SC

Security Council

LASALLECUNMUN
2026

Regulating Emerging Military Technologies: Autonomus Weapons and AI in Armed Conflict

BACKGROUND GUIDE

Dear delegates,

It's a pleasure and a joy to join you at this year's edition of LASALLECUNMUN 2026! My name is Alexandra Vargas, and I'm thrilled to be your President for the Security Council committee this year. I extend a warm welcome to all of you delegates. In the chair, you can find Jimena Roa Leo as our Moderator and Tamaki Luna Ikeda as our Conference Officer. We understand how nervous you may be, so we encourage you to give your best in this debate. Maybe you can find your true calling in the way.

I'm 17 years old and currently a junior specializing in Architectural Drawing and Construction. Interestingly, I do not plan to pursue this field at university. Thanks to my first experience in MUN, I discovered what I truly want to study, International Relations, with the goal of becoming a diplomat. Outside academics, I used to play volleyball for ULSA's team. Now, I practice aerial silks, a sport I have loved since I was 13. I am also a member of La Salle's scientific club, where I'm working on a project to create sargassum-based bioplastic. Beyond school activities, I enjoy singing, and I have a band with my friends in which I'm the main singer. Music is an important part of my life; some of my favorite artists are Caifanes, Zoé, Bad Bunny, Sabrina Carpenter, and Manuel Medrano. I'm the kind of person who gets bored if I don't try new things, and I like seeing how every new skill can be useful in unexpected situations. For me, MUN is not only for a grade but also a chance to meet people, make friends, and create lasting memories. At first, it may seem intimidating, but once it's over, you will miss it.

We, as a chair, are truly excited to witness the incredible potential that each of you will bring to this model. This is your opportunity to explore innovative solutions to real-world challenges, and I do not doubt that you will rise to the challenge with intelligence and passion. Remember, we are the generation of change. The work we do here is more than a simulation; it's a spark that can ignite greater awareness and action in the world around us. If you have any questions or need guidance at any point, please do not hesitate to reach out to me. I am here to support you every step of the way.

Yours sincerely,

Alexandra Vargas

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COMMITTEE DESCRIPTION

The Security Council has primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. It takes the lead in determining the existence of a threat to the peace or an act of aggression. It calls upon the parties to a dispute to settle it by peaceful means and recommends methods of adjustment or terms of settlement. In some cases, the Security Council can resort to imposing sanctions or even authorize the use of force to maintain or restore international peace and security.

Topic: "Regulating Emerging Military Technologies: Autonomous Weapons and AI in Armed Conflict"

INTRODUCTION

Autonomous weapon systems, according to the ICRC (International Committee of the Red Cross), are weapons capable of identifying and engaging targets without the need for direct human control. Over the last decade, artificial intelligence has moved from being a futuristic concept to a central part of modern military strategy. Around the world, armed forces are developing autonomous weapon systems (AWS). The global market for these technologies is already worth almost 15 billion USD and could reach almost 34 billion USD by the period of 2025-2032, growing more than 11.39% every year. This rapid expansion shows how deeply automation and machine learning are reshaping the way wars are fought today.

Autonomous weapons offer greater speed, precision, and reduced human risk in combat, but they also raise serious concerns about accountability, reliability, and the loss of human judgment. Once decisions are delegated to machines, it becomes much harder to predict and control their effects. For instance, after activation, how can an operator be certain that what the system identifies as a target (such as a shape or heat signature) is truly a military vehicle and not a civilian one? Studies estimate that around 75% of the world's military organizations are currently incorporating AI into their operations, and more than 50 countries are expected to possess some form of autonomous military capability by 2030. The increasing complexity of artificial intelligence in military operations poses a critical dilemma: finding a balance between rapid technological progress and the ethical and legal responsibilities that come with it. As fully autonomous weapons move beyond testing grounds and into real combat scenarios, the international community must make urgent decisions. Should these systems be banned, strictly regulated, or integrated into existing legal frameworks? The answer will determine whether the world can avoid an uncontrolled arms race: one that could fundamentally change the role of humans in making life and death choices on the battlefield.

There is growing interest in using artificial intelligence, especially machine learning, to control autonomous weapons. These systems build their own models based on data, often creating a "black box" that humans can't fully predict or explain. This lack of transparency

raises serious concerns about accountability and control, especially since machine learning can also carry biases related to race, gender, or other factors. Even with simpler autonomous systems, predicting what will trigger a strike can be difficult, and machine learning makes this unpredictability worse. If a weapon is allowed to learn and adapt during use, there's no way to guarantee its actions will stay within the limits of international law, raising critical questions about responsibility, legality, and civilian protection.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In 1898, Nikola Tesla designed and demonstrated the world's first remotely controlled boat, presenting it to the United States military as a potential innovation in warfare. However, at the time, it was dismissed as impractical. Technological experimentation continued, and during World War I in 1918, the United States developed the Kettering Bug, an early unmanned aerial bomb equipped with wings and guided by an internal gyroscope.

As technology has advanced, advocates of LAWS argue that autonomous weapons could bring humanitarian benefits by reducing the use of high explosives and improving the identification of civilians in conflict zones. However, even the most sophisticated systems can fail. A clear example is the 1988 Iran Air Flight 655 incident, when the USS Vincennes shot down a civilian airliner, mistakenly identifying it as an Iranian fighter jet. The crew acted according to protocol, but distorted radar data led to a deadly error that claimed 290 lives. This event highlights how technical failures can undermine the distinction between civilian and military targets. If future autonomous systems make such decisions on their own, similar tragedies could occur, especially when sensor data is flawed or misinterpreted. Another example is the reported use of a Kargu-2 drone in Libya in 2020 without direct human intervention, one of the first documented uses of lethal autonomous weapons in combat. AI-driven systems have also been used in Nagorno-Karabakh and Ukraine, showing the rapid operational deployment of this technology. These events, along with repeated warnings from the UN and international organizations, highlight the urgent need for global agreements to address this growing challenge.

Even though no binding treaty currently exists to regulate autonomous weapons, several initiatives have significantly influenced the global debate. Nations such as Austria, Chile, and Brazil have pushed for preventive bans. At the same time, major military powers like the United States, Russia, China, and Israel maintain that the current International Humanitarian Law provides adequate regulation. Meanwhile, the United Nations, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and various NGOs continue to advocate for stronger human oversight and clearer legal frameworks.

CURRENT SITUATION

Since 2018, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres has consistently emphasized that lethal autonomous weapons systems are politically unacceptable and morally repugnant, urging their prohibition under international law. In his 2023 New Agenda for Peace, Guterres renewed this appeal, recommending that States adopt a legally binding agreement by 2026 to ban autonomous weapons operating without meaningful human control or oversight, and to regulate all other types of such systems. He warned that, in the absence of global regulation, their design and deployment raise serious humanitarian, legal, security, and ethical concerns, posing direct threats to human rights and fundamental freedoms. Some recent reports suggest that countries such as Russia, Israel, and the United States have already deployed AI-assisted weapon systems or semi-autonomous drones in ongoing conflicts, particularly in Ukraine and the Middle East, raising urgent questions about transparency, legality, and accountability on the battlefield. Several UN independent experts have also expressed deep concern over LAWS. In 2013, Christof Heyns, then UN Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions, was the first to raise an alarm about the risks posed by lethal autonomous weapons before the Human Rights Council. A decade later, in 2023, Fionnuala Ní Aoláin, UN Special Rapporteur on Counter-Terrorism and Human Rights, echoed the Secretary-General's stance, calling for a global ban on fully autonomous weapons.

In his most recent report on science, technology, and international security, Guterres further highlighted the dangers of AI's inability to uphold the principle of distinction, a cornerstone of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) that requires the protection of civilians by distinguishing them from combatants. He also warned about the emergence of AI-driven drone swarms, capable of independently identifying and striking multiple targets simultaneously. Such technology, he noted, could challenge the principles of proportionality and precaution under IHL. Because machines cannot be held accountable for violations of international law, any lethal decision must ultimately remain under human responsibility. The New Agenda for Peace outlines the Secretary-General's recommendations for the governance of AI and autonomous weapon systems, including the negotiation of a treaty banning fully autonomous weapons by 2026. During the 2023 Summit of the Future, Member States reaffirmed the importance of continued multilateral cooperation and agreed to pursue discussions "to develop an instrument, without prejudging its nature, and other measures to address emerging technologies in the area of lethal autonomous weapons systems."

The right to life is a fundamental principle that prohibits arbitrary deprivation of life. According to Article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), "No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his life." The Human Rights Committee has emphasized that this right must be interpreted broadly. During the drafting of the ICCPR, negotiators understood "arbitrary" to encompass both unlawful and unjust actions, reflecting its legal and ethical dimensions. In General Comment No. 36, the Committee clarified that a deprivation of life is considered arbitrary not only when it violates the law, but also when it displays inappropriateness, injustice, unpredictability, or lack of due process. Furthermore, assessments of arbitrariness must include elements of reasonableness, necessity, and

proportionality, ensuring that every use of force complies with both legal and moral standards.

COUNTRY BOX

Arab Republic of Egypt

Commonwealth of Australia

Federative Republic of Brazil

French Republic

Islamic Republic of Qatar

Japan

People's Republic of China

Republic of Austria

Republic of Chile

Republic of India

Republic of Mexico

Republic of Nigeria

Republic of the Philippines

Republic of Sierra Leone

Republic of South Africa

Republic of Türkiye

Russian Federation

State of Israel

United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

United States of America

GUIDE QUESTIONS

I. What is the official position of your country regarding the development and use of lethal autonomous weapons systems (LAWS)?

II. II. What concrete actions has your country taken in the past (legal, military, diplomatic, or technological) related to autonomous weapons?

III. Has your country suffered any direct or indirect consequences due to the development or use of autonomous weapons? If so, what were they?

IV. What solutions does your country propose within the framework of international law and the United Nations to regulate or manage these weapons?

V. What role should human rights and human oversight play in the operation and decision-making of autonomous weapons systems?

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