

POSITION PAPER

Country: Canada

Committee: United Nations Security Council (UNSC)



Agenda: Addressing the Proliferation and Militarization of Autonomous Weapons Systems (AWS) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Armed Conflict

Canada recognizes that the rapid evolution of artificial intelligence (AI) is fundamentally transforming the landscape of global security and the character of warfare, as established in **The Department of National Defence (DND) and Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) Artificial Intelligence Strategy (March 2024)**. The international community faces a "**drastic compression**" of technological adoption—where technologies like ChatGPT reached 100 million users in just two months compared to the 50 years required for the electric grid—which demands an urgent and proactive multilateral response, according to the **9753rd meeting of the Security Council (S/PV.9753)**. While Canada is committed to positioning itself as an **AI-enabled military organization by 2030**, our strategy is anchored in the non-negotiable principle that **armed conflict must remain a human enterprise**, as stated in **Canada's Submission to the Report of the Secretary-General on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (A/79/88)**.

I. Strategic Integration and Human Oversight

Canada's approach to the militarization of AI is defined by five lines of effort to ensure technology improves military work without replacing the necessary human element, as outlined in **The DND/CAF Artificial Intelligence Strategy (March 2024)**. We maintain that technology should improve the work of military personnel rather than replace it, ensuring that **humans remain at the forefront of significant decisions**, particularly regarding the use of lethal force, as emphasized in the **Minister of National Defence Remarks at the Responsible AI in the Military domain (REAIM) Summit 2024**. For Canada, compliance with **International Humanitarian Law (IHL)** requires "meaningful human involvement," which we define as encompassing both **human judgment and human control** throughout the entire life cycle of a weapons system, as detailed in **Canada's Submission to the Report of the Secretary-General (A/79/88)**. Canada remains **opposed to "fully autonomous" weapons systems** because removing human involvement from critical decision-making functions makes responsibility and accountability impossible to trace, as noted in **Canada's Submission to the UN Secretary-General (A/79/88)**.

II. The Two-Track Regulatory Framework

Consistent with the evolving international consensus, Canada supports a **two-track approach** to governance:

- **Prohibition:** Canada advocates for the **prohibition of weapons systems that are inherently indiscriminate** or otherwise incapable of being used in compliance with IHL, as argued in **Canada's Submission to the Report of the Secretary-General (A/79/88)**. This includes systems that operate completely outside of a responsible human chain of command, a position supported by 115 states as of 2024, according to **Geopolitics and the Regulation of Autonomous Weapons Systems**.
- **Regulation:** For systems featuring autonomous functions that *can* be used lawfully, Canada supports strict regulations to ensure trustworthiness, including **temporal and spatial limits** and restrictions on target types, as proposed in **Canada's Submission to the Report of the**

Secretary-General (A/79/88). Canada fulfills its obligations by conducting **national Article 36 legal reviews** of all new weapons throughout their entire life cycle to ensure they meet the standards of the Geneva Conventions, as established in **Line of Effort 3: Ethics, Safety, and Trust**.

III. Ethics, Safety, and Mitigating Algorithmic Bias

A cornerstone of Canadian policy is the integration of **Ethics, Safety, and Trust** into the AI life cycle to ensure solutions do not create harms resulting from algorithmic or data bias, as established in **Line of Effort 3: Ethics, Safety, and Trust**. Canada is deeply concerned by the potential for **intended or unintended biases**—including those related to gender and race—in AI programming, as stated in **Canada's Submission to the Report of the Secretary-General (A/79/88)**. Historical data shows that biased AI systems have exhibited **gender bias in 44.2% of cases** and combined racial and gender biases in 25.7% of cases, reinforcing the risks in conflict zones where **one in six children** already live in armed conflict, according to **A/79/88**. Consequently, Canada mandates the use of **Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA Plus)** throughout the AI lifecycle, a requirement reinforced by the **Minister of Foreign Affairs Mandate Letter (2019)**. Canada specifically warns that fully autonomous systems may be inconsistent with the **Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda**, as noted in **"Because We Take Our Values to War"** (*Chicago Journal of International Law*).

IV. Proposed Solutions and Actionable Measures

The delegation of Canada proposes the following measures for international adoption:

1. **Mandatory Article 36 Legal Reviews:** Encouraging all states to conduct rigorous national legal reviews of all new weapons, means, or methods of warfare, as supported in **Canada's Submission to the Report of the Secretary-General (A/79/88)**.
2. **Establishment of Traceability Protocols:** Requiring that all AI-augmented tasks be justified, documented, and made **traceable and explainable** to ensure human accountability for every use of force, as detailed in **Line of Effort 3: Ethics, Safety, and Trust**.
3. **Adoption of the REAIM Blueprint:** Urging states to endorse the **Responsible AI in the Military Domain (REAIM) Blueprint for Action** to foster international collaboration on ethical military AI, as Canada has done.
4. **Strengthening Multilateral Forums:** Reaffirming the **Group of Governmental Experts (GGE)** as the central forum for negotiating a consensus-based instrument while utilizing the **UN General Assembly** for inclusive dialogue, as stated in **Canada's Submission to the UN Secretary-General (A/79/88)**.
5. **Data Governance Standards:** Establishing clear guidelines for **responsible data management** to prevent the amplification of social biases in targeting systems, as recommended in **A/80/78** and supported by **Line of Effort 3**.

By prioritizing **meaningful human involvement** and inclusive dialogue, the international community can ensure that technological innovation serves humankind's highest ideals rather than dehumanizing conflict.

Official Document Sources Mentioned:

- *The Department of National Defence and Canadian Armed Forces Artificial Intelligence Strategy (March 2024)*

- *Canada's Submission to the Report of the Secretary-General on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (A/79/88)*
- *Minister of National Defence Remarks at the Responsible AI in the Military domain (REAIM) Summit 2024*
- *Line of Effort 3: Ethics, Safety, and Trust - Canada.ca*
- *9753rd Meeting of the Security Council (S/PV.9753)*
- *UN General Assembly Resolutions 78/241, 79/62, and 80/57*
- *"Because We Take Our Values to War" - Chicago Journal of International Law*