



CARICOM Declaration on Autonomous Weapons Systems
CARICOM Conference: The Human Impacts of Autonomous Weapons,
Port of Spain Trinidad and Tobago
5-6 September 2023

We, the representatives of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) gathered at the "CARICOM Conference: The Human Impacts of Autonomous Weapons" in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago on 5-6 September 2023, to hereby reaffirm the following:

Preamble:

Recognising that emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence (AI), have the power to unlock inclusive economic growth, possess extraordinary potential to enhance human lives, and address significant societal challenges; but also recognizing that emerging technologies pose risks to national and regional security, including implications for global security, particularly in the case of autonomous weapons systems (AWS).

Section I: Fundamental Principles and Concerns

Acknowledging the potential opportunities and risks inherent in the development, production, deployment and application of emerging technologies and artificial intelligence within law enforcement, border security and military domains.

Noting the alarming potential of AWS, which select and apply force to targets without human intervention, to transform the dynamics of transnational organized crime, armed violence, terrorism, and armed conflicts.

Expressing deep concern at the ethical, legal, and humanitarian risks posed by AWS, including concrete challenges posed to non-proliferation efforts and the maintenance of global peace and security, and risk of a new arms race.

Emphasizing the challenges that AWS pose to compliance with international legal frameworks, encompassing international humanitarian law (IHL), international human rights law (IHRL), and international criminal law (ICL).

Reflecting on the implications of relinquishing meaningful human control over the critical targeting functions of weapons systems and the consequential devastating aftermath.

Stressing the importance of greater examination in international discussions and multilateral fora of the implications of AWS for non-proliferation and the risks of diversion to non-state actors, including criminals and terrorist groups, and the challenges of AWS to internal and domestic security, including law enforcement and border security.

Motivated by a common regional will to strengthen our ongoing collective efforts to contribute to global peace, security, stability, justice and development in CARICOM, as well as to strengthen international law in the best interest of our people.

Section II: Ethical and Legal Imperatives

Concerned with the absence of comprehensive multilateral frameworks governing the design, development, and use of AWS, and the resultant moral, ethical, legal, and humanitarian concerns, thereby posing a direct risk to human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Recognizing the need to strengthen existing global governance structures in order to effectively manage the risks posed by AWS.



Stressing the principle that advancements in AI and AWS should not be leveraged to undermine human rights, exacerbate prevailing inequalities, nor deepen discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, nationality, class, religion, gender, age, or other status.

Acknowledging the exacerbation of technological disparities between developed and developing nations, which may further amplify new dimensions of inequality, allowing some states to field weapons with dangerous and unpredictable capabilities, possibly resulting in an arms race of AWS.

Reiterating that the development, production, deployment, and application of emerging technologies in the area of AWS must conform to established international law, including IHL, IHRL, and ICL, ensuring intrinsic safety and predictability, safeguarding property rights, privacy, national security, and the maintenance of human control over the application of force.

Affirming the responsibility of the international community, aligned with the principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter, IHL, IHRL, and ICL, to address these threats through the enhancement and fortification of the international legal framework, preventing civilian displacement, injury, death, and destruction of civilian assets and heritage sites.

Section III: Collaborative Endeavours and Multilateral Cooperation

Reaffirming the significance of the [Proclamation of Latin America and the Caribbean as a Zone of Peace](#), signed at the II Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) in Havana in January 2014, and emphasized in the Buenos Aires Declaration during CELAC's VII Summit on January 24, 2023.

Acknowledging the appeals made by the UN Secretary-General, UN Special Rapporteurs, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), civil society, the academic community, and the scientific community regarding the imperative of negotiating a legally binding instrument concerning AWS.

Taking into account the [Belén Communiqué](#) emanating from the Latin American and Caribbean Conference on the Social and Humanitarian Impact of Autonomous Weapons in February 2023, acknowledged the need to *“Collaborate to promote the urgent negotiation of an international legally binding instrument with prohibitions and regulations with regard to autonomy in weapon systems in order to ensure compliance with International Law, including International Humanitarian Law, and ethical perspectives, as well as the prevention of the social and humanitarian impact that autonomy in weapons systems entail”*.

Recalling 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, calling on the Conference of CARICOM Heads of Government to adopt a CARICOM declaration on AWS.

Taking into account that the [New Agenda for Peace](#) issued by the UN Secretary-General on 22 July 2023 recommended that *“Building on the progress made in multilateral negotiations, conclude, by 2026, a legally binding instrument to prohibit lethal autonomous weapon systems that function without human control or oversight, and which cannot be used in compliance with international humanitarian law, and to regulate all other types of autonomous weapons systems.”*

Section IV: Joint Action and Future Commitments

Recognizing that the cross-border nature of AWS requires, advocating for the widest possible coalition of international actors, particularly developing nations, to participate in negotiations for a future international legally binding instrument on AWS.



Underlining the necessity for a comprehensive, inclusive approach in comprehending the potential impacts, opportunities, and challenges of AWS, advocating for active collaboration and information exchange among states, private entities, civil society, and academia.

Acknowledging the important work undertaken within the framework of the UN Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), while recognising the need to broaden the discussion to accommodate an inclusive conversation required for the advancement of an international legally binding instrument, incorporating prohibitions and regulations on AWS.

Reiterating the call for new legally binding measures within the domain of AWS to ensure compliance with international law, encompassing IHL, IHRL, ICL and ethical frameworks, guaranteeing human control over the application of force.

Emphasizing the necessity of incorporating human and social considerations into the negotiation of a global AWS instrument and subsequent national legislation, acknowledging the potential exacerbation of existing inequalities for developing states and marginalized groups.

Section V: Concluding Commitments and Recommendations

We therefore declare our commitment to:

- 1. Resolve to** support the indispensability of meaningful human control over the use of force and thereby encourage the pursuit of an international legally binding instrument which incorporates prohibitions and regulations on AWS.
- 2. Collaborate** on endeavours aimed at negotiating an international legally binding instrument that prohibits unpredictable or uncontrollable AWS capable of using force without meaningful human control, and prohibit those designed or employed to apply force against persons, while implementing regulations for other forms of AWS.
- 3. Pledge** support to other pertinent initiatives and active participation in multilateral platforms addressing AWS concerns.
- 4. Agree** to maintain a unified stance across all pertinent platforms, prioritizing the creation of an international legally binding instrument on AWS, which takes into consideration issues relating to non-proliferation and the risks of diversion to non-state actors, including non-state armed groups and terrorist groups, and the challenges of AWS to internal and domestic security, including law enforcement and border security.
- 5. Support** efforts to work with the CARICOM Implementation Agency for Crime and Security (IMPACS) along with other relevant stakeholders to promote an agreed position on AWS.
- 6. Advocate** for inclusive, multidisciplinary participation in AWS discussions and negotiations to guarantee the formulation of effective prohibitions and regulations safeguarding persons affected by armed violence and armed conflict.
- 7. Call** upon states to acknowledge the perils of proliferation, unintended escalation, ethical considerations, digital dehumanisation, and other human and social implications associated with AWS, including digital discrimination based on race, ethnicity, nationality, class, religion, gender, age, or other status.



8. **Strengthen** cooperation with civil society, industry, knowledge institutions, academia, and other stakeholders possessing relevant expertise, as appropriate.
9. **Encourage** engagement on AWS matters within the UN General Assembly and other inclusive multilateral forums.
10. **Call upon** international organisations, development partners, the private sector, academia, and other relevant stakeholders to contribute financial and technical assistance and capacity-building initiatives, in order to enable Member States to meaningfully engage in multilateral discussions on autonomous weapons systems and bridge the gap of technological disparities that may result in increased vulnerability of CARICOM States.
11. **Engage**, where possible, the rest of the international community to promote this declaration, including in other fora on related subjects, and without prejudice to ongoing discussions on related subjects in other fora.
12. **Proactively** disseminate and work towards the adoption and successful implementation of this Declaration.
