

RESOLUTION NO. .

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS, COUNTY OF SAN MATEO, STATE OF CALIFORNIA

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RESOLUTION CALLING ON THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS TO ADOPT NATIONAL LAWS AND POLICIES RESTRICTING THE DEVELOPMENT AND USE OF FULLY AUTONOMOUS WEAPONS AND THE UNITED NATIONS TO DEVELOP AN INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENT RESTRICTING THE DEVELOPMENT AND USE OF SUCH WEAPONS

RESOLVED, by the Board of Supervisors of the County of San Mateo, State of California, that

WHEREAS, the International Committee of the Red Cross has defined “autonomous weapons” as those weapons able to “independently select and attack targets, i.e., with autonomy in the ‘critical functions’ of acquiring, tracking, selecting and attacking targets;” and

WHEREAS, Human Rights Watch and the International Human Rights Clinic at the Harvard Law School, in an April 2016 Memorandum to United Nations Convention on Conventional Weapons (CCW) Delegates, note that experts in Artificial Intelligence (AI) have stated that “fully autonomous weapons, which would select and engage targets without meaningful human control, could be developed for use within years, not decades;” and

WHEREAS, in August 2017, 116 founders of robotics and AI companies from 26 countries that develop technologies that may be repurposed to develop autonomous weapons released an open letter to the United Nations’ CCW stating that, “once developed, [lethal autonomous weapons] will permit armed conflict to be fought at a scale greater than ever, and at timescales faster than humans can comprehend,” and

that “these can be weapons of terror, weapons that despots and terrorists use against innocent populations, and weapons hacked to behave in undesirable ways;” and

WHEREAS, in this same letter, these signatories request that the United Nations “find a way to protect us all from these dangers;” and

WHEREAS, precursors to autonomous weapons, such as armed drones and fixed place sentry guns, are being developed by the United States, China, Russia and other countries; and

WHEREAS, ninety four countries have recommend that United Nations formally discuss limitations on “lethal autonomous weapons systems;” and

WHEREAS, autonomous weapons have significant potential to violate the rules of warfare and humanitarian law owing to an inability to discriminate between combatants and non-combatants and to make decisions about the proportional use of force; and

WHEREAS, many of the companies developing the AI and robotics technologies that are key to the development of autonomous weapons are located in, or have close connections to, the Silicon Valley region, of which the County of San Mateo is a vital part; and

WHEREAS, this Board’s view is that the development and use of autonomous weapons should be restricted and regulated to ensure that they do not give rise to warfare on a larger and faster scale; that they are not unlawfully used by terrorists or despots; and that they are not subject to being hacked and used in undesirable ways.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that this Board of Supervisors calls on the United States Congress to adopt national laws and policies that restrict and regulate the development and use of autonomous weapons to ensure that they do not give rise to warfare on a larger and faster scale; that autonomous weapons are not unlawfully used by terrorists or despots; and that they are not subject to being hacked and used in undesirable ways.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Board calls upon the United Nations to develop an international agreement restricting and regulating the development and use of autonomous weapons.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Clerk of this Board is hereby directed to transmit copies of this resolution to all members of the County's Congressional delegation, all other appropriate members of the United States Congress, and to the Secretary General of the United Nations.

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