

Statement on Ethical Considerations with regard to LAWS

The International Panel on the Regulation of Autonomous Weapons (Twitter @iPRAW_org) delivered by Elisabeth Hoffberger-Pippan (Twitter @ehoffbergerp) on October 1st, 2021

Thank you, Chair, for giving me the floor.

The use of autonomous weapon systems raises a number of different legal, military, technical and also ethical questions. There are at least two ways to approach ethical considerations with regard to autonomous weapons systems. It is arguable – as some delegations have already raised – that autonomy in weapon systems may render weapon systems more accurate and more precise and may thus decrease the likelihood of civilian casualties. This, rather utilitarian approach stands in contrast to a non-consequentialist approach raising the question of whether – irrespective of the concrete consequences – life and death decisions should really be transferred to machines.

Human dignity, as an emanation of ethical considerations, and the fact that humans shall not be reduced to mere data objects is not only a moral question but is also reflected, *inter alia*, in Article 1 of the German Basic Law, which in further consequence has also influenced various international human rights documents. This shows clearly that moral considerations and legal obligations are profoundly interlinked with each other.

Based on the work of Peter Asaro and Christof Heyns, iPRAW in its report on LAWS and ethical considerations of 2018, which can be found online at ipraw.org, defined a set of minimum requirements for human dignity in the use of force as the ability to

- a) recognize a human being as a human, not just distinguish it from other types of objects and things but as a being with rights that deserve respect;
- b) understand the value of life and the significance of its loss; and
- c) reflect upon the reasons for taking life and reach a rational conclusion that killing is justified in a particular situation.

These aspects should be taken into consideration when analyzing in which way ethical considerations play a role in case LAWS are developed or deployed.

Thank you, Chair.