

Remarks for the Killer Robot Petition Handover to Minister Twyford

Good afternoon everyone,

I'd like to begin by acknowledging the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nation, the traditional owners of the land from which I am joining you all today, and pay my respects to their elders past present and emerging

I'd also like to thank Edwina and the Aotearoa New Zealand Campaign to Stop Killer Robots for inviting me to be part of this handover.

And I'd like to start by congratulating Minister Twyford on the political will he has already shown on this issue - including the ongoing process of policy formation as well as his participation in the LAWSVIenna21 conference the other week where he gave very clear and decisive comments on behalf of New Zealand.

Others have already talked about some of the concerns and why action to address this issue is so important but to reinforce some of those points: we are faced with the danger to humanity of crossing moral and ethical red lines if decisions over who and whether to kill are delegated to machines and we do not act now, there are also legal concerns relating to IHL, IHRL and accountability and the international security risks of proliferation, lowered barriers to war, escalation and error potentially en masse and at high speeds.

As an Australian, concerned about this issue, and like all those who signed the petition being delivered today, wanting to see action and specifically states negotiate a new treaty to retain meaningful human control over the use of force, with specific prohibitions and other regulation - we hope that political leadership by other states inspires Australia to move to a policy to adequately address this issue. We are then therefore particularly encouraged by the proactiveness in our neighbour, NZ and would hope in future the two countries, and their governments could collaborate in positive ways towards this goal.

I'd like to congratulate the New Zealand Campaign on its efforts bringing together this petition, and look forward to seeing New Zealand's ongoing work on this issue to respond with decisiveness and morality (which, I might add, New Zealand always seems well versed in displaying) in order to address the danger of increasing autonomous weapons as had already begun in your country.

Thank you very much

Matilda Byrne,
National Coordinator, Australia Campaign to Stop Killer Robots