

Document of the Russian Federation pursuant to UN GA resolution 79/239 of 24 December 2024 «Artificial intelligence in the military domain and its implications for international peace and security»

The Russian Federation notes the adoption of UN GA resolution 79/239 of 24 December 2024 and in accordance with its paragraph 7 has the honour to submit its national contribution to the report of the UN Secretary-General to the General Assembly at its 80th session for further discussion by Member States.

Introduction

Russian Federation attaches great importance to the issues of artificial intelligence (AI) in the military domain. We are interested in further substantive discussion of this issue at the relevant international venues.

We consider the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) of the High Contracting Parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) on emerging technologies in the area of lethal autonomous weapons systems (LAWS) as the optimal forum for such discussion. It is exactly the GGE that is called upon to maintain a reasonable balance between humanitarian concerns and legitimate defense interests of States in relation to such systems, and to take decisions on the basis of consensus. The consideration of AI in the military domain aspects within the Group is broad in scope, not confined just to LAWS issues, and touches upon a number of important aspects (including legal, technical and military ones) related to application of this technology for military purposes.

We note the consideration of this issue within existing regimes in the field of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation. This discussion is focused on the analysis of risks and opportunities that AI presents in terms of fulfillment of obligations under relevant international legal instruments by States Parties.

We welcome the willingness of Member States to consider the issue of AI in the military domain in the framework of the discussion on new technologies in the context of international security within the UN Disarmament Commission (UN DC). This exchange of views is aimed at making recommendations on those aspects of «military» AI that are not considered at other venues.

In the course of the work within the above-mentioned international fora, special attention should be paid to the issues of development of a common terminology, application of the existing international law, exercise of human control, ensuring responsibility, as well as risks and opportunities created by this technology.

Definition

There is no consensual definition of weapons systems and military equipment with AI technologies in the existing international law. This complicates the consideration of this topic. Developing a common working understanding of such means and, generally, of terminology related to the military application of this technology could give a clearer perception of the subject and further prospects of discussion on this topic.

The working definition should meet the following requirements:

- (a) it should contain the description of the types of weapons systems and military equipment with AI technologies, as well as certain important aspects of their use;
- (b) it should not be limited to the existing understanding of these means, but also take into consideration the possibility of their future development;
- (c) it should be universal in terms of the understanding by the expert community, including scientists, engineers, technicians, military personnel, lawyers and ethicists;
- (d) it should not be construed as limiting technological progress and undermining the ongoing research in the field of peaceful robotics and AI;
- (e) it should not define weapons systems and military equipment with AI technologies through functions only.

It is necessary to avoid dividing the means under discussion into "bad" and "good", i.e. allowing their grouping based on the political preferences of a particular group of States.

The existing highly automated military systems should not be separated into a "special" category requiring immediate restrictions and bans. It is this degree of automation that enables such systems to operate in dynamic combat situations and in various environments while ensuring an adequate level of selectivity and accuracy and, therefore, their compliance with principles and norms of international law, including international humanitarian law (IHL).

Weapons systems and military equipment with AI technologies in the context of international law

It is generally accepted that the existing international law, including IHL, is fully applicable to weapons systems with AI technologies.

As of now, the Russian Federation does not see any convincing reasons requiring introduction of any new restrictions and bans against weapons systems with AI technologies, modernization or adaptation of international law, including IHL, in relation to such means. The discussions aiming at negotiation of certain "rules of behaviour" or norms and principles of "responsible" application in relation to weapons systems and military equipment with AI technologies are premature. The concept of "responsible" application of AI promoted by Western States is based on quite controversial criteria unknown to international law (including IHL), raises many questions and does not enjoy consensus support of the international community.

The principles of humanity, the dictates of public conscience, as well as the human rights dimension cannot be used as the absolute and sole sufficient condition to impose restrictive and prohibitive regimes on certain types of weapons and military equipment. Concerns regarding weapons systems and military equipment with AI technologies can be addressed through faithful implementation of the existing international legal norms.

Strict compliance with norms and principles of international law, including IHL, in situations of armed conflicts remains one of the Russian Federation's priorities. The Armed Forces of the Russian Federation adhere strictly to the IHL norms enshrined in federal and departmental legal instruments. Issues related to IHL observance, including those connected with use of new types of weapons, are reflected in administrative documents and training programs for all categories of military personnel. In 2022 a «Concept of Activities of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation in the Development and Use of Weapons Systems with AI Technologies» was adopted.

Russian legislation fully provides for the guiding principles concerning weapons systems with AI technologies approved by consensus by the CCW High Contracting Parties in 2019. We perceive further exchange of information on specific practical measures to implement these guiding principles at national level as a way to strengthen confidence and enhance transparency.

Exercising control over weapons systems and military equipment with AI technologies

We consider human control over the operation of weapons systems and military equipment with AI technologies as an important constraint. For these purposes, the control system of the means mentioned should provide for intervention by a human operator or the upper-level control system to change the mode of operation of such systems, including partial or complete deactivation.

The Russian Federation considers that human at any time bears responsibility for his decisions to use force. The control exercised is based on all information available at the moment this decision is made. At the same time, specific forms and methods of human control should remain at the discretion of States and can be ensured by means other than direct control.

Control can be exercised by means of:

- (a) increased reliability and fault tolerance;

- (b) limitations on types of targets;
- (c) limitations on duration of operation, geographical scope and scale of use;
- (d) timely intervention and deactivation;
- (e) testing weapons systems and military equipment with AI technologies in real operation environment;
- (f) admitting persons who have successfully mastered the procedures of use of AI-enabled means to management (control);
- (g) control over the production process of separate elements and the product as a whole;
- (h) control over presorting and disposal of separate elements and the product as a whole.

We consider it inappropriate to introduce the concepts of "meaningful human control", "forms and degree of human involvement", "context-appropriate human control and judgement" and "predictability, reliability, traceability, explainability" promoted by individual States into the discussion, since such categories have no general relation to law and lead only to the politicization of discussions.

Responsibility

The Russian Federation considers that States and individuals (including developers and manufacturers) at any time bear responsibility in accordance with international law for their decisions to develop and use weapons systems and military equipment with AI technologies. Responsibility for the use of such systems rests with the official who assigns a mission for them and orders their use. When using weapons systems and military equipment with AI technologies, such an official should have adequate knowledge and skills related to their functioning and operation, as well as perform decision-making function with respect to feasibility of use, planning of forms and methods of use of these means.

Opportunities and constraints of weapons systems and military equipment with AI technologies

It is common knowledge that weapons systems and military equipment with AI technologies can demonstrate greater effectiveness than human operator when performing assigned tasks, reduce error probabilities. In particular, such systems can significantly lower negative implications of the use of weapons in the context of international law, including IHL, related to operator's errors, his mental or physical state, moral, religious, ethical attitudes. Their use can ensure more accurate guidance of weapons directed against military objects and contribute to reduced risk of unintentional strikes against civilians and civilian objects.

The assessment of potential risks related to use of weapons systems and military equipment with AI technologies and mitigation measures should be part of the new technologies design, development, testing and deployment cycle in any weapon system.

Minimization of risks with regard to such means could be exercised though:

- (a) effective life cycle management;
- (b) comprehensive tests at all life cycle stages, including in realistic environment;
- (c) ensuring reliability and fault tolerance;
- (d) specification of readiness criteria;
- (e) ensuring maximum security against unauthorized access;
- (f) operator training;
- (g) prioritizing the use of AI technology in gathering and processing information necessary to support military decision-making;
- (h) continuous operator monitoring of the actions of such systems, ensuring emergency termination of a combat mission by operator's command;
- (i) preventing access by non-state actors who could use them for illegal purposes.

These measures may be taken at all stages of the life cycle (development, production, operation, disposal) of samples of armaments, military and special equipment.

Further actions

We believe it would be useful to continue consideration of the issues related to the military application of the AI technologies by States within the GGE on LAWS as an optimal international platform for such discussion, under the current regimes in the field of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation and in the UN DC. At the same time the relevant consideration at one venue should not duplicate the exchange of views that is already taking place in parallel dialogue formats.

We oppose the fragmentation of efforts in this area. Transferring the discussions on the military application of the AI technologies to any other international venue, creating additional fora for its consideration or discussion in a narrow format without participation of the vast majority of the UN Member States (including the major developers of AI-enabled weapons systems, including the Russian Federation) seem to be counterproductive.

In particular, the discussion on this topic in the framework of non-inclusive summits on «responsible application of AI for military purposes» organized by a group of Western States, as well as summits on AI in general is of destructive character. These events and their documents do not take into account the views of all the parties concerned and cannot be considered as a basis for further work that would reflect a common understanding of the subject. They have a divisive effect and do not contribute to consolidation of efforts in this area.

Attempts to «reserve» unilateral approaches to the above-mentioned issues at alternative venues, including in the framework of such «summits», bypassing the relevant multilateral formats, will have extremely negative consequences. They can seriously undermine the ongoing constructive and inclusive work on the topic of

«military» AI and divide efforts to elaborate common understandings and recommendations in this area.

In the course of the discussion at these international fora we believe it is necessary to focus on negotiating the relevant common terminology and approaches regarding the application of the existing international law, including IHL, to weapons systems and military equipment with AI technologies, ensuring human control over such means, as well as the risks and opportunities created by these technologies.

The Russian Federation requests you, Mr. Secretary-General, to take into account the suggestions presented above in your substantive report in fulfillment of the paragraph 7 of the UNGA resolution 79/239, and to include this document in an annex to your report.