[Concept Note]

CCW GGE LAWS Side Event

“Human Control” at the Crossroads of Governance

:Security Exceptions, Military AI Beyond Weapons, and the Retreat from "Meaningful”

Date: 1 September 2026

- **Time:** 13:15 – 14:45
- **Venue:** Room Concordia 5
- **Organized by:** PEACEMOMO, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Korea & Geneva

1. Context & Rationale

The Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS), convening in Geneva from 31 August to 4 September 2026, marks a critical turning point, as its work feeds directly into the Seventh CCW Review Conference in November. Throughout this process, the international community is pursuing a range of diplomatic and principled efforts to establish an institutional framework for the responsible operation of autonomous weapons systems.

On 5 June 2026, the CCW GGE on LAWS released its rolling text, and on the same day the United States signed National Security Presidential Memorandum-11 (NSPM-11). Two developments converging on that single date make the question especially urgent: how to operationalize "human judgment and control," from design-stage limits to abort capabilities, into a workable standard. First, paragraph 12 of the rolling text steps back from the language of "meaningful human control," softening a qualitative threshold that civil society has long defended. Second, on that same day, NSPM-11 rescinded the previous administration's national security AI directive along with its explicit conditions on human rights, civil liberties, and privacy.

These two moves point in the same direction: an international retreat from "meaningful" control, mirrored by a major power stripping rights-based conditions from its own defense AI governance. Together they frame the question this event poses. To address it, the side event compares the structural features of two landmark instruments in global AI legislation, the European Union (EU) AI Act and the Republic of Korea (ROK) Framework Act on AI, in search of an effective, balanced, and evolving definition of "human control" that governments, academia, and civil society can hold in common.

Both the EU and the ROK have chosen to carve military and national security AI out of their general AI frameworks. That carve-out, however, is not a neutral administrative act but a normative choice, and the two jurisdictions expose its stakes in different ways. In the EU, the term "exclusively" leaves the treatment of dual-use systems open to dispute, even as the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) has consistently held that national security derogations from EU law must be interpreted strictly. The European Defence Fund (EDF) regulation, meanwhile, expressly requires meaningful human control in autonomous weapons research. A tension between the security exception and the requirement of human control thus already lives within the EU legal order itself. Korea, by contrast, pairs a wholesale exclusion in its Framework Act on AI with the development-oriented posture of its pending Defense AI Act, closing the governance gap before that tension can even surface.

Between these two bodies of law lies a space that neither fully reaches. A growing range of military AI applications, decision support systems among them, are not weapons, and so attract limited attention in the CCW; yet they are equally carved out of civilian AI legislation because they sit in the defence domain. Making that space visible, and asking what human control requires within it, is one of the tasks this roundtable sets itself.

2. Main Topics

- The status and prospects of meaningful agreement on human control in LAWS
- The cases of the EU AI Act and the ROK Framework Act on AI
- Human control under IHL in practice, from design and development onwards, including military AI applications that are not weapons systems
- Concerns and further recommendations for the CCW GGE on LAWS

3. Programme

Moderator

- Francis Daehoon Lee (Director, Trans-Education for Peace Institute, PEACEMOMO)

Opening Remarks

- Lisa Müller (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Geneva)

Presentations (10 minutes each)

- **Operationalizing Human Control in Practice: An IHL Perspective on Military AI beyond Weapons Systems** Heidi Kandiel (Lawyer, International Committee of the Red Cross) What human control requires under IHL at the stage of design and development, across the wider field of AI in the military domain, taking the systems themselves as its object.

- **A Governance Gap by Design: The ROK Framework Act on AI and the Pending Defense AI Act** A-Young Moon (Representative, PEACEMOMO) The security exception in the Framework Act on AI and the posture of the pending Defense AI Act,

read from the perspectives of human rights, humanitarian principle, and democratic accountability.

- **The Yardstick and the Statute: IHL and IHRL Applied to the EU and ROK AI Frameworks** Ozlem Ulgen (Professor, Nottingham University) IHL and IHRL as the yardstick against which the two legislative frameworks are assessed, taking the law on AI as its object.

- **Human Control in Question: The Rolling Text and What It Leaves Unresolved** Elizabeth Minor (Head of Policy, Stop Killer Robots) How the prohibitions and restrictions under discussion in the GGE operationalize human control, and what the rolling text leaves unresolved.

Following the presentations, all attendees are invited to join an open roundtable discussion.

Time	Program	Moderator/ Presenter
13:15-13:20	Opening	Francis Daehoon Lee (Director, Trans-education for Peace Institute, PEACEMOMO)
13:20-13:30	Operationalizing Human Control in Practice: An IHL Perspective on Military AI beyond Weapons Systems	Heidi Kandiel (Lawyer, International Committee of the Red Cross)
13:30-13:40	A Governance Gap by Design: The ROK Framework Act on AI and the Pending Defense AI Act	A-Young Moon (Representative, PEACEMOMO)
13:40-13:50	The Yardstick and the Statute: IHL and IHRL Applied to the EU and ROK AI Frameworks	Ozlem Ulgen (Professor, Nottingham University)
13:50-14:00	Human Control in Question: The Rolling Text and What It Leaves Unresolved	Elizabeth Minor (Head of Policy, Stop Killer Robots)
14:00-14:40	Open Discussion	Francis Daehoon Lee (Director, Trans-education for Peace Institute, PEACEMOMO)
14:40-14:45	Closing	

4. Reference Materials & Publications

(To be available at the venue)