

KLE MUN 2025

Disarmament and International Security Committee (DISEC)



Background Guide

Agenda: The Militarization of Artificial Intelligence and Autonomous Weapons Systems

Table of Contents

Letter from the Executive Board.....	2
Introduction to DISEC.....	3
Introduction to the Agenda.....	4
Definition of Key Terms.....	6
Timeline of Key Events.....	7
Subtopics within the Agenda.....	9
6.1 Definitions, Classifications and Levels of Autonomy in Weapons Systems	
6.2 Legal and Ethical Challenges	
6.3 Accountability and Attributions of Responsibility	
6.4 Global Security and the Risk of an AI Arms Race	
6.5 Proliferation Risks and Dual-Use Technologies	
Analysis of the Current Situation in Developed and Developing States	11
Questions a Resolution Must Answer.....	12
References and Further Reading.....	14

Letter from the Executive Board

Dear Delegates,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the Disarmament and International Security Committee (DISEC), the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly, at KLE MUN 2025. I am honoured to serve as your Chair of this committee and to help guide our discussions on one of the most pressing discussions of our time: The Militarization of Artificial Intelligence and Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS).

In an era of technological advancement, the fusion of AI and warfare challenges the rules of combat and questions the very foundations of international peace and security. As nations invest heavily in developing autonomous military capabilities, we must ask: Where do we draw the line between innovation and accountability? How do we ensure that emerging technologies remain under human oversight? And most importantly, can our existing global frameworks adapt to these evolving threats?

This committee will push you to think deeply and debate rigorously. While this background guide will provide you a strong foundation, I expect you to go beyond it. Your success as a delegate depends on independent research, critical thinking, and a nuanced understanding of your assigned country's stance and national interests.

Please remember: you are not here to voice your personal views. You are representing a sovereign nation, its foreign policy, alliances, and diplomatic behavior. Make sure you understand these thoroughly and can defend them convincingly.

I encourage you to explore a wide range of reputable sources, including official government statements, UN documents, academic articles, and current affairs. The more informed you are, the more meaningful and productive your contributions will be.

If you have any questions or need guidance as you prepare, please feel free to reach out at siya.revanna@gmail.com. I'm here to support you and help make your MUN journey enriching and enjoyable.

I look forward to engaging with each of you and witnessing the impactful discussions you will lead.

Wishing you all the very best!

Warm regards,

Siya BR
Chair, DISEC
KLE MUN 2025

Introduction to DISEC

The Disarmament and International Security Committee (DISEC) is the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). It plays a central role in addressing the most pressing threats to international peace and security, particularly in the realms of disarmament, arms control, and global military tensions. DISEC also engages with emerging challenges posed by new technologies, including artificial intelligence, autonomous weapons, cyber warfare, and the militarization of outer space. It serves as a critical platform for dialogue, negotiation, and resolution-building on a wide array of international security issues.

DISEC operates under the mandate of the UN Charter to promote disarmament and reduce global threats through peaceful cooperation and consensus. Although the resolutions passed by DISEC are not legally binding, they hold significant diplomatic value and often shape international norms. These resolutions frequently lay the groundwork for future treaties, guide the work of specialized bodies such as the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), and reflect the evolving consensus of the international community on issues of war, peace, and technological change.

One of DISEC's defining features is its inclusivity and equal representation. As part of the General Assembly, it comprises all 193 UN Member States, each with one equal vote. This means that regardless of a country's military power, political influence, or economic standing, every nation has an equal opportunity to voice its concerns, express its position, and participate in shaping the outcome of the committee.

The committee's focus has traditionally centered on regulating weapons of mass destruction, such as nuclear, chemical, and biological arms, as well as conventional weapons including small arms and light weapons. However, in recent years, DISEC has expanded its attention to include the growing risks associated with technological innovation in warfare. Topics such as the development and deployment of lethal autonomous weapons systems (LAWS), artificial intelligence in combat, and cyber warfare have emerged as urgent and controversial issues requiring the attention of the international community.

Introduction to the Agenda

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is no longer a distant or futuristic concept. It already shapes many aspects of everyday life, from virtual assistants and navigation apps to medical diagnostics and industrial automation. In recent years AI has begun to play an increasingly significant role in military affairs. This integration of AI into military systems presents new challenges to international peace, security, and humanitarian law, particularly in the form of Autonomous Weapons Systems (AWS).

Artificial intelligence in military contexts refers to the capacity of machines to perform functions that would typically require human intelligence such as decision-making, pattern recognition, and target acquisition. Autonomous Weapons Systems, especially Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS), are military technologies that can identify, track, and engage targets without further human intervention once activated. These systems vary widely, from loitering munitions like Israel's Harpy drone and Russia's KUB-BLA, to experimental drone swarms and missile systems being developed in the United States. While many of these technologies offer enhanced speed, accuracy, and efficiency, they also raise critical questions about human control, legal responsibility, and ethical conduct in warfare.

Supporters of military AI argue that these systems could make warfare more precise, reduce mistakes, and limit harm to civilians. AI may also be faster at decision-making and more capable of handling dangerous tasks without risking soldiers' lives. Some believe it can improve compliance with international humanitarian law (IHL) by minimizing human error.

Weaponized AI technologies do not face the same barriers as human soldiers, allowing them to traverse all kinds of terrain and be utilized in all areas of typical warfare. Additionally, as artificial intelligence becomes more sophisticated, its ability to engage in atypical warfare, such as that in space and cyberspace, continuously increases.

However, the use of AI in weapons also raises serious challenges. One major concern is accountability: if an autonomous weapon breaks the law or causes unintended harm, who is responsible—the operator, the programmer, the manufacturer, or the government? These systems may act in unpredictable ways, especially if they use machine learning. This creates an "accountability gap" in existing laws of war, which were written with human decision-makers in mind.

Ethically, many worry that delegating life-and-death decisions to machines could dehumanize warfare. Autonomous weapons might struggle to interpret complex human behaviors like surrender or noncombatant status. There is also a risk of unintended escalation where machines act too quickly or misinterpret data, possibly starting or worsening a conflict before humans can intervene.

Another major issue is strategic stability. Since these weapons are cheaper and more accessible than nuclear arms, they could contribute to a new arms race, especially among major powers. If states rush to deploy AI systems without strong safeguards, it might lead to global instability. Non-state actors like terrorist groups could also gain access to commercial AI technologies and adapt them for violence, increasing the risk of asymmetric warfare.

Organizations like the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Human Rights Watch, and the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots have called for strong rules or outright bans. They argue that without “meaningful human control” over autonomous weapons, basic humanitarian values and human dignity could be at risk.

So far, there is no binding international treaty that regulates or bans fully autonomous weapons. The United Nations has been discussing the issue since 2014 under the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), but agreement has been difficult. Some countries want to ban these systems, while others do not and instead prefer regulation or rely on existing international law.

This agenda asks you to find a balance between innovation, national defense, and international peace. As representatives in DISEC, you are tasked with considering diverse national interests while upholding the principles of international law and humanitarian protection.

Definition of Key Terms

1. Artificial Intelligence (AI): The simulation of human intelligence processes by machines, especially computer systems. In the military context, AI is used for tasks such as data analysis, decision-making, targeting, and autonomous navigation.

2. Autonomous Weapons Systems (AWS): Weapons that can independently identify, select, and engage targets without human intervention once activated. Also referred to as "lethal autonomous weapons" or "killer robots."

3. Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS): A subset of AWS designed specifically to use force or kill without human oversight. These raise ethical, legal, and humanitarian concerns under international law.

4. Human-in-the-Loop: A model in which human operators retain full control over critical functions of a weapon system, such as target selection and engagement. This is often contrasted with semi- or fully autonomous systems.

5. Dual-Use Technology: Technologies that can serve both civilian and military purposes. AI, for instance, can be used in both medical diagnostics and missile guidance, making regulation more complex.

6. International Humanitarian Law (IHL): A set of rules that aim to limit the effects of armed conflict, protecting those who are not participating in hostilities and restricting the means and methods of warfare. Autonomous weapons must comply with IHL principles such as distinction, proportionality, and military necessity.

7. Target Discrimination: The ability of a weapon system to distinguish between combatants and non-combatants or between military objectives and civilian infrastructure which is a requirement under international law.

8. Accountability Gap: The legal and ethical dilemma surrounding who is held responsible when an autonomous weapon causes unlawful harm - the programmer, the commander, the government, the manufacturer, or the machine?

9. Arms Race: A competitive buildup of weapons technology between nations, often driven by the fear that rivals will gain a strategic advantage. The rise of AI in warfare has sparked concerns about a new global AI arms race.

Timeline of Key Events

Year	Event	Explanation
1954	Early Autonomous Concepts	Initial research into automated military systems, such as radar-guided weapons and missile defense systems.
1957	Sputnik Launch	Marked the beginning of the space race, which led to advancements in satellite and military navigation technologies.
1969	ARPANET Launched	Funded by the U.S. DoD, ARPANET was the precursor to the internet — foundational for AI command and control systems.
1980	Military Use of GPS Begins	GPS, developed by the U.S. military, became central to targeting and navigation in modern warfare.
1991	Persian Gulf War	Marked the debut of smart bombs, GPS-guided missiles, and early battlefield automation.
1999	Use of Drones in the Balkans	NATO deployed UAVs for surveillance and limited engagement during the Kosovo conflict.
2001	9/11 and Military Tech Surge	Led to rapid investment in surveillance, AI-enabled defense tech, and drone warfare.
2003	Iraq War and Modern Tech	Expansion of real-time battlefield data systems and advanced drone strikes.
2010	Stuxnet Cyberattack	First known use of malware (by U.S. & Israel) targeting physical infrastructure — Iran's nuclear program — via autonomous digital code.
2013	UN Special Rapporteur's Warning	Christof Heyns warned LAWS could violate international humanitarian law (HRW).
2014	UN CCW Begins LAWS Talks	Formal discussions began under the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (UN).
2018	Working Group of Experts Formed	Geneva meetings under the CCW to study legal, ethical, and technical frameworks for LAWS.

2020	No Consensus on LAWS Regulation	UN CCW meetings acknowledged lack of agreement on regulation or bans.
2024 (Aug)	UNSG's Call for Treaty	António Guterres urged a binding legal framework by 2026 to prevent machine-led warfare (Stop Killer Robots).
2024 (Nov 5)	DISEC Resolution on LAWS	The First Committee passed a resolution encouraging constraints and transparency in LAWS development (Reuters).
2024 (Dec 2)	UNGA Resolution Passed	The UN General Assembly passed a non-binding resolution supporting new international LAWS regulations (Stop Killer Robots).
2025 (May 12)	UN Talks on Killer Robots	First dedicated New York session on military AI and LAWS, referencing conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza (Reuters).

Subtopics within the Agenda

6.1 Definitions, Classifications, and Levels of Autonomy in Weapons Systems

Autonomous Weapons Systems (AWS) are military technologies that can operate without direct human control after activation. These systems range from automated weapons (which follow fixed rules) to semi-autonomous systems (where humans remain involved in critical decisions), and fully autonomous systems, which can identify, select, and engage targets entirely on their own. Countries define these differently, some consider combat drones or loitering munitions autonomous, while others apply stricter definitions. A widely discussed term is “meaningful human control”, which refers to keeping humans in charge of life-and-death decisions. However, no global agreement exists on what this means in practice, making it hard to regulate these weapons internationally (UNODA, 2021).

6.2 Ethical and Moral Implications of Delegating Lethal Decisions to Machines

Allowing machines to decide who lives or dies raises serious ethical questions. Human judgment, emotion, and accountability are central to decisions about using force. Machines lack empathy and cannot understand human context, such as surrender or suffering. This debate ties into the Martens Clause in international law, which protects basic human dignity even when specific legal rules are missing. Critics believe autonomous weapons could dehumanize war and lower the threshold for killing, while supporters argue that AI could reduce errors and save lives by being more accurate than humans in certain tasks. So far, no ethical consensus has been reached (ICRC, 2021; UNODA, 2021).

6.3 Accountability and Attribution of Responsibility

When an autonomous weapon makes a mistake or kills civilians unlawfully, it's unclear who should be held responsible. Is it the military commander, the software developer, the manufacturer, or the state that deployed it? This is known as the accountability gap. Traditional laws of war assume human decision-making and clear chains of command. But autonomous systems, especially those that use machine learning, can act in ways that even their creators don't fully understand. This makes it difficult to apply current legal systems like the Geneva Conventions or hold anyone criminally liable in international courts (UNIDIR, 2020).

6.4 Impact on Strategic Stability and Global Power Dynamics

The use of AI in weapons could change the balance of global military power. Countries like the United States, China, and Russia are already competing to develop faster and smarter autonomous systems. Unlike nuclear weapons, these systems are easier to produce and deploy quickly. This could lower the threshold for going to war, because countries may see these tools as safer or less costly than sending troops. It also increases the risk of misunderstandings and escalation—if one country mistakenly thinks it's under attack by an autonomous weapon, it may respond violently before checking facts. AI in warfare could therefore make global security less stable (SIPRI, 2023; UNODA, 2023).

6.5 Proliferation Risks and Dual-Use Technologies

Many AI tools used in autonomous weapons are dual-use, meaning they can be developed for civilian purposes but adapted for the military. For example, self-driving car technology or facial recognition software can be used to make guided missiles or surveillance drones. As these technologies become cheaper and more widely available, non-state actors (like terrorist groups or rebel militias) could gain access to them. Weak export controls and cybersecurity systems, especially in developing regions, make it harder to stop this spread. Regulating the use and sale of AI systems is now a major challenge in preventing misuse and illegal development of such weapons (SIPRI, 2021).

Analysis of the Current Situation in Developed and Developing States

The landscape of military AI and autonomous weapons is sharply divided between developed and developing states, not only in technological capacity but also in policy stance, ethical outlook, and strategic intent.

Developed States such as the United States, China, Russia, and members of the European Union are at the forefront of research, development, and deployment of AI-enabled military systems. These countries invest heavily in defense innovation, with programs like the U.S. Department of Defense's Project Maven and the UK's Autonomous Warrior trials integrating AI into surveillance, target identification, and combat operations. China's "military-civil fusion" strategy promotes the integration of commercial AI advances into military applications. Russia has tested unmanned combat vehicles like the Uran-9 and actively incorporates AI in cyber and electronic warfare.

Despite technical leadership, developed nations remain divided on regulation. The U.S. and Russia oppose preemptive bans, favoring governance under existing international law, while countries like Germany and Austria support new legally binding instruments. Concerns over strategic advantage, verification challenges, and geopolitical rivalry often stall progress on consensus.

Developing States, on the other hand, typically lack the resources to develop LAWS independently but are increasingly impacted by their global proliferation. While some nations like India, Brazil, and South Africa are building limited AI capacities for defense, the majority of states in Africa, Latin America, and Southeast Asia emphasize precautionary regulation. These countries often highlight the humanitarian risks and the potential for unequal power dynamics. There is growing fear that LAWS could be deployed in low-capacity regions without accountability or used in asymmetric warfare where technological imbalance deepens instability.

Many developing nations also raise concerns about AI systems being trained on datasets biased against their populations, or being tested in their territories without consent, further exacerbating distrust.

Questions A Resolution Must Answer (QARMA)

1. How should Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS) be formally defined in international terms?
2. What constitutes “meaningful human control,” and how should it be operationalized?
3. Do current international laws (e.g., International Humanitarian Law, Geneva Conventions) adequately regulate LAWS, or is new legal architecture required?
4. What mechanisms should be established to assign accountability in cases where autonomous weapons cause unlawful harm or violate human rights?
5. Should the international community pursue a complete ban, a partial restriction, or the regulation of LAWS?
6. What categories of autonomous weapons, if any, should be prohibited or exempt (e.g., defensive systems, non-lethal systems)?
7. What transparency and verification mechanisms should be implemented to monitor the development, testing, and deployment of LAWS?
8. Should an international registry or reporting system for autonomous weapons be established?
9. How can the proliferation of LAWS to non-state actors, terrorist groups, or unauthorized users be prevented?
10. What steps should be taken to safeguard AI technology from being weaponized outside of regulated channels?
11. Should there be international guidelines for ethical research and development of military AI?
12. How can dual-use technologies (civilian + military AI) be regulated without stifling innovation?
13. Should a new legally binding international treaty be negotiated, or should the existing Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) be strengthened?

14. What role should DISEC, the UN General Assembly, or a new specialized body play in enforcing or reviewing compliance?
15. What support (technical, legal, financial) should be given to developing countries to ensure they are not excluded from shaping or complying with LAWS governance?
16. How can equity and technological sovereignty be protected in a global framework?

References and Further Reading

United Nations. (1945). *Charter of the United Nations.*

United Nations. *First Committee of the UNGA (Disarmament and International Security).*

United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. (2021). *The impact of artificial intelligence on disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control.*

United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. (2023). *Report on developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security.*

United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research. (2019). *The UN First Committee and the development of disarmament norms.*

United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research. (2020). *The accountability gap on autonomous weapons: A challenge for international law.*

International Committee of the Red Cross. (2021). *Autonomous weapon systems and international humanitarian law: ICRC position paper.*

Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. (2020). *Artificial intelligence, strategic stability and nuclear risk.*

Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. (2021). *Artificial intelligence, strategic stability and nuclear risk: Euro-Atlantic perspectives.*

Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. (2023). *Trends in world military expenditure, 2023.*

Campaign to Stop Killer Robots. *UN General Assembly action on killer robots.*

Future of Life Institute. *Lethal Autonomous Weapons Pledge & Research on AI in Warfare.*

Human Rights Watch. *Heed the Call: A Moral and Legal Imperative to Ban Killer Robots.*

RAND Corporation. *The Role of AI in Future Military Operations.*

Oxford Institute for Ethics, Law and Armed Conflict. *Meaningful Human Control: Challenges and Proposals.*

Chatham House. *Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Warfare.*

Center for a New American Security (CNAS). *AI and the Future of Conflict.*