
Committee: The United Nations Security Council (UNSC)

Country: The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

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

I. Background

The rapid development of Autonomous Weapons Systems (AWS) (platforms capable of independently identifying, selecting, and engaging targets with minimal human intervention) constitutes one of the most consequential security challenges of the 21st century. The proliferation of these technologies, including their potential transfer to terrorist organisations and non-state armed groups, threatens to destabilise fragile regions and endanger civilian populations well beyond active conflict zones. Yet the international community presently lacks a coherent regulatory architecture to govern them: no globally agreed taxonomy distinguishes varying degrees of autonomy; no binding standard defines "meaningful human control"; no independent review mechanism evaluates military AI systems; and no non-proliferation regime prevents advanced autonomous capabilities from reaching malign actors. Any premature or unilateral prohibition risks regulatory fragmentation that would neither improve humanitarian protection nor preserve strategic stability.

II. Saudi Arabia's Position

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia approaches the regulation of AWS and military AI from both principled conviction and direct operational experience. Having sustained repeated hostile autonomous-weapon attacks (most notably the September 2019 Abqaiq-Khuras strikes, one of the most consequential autonomous drone and cruise-missile attack on civilian infrastructure in modern history) the Kingdom understands, at first hand, the humanitarian and economic devastation that unregulated proliferation can inflict.

Saudi Arabia firmly rejects both extremes of the regulatory debate. An outright ban on autonomous weapons technologies would suppress legitimate national defence capabilities and cede strategic advantage to states and non-state actors unwilling to comply. Equally, the absence of any governance framework invites systemic abuse and humanitarian harm. The Kingdom accordingly advocates a balanced, legally binding international framework that upholds accountability, transparency, and cybersecurity; ensures compliance with International Humanitarian Law (IHL); and respects the sovereign right of states to develop AI for legitimate defence purposes.

This position is grounded in domestic practice. Saudi Arabia's National Strategy for Data and Artificial Intelligence (NSDAI, 2020), administered by the Saudi Data and AI Authority (SDAIA), establishes ethical guidelines: emphasising accountability, transparency, and human oversight, directly applicable to the military domain. Royal Decree M/117 (2020) criminalises unauthorised unmanned-aerial-vehicle operations, designates protected no-fly zones, and authorises proportionate counter-drone measures for the defence of civilian and critical national infrastructure. By 2030, AI is projected to contribute approximately USD 135.2 billion to Saudi GDP (12.4%), reflecting the Kingdom's deep strategic investment in responsible AI governance.

III. Proposed Solutions

A. Governance & Legal Framework

- Support continued, consensus-based multilateral negotiations within the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) Group of Governmental Experts on LAWS, with a view to adopting a legally binding instrument that establishes minimum standards for meaningful human control over lethal force.

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- Develop a universally agreed taxonomy of autonomous and semi-autonomous systems, incorporating algorithmic transparency requirements, mandatory pre-deployment weapons reviews under Article 36 of Additional Protocol I, and post-deployment auditability and accountability mechanisms.
 - Establish a non-proliferation sub-regime within the CCW framework to prevent the transfer of advanced military AI capabilities to non-state actors and terrorist organisations.

B. Transparency & Confidence-Building

- Create a voluntary UN transparency registry for national AWS programmes and targeting doctrine, modelled on the Arms Trade Treaty reporting framework, with a pathway toward mandatory reporting.
- Institutionalise regular, structured bilateral and multilateral confidence-building dialogues among AWS-developing states to mitigate the risk of AI-enabled miscalculation and inadvertent escalation.

C. Capacity Building & Technical Assistance

- Establish UN-led capacity-building programmes, administered through the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), to assist developing and middle-income states in conducting Article 36 weapons reviews and implementing national AI governance frameworks.
- Create a dedicated UN Trust Fund for AWS Governance and Capacity Building, financed by voluntary contributions, to support treaty implementation, technical research, and equitable access to regulatory expertise to prevent dangerous technological asymmetries between advanced and developing militaries.

D. International Partnerships

- Forge a formal partnership between the United Nations, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and leading academic and technical institutions to develop authoritative operational guidance on applying IHL principles (in particular distinction, proportionality, and precaution) to autonomous targeting systems.

IV. Conclusion

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is committed to a multilateral, rules-based approach to the governance of autonomous weapons and military artificial intelligence. The delegation calls upon all Member States to engage constructively within the CCW framework to develop a legally binding instrument that preserves human accountability over lethal force, prevents proliferation to non-state actors, and ensures that the benefits of AI can be harnessed for international peace and security. Saudi Arabia stands ready to serve as a constructive partner in designing governance solutions that are technologically realistic, legally rigorous, and universally applicable.