

CARICOM Conference 2023: The Human Impacts of Autonomous Weapons,  
Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago  
Statement of Soka Gakkai International  
Delivered on 6th September 2023

Thank you, chair, for giving me the floor. I speak on behalf of Soka Gakkai International, a member organization of Stop Killer Robots. As an NGO working to promote peace, culture and education based on Buddhist principles, we believe in human dignity and hold that life and death decisions should never be delegated to machines.

We are grateful to our partner organizations CARICOM IMPACS, the office of the Attorney General of Trinidad and Tobago and Stop Killer Robots.

We applaud the political and moral leadership of all Caribbean states who have joined this two-day conference and for your vision and commitment to multilateral discussions on disarmament issues more broadly. We congratulate on adopting the declaration that calls for a new legally binding instrument with prohibitions and regulations with regard to autonomy in weapon systems.

We have learnt that without regulation, autonomous weapons could be proliferated globally, including amongst non-state actors which could increase crime regionally, exacerbate social inequalities, overwhelm resources and infrastructures of countries, as well as undermine social and national security.

We have seen how autonomous weapons are part of a wider issue of digital dehumanization and if allowed to go unregulated will have negative impacts in all spheres of civil life including law enforcement, border control, education, housing and health care.

Reducing human beings to mere data points, poses serious human rights implications, exacerbating existing biases intersectionally, disproportionately impacting already marginalized individuals and communities.

Fundamentally, the issue of autonomy in weapons systems poses the question of what it means to be human—a question that requires moral, ethical and spiritual examination.

For this reason, we work with a wide group of stakeholders including other religious and

faith groups to express concerns about increased autonomy in weapons systems, grounded in moral and ethical perspectives.

In May this year, we supported an Interfaith statement on autonomous weapons systems endorsed by 15 faith-based organizations, delivered at the CCW which states

“machines will never have human consciousness or awareness, and will never experience human emotions such as empathy, compassion, love and hate... Strengthening the moral threshold against delegating decisions about the life or death of people to machines operated by digital code is a core issue for us all.”

During this conference it has been said, we have an opportunity now to decide how we want to use technology. And we can do so by rejecting the notion that it is permissible to leave the decisions of life and death to machines.

We therefore, join a growing number of stakeholders in calling for an urgent and timely start of negotiations for an international treaty to prohibit and regulate autonomy in weapons systems, and to do so in a forum that is capable of achieving this goal.

We stand ready to work with you on advancing this crucially important issue.

We thank you.