DISEC

Letter from the Chairs

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to WAMUNC XXVII! My name is Deepti Pillai, and I am delighted to serve as your chair for the DISEC committee. Model UN has been a huge part of my life, and I cannot explain how much joy it brings me to be able to contribute to this amazing conference and your individual MUN careers. I am a Sophomore here at George Washington, studying Political Science and International Business–minoring in Fine Arts. Besides MUN, I am a part of several other clubs on campus including our Public Policy Society (KOA), the Fashion & Business Association, the Indian Students' Association, and the Chi Omega Sorority! I am a big fan of oranges, Geometry Dash, drawing, and New Girl–I am a Winston girl through and through. Although I am originally from Minnesota, I have a deep love for DC and look forward to chatting more about this incredible city with you all.

DISEC was created with the intention of addressing the most pressing issues compromising international security. As such, the topics on the agenda are important and extremely personal to communities around the world. I expect delegates to debate with the utmost respect, maturity, and sensitivity to retain the integrity of our committee and global community. Absolutely no discriminatory or violent language will be tolerated in committee. That being said, please feel free to ask me questions before and during the conference about sensitivity or anything at all!

When I began MUN in high school, I remember falling in love with the activity due to its perfect blend of academic prowess, competitive nature, and community which spurred new friendships and growth. This weekend, I am here as your chair to help run the committee–but more so than anything, I deeply care about each and every one of you growing as a delegate this weekend. I will favor delegates who speak kindly and embody genuine diplomacy. Winning should never come at the expense of those around you. I look forward to meeting you all and having a super fun weekend.

Sincerely,

Chair
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Introduction to Committee

The Disarmament and International Security Committee (DISEC), was the First Committee of the UN General Assembly established in 1945 to address global peace and security. A variety of resolutions have come into fruition focused on reducing threats to peace by promoting transparency and peaceful resolutions for security dilemmas. Within international security, major points of contention range from nuclear disarmament, emerging military technologies, and regional security disputes. DISEC operates directly within the UN Charter, collaborating closely with other bodies including the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA).

DISEC produces non-binding resolutions that guide member states, set norms, and influence future multilateral negotiations. It serves as a crucial political platform for the advancement of the world in relation to safety and international negotiations.

Topic 1: Regulating the Use of Autonomous Weapons in Warfare

Introduction

Rapid advances in artificial intelligence have enabled the development of weapons systems capable of selecting and engaging targets with minimal or no human oversight. Known as autonomous weapons, these systems raise profound ethical, legal, and strategic questions. States remain divided on whether such technologies enhance military efficiency and reduce human casualties, or whether they pose unacceptable risks to international humanitarian law and global stability.

Historical Background

Early forms of military automation emerged in the late twentieth century through missile defense systems, automated targeting technologies, and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), which still relied on human operators. As AI capabilities expanded, autonomy in weapons systems increased.

In 2013, the United Nations established the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems (LAWS) under the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW). This marked the first coordinated international effort to assess the implications of autonomous weapons. Since then, states have diverged into three general camps: those advocating for a preemptive ban, those supporting regulation through the principle of "meaningful human control," and those opposing formal restrictions to preserve strategic or technological advantages.

Current Situation

Concerns surrounding autonomous weapons center on ethics, reliability, accountability, and escalation risks. Critics argue that machines cannot assess human life or moral responsibility and should not be entrusted with lethal decision-making. The scalability and speed of AI-driven systems increase the risk of rapid escalation and unintended conflict, particularly given the dual-use nature of AI research.

Accountability presents another challenge. When algorithms make targeting decisions, determining legal responsibility for violations of international humanitarian law becomes increasingly complex. These concerns have intensified global calls for clearer regulatory frameworks.

Subtopic 1: International Humanitarian Law and Accountability

Using autonomous weapons systems brings up questions about whether they follow international humanitarian law, especially the rules of distinction, proportionality, and military necessity. These rules depend on people making judgments about context and intent during conflict. As these systems become more independent, there are concerns about whether algorithms can reliably tell the difference between combatants and civilians or judge what response is appropriate.

Accountability is another challenge. If autonomous systems cause unlawful harm, it is hard to decide who is responsible because many people, such as commanders, programmers, manufacturers, and states, may have played a role. Current legal rules do not clearly say who is responsible for what these systems do, which makes enforcement and compliance uncertain.

Subtopic 2: Strategic Stability and Technological Disparities

The growth and spread of autonomous weapons could affect strategic stability by speeding up arms races and shortening the time leaders have to make decisions during conflicts. Relying more on automated systems could also increase the risk of accidental escalation, especially if there is a misunderstanding or a system error.

Differences in technology between countries make regulation even harder. Countries with advanced technology may have an advantage, while those still developing may not be able to regulate, use, or defend against autonomous systems. Because AI can be used for both civilian and military purposes, it is also hard to monitor and verify how it is used.

- Should the international community pursue a legally binding treaty banning fully autonomous lethal weapons, or rely on non-binding norms and guidelines?

- What constitutes "meaningful human control," and how can it be standardized across states?

- How can accountability be assigned if an autonomous system violates international humanitarian law?

- Should developing states receive technological assistance to avoid disproportionate disadvantages under regulatory regimes?rade o

- How can verification and compliance mechanisms function Tthegiven the dual-use nature of AI technologies?

Topic 2: Combating the Trade of Illicit Weapons

Introduction

The illicit trade of small arms, light weapons, and other conventional arms continues to fuel armed conflict, terrorism, and organized crime worldwide. Weak governance, corruption, porous borders, and limited international coordination allow weapons to circulate beyond state control. Addressing illicit arms trafficking is essential to strengthening global security and supporting sustainable development.

Historical Background

Following the end of the Cold War, surplus weapons entered global black markets, intensifying trafficking in conflict-prone regions. In response, the international community adopted key

frameworks such as the 2001 UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons and the 2013 Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). These initiatives sought to regulate legal arms transfers and curb diversion into illicit markets.

Despite these efforts, uneven implementation, limited enforcement capacity, and inconsistent national legislation have hindered progress.

Current Situation

Illicit arms flows persist due to evolving trafficking networks, including online marketplaces and transnational criminal organizations. Recent conflicts have further increased demand, while post-conflict environments often struggle to secure weapons stockpiles. These dynamics undermine peacebuilding, exacerbate violence, and weaken state institutions.

Subtopic 3: Transnational Trafficking Networks and Border Enforcement

Illegal arms trafficking often crosses borders and is run by international criminal networks that take advantage of weak customs and open borders. These groups are using more advanced methods, like fake documents and digital communication, to avoid being caught.

Poor information sharing and different legal systems make it hard for countries to work together. There are regional and international systems to help, but how well they work depends on political will, resources, and how well countries coordinate.

Subtopic 4: Balancing Arms Control with Legitimate Security Needs

Efforts to stop illegal weapons trafficking must also consider countries' real security and self-defense needs. Countries depend on legal arms transfers for their defense and for peacekeeping, so making controls too strict could backfire.

International agreements like the Arms Trade Treaty try to regulate legal arms transfers and stop them from being diverted, but their impact is limited by uneven enforcement and different national priorities. Finding the right balance between security and arms control is still a major policy challenge.

Questions to Consider

- How can states strengthen national legislation and enforcement to monitor arms production, stockpiles, and transfers?
- What mechanisms can improve cross-border information sharing and international cooperation?
- Should the international community expand funding for disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) programs?
- What role can technology—such as marking, tracing, or blockchain systems—play in preventing diversion?
- How can states balance security needs with legitimate self-defense and lawful arms trade?

Sources

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