I am pleased to address you on behalf of the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots, the international coalition of non-governmental organizations working to preemptively ban weapons that would select and attack targets without further human intervention.

We have many concerns with these “killer robots” but perhaps most significant concern is with the notion of permitting a machine to select and take a human life on the battlefield or in law enforcement and other situations. We’ve found that many agree with us that this is a step too far that crosses a line that should never be crossed. It would be an affront to human dignity.

We welcomed the decision last November by States Parties to the Convention on Conventional Weapons (CCW) to start considering the questions raised by the emerging technology of “lethal autonomous weapons systems.”

The strong turn-out last May by more than 80 nations and dynamic deliberations indicate there is broad interest and appetite for continuing this work in 2015. Next month, we urge that nations participating in the CCW meeting agree to a mandate that creates a formal group of governmental experts to continue the work though expanded discussions.
We are certain that only four more days of talks held in the course of an entire year, as in 2014, is not an adequate response to the multiple concerns that have been raised. The current speed of technological change requires urgent deliberations and rapid action.

We must make sure any future deliberations at the CCW on killer robots not simply be a repeat of the 2014 meeting, which requires going deeper in considering substantive matters, such as the notion of meaningful human control.

It also requires being more open and inclusive by bringing in women experts and experts from more nations. Put an end to the all male-panels or “man panels.”

The CCW is also not the only place where fully autonomous weapons should be considered as the special challenges raised by these weapons systems have relevance to other multilateral fora. As the reporting by the UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, Professor Christof Heyns, shows, there is an important role for the Human Rights Council to play on this emerging international issue of concern.

We know from CCW Protocol IV on blinding lasers that a preemptive ban is achievable. We know from the humanitarian disarmament path carved by the Mine Ban Treaty that much can be achieved in a short period of time when nations take responsibility for acting and work in cooperation with the UN, ICRC, and non-governmental organizations. We know that if we follow this way of working and stay focused on our goal, the negotiation of a legally binding instrument that establishes the principle of human control over targeting and attack decisions is not just possible, but inevitable.

But taking such bold leadership requires sound policy and domestic support. We urge all nations to develop and articulate their policy on fully autonomous weapons in consultation with relevant actors, including our civil society experts.

Thank you.