



Views of Switzerland on “lethal autonomous weapons systems, inter alia, on ways to address the related challenges and concerns they raise from humanitarian, legal, security, technological and ethical perspectives and on the role of humans in the use of force, and to submit a substantive report reflecting the full range of views received with an annex containing these views, to the General Assembly at its seventy-ninth session for further discussion by Member States” in response to the request of the UN Secretary- General contained in Note Verbale ODA-2024-00019/LAWS

Switzerland welcomes the adoption of UNGA resolution 78/241 entitled “Lethal autonomous weapon systems”, of which it was a lead sponsor, as well as the strong support it received.

Switzerland is of the view that, in general, new and emerging technologies hold great promise for the advancement of humanity and could contribute to strengthening human and international security. In the military domain, autonomy can provide advantages, including improved safety and efficiency. Also, it is envisaged that in specific applications and under certain conditions such technologies could contribute to better protecting civilians and civilian objects or to avoiding collateral damage.

While recognizing the potential benefits and opportunities of Artificial Intelligence (AI), including the use of AI and autonomous capabilities by armed forces, Switzerland sees an urgent need to intensify multilateral efforts to better understand, and address effectively and in a timely manner, the humanitarian, legal, security, technological and ethical concerns that these developments may pose, notably in relation with Autonomous Weapons Systems (AWS).

Switzerland considers that AWS cover weapon systems that can operate without direct human intervention once activated, in the critical functions of target identification, target selection and the application of force thereto.

Adequate rules and limits on AWS’ development, deployment, and use are required in order to ensure conformity with international legal obligations, to uphold ethical requirements and to taking into account humanitarian considerations and aspects related to international security. In particular, Switzerland sees the need to continue the codification and progressive development of the rules of international law applicable in armed conflict with regard to AWS.

In this context, Switzerland underlines the importance of the work undertaken in the framework of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) in Geneva by the Group of Governmental Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (GGE). Given its composition and the expertise that it has developed in more than ten years of deliberations, the GGE is uniquely placed to develop multilateral governance measures in this field. Switzerland underlines the importance that the GGE meets its mandate to consider and formulate elements of an instrument on AWS by 2026 at the latest. In this regard, Switzerland takes note of the joint call by the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) for an international legally binding instrument by 2026.



Switzerland sees strong value in, and has been supportive of, the so-called two-tier approach consisting of specific prohibitions and regulations on the development, deployment and use of AWS that has been promoted in the framework of the CCW GGE, and which should be at the centre of any instrument:

Firstly, Switzerland is actively supporting the negotiation of an international instrument to prevent, above all, the emergence of systems with increasingly autonomous functions that would not be in compliance with international humanitarian law (IHL). This includes systems

- that cannot perform their functions with a sufficiently high degree of reliability or predictability in line with the intent of a human operator or commander, or could function outside of their defined parameters;
- whose effects cannot be limited in accordance with the provisions of IHL, for example because the extent and timing of the use of force cannot be sufficiently restricted;
- which cannot otherwise be used in accordance with international law, in particular IHL and human rights law.

Secondly, Switzerland advocates for the adoption of regulations and measures concerning weapons with increasingly autonomous capabilities, provided that they can, in principle, be used in accordance with international law. These regulations should focus on risk mitigation, including positive obligations to uphold human control and imposing limitations on weapon parameters and deployment contexts, all while considering military, security policy, and ethical considerations.

The concept of human involvement or control, notably to comply with IHL, is central to this approach. Switzerland sees it as a priority to develop an international framework to ensure a sufficient degree of and a type of human control, and underlines that control can be exercised over a system's entire life cycle, and notably in the targeting-cycle. This is vitally important because when using autonomous weapons systems – as with any weapon system – humans must ensure legal conformity. In order to ensure human responsibility for decisions on the use of weapon systems, a certain degree of human control must be exerted or embedded at the appropriate stages of the life cycle of the weapon.

Advancing in the framework of the CCW is crucial and urgent. It has been, and will remain, a priority for Switzerland. We reiterate that no other multilateral forum seems to be better placed to deal with key aspects relevant to autonomous weapons systems, which may be deemed to be excessively injurious or to have indiscriminate effects, and could serve to develop and adopt respective IHL provisions. Switzerland calls upon all High Contracting Parties to the CCW to continue their efforts within the GGE to effectively address these challenges and expects the GGE to achieve its objective as outlined in the three-year mandate.

Notwithstanding our strong support for the CCW, Switzerland recognizes that weapons systems with increasing autonomy and, more broadly, the military use of AI and notably AI-assisted decision-making in military operations, are a multifaceted issue. It is therefore important to adopt a comprehensive and inclusive approach on this matter as it encompasses various aspects of



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international law, stability, arms control, proliferation, export control and ethics in addition to IHL and the conduct of hostilities.

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