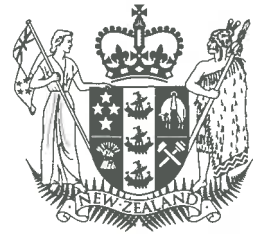


Rt Hon Winston Peters



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

Professor Michael Winikoff
michael.winikoff@otago.ac.nz

Dear Professor Michael Winikoff

Thank you for your email of 15 March 2019 and the attached letter signed by a number of your peers.

In statements to the Group of Governmental Experts which is meeting in Geneva to consider 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 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 ensure 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

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Winston Peters'.

Rt Hon Winston Peters
Minister for Disarmament and Arms Control