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Article 36  
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Rt Hon Philip Hammond  
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs  
King Charles Street  
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6 April 2016

Dear Secretary of State,

We are writing to you on the issue of lethal autonomous weapons systems (LAWS) ahead of the third UN Convention on Conventional Weapons (CCW) expert meeting which will take place in Geneva from 11-15 April 2016.

We thank you for your letter dated 1 May 2015 (MIN/82703/2015) and welcome the United Kingdom's engagement on this important issue. Furthermore, we welcome the commitments that "the UK is not developing and has no plans to develop LAWS", and that "the operation of weapons systems will always be under human control".

We believe that further developing these statements into policy that elaborates the necessary measures to ensure that weapons remain under human control in greater detail would be valuable. Whilst we appreciated the presentation on the UK armed forces' targeting process presented at the last expert meeting, further clarification over how the UK will ensure that a weapon system will remain under human control after it has been released, and what constitutes a weapon, is needed. We also encourage the UK to publicly support the principle of meaningful human control over individual attacks. We believe that this is in line with previous statements and could help establish a useful principle at the forthcoming CCW meeting in Geneva, which in turn could have a positive consensus-building effect internationally.

The *Campaign to Stop Killer Robots* is calling for the development of a new international treaty to prohibit lethal autonomous weapons systems, weapons understood to operate without meaningful human control. We were disappointed that the UK has stated that it does not currently support the development of new international law that would prevent all states from developing these weapons systems. The UK is a major developer of advanced military equipment. It is clearly in our interest to ensure that all weapons systems remain under strict human control, and, as such, for the UK to be at the forefront of international discussions to prevent anyone developing autonomous weapons systems.

Lastly, we were encouraged by remarks in your previous letter which agreed that there was a need for the UK to consolidate its statements with regards to LAWS in order to present a clearer and more accessible policy. The UK does not appear to have acted on this yet and we would like to remind the UK of the value we attach to such an undertaking and of the positive example it would set internationally.

We look forward to hearing your thoughts on these points and to continuing to work

constructively with the UK government on this issue in Geneva later this month and beyond.

Yours sincerely,

Mr. Chris Cole, Director  
Drone Wars UK

Dr. Rebecca Johnson FRSA, Executive Director  
Acronym Institute for Disarmament Diplomacy

Mr. Thomas Nash, Director  
Article 36

Ms. Natalie Samarasinghe, Executive Director  
United Nations Association – UK

Mr. Steven Smith MBE, Chief Executive Officer  
Action on Armed Violence