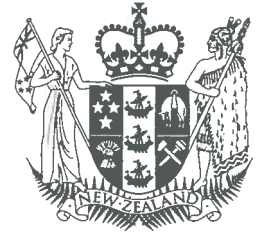# Rt Hon Winston Peters

Deputy Prime Minister
Minister of Foreign Affairs
Minister for Disarmament and Arms Control
Minister for State Owned Enterprises
Minister for Racing

1 6 APR 2019

Edwina Hughes
Campaign to Stop Killer Robots
stopkillerrobots@xtra.co.nz

Dear Edwina Hughes

Thank you for your email and letter of 15 March 2019.

In statements to the Group of Governmental Experts considering this issue, New Zealand has been very clear that we have concerns about the legal, ethical and human rights challenges posed by the development and use of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS). We have firmly stated that meaningful human control must be applied to LAWS, and that the ability to exercise human control is critical as to whether a weapon would be able to comply with international humanitarian law as well as other legal requirements.

Our view is that international law already sets limits on LAWS, notably through Additional Protocol 1 to the Geneva Conventions. An autonomous weapon that could not fulfil the requirements of proportionality, distinction and precautions in an attack would not be lawful. Our priority is to ensure that current international law is implemented more effectively to make sure there will always be meaningful human control over weapons incorporating autonomy.

New Zealand has lent its support to calls for a high-level political declaration that would set out key disciplines on the development and use of LAWS, such as meaningful human control and the operational safeguards needed to ensure them. The political declaration we seek would not exclude progress on other options over time, but at this stage it is clear that major countries capable of developing LAWS would not join a ban. We support a forward work programme that ensures that discussions can continue among a wide grouping of states on key technical, policy and legal issues relating to LAWS, including issues involved in a possible ban.

Yours sincerely

Rt Hon Winston Peters
Minister for Disarmament and Arms Control