Australian Government

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Australia's Submission to the UN Secretary-General's Report on 'Artificial intelligence in the military domain and its implications for international peace and security'

RESPONSE TO ODA/2025-00029 - A/RES/79/239 | 7 August 2025

1. Australia appreciates the opportunity to make a submission to the UN Secretary-General's (UNSG) Report on 'Artificial intelligence (AI) in the military domain and its implications for international peace and security', in accordance with UN General Assembly (UNGA) Resolution 79/239 'AI in the military domain and its implications for international peace and security', adopted by the UNGA on 24 December 2024.

2. In this submission, we provide Australia's views on the opportunities and challenges presented to international peace and security by the application of AI in the military domain. Specific focus is on areas other than lethal autonomous weapons systems (LAWS), which are appropriately considered in other forums and reports, in particular, the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons Group of Governmental Experts of the High Contracting Parties related to emerging technologies in the area of LAWS. We refer to Australia's submission to the UNSG Report A/79/88 'Lethal autonomous weapons systems' for further information in this regard.

Opportunities and Challenges

3. AI is not one technology but a suite of enabling technologies with the potential to deliver significant benefits. AI, applied appropriately in concert with human judgement, has the capacity to enhance defence capabilities and increase efficiency in military operations through better operational and strategic decision-making, logistics, training, information management, and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance.

4. AI could reduce risks to defence personnel and mitigate civilian harm during military activities, including through enhanced information management, decision-making, logistical, medical and maintenance support and coordination in complex operations and difficult operating environments. Importantly, AI has the potential to enhance compliance with international humanitarian law (IHL), for example, by enhancing precision, and thus reducing harm to civilians and civilian objects.

5. While recognising the opportunity that AI presents, it is also important to acknowledge that it generates potential risks. Careful consideration should be given to how use of these emerging technologies in the military domain will affect State behaviour and its implications for international peace and security. This should include both the AI itself and the supporting technical elements, such as data and cyber security. AI poses new challenges to data management and assurance procedures, such as test, evaluation and certification. Further, AI - like other technologies - may be vulnerable to hostile interference or attack.

Australia's Approach to these Opportunities and Challenges

6. Australia welcomes **international collaboration** and **policy development** in parallel with technological development. Australia will continue to act consistently with applicable **international law** throughout an AI technology's life cycle.

International collaboration

7. **A shared international understanding of what it means to be a responsible AI actor in the military domain is crucial.** Australia participates in international efforts that consider the breadth of applications of AI in the military domain and discuss norms concerning responsible use. These include the Responsible AI in the Military Domain (ReAIM) summits in February 2023 and September 2024. Australia joined the ReAIM 'Call to Action' and 'Blueprint for Action', which underscores the importance of the responsible use of AI, in accordance with international legal obligations, and in a way that maintains and does not undermine

international peace, security and stability. Australia also endorsed the 2023 Political Declaration on Responsible Military Use of Artificial Intelligence and Autonomy. The Political Declaration states that the military use of AI should be ethical, responsible, and enhance international security, and must comply with applicable international law, including IHL.

Policy and governance

8. **Governance, control measures and procedures to ensure the responsible use of AI in the military domain requires concerted practical and policy efforts.** This calls for a flexible, balanced, and realistic approach to the governance of AI in the military domain that keeps pace with the evolution of technologies and capabilities. Australia is committed to responsible use of AI in the military domain and is uplifting existing governance, control measures, and procedures, including to ensure military use of AI is in line with Australia's domestic and international legal obligations. All Australian defence technologies, including AI, are subject to multi-layered control measures, comprised of technical, legal and doctrinal measures including test and evaluation, and capability-specific training and policies. Australia will continue to apply a rigorous approach to the development, acquisition and fielding of AI capabilities, taking into account AI's unique risks, opportunities and vulnerabilities. Australia recognises the need for strict controls on the export and transfer of military technologies, to prevent unauthorised use or misuse by individuals or entities, and to protect human rights.

International law

9. **All military capabilities, including AI technologies, must comply with applicable international law, including IHL and international human rights law, throughout their life cycle.** Article 36 of the first Additional Protocol to the Geneva Conventions requires a new weapon, means or method of warfare, be subject to legal review to determine whether its employment in some, or all circumstances, is lawful. Australia meets its IHL obligations by subjecting new weapons, means or method of warfare, including where enabled by AI, to legal review during study, development, acquisition or adoption. Australia will not deploy a capability if it cannot be used in accordance with Australia's international law obligations.

Recommendations

10. **Australia recommends engagement with existing multilateral and multi-stakeholder initiatives, like ReAIM and the Political Declaration.** These preeminent forums usefully discuss norms and standards, set future directions and share lessons learnt. Engagement in these forums enables States to benefit from the expertise of all sectors present. Australia's preference is that discussions on AI in the military domain do not expand in a way which makes them inaccessible and diffuse. Instead, we encourage discussions about the military use of AI in forums with the requisite technical and legal knowledge, like ReAIM, the Political Declaration, and the UNGA First Committee.

11. **Australia recommends forums discussing emerging technologies be diverse and inclusive.** Such forums should enable meaningful participation, leadership and representation of people from diverse gender, ethnic, linguistic and socio-economic backgrounds. This is essential to considerations and discussion on how to prevent, detect, and correct or mitigate potential risks, including unintended bias, which is critical to the responsible use of AI.

12. **Australia recommends cooperation between States to share lessons learnt and best practices on mechanisms to manage the risks of AI while harnessing the benefits and opportunities.** This includes sharing national strategies, legislation and policies and providing transparency on military modernisation where appropriate. With respect to potential proliferation risks, we encourage States to support the work of multilateral export control regimes and share information and case studies to enable countries to implement controls on technologies not covered by existing control lists.

13. **Australia reiterates the importance of States using military applications of AI consistent with their existing obligations under international law, particularly IHL.** Australia strongly advocates for legal reviews as a mechanism for ensuring that military technologies are capable of being used in compliance with IHL. Australia has hosted three annual expert workshops on legal reviews in Sydney and Geneva since 2023. We commend States' domestic development of legal review processes, as well as the sharing of best practices. To this end, Australia welcomes the establishment of the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs' 'Legal Reviews Portal', to which Australia has contributed, which will assist in the exchange of information among States in line with Resolution 79/239, which encourages the UN Secretariat to facilitate knowledge sharing.