

**Speech by Minister for Foreign Affairs Pekka Haavisto at the conference
“2020. Capturing Technology. Rethinking Arms Control”**

6 November 2020

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Ministers, dear colleagues,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you, Foreign Minister Maas, for this timely and important initiative. In-depth discussion on new technologies and their impact on global security is indeed called for. We as Europeans should be at its forefront.

New technologies, in military use as elsewhere, hold a lot of promise, but can also entail significant risks. We are here today to look at **both sides of the coin**: to find ways to manage potential risks, while at the same time harnessing the full potential of technology for current and future arms control.

For my part, I will look at our topic from three angles: What needs to be done, what are we already doing, and what could we do more, or better?

Firstly, what needs to be done?

The key task today, I think we can all agree, is to **uphold and strengthen the existing arms control architecture**. In the current political climate, that in itself is a daunting task. But at the same time, we need to think ahead and **develop new solutions** to respond to new challenges – both technological and geopolitical. Not all existing instruments fully reflect today’s realities.

Some will say that agreeing new commitments will not be possible in the current security environment. But arms control was never a luxury to indulge in in good times. It is a vital necessity especially in bad times. If it was possible to agree on limits and controls in the coldest days of the cold war, it must be possible today.

For strategic stability, there is no substitute for dialogue between the United States and Russia. We welcome the ongoing talks, held most recently in Helsinki, and hope they will soon lead to concrete results: the **extension of New START** and continued dialogue on broader limitations.

The search for new solutions, however, concerns us all. We all can and should contribute. With new technologies, we might also be able to solve some of the problems related to existing agreements, by strengthening verification and transparency. This is what we should aim at.

What, then, are we already doing, individually and as the EU?

The short answer is – quite a lot, on several fora.

New technologies, digitalisation and artificial intelligence are key themes in multilateral cooperation across the board. Our work on these issues on **development and human rights fora** has direct relevance also for arms control. The fundamental principles guiding our work are the same.

At the UN, Finland is pleased to lead the work on artificial intelligence in the follow-up to the Secretary General's High Level Panel on Digital Cooperation. Similarly, we are heading the coalition on technology and innovation in the Generation Equality process led by UN women. At the Council of Europe, the impact of artificial intelligence on human rights was one of the priority themes of Finland's chairmanship last year.

As the EU, and as member states, we have engaged actively in the discussions on **lethal autonomous weapons** in Geneva. Our aim is clear: a jointly agreed framework for ensuring compliance with international humanitarian law, in all situations.

Within the EU, work is ongoing on the **civilian uses of artificial intelligence** based on the Commission's White Paper presented in February. In EU security and defence policy, discussion on **digitalisation and defence** was initiated under the Finnish presidency last autumn.

Now it is high time to raise the profile of these issues also on the EU foreign and security policy agenda. With today's meeting, that is precisely what we aim to do. I thank the German presidency for taking the lead here.

Embarking on this discussion, we should be guided by a few **key considerations**:

First, international law: International law, including humanitarian law and international human rights law, applies in full for all weapons systems, present and future. In any situation, states remain fully responsible for the use of military force and its consequences.

Second, multi-stakeholder dialogue: The dual-use character of many new technologies makes it essential to involve a broad range of actors, including science and industry, in the development of new arms control measures. Our meeting today sets an excellent example.

Third, a comprehensive approach: Discussions should cover the full spectrum of new technologies, AI and beyond. For example for small arms control, 3D printing is a growing concern. For verification, new technologies present new opportunities, such as the use of open source data and software.

Fourth, focusing on responsible behaviour: Potential regulation on the military use of new technologies should not hinder the development of civilian applications. In any new measures, the focus should be on ensuring that new technologies are used responsibly and in accordance with international law.

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Fifth, multilateral decision-making: For the EU, this is a given – global challenges can only be solved through global cooperation. To be effective, any new measures must be decided among all concerned countries. The UN, therefore, is the prime frame of reference also for this topic.

To come to my third question, **what can the EU do more, or better?**

Based on the **EU's unique strengths** – our bridge-building role, our extensive network of partnerships, and our uniquely broad external action toolbox – I see great potential for a more active EU role in tackling the challenges of new technologies.

As the EU, we have the technological cutting edge and the moral compass needed to take the lead in the search for global standards on the use of new technologies.

We have **useful experience to share** on agreeing complex legislation, balancing seemingly contradictory business and human rights interests, such as the EU data protection legislation. We have the potential to become the standard setter for ethical guidance on artificial intelligence, just as we have been for data protection. On lethal autonomous weapons systems, the EU's balanced approach can be particularly helpful.

Finally, it is possible for us to exploit this potential only if we coordinate our actions better internally, and collaborate more actively externally – with governments, civil society, businesses and academia alike.

Foreign Minister Maas,

I thank you for your personal engagement on these issues. I look forward to working with you and other colleagues to **rethink and revitalise** arms control.

Thank you.