



## Concept Note

### CARICOM Conference: The Human Impacts of Autonomous Weapons

#### A. BACKGROUND

The world is rapidly changing, and artificial intelligence (AI) technologies are quickly growing and expanding, transforming all areas of society. AI and robotics are revolutionising law enforcement, security, conflicts, warfare and weapon systems, including the emergence of autonomous weapon systems<sup>1</sup>. Such weapon technologies may have detrimental implications for maintaining peace and security, and protecting civilians and civilian infrastructure; raising questions about the sufficiency of existing governance frameworks, and the proliferation of these weapons to non-state actors, including criminal groups, gangs and terrorists. The lack of human control in the decision-making process of these weapons raises significant legal, ethical and moral concerns and also questions the conformity of these weapons with applicable international humanitarian law, international human rights law and issues of accountability and responsibility in the event of civilian harm or other unintended consequences.

There has been over ten (10) years of discussions on this issue of autonomous weapons systems taking place at the United Nations, including discussions at the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) and its Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on lethal autonomous weapons systems, the UN Human Rights Council and the UN General Assembly First Committee. During this period, over [90 States](#) have called for the negotiations of an international legally binding instrument to safeguard against the legal, ethical, humanitarian and security risks posed by autonomous weapons systems. The UN Secretary-General, the International Committee of the Red Cross, experts in artificial intelligence and technology, and civil society also support the call. [The United Nations Policy Brief: The New Agenda for Peace](#), launched on Thursday, 20 July 2023, by United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, has issued an urgent call to states to adopt a treaty to prohibit and regulate autonomous weapons systems by 2026.

#### B. A CARICOM PERSPECTIVE

States in the Caribbean can play a vital role in achieving new international laws to protect humanity and safeguard against these dangers. It is a critical moment in the ongoing diplomatic discussions on autonomous weapons systems, and the Caribbean Community can play a vital leadership role in advancing international law to protect humanity and safeguard against these dangers. The Caribbean region has been a long-time champion for disarmament, arms control, and non-proliferation, as well as highlighting gender and environmental perspectives. With a regional position supporting a legally binding instrument on autonomous weapons, the Caribbean region would be a strong influence to move states towards negotiations of such an instrument.

The Outcome Statement of the Caribbean Community Regional Workshop on Achieving the Universalization of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, on 11-12 July 2023, agreed to;

1. Commit to actively engage in discussions with our respective national representatives on matters related to the CCW and Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems with a view to

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<sup>1</sup> Autonomous weapons systems can replace humans in the application of force, by relying on the processing of sensor data to select and engage targets with force, without human intervention. In these systems, upon activation, there is a period of time where the weapon system can apply force to a target without additional human approval, meaning the human operator does not determine specifically where, when, or against what force is applied.

intensify States' participation and to promote the active engagement in meetings of CCW and other fora related to LAWS;

2. Promote collaboration among CARICOM Member States to develop a common position on LAWS;
3. Collaborate with CARICOM IMPACS to support CARICOM Member States to enhance their shared awareness and technical literacy of Artificial Intelligence and LAWS;
4. Recommend that national representatives consider the accession to the CCW and its related protocols, where applicable; and
5. Recommend that the Conference of CARICOM Heads of Government adopt a CARICOM declaration on LAWS.

### **C. WAY AHEAD**

In furtherance of the CARICOM Outcome Statement, the UNSG urgent call to states to adopt a treaty to prohibit and regulate autonomous weapons systems by 2026, and IMPACS' support to enhance Member States' preparedness to negotiate an international legal treaty, CARICOM IMPACS, in collaboration with Stop Killer Robots and Soka Gakkai International, will convene a **'CARICOM Conference: The Human Impacts of Autonomous Weapons'**, to be held at Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, on 5-6 September 2023. The two-day meeting will bring together government officials from across the Caribbean and members of international organisations, technical experts, academia, and civil society organisations.

The **'CARICOM Conference: The Human Impacts of Autonomous Weapons'** builds upon the gains made at the regional conference held in Costa Rica on the 'Social and Humanitarian Impact of Autonomous Weapons Systems' in February 2023, where 33 States from Latin America and the Caribbean agreed to the Belen Communique calling for the urgent negotiation of a legally binding instrument to include both prohibitions and regulations on the development and use of autonomous weapons systems.

The Conference will provide an opportunity to create and deepen a shared understanding of the subject matter with input from technical experts, providing an arena for substantive discussion and building of regional policy coherence, and to contribute valuable insights to the global policy landscape on the issue. The Conference aims to advance a CARICOM Declaration on Autonomous Weapons Systems and elaborate a common CARICOM regional position.

### **D. OBJECTIVES**

The objectives of the two-day Conference are:

1. Build technical awareness of the risks and challenges to peace, security, and humanitarian protections posed by autonomous weapons in a Caribbean context;
2. Discuss how best to respond to the challenges these weapons pose to global peace and security and international law (including international humanitarian law and international human rights law);
3. Contribute to the development of a regional position in support of the negotiation of a legally binding instrument on autonomous weapons systems; and
4. Consider the trajectory of the autonomous weapons issue and opportunities to engage at the UNGA First Committee.

### **E. OUTCOME**

- CARICOM Declaration on Autonomous Weapons Systems