

WILPF Statement

Thank you chair for giving us the opportunity to speak and we also thank the Austrian government for organising this conference. This is a statement from the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom the oldest feminist peace organisation in the world.

We believe autonomous weapon systems are not just material technologies. They also need to be understood within the wider context of power, violence, and militarism. To comprehensively address the risks and challenges posed by the possible development and deployment of these weapons, we need to think about how they are positioned within militarism more broadly. The sorting and categorising of people makes an intersectional perspective important—this is a perspective that considers the experience of people based on race, class, gender, sexual orientation, etc., and analyses the ways in which these social categorisations result in overlapping and independent oppressions and discrimination. Autonomous weapons, programmed with algorithms to determine “targets,” will inevitably be used to cause harm to people on the basis of their identities and locations. Autonomous weapons should also be considered in the context of the pursuit of “full spectrum dominance”—the idea that a state can have full awareness and control over individuals anywhere in the world, at any time. Domination through violence is inscribed both within autonomous weapon technology and within the framework of thought and policy that is leading to their development and potential deployment. Given the patriarchal world we currently live in, autonomous weapon systems will exacerbate discriminatory gender norms and be used to commit acts of gender-based violence. It is important to understand that patriarchy, racism, and other structural inequalities can be reproduced within weapon systems using artificial intelligence and autonomous features. While we work to prevent the development of autonomous weapons, we need to also stand against those who seek to develop them and the cultures of social ordering and othering that these forces perpetuate. All of this is essential for the pursuit not just of disarmament or demilitarisation, but to peace and justice more broadly. To be effective, we need to look beyond the “killer robot” itself and turn our eyes, and our efforts, against the systems of oppression and domination that seek its construction. We need to move the money from war to peace.