

2022 Council of Delegates of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement

WORKSHOP

Towards a Movement position on autonomous weapon systems

OUTLINE

Context

The ICRC understands autonomous weapon systems as weapons that select and apply force to targets without human intervention. After initial activation by a person, an autonomous weapon system triggers a strike. The use of autonomous weapon systems entails risks because it is difficult for weapon users to anticipate and limit their effects. This loss of human control and judgement in the use of force raises serious concerns from humanitarian, legal and ethical perspectives.

Since 2015, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has called on States to establish internationally agreed limits on autonomous weapon systems to address these risks, and a number of National Societies have also engaged with their governments to highlight their concerns.

In May 2021, with a view to supporting current efforts to establish international limits on autonomous weapon systems, the ICRC recommended that States adopt new legally binding rules to prohibit certain types of autonomous weapon systems and strictly regulate all others.

This workshop will provide an opportunity to assess the progress made since the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (Movement) called upon States to fully consider the potential humanitarian impact of autonomous weapon systems in Resolution 7 of the 2013 Council of Delegates, as well as an opportunity to consider the potential development of a Movement position.

The Movement has an opportunity to bring a strengthened humanitarian voice to multilateral efforts by States to address the risks posed by autonomous weapon systems, including within the framework of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons.

Overall objective and expected outcomes

The objective of the workshop is, first, to exchange ideas and experience on ways of effectively mobilizing States to address the humanitarian concerns raised by autonomous weapon systems in a timely manner, taking into account the ICRC's 2021 recommendations to States to adopt new legally binding rules, and second, to raise all Movement components' awareness in this respect. The expected outcomes are to have further mobilized National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to urge their governments to take action on autonomous weapon systems, and to have gathered views on the potential development of a Movement position.

Key questions to be considered

1. What is the current status and possible evolution of international efforts by States to address the humanitarian, legal and ethical concerns raised by autonomous weapon systems?
2. What rationale can be used to urge States to adopt new legally binding rules to regulate autonomous weapon systems?
3. What experiences have National Societies had in trying to mobilize States to take action?
4. How can the Movement help address the humanitarian concerns raised by autonomous weapon systems?

Supporting documents, resources or graphics

- *ICRC Position on Autonomous Weapon Systems: Position and Background Paper*, 12 May 2021: <https://shop.icrc.org/icrc-position-on-autonomous-weapon-systems-pdf-en> (Available via dropdown menu in: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, and Spanish)
- Council of Delegates, Resolution 7, “Weapons and international humanitarian law” (CD/13/R7), 2013: <https://shop.icrc.org/resolutions-of-the-2013-council-of-delegates-pdf-en> (Available via dropdown menu in: Arabic, English, French and Spanish)