DCAF 25 YEARS

Canadian Red Cross | Croix-Rouge canadienne

Operationalising IHL in AI-Enabled and Autonomous Military Systems: Gender and WPS as Enablers of Lawful Use

Expert Roundtable Report

9 March 2026, Geneva

Executive summary

This report synthesises insights from an expert roundtable examining how gender analysis and the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda can function as practical enablers of compliance with IHL in AI-enabled and autonomous military systems.

Convened by DCAF – the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance, in partnership with the Permanent Mission of Canada to the United Nations and the Canadian Red Cross, the roundtable brought together 36 experts — military legal advisers, defence policymakers, gender experts, scholars, technologists, and humanitarian actors.

Discussions focused on:

- Applying core IHL principles to AI-enabled operations;
- Addressing gender-related bias in military use of AI-enabled systems;
- Strengthening proportionality and civilian harm assessments through gender analysis throughout the entire decision-making process in AI-enabled systems; and
- How to ensure meaningful human agency, judgment, control and accountability in AI-supported decision-making.

Participants emphasised that gender analysis is not an add-on, but a legally and operationally relevant lens that enhances foreseeability, strengthens precautionary measures, improves proportionality assessments, and reduces risks of discrimination. The WPS framework was identified as a governance tool capable of institutionalising safeguards in doctrine, design processes, operational planning, and review mechanisms.

The expert roundtable constitutes part of DCAF's project to "move gender and IHL from analysis to implementation" and advance the integration of gender perspectives and WPS commitments in IHL, supported by the Government of Liechtenstein. This project has established a new IHL Community of Practice for WPS to foster dialogue and collaboration across sectors, is convening a series of expert roundtables, and will develop a repository of model language and good practice aiming to inform the revision of military doctrine.

Context

Artificial intelligence and autonomous functions are increasingly integrated into military systems relevant to targeting, intelligence processing, threat identification, and civilian harm assessment.

While these technologies do not alter the content of IHL, they raise operational and legal questions concerning:

- Predictability and foreseeability
- Human judgment and control
- Non-discrimination
- Accountability
- Bias in data and modelling assumptions.

At the same time, AI-enabled systems may amplify existing structural biases, including gender bias, particularly where demographic proxies or incomplete datasets influence assessments of civilian presence, patterns of life, or expected harm.

Gender analysis and WPS frameworks offer practical entry points to identify and mitigate these risks by:

- Enhancing civilian harm assessment;
- Improving pattern-of-life analysis;
- Strengthening legal review processes;
- Institutionalising safeguards in doctrine and procurement; and
- Supporting meaningful human agency in AI-supported operations.

Overview and Objectives

Held under the Chatham House Rule, the roundtable aimed to:

- ⇨ Examine how core IHL obligations apply in AI-enabled and autonomous military systems;
- ⇨ Identify where gender-blind analysis may create legal vulnerabilities;
- ⇨ Discuss legal and technical safeguards to mitigate bias in military AI;
- ⇨ Explore how gender data can strengthen targeting and proportionality assessments; and
- ⇨ Assess how WPS frameworks can reinforce meaningful human judgment, agency, and accountability.

Opening session

Opening remarks were delivered by H.E. Mr. Peter MacDougall, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Canada to the United Nations Office and the Conference on Disarmament; H.E. Mr. Frank Büchel, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the

Principality of Liechtenstein to the United Nations; and Ms. Catherine Gribbin, Senior IHL Legal Advisor at the Canadian Red Cross. The keynote address was delivered by Ambassador Nathalie Chuard, Director of DCAF.

> "Respect for IHL, and gender-responsive risk analysis are not optional."

The opening underscored how AI is rapidly reshaping the practical application of IHL, introducing challenges around non-discrimination, bias, opacity, human judgment, and accountability that can directly affect civilian protection and other aspects of IHL compliance. Gender perspectives and the WPS agenda are not peripheral but operationally necessary, as failure to account for gendered patterns of life can distort legal assessments and increase risks of harm. Strengthening AI governance — through transparency, inclusive data, and gender-responsive safeguards — is essential to ensure AI-enabled military systems support lawful and accountable operations.

Session 1: Applying core IHL obligations to AI and autonomy: where gender matters

This session explored the implications of AI in the conduct of hostilities, focusing on how core principles of IHL must apply to AI-enabled military systems and where gaps, including related to data and gender, may create legal and operational risks. Speakers underscored existing IHL frameworks fully apply to autonomous weapon systems (AWS) and AI-enabled decision-support tools, and that legal obligations and legal responsibility remain with human operators and states rather than with the technology itself. IHL relies on the responsibility for violations of IHL to exist at the individual level. At the same time, it was noted that the increasing complexity and opacity of AI systems are making it more difficult to translate these obligations into practice.

A central area of discussion was the distinction between AWS, which can select and engage targets without further human input once activated, and AI-supported systems, which assist human decision-making by processing large volumes of data. The latter are already integrated into military operations, often through systems that synthesise inputs from drones,

satellites, and other sources to provide real-time situational awareness. These technologies, although potentially enhancing operational effectiveness and as noted by some participants, may support IHL compliance, they must remain under meaningful human control and transparency remains critical in such decision-making.

Applying the principle of distinction in this context was identified as particularly challenging. Speakers highlighted that determining a lawful military target requires complex, context-specific, and value-based judgments that are difficult to codify into algorithmic processes. This challenge is compounded by the unpredictable nature of conflict environments, where an individual's status may change rapidly, such as when someone becomes *hors de combat*. Current evidence suggests that many AI systems are not capable of reliably capturing these dynamic shifts. In addition, concerns were raised about the risk of embedded biases within datasets and algorithms, including the potential for systematic errors such as the over-identification of men as combatants.

The principle of proportionality raised similarly complex issues. Speakers emphasised that proportionality assessments require balancing anticipated military advantage against potential civilian harm, a process that is inherently context-dependent and often involves qualitative judgment. While AI tools can assist with technical aspects of civilian harm assessments (for example, by modelling blast radius, estimating damage, or analysing timing and weapon effects), there was broad agreement that such tools should support rather than replace humans in decision-making. It was consistently stressed that proportionality determinations cannot be delegated to AI.

The discussion also highlighted the growing reliance on data-driven systems and the risks associated with data limitations. The effectiveness of AI tools depends heavily on the quality, completeness, and relevance of the data on which they are trained and operate. Significant gaps in the availability of disaggregated data were identified, noting that without data disaggregated by sex, age and other relevant characteristics of a population, AI systems are unable to adequately account for differentiated impacts across populations. This raises concerns that AI may reproduce or amplify existing biases, including gender biases, unless gender perspectives are deliberately integrated into system design, training, and use.

> "Gender is not an add-on, but a prerequisite for lawful use under IHL." —Government representative

Some speakers and participants also emphasised the importance of increasing the participation of women in armed forces, AI development, and operational decision-making structures, in line with broader WPS agenda commitments.

Across the discussion, the importance of maintaining human judgment and responsibility remained a central theme. While AI can augment human decision-making, it must not replace it, particularly in life-and-death decisions as it is not possible for current AI systems to account for the protection issues at stake under WPS and IHL. It was stressed that users need to be adequately trained to understand both the capabilities and limitations of AI

systems, including risks of error, bias, and system malfunction, in order to begin to account for these protection failings.

The role of states and industry was also discussed. It was agreed that states bear the primary responsibility for ensuring that AI-enabled systems comply with IHL, including through Article 36 legal reviews of new weapons and methods of warfare and the integration of IHL considerations into procurement processes. At the same time, the growing role of private sector actors in developing AI technologies shows the need for earlier and more sustained engagement with industry, including on legal requirements. Suggested approaches included dialogue and knowledge exchange, embedding IHL compliance into contractual requirements, and leveraging financial and procurement mechanisms to incentivise responsible development.

Experts also reflected on broader operational and ethical questions, including whether AI should ever be relied upon in combat decision-making, how systems can remain relevant in rapidly evolving conflict environments, and how feedback and operations learning can be integrated into AI systems over time. These questions point to a bigger concern about a widening gap between the requirements of IHL and the realities of contemporary warfare, particularly as technologies like drones expand the scale and scope of military operations.

Speakers also acknowledged potential positive applications of AI and related technologies. In some contexts, AI systems are being used to enhance awareness of civilians in combat zones, informing decisions about methods and means of warfare. Examples were also cited where AI and unmanned systems can support humanitarian assistance, including the delivery of medical supplies and evacuation planning. For example, the DELTA AI system in use in Ukraine collects information on civilian movements, disaggregating adults and children, and this is used to inform the delivery of humanitarian aid appropriate to the specific needs of children. These cases illustrate that, when appropriately utilised, the lawful use of AI can contribute to ensuring parties of conflict meet their obligations in ensuring the protection of civilians.

Experts emphasised that a gender perspective should be applied to military operations where AI-supported systems are in use. Gender-disaggregated data can inform, for example, evacuation means and routes, and planning around schools and medical centres. AI systems could help identify early warning indicators of conflict-related sexual violence. As such, integrating sex-disaggregated data and gender questions into the training of AI decision support systems — for example, “What are the impacts on men and on women?”is important.

> “We should build the bridge between gender perspective in military operations and AI-supported systems. The principles remain the same … We need to train AI that there is a gender perspective.”
> — Military legal advisor

Overall, the session highlighted that while AI offers operational advantages, it also introduces substantial legal, ethical, and practical challenges. Ensuring that AI-enabled systems can be used in compliance with IHL requires addressing data gaps, mitigating bias, enhancing transparency, strengthening engagement with industry, and, above all,

maintaining meaningful human control, judgment and accountability over all decisions involving the use of force. Even so, some participants insisted that certain uses of AI will not be possible to reconcile with IHL and that legal restrictions on use are needed.

Session 2: Addressing bias in military AI: gender-responsive legal and technical safeguards

Speakers in this session examined the sources of bias in AI-enabled military systems and how gender-related bias, as well as biases based on race and age, may compromise IHL compliance. It was emphasized that bias is often rooted in the data that underpins AI systems, noting that incomplete, unrepresentative, or skewed datasets can reproduce and amplify existing societal inequalities. Persistent gaps in sex-disaggregated data were identified as a key concern, alongside the reality that many AI systems rely on supervised learning models trained on datasets that may already contain embedded biases. Generative AI tools have been trained on datasets where violent, misogynistic images are prevalent.

These issues are compounded by the use of complex “black box” systems, wherein the internal workings of an AI system are not transparent or understandable to its users. This means decisions or outputs cannot easily be explained or traced, making it difficult to assess how conclusions were reached, whether biases are present, or who is accountable for errors. Human developers may also introduce their own assumptions into system design. Speakers also noted that bias can evolve over time through operational use, reinforcing problematic patterns in a circular manner.

Drawing on examples from civilian applications, this session highlighted how bias in facial recognition technologies and the widespread gendered harms associated with deepfake content illustrate the broader risks of dual-use AI systems. Similar dynamics are relevant in military contexts, where biased systems may misclassify individuals or fail to detect civilians altogether. Two primary risk pathways were identified. First, where civilians or civilian objects are incorrectly identified as threats. An example is where young men with guns are seen as lawful targets without reference to contextual factors (such as hunting or ceremonial practices). Second, where civilians are not detected or are rendered invisible within the system, such as where an AI system does not recognise a

minority dialect in a target area. Both scenarios carry serious IHL implications, particularly in relation to the obligations to distinguish military and civilian targets, verify military targets and take feasible precautions in attack. It was stressed that even indirect or unintended bias can result in unlawful outcomes, including where negligence in identifying or mitigating bias leads to violations of IHL. The discussion underscored that bias is not solely a tech issue but constitutes a legal concern when it undermines compliance with IHL principles and rules. In this sense, addressing bias was framed not only as good practice but as a legal imperative.

It was stressed that it is important to train users, including commanders, to critically assess and question AI-generated recommendations, particularly in high-pressure, stressful operational settings. Yet, participants highlighted that military personnel and leaders themselves may hold biased views, which AI bias is likely to compound. Gender training of users was suggested. Concerns were raised about placing an excessive burden on end users, suggesting that responsibility for identifying and mitigating bias should be distributed across the entire lifecycle of AI systems, from product development to use.

Operational challenges were also discussed, particularly the difficulty of managing bias in fast-paced decision-making contexts. Participants questioned how commanders can be adequately assured of the reliability of AI systems when data is incomplete or evolving, and how to balance the perceived benefits of expanded data analysis with the risks of overreliance on automated outputs. Experts also cautioned against overestimating the objectivity or accuracy of AI systems, noting that human expectations of technology can themselves introduce bias.

Bias cannot be entirely eliminated, but efforts should focus on mitigating its impacts and reducing associated risks. Proposed safeguards included improving the representation and contextual relevance of AI training datasets, integrating data that is more reflective of the specific operational environment, and strengthening verification processes to account for potential bias in AI outputs. Data transparency, reliability and explainability are critical in AI systems, including the ability to access underlying training data. The feasibility of such approaches was not, however, clear. While no definitive solutions were identified, there was broad agreement on the importance of taking proactive measures to identify and mitigate bias early in the system lifecycle, rather than attempting to correct for it after harm has occurred.

A recurring theme was the need for enhanced state institutional capacity to understand and manage bias. Speakers highlighted a significant knowledge gap across military, legal, and procurement aspects and stressed the importance of developing specialised expertise to understand both the technical and legal dimensions of AI and, specifically, AI biases. It was suggested militaries may need specialist technology advisers, alongside legal advisers and gender advisers. The lack of standardised definitions and practical guidance on bias further complicates this effort, showing a need for continued research and the development of operational tools and reference frameworks.

The role of states in addressing bias was also addressed, noting that states have both legal obligations and policy incentives to ensure that AI-enabled systems comply with IHL. This includes integrating bias considerations – including but not limited to gender bias – into legal reviews, procurement processes, and national AI policy frameworks, as well as clarifying

how existing IHL rules apply to AI-enabled systems in practice. In certain contexts, the risks associated with bias may be sufficiently high to warrant restrictions on the deployment of specific systems, particularly in complex environments such as densely populated urban areas or non-international armed conflicts where indicators of combatant status are less clear.

Engagement with the private sector was identified as essential, given that much AI innovation originates outside government and awareness of IHL and its application to the use of AI in armed conflict. Experts stressed the importance of early and sustained dialogue with technology developers, including on issues of data transparency, system design, and oversight and awareness and understanding of IHL. States were encouraged to articulate clear expectations regarding compliance with IHL and to use procurement and financial leverage to incentivise lawful and responsible practices. At the same time, the absence of clear, standardised questions or benchmarks to guide such engagement highlights the need for practical guidance for both states and industry actors.

Finally, the discussion highlighted the broader structural dimensions of AI bias, including the underrepresentation of women and diverse groups in both the technology sector and military institutions. Increasing gender diversity and integrating gender perspectives into AI development and operational planning were seen as critical components of more effective and equitable systems.

> "We need to break down silos between disarmament and Women, Peace and Security." — Expert

The session underscored that bias in military AI has clear legal and humanitarian implications when it affects the ability to comply with IHL. Mitigating AI bias requires a combination of technical safeguards, legal and policy measures, capacity building, and sustained political will, supported by closer collaboration between states, industry, and other stakeholders. Nonetheless, no evidence has yet been presented to demonstrate that the mitigation measures required to ensure compliance with IHL are possible.

Session 3: Targeting, proportionality and civilian harm: gender data as a legal enabler

This session looked at how gender analysis and data can inform targeting decisions and civilian harm mitigation in AI-supported military environments. Speakers emphasized that effective application of IHL, particularly in relation to distinction and proportionality, depends fundamentally on a deep understanding of the operational environment, including the gendered patterns that shape civilian presence, movement, and vulnerability. Civilian harm in armed conflict is not evenly distributed; rather, it reflects social roles, patterns of life, and structural inequalities that influence how different populations are exposed to risk. These factors are legally relevant to targeting decisions and must be taken into account in assessing both civilian status and expected harm.

The discussion highlighted that layering AI systems onto these already complex dynamics can amplify existing risks. For example, AI-enabled systems may accelerate the targeting cycle, increasing the speed at which decisions are made while potentially magnifying underlying biases or flawed assumptions. Examples were cited in which historical or operational practices, such as the classification of military-aged men as likely combatants, have been embedded into targeting processes, raising concerns that similar patterns may persist or be reinforced through AI use. Questions were raised about whether current systems are sufficiently reliable, and whether higher error rates affecting women, minority groups, or individuals with darker skin tones are being implicitly accepted. Civilian harm assessments are highly context-specific and require nuanced, real-time understanding of local conditions and populations, which may not be adequately captured by AI systems trained on data from different environments.

> "We see gendered patterns of harm: men and women targeted on basis of gender, and women and men disproportionately killed based on gendered patterns of life. Then, inequities in society shape access to the resources to cope with the effects of conflict." — Expert

At the same time, it was acknowledged that AI has the potential to support more informed and effective civilian harm mitigation if appropriately designed and used. Potential applications include improving collateral damage estimates, supporting weapon selection, identifying civilian presence in strike zones, and detecting gendered patterns of life or early warning signs of harm to vulnerable populations. AI tools could also contribute to post-strike assessments by analysing satellite imagery, open-source information, and other data sources to identify civilian casualties and inform future targeting decision-making. However, it was consistently stressed that such applications must complement, rather than replace, human judgment, and that their effectiveness is contingent on the quality and representativeness of the underlying data.

A key concern throughout the discussion was the reliability and limitations of AI models. Experts highlighted risks related to data bias, data drift, and model "hallucinations," as well as the challenges of adapting systems to rapidly changing operational environments. The importance of continuous model retraining and validation was noted, alongside the reality that AI systems are never fully autonomous and rely on ongoing human input, including data annotation, quality assurance, and oversight. At the same time, overreliance on AI can lead to a tendency to overestimate its objectivity or effectiveness, particularly in fast-paced operational settings.

The discussion also underscored the importance of robust feedback and accountability mechanisms. It was noted that there are currently insufficient systems in place to systematically assess civilian harm and feed lessons learned back into AI development and operational practices. Strengthening after-action review processes was identified as a critical gap. Greater transparency around system performance, including failures, was also seen as essential to improving both accountability and future outcomes.

Operational challenges were raised, particularly regarding the ability of commanders to incorporate gender analysis into fast-paced decision-making processes. Participants questioned whether expectations placed on commanders are realistic, given the volume and complexity of data involved, and emphasized the importance of conducting thorough analysis and data preparation in advance of operations. Integrating disaggregated data and contextual information into planning processes was seen as essential to enabling more effective and responsive decision-making during operations. Measures such as tactical pauses were also discussed as potential tools to mitigate civilian harm where feasible.

The role of industry and data governance emerged as a critical issue. Many AI systems rely on large-scale datasets sourced from the civilian sector, often with varying levels of transparency regarding data origin and quality. Concerns were raised about biases in widely used datasets, as well as the implications of relying on external or proprietary data sources. While some companies are developing tailored or synthetic datasets to address these issues, states must articulate clear requirements and demand systems that align with IHL and ethical standards. At the same time, the rapid pace of technological development continues to outpace policy and regulatory frameworks as well as their implementation, creating a persistent gap between advances in technology and oversight.

There was reflection on the broader incentives shaping AI development in military contexts. While there is growing investment in AI to enhance operational effectiveness and gain strategic advantage, comparatively less attention and fewer resources are directed toward leveraging AI for civilian protection. Bridging this gap will require not only technical innovation but also political will, clear operational demand from militaries, and stronger collaboration between states, industry, and humanitarian actors. Overall, the session underscored that gender-sensitive data and analysis are not fringe considerations but central to lawful and effective targeting and civilian harm mitigation in AI-supported operations, and that failure to integrate these perspectives risks undermining compliance with IHL and exacerbating harm to civilian populations.

Session 4: Human agency, judgment and control in AI-enabled decision-making

This session examined how the WPS framework can help ensure that human involvement in AI-supported military decision-making remains meaningful. Building on earlier sessions, speakers explored how gender analysis should inform the design, governance, and operational use of AI-enabled systems, while reinforcing accountability and compliance with IHL.

Speakers emphasised that the presence of a "human in the loop" does not automatically guarantee meaningful human judgment and control. Automation bias may result in human involvement becoming largely symbolic, with operators effectively "rubber-stamping" AI recommendations. This risk is particularly high in high-tempo operational environments, where cognitive overload, fatigue, and time pressure may further limit meaningful human engagement. Speakers stressed that ensuring legally meaningful human judgment and control requires attention not only to procedural safeguards but also to how AI systems are designed, integrated, and used in practice.

> "AI systems shape human behaviour in ways that extend beyond our conscious choices."- Expert

Gender analysis was identified as a useful lens for understanding how AI systems influence human decision-making. AI decision-support systems do not replace human decision-makers, but they shape behaviour, highlight certain patterns, and frame possible outcomes. These dynamics can subtly influence operational choices and may reinforce existing biases if not carefully designed. The relational nature of human-AI interaction also comes into play, with an emphasis that technological systems can shape human judgment over time, potentially eroding critical thinking and reducing the ability of operators to question

automated outputs. This dynamic may create tensions between the pursuit of operational efficiency and the precautionary obligations required under IHL.

Gender perspectives could inform alternative approaches to AI system design. Rather than focusing exclusively on technical solutions, this could include designing AI systems that strengthen human judgment and decision-making capacity. Examples included decision-support systems that monitor physiological indicators such as fatigue or stress, prompting operators to pause, seek collaboration, or reassess decisions. Such approaches could help reinforce reflective decision-making and support a culture of compliance with IHL, particularly in cognitively demanding operational environments.

The WPS framework was identified as a valuable governance tool for addressing these challenges. It was noted that the WPS agenda's human security lens, and emphasis on accountability, women's meaningful participation in security-related decision-making, prevention of conflict (including through disarmament), and protection offers a structured approach to integrating gender considerations into AI development and use. Speakers also emphasised the importance of mainstreaming gender analysis across the full lifecycle of AI systems, from data collection and model development to operational deployment and post-operation review. This includes careful consideration of what types of data should be collected by military actors (versus humanitarian), as well as potential risks associated with the use of sensitive gender-related data.

At the same time, tensions were noted between the WPS agenda's commitment to demilitarization and disarmament and the increasing militarisation associated with advanced AI technologies. Applying WPS frameworks to AI-enabled weapons systems risks legitimising technologies that are inherently problematic from a human security perspective: legitimising lethal AWS, when many actors, rather, call for them to be banned. Despite these tensions, the WPS framework remains valuable as a tool to draw attention to gendered harms, to strengthen accountability, and to reinforce the importance of meaningful human agency and ethical oversight.

> "Feminist security studies helps show how online gender violence seeps into the mainstream defence policy speak in which military AI is being developed and governed."- Expert

The discussion also explored broader political and cultural dynamics shaping AI development in military contexts. Speakers noted the growing influence of narratives emphasising speed, lethality, and technological superiority, which may be reinforced by gendered assumptions and toxic masculinity — even "lawless masculinity" — rhetoric. This was highlighted in the context of a global anti-feminist backlash in national and multinational policy spaces. Integrating WPS perspectives was therefore seen as essential not only for technical governance, but also for shaping the broader policy and cultural environment in which AI systems are developed and deployed.

Speakers emphasised that ensuring meaningful human control requires a shift from a binary debate (i.e. human versus machine) toward a more nuanced understanding of shared responsibility and responsibility by design. This approach would involve embedding legal,

ethical, and gender considerations directly into system architecture, rather than relying solely on human oversight at the point of decision. The importance of early integration of civilian harm mitigation and gender analysis into planning processes was also highlighted, noting that decisions made during system design and operational preparation can significantly influence outcomes during high-tempo operations.

Finally, the importance of multidisciplinary and multi-stakeholder engagement was underscored; for example, the WPS framework points to engagement with women's civil society in the development of weapons governance. There is a need for partnerships with institutions supporting human rights, more broadly, in relation to AI weapons governance. The potential leadership role of middle-power states in advancing responsible AI standards was also highlighted, including integrating AI considerations into national WPS plans of action and promoting responsible AI development internationally.

Overall, the session emphasised that the WPS framework provides a valuable lens for ensuring that human agency in AI-enabled military decision-making remains meaningful and legally relevant. Integrating gender analysis into system design, governance, and operational practice can help strengthen accountability, mitigate bias, and promote compliance with IHL, while also addressing broader cultural and political dynamics shaping the future of military AI.

Conclusions

The closing discussion highlighted several overarching insights from the roundtable. Participants emphasised that the challenges associated with AI-enabled military systems cannot be addressed through simplistic solutions. Addressing bias, accountability, and civilian harm requires a comprehensive, systemic approach that integrates legal, technical, and policy perspectives.

Participants reaffirmed that the legal obligations of IHL remain unchanged by the emergence of AI technologies. However, longstanding challenges related to compliance, accountability, and civilian protection persist and may be amplified in AI-enabled environments.

Several participants emphasised the importance of improving transparency and explainability around data sources, system reliability, and decision-making processes. Feedback mechanisms and data-sharing frameworks were identified as critical for improving system performance and strengthening accountability.

The discussion also highlighted the importance of ensuring that diverse voices are included in policy discussions on military AI. Participants emphasised that gender perspectives should not be treated as a niche issue but rather integrated into broader debates on security governance and emerging technologies.

Many participants stressed the value of multi-stakeholder dialogue in advancing this agenda. Exchanges between military practitioners, policymakers, civil society organisations, and

technology companies were seen as particularly valuable for bridging gaps between operational realities and policy frameworks.

Participants concluded that continued engagement will be necessary to translate these discussions into practical guidance and policy development. Nonetheless, government representatives emphasised how useful the roundtable was to their thinking and policymaking.

"Discussions like this guide our policy development, including on industry standards … the way in which this captures IHL, WPS and GGE LAWS and brings them together, this is not something foreign and defence ministries are good at."

"I cannot underline how important meetings like this are … Convincing our decision-makers is the hardest thing to do. WPS is not a popular subject in the military at the moment. To me, gender-responsive analysis is absolutely necessary."

"We as military LEGADs don't often get a seat at these kinds of tables, which tend to be policy heavy … The most important thing is we empower commanders to make the right decisions … IHL is vitally important to those who have to make those decisions."

"Tangible ideas about integrating gender into IHL programming and planning show the value of a multi-stakeholder format."

"We appreciate practical and on-the-ground perspectives — not what we get normally … inputs from different perspectives make one a better lawyer, better legal officer, better human"

There is a lot of focus on capability development, countering emerging threats, but sometimes these issues get lost in these discussions"

"This was a great opportunity to hear more practical and technical views."

"I have profound concern that there is a lot of work to do to bring IHL, WPS and military AI together — as weapons are being procured and developed now."

"This discussion has been the most substantive I have seen on this file."

The roundtable forms part of a broader initiative to advance implementation of gender perspectives and the WPS agenda in the context of IHL and emerging technologies. A forthcoming policy brief will further synthesise the insights generated through this discussion and identify potential ways forward for future action.

Participants

1. Mr Andreas Bilgeri, Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Austria
2. Dr Anna Rosalie Greipl, Research Fellow, University of Geneva
3. Ms Ayaka Sasagawa, First Secretary, Delegation of Japan to the Conference on Disarmament
4. Ms Beatriz Pino, Staff Officer (Gender), NATO/SHAPE
5. Mr Bryan Tomlinson, Second Secretary (Disarmament – Peace and Security), Permanent Mission of Canada
6. Ms Catherine Gribbin, Senior Legal Advisor, Canadian Red Cross
7. LCdr Charlotte Porter, DLH Legal, Global Affairs Canada
8. Ms Elia Duran-Smith, Analyst, Delegation of Japan to the Conference on Disarmament
9. Colonel Erik Op de Beeck, Defence Staff, Strategy Department, Global Ministry of Defence of Belgium
10. Ms Fleur Heyworth, Head of Gender and Inclusive Security, GCSP
11. H.E. Ambassador Frank Büchel, Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Permanent Mission of Liechtenstein (opening session)
12. Major Georgina Adams, Legal Officer, British Army
13. Ms Hayley Keen, Senior Policy Officer, Arms Control and Counter Proliferation, Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
14. Ms Heidi Kandiel, Legal Adviser, ICRC on New Technologies of Warfare, Legal Division
15. Colonel Inna Zavorotka, Head of the International Law Section, Legal Department, Ministry of Defence of Ukraine
16. Ms Jesse Berns, Product Director, Helsing
17. Mr Joshua Maziak-Amey, Disarmament & Arms Control Attaché, UK Mission to the United Nations, Geneva
18. Ms Julia-Silvana Hofstetter, President, WIIS Switzerland
19. Ms Karyn Stone, Senior Specialist, International Humanitarian Law Policy, Canadian Red Cross

20. Colonel Kazuki Tamai, Defense Attache, Delegation of Japan to the Conference on Disarmament

21. Ms Kerri Iwanonkiw, Project Manager, Land Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance Modernization, Canadian Department of National Defence

22. Ms Laura Bruun, Researcher in the Governance of Artificial Intelligence Programme, SIPRI

23. Ms Lauren Spink, Senior Advisor on Research, CIVIC

24. Ms Leylo Merali, Senior Project Officer, DCAF

25. Ms Marie Humeau, First Secretary, Permanent Mission of The Netherlands

26. Dr Megan Bastick, Gender and Security Fellow, DCAF

27. Minister-Counsellor Mika Ruotsalainen, Deputy Permanent Representative to the Conference on Disarmament and Disarmament, Permanent Mission of Finland

28. Ambassador Nathalie Chuard, Director, DCAF (opening session)

29. Ms Nathalie Gendre, Head, Gender and Security, DCAF

30. H.E. Ambassador Peter MacDougall, Permanent Representative to the Office of the United Nations and to the Conference on Disarmament, Permanent Mission of Canada (opening session)

31. Major Paul Owens, Emerging Technologies Policy Officer, Canadian Department of National Defence

32. Mr Pilar Masegosa, Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Spain

33. Ms Rebecca Mikova, Senior Project Officer, DCAF

34. Dr Renata Hessmann Dalaqua, Head of Integrated Approaches – Gender and Disarmament Programme, UNIDIR

35. Ms Shimona Mohan, Associate Researcher, Integrated Approaches – Gender and Disarmament, Security and Technology, UNIDIR

36. Ms Vanessa Murphy, Legal Adviser, ICRC