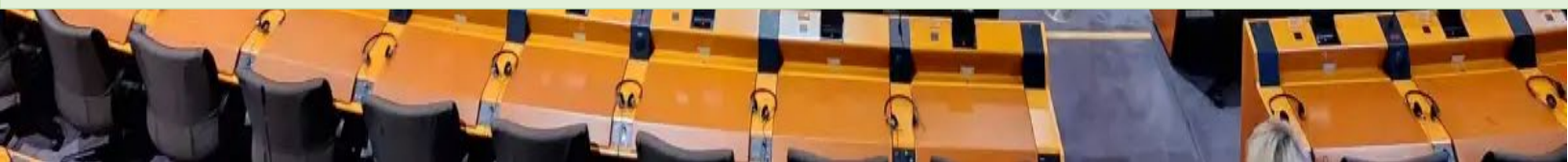




Human Rights Council (HRC)

Topic 1: Assessing Ethical Implications in the Development and Deployment of Autonomous Weapon Systems (AWS).

President: Leen Mansour



President's Letter

Honorable delegates of the Human Rights Council,

It is my utmost pleasure to welcome you to MontessoriMUN'25! My name is Leen Mansour, and I have the great honor of serving as your President for this year's HRC, alongside our esteemed deputy, Safa Alkhudairy, and our respected chair, Karam Abboud. With the guidance and support of your chairing panel, I am confident that this committee will not only be impactful and productive, but also a truly memorable experience for every one of us.

The Human Rights Council has always held a special place in my heart, and is the one committee where every debate, every resolution, and every discussion carries not only significance, but the power to truly impact lives around the world. It is the very power to influence real change that makes our work here so meaningful. This year, we are entrusted with two critical topics that demand both careful thought and empathy, so be prepared to engage fully, think critically, and speak passionately.

Our first agenda, the ethical implications in the development and deployment of Autonomous Weapon Systems (AWS), calls on us to examine the intersection of technology, accountability, and human dignity.

Meanwhile, our second topic, addressing child labor in the gold and cobalt mining industry of the Democratic Republic of Congo, challenges us to confront the hidden suffering behind global progress and to find solutions that protect the most vulnerable among us.

As I encourage you all to get out of your comfort zones, voice your ideas and thoughts, bring your insight and your passion to this committee seeing as its only one of the many MUN experiences that you will hopefully be a part of in the future no matter what happens no one's there to judge, everyone has different perspectives, and there is no right or wrong.

I look forward to making this committee as meaningful and memorable for you as it has always been for me.

Best Regards,

Leen Mansour

President of the Human Rights Council

Introduction to the Committee

The United Nations Human Rights Council is the principal intergovernmental body responsible for the promotion and protection of fundamental human rights, including life, liberty, and due process. As a delegate in this committee, you will play a key role in addressing pressing human rights violations, evaluating global situations, and contributing to fruitful discussions. Throughout the conference, you will collaborate with fellow delegates to propose comprehensive long-term resolutions and strategies to promote equality, justice, and peace across the globe.



Terminology

- **Ethical implications:** The potential moral consequences or considerations that arise from a particular action, decision, or technological development.
- **Autonomy:** The degree to which a system can operate independently of human control. Autonomy exists on a spectrum, ranging from semi-autonomous systems that require human intervention to fully autonomous systems capable of independent decision-making.
- **Autonomous weapon systems (AWS):** A specialized class of weapons that use sensors, algorithms, and AI to independently identify, track, and engage targets without direct human input.
- **Global superpowers:** Countries with dominant economies, advanced technology, and significant global military influence. These states often drive the development and deployment of cutting-edge military technologies, including AWS.
- **Unrestricted arms race:** A dangerous competitive escalation among states to achieve military superiority, characterized by the uncontrolled expansion of weapons and technology without international treaties or arms control measures to regulate it.

- **Principle of distinction:** A rule of international humanitarian law that requires combatants to differentiate between military targets and civilians.
- **Accountability gap:** A situation in which it is unclear who bears legal or moral responsibility for violations committed by an AWS, whether in manufacturing, programming, deployment, or operational decision-making.



History

- *The Mechanical Precursors (Pre-1980s)*

The earliest forms of autonomy in weaponry focused primarily on speed and defensive capability. Machines were designed to act independently because humans could not react quickly enough. The earliest forms of autonomy are landmines: although set by humans, these devices operate according to simple physical rules (pressure or proximity) to determine when to detonate.

- *Targeting Automation*

By the 1950s, targeting automation had advanced with the development of basic “smart” weapons, such as heat-seeking missiles. Once launched by a pilot, these missiles could independently track and strike a target based solely on the heat source.

- *The First Modern Killer Robot.*

A major milestone came in the 1970s with the Phalanx Close-In Weapon System (CIWS) deployed on naval vessels. Designed to intercept incoming missiles, the Phalanx CIWS could autonomously detect, track, and engage threats once activated, without further human intervention. This marked the first fully autonomous defensive system capable of lethal action.

- ***The Remote-Control Era (1990s–2010s)***

This era was defined by the physical separation of humans from the battlefield, though humans remained in control of lethal decisions. Advances in GPS, communication systems, and sensor technology enabled the widespread use of military drones, such as the Predator. Pilots could operate these drones from trailers miles away, observing through video feeds and guiding strikes remotely. A pilot would sit in a trailer miles away, guiding the aircraft and looking through a screen.

- ***The Rule of the "Human-in-the-Loop."***

This period is often described as the “Human-in-the-Loop” phase because while drones provided unprecedented operational reach, humans retained the final authority to authorize lethal action, thereby maintaining legal and moral responsibility for the use of force.

- ***Building the Brain***

Behind the scenes, military research programs, including those sponsored by DARPA, accelerated developments in AI and robotics. Ground vehicles and aircraft were increasingly capable of autonomous navigation, environmental perception, and object recognition: key components necessary for the creation of fully autonomous combat systems in the future.

Current Situation

The advancement and implementation of Autonomous Weapon Systems (AWS) is now at the forefront of global security and international law, as progressions in fields such as artificial intelligence, which is now dominating our daily lives, are rapidly outpacing legal and regulatory frameworks. A handful of economic superpowers are heavily racing to invest in AWS research and breakthroughs, viewing it as a means to enhance efficiency in the military, save lives, and gain tactical improvements over foreign forces.

However, this divide has sparked ethical, moral, and legal debates over the unchecked use of AWS, compliance with international military and humanitarian law, and the strong and rapidly increasing possibility of an unrestricted arms race. While some nations are calling for a partial or complete ban on AWS, many others believe that, if regulated properly, it can be beneficial to society and the safety of civilians. However, the lack of international cooperation and moderation has raised urgent questions and concerns about leaving potential life-and-death decisions to machines.

Parties involved

- **The United States of America:** The USA is at the forefront of AWS research and development, integrating autonomous systems into various branches of its military. American programs often explore AI-driven drones, autonomous ground vehicles, and defensive weapon systems.
- **Russia:** Russia is heavily investing in AWS as part of its military modernization. Its focus includes autonomous combat vehicles, drones, and missile systems.
- **China:** China is rapidly advancing in AWS development to strengthen its military technology and assert its strategic influence. The country is exploring autonomous naval, aerial, and land-based systems, aiming to compete with global superpowers and establish dominance in future warfare.
- **South Korea and Turkey:** Both countries have begun deploying AWS within its military strategy, particularly in response to regional threats.
- **Austria, Brazil, and Chile:** Advocates for strict international regulation or a complete ban on AWS, emphasizing ethical, legal, and security concerns.

Guiding questions

- Who holds definitive responsibility for unauthorized lethal outcomes?
- Can a machine reliably satisfy the ethical requirements of war?
- What specific criteria define acceptable human oversight in engagement decisions?
- Does the use of autonomous weapons inherently increase the likelihood of conflict?



Helpful Resources

[https://docs-library.unoda.org/Convention_on_Certain_Conventional_Weapons_-
Group_of_Governmental_Experts_on_Lethal_Autonomous_Weapons_Systems_\(2024\)/
CCW-GGE.1-2024-WP.4.pdf](https://docs-library.unoda.org/Convention_on_Certain_Conventional_Weapons_-_Group_of_Governmental_Experts_on_Lethal_Autonomous_Weapons_Systems_(2024)/CCW-GGE.1-2024-WP.4.pdf)

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Archives/May-June-2017/Pros-and-Cons-of-Autonomous-Weapons-Systems/](https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Journals/Military-Review/English-Edition-Archives/May-June-2017/Pros-and-Cons-of-Autonomous-Weapons-Systems/)

[https://www.fcas-forum.eu/publications/Prohibiting-Autonomous-Weapons-Put-Human-
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