

[1] How does (a) the Political Declaration of Feb. 16, 2023 build upon and go beyond earlier US policy statements, particularly (b) the 2022 six-nation statement of "Principles and Good Practices on Emerging Technologies in the Area of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems" and (c) the 11 "Guiding Principles" agreed to by the Group of Government Experts (GGE) in 2019?

In particular, my understanding is all three documents emphasize human responsibility & accountability through a chain of command and compliance with existing international law throughout the life-cycle of a weapons system; but the Political Declaration broadens the focus to look at all military applications of artificial intelligence, not just LAWS, and it adds specific best practices such as senior-level review, auditability, safeguards against unintended behaviors, etc.

The Declaration is complementary to, but independent of the existing work going on at the Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS) Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) meetings. The U.S. will continue to promote our proposal on emerging technologies in the area of LAWS in the GGE. We see synergies between these two workstreams, but also key differences.

The Declaration differs from our LAWS GGE joint proposal in that it focuses on military use of AI and autonomy broadly (including but not limited to weapon systems). The LAWS GGE is focused on weapons and the use of such weapons in compliance with International Law, in particular International Humanitarian Law. However, the issue of military use of AI is broader than just the application of AI and autonomy in weapon systems and the Declaration is aimed at promoting responsible behavior in the development, deployment, and use of AI and autonomy in a military context more broadly. The Declaration builds on existing U.S. Defense Department policy and practice and consists of non-legally binding guidelines describing best practices for responsible use of AI in that broad military context.

[2] What is the US position on the communiqué issued by 33 nations attending the Latin American & Caribbean conference Feb. 23-24 in Costa Rica? In particular, does the State Department believe the 33 nations' call for "the urgent negotiation of an international legally binding instrument, with prohibitions and regulations with regard to autonomy in weapons systems" is helpful or counterproductive?

The United States continues to believe that it is not the right time to begin negotiating a legally binding instrument on LAWS. In the GGE, States appear to continue to have basic disagreements about the weapons systems we're talking about and basic disagreements about what the problem is that the GGE is trying to address.

In our view, it would not be responsible for the GGE to begin to negotiate a legally binding instrument with such fundamental divergences in our understandings and purposes. Rather than begin a negotiation that is likely to fail, we believe the GGE should make progress by clarifying how fundamental principles of international humanitarian law apply to the development and use of LAWS. There is important consensus that these principles apply and the GGE should elaborate upon that consensus by clarifying what IHL requires in this specific context.

Our joint proposal provides a foundation for that work, and this is the very work that would be necessary to responsibly develop a legally binding instrument, so we believe that states who seek a legally-binding instrument should support the Joint Proposal even if they only do so as an intermediate step towards the legally-binding instrument that they desire. As we have made clear before, the United States believes that it is important to proceed in a rigorous and methodical manner, and our proposal seeks to do just that. However, it should also be noted that our proposal can be implemented immediately to strengthen the implementation of IHL and promote responsible behavior with regard to emerging technologies in the area of LAWS.

As we prepare for this year's LAWS GGE sessions, we are considering how the principles and good practices reflected in our joint proposal could be further developed to help clarify the application of IHL and strengthen its implementation. We look forward to engaging with all delegations at the GGE in Geneva on the best path forward.

More broadly, and beyond just the specific context of the LAWS GGE, the United States also believes this is an important time for holding discussions and building consensus on how militaries can use AI technologies in ways that are responsible and respect international law.

To provide a foundation for this dialogue, we recently unveiled our "Political Declaration on Responsible Military Use of AI and Autonomy."

This Declaration consists of a series of non-legally binding guidelines describing best practices that militaries should follow to ensure that they are designing, developing, deploying, and using AI in responsible ways.

The aim of the Declaration is to promote responsible behavior, share lessons learned, and help guide states' development and deployment of military AI in ways that promote respect for international law.

The United States has committed to fulfilling all of these best practices and has developed and published policies describing how we are implementing them.

It will be important for states to back their public commitments on this issue with action. U.S. transparency on the principles and procedures it uses to develop and deploy AI for military purposes stands in stark contrast with the opaque policies of Russia and China.

We must work toward an international consensus promoting norms of responsible behavior for the military use of AI.

We look forward to further engaging other states and the broader international community to build this consensus.