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Yeshiva University National Model UN

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Disarmament and International Security Committee (DISEC)

Topic 2: Accountability and Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS)

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Every legal system constructed rests on the presumption of free choice and its consequences. A soldier fires, a commander orders, a government authorizes, so when something goes wrong, the law knows where to look. Lethal autonomous weapons laws (LAWS) challenge such assumptions. When a machine can select and attack a target on its own, it becomes much harder to determine who decided, and therefore, who is responsible.

By definition, LAWS are weapons that, once activated, can find and attack targets without a human approving each strike. Autonomy comes in degrees, from systems where a human approves every attack to systems where no human is involved once they are running. States disagree about which of these count as LAWS, and that disagreement shapes the whole debate. Supporters point to speed and reduced risk for soldiers. Even further, it prevents potential harm to soldiers' mental health when targeting other human beings. Even though war generally calls for and justifies killing the enemy, the results can negatively impact those soldiers beyond the action itself. But critics warn that machines may misidentify civilians as combatants and that delegating life-and-death decisions to software is a moral problem in itself.

International humanitarian law applies in war, but it was written for human decision-makers. If an autonomous weapon unlawfully harms civilians, responsibility could fall on the programmer, the manufacturer, the commander, or the State. Each option has weaknesses, and in some cases no one may be held accountable.

On December 1st, 2025, UNGA adopted resolution A/RES/80/57 on LAWS by a vote of 164 to 6, with 7 abstentions. It points towards a two-tier approach: prohibit some autonomous weapons and regulate others.[1] The main negotiating forum is the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) under the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW). Its June 2026 working

[1] United Nations General Assembly, *Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems*, A/RES/80/57 (adopted 1 December 2025; vote 164-6-7), https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4095989.

text states that humans must remain accountable for decisions involving LAWS, since responsibility cannot be transferred to a machine. It also says users should be able to limit a system's effects and deactivate it on time, and that States should guard against automation bias, meaning overtrusting a machine's output.[2] The GGE has now finished its mandate, and its final report goes to the CCW's Seventh Review Conference, scheduled for November 16-20th. [3] I would highly recommend checking its outcome before we convene.

To clarify, States differ on scope (only fully autonomous weapons, or also partly autonomous ones), on form (a binding treaty, a two-tier approach, or existing law), and on how detailed the rules should be. Countries with advanced militaries tend to favor flexibility, while others push for firm limits.

Questions to guide your research:

1. Does your country support a binding treaty, a two-tier approach, or existing law? How does it define LAWS?
2. Who should be held responsible when an autonomous weapon causes unlawful harm?
3. What does "meaningful human control" require, and how could it be verified?
4. Beyond a treaty, which steps deserve priority: weapons reviews, transparency, export controls, or testing standards?

Keep in mind that these questions are meant to guide your preparation, not limit it. A few important reminders:

1. You are representing your country's position, not your personal views (though I'd be glad to hear your own perspectives outside of session!).
2. Use reliable, credible sources to support your research.

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[2] CCW Group of Governmental Experts on LAWS, *Rolling Text*, status date 5 June 2026, UNODA, https://docs-library.unoda.org/Convention_on_Certain_Conventional_Weapons_-_Group_of_Governmental_Experts_on_Lethal_Autonomous_Weapons_Systems_(2026)/GGE_LAWS_-_Rolling_Text_-_5_June_2026.pdf.

[3] "Symposium on the CCW GGE LAWS: Obstacles Avoided? Rolling Towards Consensus for the 2026 GGE LAWS Report," *Opinio Juris*, 9 October 2026, http://opiniojuris.org/2026/10/09/symposium-on-the-ccw-gge-laws-obstacles-avoided-rolling-towards-consensus-for-the-2026-gge-laws-report/.

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3. When drafting your position papers, you must follow YUNMUN's updated AI policy: UG 1, Polish, with disclosure.

If you have any questions, comments, or concerns as we approach the conference, please don't hesitate to reach out. I would be so happy to help in any way, or even if you just want to introduce yourself; I would also love to hear from you! You may reach me at afried21@mail.yu.edu.

I am very much looking forward to hearing all of your creative ideas and meeting all of you in person at the conference! Let's make it the best one yet.

Warmest regards,
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