

# VVPMUN'23 Background Guide The Disarmament and International Security Committee (DISEC)

## Letter from The Executive Board

Dear Delegates,

We hope this letter finds you in good health and high spirits. We are pleased to extend a warm welcome each of as you join the Disarmament and International Security Committee (DISEC) for the upcoming session of the United Nations General Assembly. We are eager to engage with you on some of the most critical issues that currently shape our global landscape. As you may know, DISEC is primarily focused on issues related to disarmament and international security. This year, we will be delving into topics such as

Autonomous Weapon Systems (AWS) and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. These are not just topics for academic debate; they are real-world issues that require our immediate attention and thoughtful solutions. Our primary objective is to foster a constructive dialogue that leads to actionable resolutions.

We aim to create an environment where each delegate feels empowered share their perspectives and collaborate on effective solutions. We are committed to ensuring that this committee serves as a platform for meaningful discussion and impactful decision-making. We expect each delegate to come prepared, having thoroughly researched their respective country's stance on the agenda topics. Your active participation is crucial for the success of this committee. We are looking forward to the unique insights that each of you will bring to the table. We Are Excited about the potential for significant contributions from this committee. Together, we can address the challenges that lie ahead and work towards a more secure and peaceful world. Thank you for your commitment to these important issues. We look forward to working closely with each of you.

Sincerely,

Mithun-Co Chairperson

Darsheel-Co Chairperson



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# Introduction to the DISEC

## Overview and Purpose

The Disarmament and International Security Committee (DISEC), also known as the First Committee, is one of the six main committees at the United Nations General Assembly. Created in 1945 when the United Nations Charter was signed, DISEC is often referred to as the First Committee. Its primary focus is on disarmament and international security matters. The committee's purpose is to establish general principles of cooperation in the maintenance of international peace and security, including principles governing disarmament and the regulation of armaments. DISEC discusses peace and security issues among members of the international community and seeks to find solutions to global challenges and threats to peace ([source](#)).

## Mandate

DISEC's mandate is broad and encompasses a range of issues related to disarmament challenges, global security, and threats to international peace. While it cannot directly advise the Security Council's decision-making process, it can make recommendations to the Members or to the Security Council. The committee addresses issues such as nuclear disarmament, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and the regulation of conventional arms ([source](#)).

## Member States

All 193 member states of the United Nations are members of DISEC, and they meet annually in October. The committee has two main bodies that report to it: the Disarmament Commission (UNDC) and the Conference on Disarmament (CD). These bodies help in shaping the discussions and resolutions that DISEC adopts ([source](#)).

## History of DISEC

The history of DISEC is deeply intertwined with the history of the United Nations itself. Created as the first of the Main Committees in the General Assembly when the United Nations Charter was signed in 1945, DISEC has been at the forefront of discussions related to disarmament and international security. The very first General Assembly resolution, entitled "Establishment of a Commission to Deal with the Problems Raised by the Discovery of Atomic Energy," was adopted by DISEC, highlighting its historical significance ([source](#)).

## Past Resolutions on AWS and LAWS

DISEC has been actively involved in discussions about Autonomous Weapon Systems (AWS) and Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS). The committee has passed several resolutions aimed at regulating these technologies,

emphasizing the need for human oversight and compliance with international humanitarian law. These resolutions often serve as the basis for further international negotiations and agreements ([source](#)).

## Interesting Facts

- DISEC was the first committee established under the United Nations General Assembly.
- The committee has been instrumental in shaping global norms around disarmament and international security.
- It has a broad mandate but cannot directly influence the Security Council, highlighting the checks and balances within the UN system.

DISEC plays a crucial role in addressing disarmament challenges, promoting international security, and maintaining peace among nations. It serves as a vital platform for member states to discuss and negotiate matters of global importance, thereby contributing to the maintenance of international peace and security.

## Autonomous Weapon Systems (AWS)

AWS are weapon systems that have the capability to operate autonomously, meaning they can select and engage targets without human intervention. The United Nations has been at the forefront of discussions regarding the regulation and ethical implications of AWS. While there is no universally accepted definition, the UN describes an AWS as any weapon system with autonomy in its critical functions. The rise of AWS has led to debates about their compliance with international humanitarian law, ethical considerations, and the potential for misuse. The UN's Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) has been actively involved in these discussions, particularly through the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW).

## Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS)

LAWS are a subset of AWS capable of causing death or significant harm. They can operate without human involvement in the selection and engagement of targets. The UN states that there is currently no internationally recognized definition for LAWS. This lack of definition adds complexity to the regulatory landscape, making it a subject of ongoing debate within the UN's Group of Governmental Experts on LAWS.

## Critical Functions

The critical functions of an AWS include the selection and engagement of targets. These functions operate autonomously, meaning without human intervention. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) also defines autonomous weapon systems as any weapons that select and apply force to targets without human intervention ([ICRC](#)).

## Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW)

The CCW serves as the primary forum for discussing emerging technologies like AWS. It aims to strike a balance between humanitarian principles and military necessity. The CCW has been instrumental in bringing together states to discuss the legal and ethical implications of AWS and LAWS. It has also been a platform for the UN's efforts to regulate these technologies ([UNODA](#)).

## Accountability

Accountability in the context of AWS refers to the challenge of determining who or what is responsible when lethal force is used improperly. The UN has been vocal about the need for clear accountability mechanisms to ensure that AWS are used responsibly and ethically. The issue of accountability is closely tied to the broader legal and ethical concerns surrounding AWS ([UNODA](#)).

## Humanitarian Risks

AWS pose significant humanitarian risks, particularly their ability to distinguish between combatants and non-combatants. The UN has emphasized the need for AWS to comply with international humanitarian law, which includes the principle of distinction. The ICRC also highlights these concerns, stating that AWS must be able to distinguish between combatants and civilians ([ICRC](#)).

## Legal Challenges

The legal challenges associated with AWS involve ensuring their compliance with international humanitarian law and other legal frameworks. The UN has been actively involved in discussions aimed at creating a normative and operational framework for AWS. These discussions often take place within the context of the CCW ([UNODA](#)).

## Ethical Concerns

The ethical concerns surrounding AWS involve the moral implications of delegating life-and-death decisions to machines. The UN has been a platform for discussing these ethical dilemmas, often within the framework of the CCW. The ethical concerns also tie into broader discussions about accountability and humanitarian risks ([UNODA](#)).

## Lowering the Threshold for Armed Conflict

The potential for AWS to lower the threshold for initiating armed conflicts is a growing concern. The ease of deploying these systems could lead to escalated conflicts and unintended consequences. The UN has highlighted this issue as part of its broader discussions on the implications of AWS.

## Implications on the Laws of War

- Compliance with International Humanitarian Law (IHL): The core principles of IHL, such as distinction, proportionality, and military necessity, are designed to minimize harm during armed conflicts. AWS, however, raise concerns about their ability to make nuanced judgments in complex combat situations. For instance, can an AWS differentiate between an armed combatant and a civilian holding a similar object? The ICRC and other international bodies are actively engaged in discussions to address these issues.
- Responsibility and Accountability: The absence of a human operator in the decision-making process of AWS creates a legal and ethical dilemma. If an AWS mistakenly targets civilians, who is to be held accountable? Is it the programmer, the operator, or the state that deployed the system? This ethical conundrum is a subject of ongoing debate.
- Human Control: The principle of human control over the use of force is a cornerstone of the laws of war. AWS challenge this principle by potentially making life-or-death decisions autonomously. The question arises: can these systems ever be programmed to adhere to the ethical and legal constraints that human soldiers are expected to follow?
- Protection of Civilians: AWS's potential inability to distinguish between combatants and civilians is a significant concern. The Arms Control Association highlights that AWS could inadvertently target schools, hospitals, or other civilian structures, violating the principle of distinction.
- Prevention of Unnecessary Suffering: AWS may lack the ability to assess the level of force required in a given situation, potentially leading to disproportionate responses. This raises concerns about their ability to prevent unnecessary suffering.
- Escalation and De-escalation: One of the less-discussed aspects is the potential for AWS to escalate conflicts. Their deployment could lower the threshold for initiating military action, as the risk to human soldiers is reduced. This could lead to unintended and uncontrollable escalations.
- Transparency and Public Scrutiny: The use of AWS in warfare could be shrouded in secrecy, making public oversight and scrutiny challenging. Transparency is essential for democratic societies, especially when it comes to the use of lethal force.
- International Arms Race: The development of AWS by one nation could trigger an international arms race. Countries may rush to develop or acquire similar technologies, potentially leading to destabilization and a breakdown of international security norms.
- Legal Precedents and Frameworks: The advent of AWS necessitates the creation of new legal frameworks or the adaptation of existing ones. International bodies are grappling with how to incorporate these new technologies into existing laws of war.



- Ethical Training and Machine Learning: As machine learning algorithms can be part of AWS, there's a question of how to instill ethical considerations into these algorithms. Can a machine be trained to understand the complexities of human ethics and international law?

Given the profound implications and challenges, international discussions and regulations are more critical than ever. These aim to establish guidelines that ensure the responsible and ethical use of AWS in warfare.

## Laws and Legal Recommendations Relating to the Usage of Autonomous Weapons Systems in Combat

- International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and AWS: A comprehensive document from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) delves into the legal perspectives surrounding Autonomous Weapon Systems (AWS) under International Humanitarian Law (IHL). The document critically examines the ethical and legal issues raised by AWS, such as the principle of distinction and proportionality, and their implications for compliance with IHL.
- UNODA's Draft Articles: The United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) has released draft articles that focus on the prohibitions and other regulatory measures concerning AWS. These articles are grounded in International Humanitarian Law and aim to guide the development, deployment, and usage of AWS in a manner that is ethically and legally sound.
- 2023 CCW Group's Contributions: A collection of documents from the 2023 Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) Group of Governmental Experts includes draft articles and regulatory measures based on IHL. These documents serve as a foundational framework for international discussions on the legal aspects of AWS and Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS).
- ICRC's New Rules: An article from the ICRC emphasizes the organization's recommendation for states to adopt new, legally binding rules to regulate AWS. The focus is on ensuring that there is sufficient human control over these weapon systems to comply with ethical and legal standards.
- European Human Rights Law and LAWS: A document that discusses the emergence of LAWS through the lens of European human rights law addresses the legal requirements in the laws of war. It provides a European perspective on how LAWS should be regulated to ensure they are in compliance with human rights standards and international law.

These legal documents and articles offer invaluable insights and proposals for addressing the complex ethical and legal concerns related to AWS and LAWS. They contribute significantly to ongoing international discussions aimed at

establishing comprehensive regulations and guidelines for the responsible development and deployment of these advanced weapon systems.

## PROPOSED SOLUTIONS FOR REGULATING AUTONOMOUS WEAPON SYSTEMS

### International Proposals

- Developing New International Law: The Future of Life Institute (FLI) advocates for the creation of new international laws specifically targeting autonomous weapons. They argue for a ban on certain types of autonomous weapons, particularly those that target humans, are highly unpredictable, or operate beyond meaningful human control. The Red Cross also supports this stance, calling for regulation of other autonomous weapons that can be controlled by humans. [Source](#)
- Establishing Binding Rules: The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) recommends that states adopt new, legally binding rules to regulate autonomous weapon systems. The aim is to ensure that sufficient human control and judgment are retained in the use of force. [Source](#)
- Ensuring Compliance with International Humanitarian Law (IHL): The ICRC emphasizes that autonomous weapon systems must operate within the legal and ethical constraints of IHL, adhering to principles such as distinction, proportionality, and military necessity. [Source](#)
- Encouraging Transparency and Public Debate: Open discussions involving experts, policymakers, and the general public can foster a comprehensive understanding of the ethical implications of autonomous weapon systems. [Source](#)
- Establishing Mechanisms for Accountability: Frameworks need to be developed to attribute responsibility and ensure consequences for any violations of ethical and legal standards. [Source](#)
- Promoting Human Control: Guidelines and regulations should be developed to ensure meaningful human control over the deployment and use of autonomous weapon systems. [Source](#)

### Proposals by Countries and the UN

- Legally Binding Instrument: In his 2023 New Agenda for Peace, the UN Secretary-General recommended that states conclude a legally binding instrument to prohibit lethal autonomous weapon systems that function without human control by 2026.
- Group of Governmental Experts (GGE): The United Nations Convention on Conventional Weapons (CCW) has been the primary forum for discussing lethal autonomous weapons systems (LAWS). The CCW's GGE on Lethal Autonomous Weapons has been debating these issues since 2014.

- Country Positions: Since 2013, 97 countries have publicly elaborated their views on fully autonomous weapons in multilateral forums. They have expressed a wide array of concerns and generally agree that a legally binding instrument is the optimal framework for addressing these challenges. [Source](#)
- Internationally Agreed Limits: A report by the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots advocates for "establishing internationally agreed limits on lethal autonomous weapons systems."
- Applying Arms-Control Frameworks: Existing arms-control regimes could serve as models for governing autonomous weapons. Even if autonomous weapons are banned in whole or in part, governments must consider how to prevent their inadvertent export to states not party to the ban. [Source](#)

These proposals aim to guide the development and use of autonomous weapon systems by principles of human control, adherence to international law, and respect for human dignity. Ongoing international discussions and regulations are being formulated to address these concerns and establish responsible guidelines.

## POSITIONS OF VARIOUS COUNTRIES ON THE USAGE AND REGULATION OF AUTONOMOUS WEAPONS SYSTEMS IN COMBAT

### United States

- Position: Generally supportive of the development and deployment of autonomous weapons systems.
- Rationale: The U.S. believes that these systems can enhance military capabilities, reduce risks to soldiers, and improve decision-making in combat scenarios.
- Regulatory Framework: The Department of Defense has issued Directive 3000.09, which provides guidelines for the development and use of autonomous systems.
- Public Opinion: Mixed; while there is support for technological advancements that can protect soldiers, there are ethical concerns about the lack of human intervention in decision-making.
- Source:
  - [U.S. Department of Defense Directive 3000.09](#)
  - [United Nations Meetings Coverage](#)

### European Union

- Position: Cautious and advocating for ethical considerations.
- Rationale: The EU is concerned about the ethical implications of autonomous weapons, including the potential for unintended civilian casualties.

- Regulatory Framework: The European Parliament has called for an international ban on "killer robots," although member states have their own policies.
- Public Opinion: Generally negative, with strong advocacy groups pushing for a complete ban on autonomous weapons.
- Source:
  - [European Parliament Resolution](#)

## Russia

- Position: Supportive of autonomous weapons but skeptical of international regulations.
- Rationale: Russia sees autonomous weapons as a means to modernize its military and compete with Western powers.
- Regulatory Framework: No specific regulations, but Russia has opposed UN initiatives aimed at banning autonomous weapons.
- Public Opinion: Limited public discourse, but generally supportive of military advancements.
- Source:
  - [Russia's stance at UN meetings](#)

## China

- Position: Ambiguous, showing both support and caution.
- Rationale: Initially, China called for a prohibition on autonomous weapons at the UN-CCW in 2016. However, in 2017, it issued the New Generation of AI Development Plan (AIDP), which supports the development of autonomous weapons.
- Regulatory Framework: The AIDP serves as the basis for China's development of autonomous weapons, contradicting its earlier stance at the UN.
- Public Opinion: Limited public information, but the government seems to be balancing technological advancement with ethical considerations.
- Source:
  - [China's Strategic Ambiguity on the Issue of Autonomous Weapons Systems](#)

## Israel

- Position: Supportive, with operational systems already in place.
- Rationale: Israel is a leader in the development of autonomous systems, primarily for defense and border security.
- Regulatory Framework: Israel has not publicly disclosed specific regulations but has operational systems like the Iron Dome.
- Public Opinion: Generally supportive due to the perceived benefits for national security.
- Source:

- Israel's use of Iron Dome

## India

- Position: Cautious but interested in development.
- Rationale: India sees potential military advantages but is also concerned about ethical and security implications.
- Regulatory Framework: No specific regulations, but India has participated in UN discussions on the subject.
- Public Opinion: Mixed; there is interest in technological advancement but also ethical concerns.
- Source:
  - India's participation in UN discussions

Each country's stance is shaped by a complex interplay of ethical considerations, military strategy, and geopolitical interests. The international community remains divided, and efforts to regulate autonomous weapons at the UN have so far been inconclusive.

## Sources and Citations

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- Online casebook - How does law protect in war?: Discusses legal protections in war concerning AWS.
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- UNODA - Draft articles: Draft articles on AWS based on international humanitarian law.
- Reaching Critical Will: Documents from the 2023 CCW Group on LAWS.
- UNODA - Background on LAWS in the CCW: Provides background information on LAWS within the framework of the CCW.



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