Spring 2025
Iowa High School Model United Nations
Disarmament
Topic: What international frameworks and policies can the UN develop to prevent fully AI-based weapons and better ensure the peaceful use of artificial intelligence?
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Background:

Artificial Intelligence, (AI), has become very overpowering and universal in our daily lives. The use of AI in military technology is becoming an international issue as countries continue to develop advanced self-sufficient weapons. Robotic weapons and self-operating drones could easily change the way wars are fought by decreasing actual human soldiers on the battlefields. There are many concerns and dangers that experts worry about, such as letting machines make life-or-death decisions without human inspection. These concerns also include ethical implications, accountability, and the risk of AI weapons rising conflicts. Although some nations see AI as a way to gain advantages militarily, many human rights organizations argue that fully independent weapons should be banned completely. The United Nations believes that the merging of AI with nuclear weapons must be avoided at all costs. The UN has been working through discussions on this specific issue, mostly through the Convention of Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), in order to explore achievable regulations and encourage the peaceful use of AI.

Past Actions of the UN:

Over the years, past Model United Nations conferences have reviewed the issues of fully AI-based weapons and the peaceful use of AI by drawing proof and examples from real-world UN frameworks and discussions. There have been many resolutions and ideas sparked by LAWS, (Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems), and the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE), which is under the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW). These conventions are advocating for legally binding treaties that can ensure relevant human control over weapon systems. Some of these MUN conferences have been hoping for an international suspension on the development of fully autonomous weapons, stressing the need for legal and ethical frameworks that are similar to the UNESCO Recommendation on AI Ethics. Also, MUN discussions and debates have suggested the production of an international official or specialized UN agency to oversee AI governance and draw from initiatives such as the Global Partnership on AI (GPAI), the EUs AI Act, and the OECD AI principles. Beyond mandates and laws, MUN discussions have also highlighted the potential of AI for peaceful progression, including its role in global healthcare, reducing socioeconomic inequalities, and its role in climate change

mitigation. Lots of these resolutions have advised the UN to invest in AI education programs and unbiased technology access to ensure that AI will benefit all nations while also reducing its risks.

Possible Solutions:

There are many possible solutions to this topic and to prevent the use of fully autonomous AI weapons, while still guaranteeing that AI is used for peaceful purposes only. A major step towards this goal would be to create a legally binding international treaty that is similar to the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) or the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), to ban lethal autonomous weapons (LAWS) and require human oversight in AI-based military systems. Additionally, by initiating a United States Artificial Intelligence Agency (UNAI) could guide and help regulate AI development, conduct safety examinations, and apply ethical standards based on frameworks such as the UNESCO Recommendation on AI Ethics and the OECD AI Principles. By increasing clarity and accountability, there can be some requirements that are needed for countries and private companies to disclose military AI projects and enforce strict liability laws for AI misuse, which can also help prevent unethical AI development. Other strategies can be used such as diplomatic and economic, such as a global AI non-proliferation agreement, sanctions on countries who may be violating AI regulations, and UN-backed AI disarmament talks can all lessen the advancement of autonomous weapons. In general, AI should be used for peaceful purposes such as climate change solutions, disaster response, global healthcare, and education. Investing in AI ethics training and programs and international cooperation initiatives would guarantee that AI is evolving responsibly while also discouraging its use in warfare and violence. By applying these policies, the global community can more confidently work towards a future where AI is used safely to support international peace and security.

Questions to Consider:

1. How can AI be safely incorporated into military operations without increasing the risk of rampant conflict?
2. What are the risks of an AI arms race? How can they be prevented?
3. Should there be an international ban on fully autonomous weapons, or is regulating and mandating enough?
4. What type of role should tech companies, researchers, and governments play in setting AI safety standards?
5. How can AI be used for peaceful reasons, such as conflict resolution and disaster relief rather than for military advancements and promotion?

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