

FIRST COMMITTEE MONITOR

NGO Reporting on the United Nations
General Assembly First Committee on
Disarmament and International Security
7 October–5 November 2013

NO. 1

7 October 2013 Preview Edition



FIRST COMMITTEE MONITOR

2013 No. 1

Reaching Critical Will | A programme of the
Women's International League for Peace and
Freedom

777 UN Plaza, 6th Floor, New York, NY 10017
ph. +1 212 682 1265 | fax +1 212 286 8211
contact: info@reachingcriticalwill.org

Editor: Ms. Ray Acheson

The views in this publication are not necessarily those of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom or the Reaching Critical Will programme.

Cover image: Jared Rodriguez / t r u t h o u t

Reaching Critical Will is the disarmament programme of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), the oldest women's peace organization in the world. Reaching Critical Will works for nuclear and conventional disarmament, the reduction of global military spending, and the demilitarization of politics and economics in order to achieve human security and social, economic, and environmental justice.

Reaching Critical Will is your primary source for information, documents, and analysis about the United Nations General Assembly First Committee and other multilateral disarmament conferences and processes.

On www.reachingcriticalwill.org you can find:

- A calendar of events for this First Committee;
- All editions of the *First Committee Monitor*;
- Statements, documents, and analysis from meetings of the First Committee, Conference on Disarmament, nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, Arms Trade Treaty, Programme of Action on small arms, and more;
- Research and analysis of critical issues related to disarmament and arms control; and
- News and information about civil society engagement on disarmament and arms control.

In this edition:

Editorial	3
First Committee briefing book: extracts.	4
Reflections on the UNGA general debate.	5
The "humanitarian campaign": where are we going?	7
Report on women and disarmament resolution highlights actions to promote women's participation	9
UNSC resolution on small arms relates to women, peace, and security	10
Civilian protection requires environmental protection	11



Reaching Critical Will

EDITORIAL: OUT OF THE ABSTRACT

Ray Acheson | Reaching Critical Will of WILPF

The backdrop to this year's First Committee is as bloody as ever. Civil wars, revolutions, occupations, armed violence in streets, schools, and homes. How many different weapon systems have been used in the last year? How many bullets have been fired? How many rockets launched? For the first time in many years, chemical weapons have been used. And behind them all stand nuclear weapons—possessed by a handful of countries, a constant shadow over us all.

First Committee often seems very disconnected from the “real world”. While the violence rages on around the UN, its committee on disarmament and international security adopts the same resolutions and member states deliver the same statements. But First Committee is uniquely situated to address many of the ongoing crises because it deals with issues of weapons and security.

Amidst the backdrop of a bloody armed conflict in Syria, in which over 100,000 people have been killed and over seven million have been internally displaced or made to flee their country, chemical weapons have once again been used against human beings. The use of chemical weapons is a serious violation of international law, regardless of which party to the conflict perpetrated the attack. But as most groups working for peace, justice, and disarmament have pointed out, it should not be used as a pretext for military intervention. As Palau's President said during the General Assembly's high-level general debate, “Discussion, not weapons, is the best way to resolve differences and ensure human rights.”

The agreements reached to eliminate Syria's chemical weapons have shown what the international community is capable of when it is resolved to solve a particular problem through diplomacy. The elimination of chemical weapons should not, however, be used to legitimize the ongoing violence perpetrated in Syria with conventional weapons. And the resolve demonstrated to eliminate chemical weapons in Syria must be equally applied to other issues of armed violence and disarmament.

First Committee is a good opportunity to build this resolve.

“While armed conflicts persist, international norms that condemn civilian casualties and demand the preservation of human dignity must be respected, and where there are gaps, we must fill them,” wrote the heads of several membership-based civil society groups affiliated with the International Campaign

to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) published on 26 September. These groups noted that the use of chemical weapons in Syria serves to once again underscore the dangers inherent in the possession of all weapons of mass destruction. So long as such weapons exist, there is a risk they will be used. Nuclear weapons, “an anomaly among weapons of mass destruction” because they have not yet been banned, are no exception. The actions decided upon at First Committee must address this anomaly as concretely as possible. The 26 September high-level meeting on nuclear disarmament clearly demonstrated the appetite of the majority of governments to eliminate the scourge of nuclear weapons forever. This sentiment should inspire innovation and action at First Committee.

Resolve will also need to be built on issues other than those relating to WMD. New action is needed on small arms, cluster munitions, and landmines. Just because these weapon systems have been regulated or banned does not mean that the job is finished. There are substantive gaps, for example, in the UN Programme of Action on small arms and light weapons that must be addressed. There are emerging technologies that need to be constrained or prevented, such as drones and autonomous weapon systems. Acts of gender-based violence must be prevented through the greater control over small arms and the arms trade.

All of these issues require new approaches. The recycling of statements and resolutions is unacceptable and increasingly untenable. Lives are lost while paper is shuffled around. Last year saw the introduction and adoption of a handful of new texts. Some of these, such as the mandate for a new negotiating conference on the Arms Trade Treaty and the establishment of the open-ended working group and high-level meeting on nuclear disarmament, led to successes. They were actionable and timely and addressed real concerns with new approaches. As we begin another year, civil society is looking to member states to once again act with purpose and move beyond the abstract into the concrete. •

FIRST COMMITTEE BRIEFING BOOK: EXTRACTS

To provide ideas and inspiration to delegates at First Committee, Reaching Critical Will has published a briefing book with background and recommendation on some of this year's most pressing disarmament-related topics. The non-governmental groups that have contributed to this book work on many different issues and weapon systems from a variety of perspectives, but they all share one thing in common: the desire to increase human security by reducing the impact of weapons through the development of international norms.

The following are abbreviated recommendations from each chapter. The full briefing book can be downloaded from www.reachingcriticalwill.org. Hard copies are also available from the RCW team at First Committee.

Nuclear weapons

At First Committee, delegates should: highlight the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons; welcome the announcement by Mexico to hold a conference on this subject in February 2014; acknowledge that the current deadlock of the disarmament machinery is not acceptable; reiterate that the catastrophic humanitarian impact of any use of nuclear weapons underscores the urgent need for a ban on nuclear weapons; and express the importance of outlawing and eliminating nuclear weapons now.

Arms Trade Treaty

At First Committee, delegates should: encourage swift entry into force of the ATT; announce measures to effectively and transparently implement the ATT; and participate in and contribute to substantive discussions taking place in side events and elsewhere to share expertise and strengthen capacity for the robust implementation of the Treaty.

Fully autonomous weapons

At First Committee, delegates should: welcome calls for international debate on this topic and describe how they will seek to advance discussions at the international level; welcome the UN report on lethal autonomous robotics and endorse its four recommendations.

Anti-personnel landmines

At First Committee, delegates should: emphasize that the Mine Ban Treaty is one of the most impactful and most universally accepted disarmament treaties; condemn any use of antipersonnel mines, call on public investigation of allegations of use by states parties, and publicize their contribution to the implementation and universalization of the treaty; report on prog-

ress made towards accession to the treaty; and vote in favour of the resolution on the Mine Ban Treaty.

Cluster munitions

At First Committee, delegates should: emphasize that universalization of the Convention on Cluster Munitions is essential to preventing any further harm from their use; condemn any use of cluster munitions, including the widespread use by Syria over the past year; report on any contributions to the implementation and universalization of the convention; report on progress made towards joining and stress support for the humanitarian objectives of the convention.

Explosive weapons in populated areas

At First Committee, delegates should: set out national policies on the use of explosive weapons in populated areas; endorse the statement from the UN Secretary-General that the use in densely populated areas of explosive weapons with wide-area effects should be avoided; and work with states, international organizations, and civil society to identify concrete measures that can be taken to prevent humanitarian harm from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas.

Small arms and light weapons

At First Committee, delegates should: call for the establishment an independent mechanism to assess UNPoA implementation; propose that the UNPoA, and its International Tracing Instrument, become legally-binding; propose a concrete way towards legally-binding international controls of SALW ammunition; and introduce new resolutions to remedy some of the UNPoA's most damaging substantive gaps, including universal binding norms regarding production, stockpile management, and emerging technologies in the field of SALW.

Gender and disarmament

At First Committee, delegates should: welcome the inclusion of a specific provision on gender-based violence in the Arms Trade Treaty; recognize the particular impact that explosive weapons in populated areas have on women; highlight the outcome of the 2012 Review Conference of the UNPoA, which expressed concern about the negative impact of the illicit trade of SALW on women and underscored the need for further integration of the role of women into efforts to combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms; and identify and discuss ways of strengthening and improving the biannual resolution on "Women, disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation". •

REFLECTIONS ON THE UNGA GENERAL DEBATE 2013

Ray Acheson | Reaching Critical Will of WILPF

The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) held its general debate from 24 September–1 October. As usual, disarmament and arms control themes were prominent at the debate, with key issues this year including the use of chemical weapons in Syria and the recent adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty text.

The theme for this year's debate, set by UNGA President John W. Ashe of Antigua and Barbuda, was "The Post-2015 Development Agenda: Setting the Stage". The focus on development is timely and necessary. The UN's 2010 report on the Millennium Development Goals warned that "unmet commitments, inadequate resources, lack of focus and accountability, and insufficient dedication to sustainable development have created shortfalls in many areas."¹ It is widely anticipated that most of the MDGs will not be met by the 2015 deadline.

Disarmament and arms control are directly related to development. As Nitin Desai and Jayantha Dhanapala have written, poverty and conflict often reinforce each other: poverty and inequalities can be a catalyst for armed conflict; armed conflict plunges people into

References by the numbers

Chemical weapons: 130

Nuclear weapons: 61

Arms Trade Treaty: 49

poverty and undermines development. Even in the absence of armed conflict, military spending absorbs resources that could be used to address poverty.²

Some of the interventions at this debate directly addressed the issue of military spending. "At a time of pressing human need," argued UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, "spending on weapons remains absurdly high. Let us get our priorities right and invest in people instead of wasting billions on deadly weapons." Representatives of The Gambia and Uruguay contrasted military and medical expenditure, with The Gambia's President Yahya Jammeh lamenting the money that Western countries spend on "killer technologies". Uruguay's President José Mujica noted that this excessive spending "ensures hatred and fanaticism," which leads to armed conflict, which absorbs even more money.

The overwhelming majority of member states spoke about armed conflict at this year's debate, directing their principal focus towards the ongoing crisis in Syria. Most spoke about the fact that 100,000 people have been killed and over seven million have been internally displaced or made to flee their country. Many spoke about the strain on neighbouring countries and the dire need for humanitarian aid. This kind of protracted armed conflict has undeniable implications for national and regional development, poverty, and inequality.

Amidst the backdrop of this bloody conflict, chemical weapons were used in Syria on 21 August in Damascus. UN inspections found that this action resulted in the deaths of numerous casualties, particularly among civilians. The vast majority of states addressing the general debate condemned this abhorrent and illegal act of violence. Most agreed that the use of chemical weapons is a serious violation of international law and welcomed UN Security Council resolution 2118 on the framework for eliminating Syria's chemical weapons.

But most states also were clear that any militarized response to the use of chemical weapons would be unacceptable. Country after country renounced the idea that more bloodshed or bombings could end the conflict or prevent future use of weapons of mass destruction. Many countries called for the case to be

continued on next page

Download or pick up your copy today!



referred to the International Criminal Court (ICC). "This is precisely the type of crisis for which we have established the ICC," argued Aurelia Frick, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Liechtenstein. "A referral to the ICC will not only ensure that there is no impunity for the atrocious crimes committed in Syria. It will ultimately also contribute to a viable political future for the country: it will isolate those who have committed the most serious crimes, it will provide redress for victims, and it will establish the truth."

Most representatives who spoke on the subject expressed firm resolve against the use of force as a viable means to solve conflicts. Several representatives also highlighted the hypocrisy of violating one international law in order to enforce another. Ralph Gonsalves, Prime Minister of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, noted that "there are those in this Assembly who hold a curious view of international law, as something that must be imposed against others, but which has limited applicability to them."

Indeed, the same countries that were originally calling for military strikes against Syria in response to the use of chemical weapons are some of those that possess nuclear weapons. And one of them, the United States, has not yet met its deadline to destroy its own chemical weapons stockpile as mandated by the Chemical Weapons Convention. This double standard did not go unnoticed. "In Syria, we disagree with the use of chemical weapons and weapons of mass destruction. But who has the greatest nuclear arsenal? Who invented chemical weapons?" asked President Evo Morales of Bolivia. The representatives of Guatemala and San Marino, among others, also drew connections between the threats of chemical and nuclear weapons, calling for action to eliminate both. Over 65 countries spoke about the dangers of nuclear weapons at this general debate. Some—those that possess them—spoke merely of the dangers of proliferation. But the overwhelming majority warned of the threats to security, stability, and humanity inherent in the weapons themselves. "The continued reliance on nuclear weapons and the limited progress towards nuclear disarmament are of great global concern," argued President Heinz Fischer of Austria. "Nuclear weapons should be stigmatized, banned and eliminated." The concern with nuclear weapons is truly cross-regional. The Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) reiterated the need for the "total and absolute elimination of nuclear weapons," while Prime Minister Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi of Samoa highlighted the "urgent need to have a treaty banning nuclear weapons."

While the abolition of nuclear weapons is often treated like a far-reaching dream, the same was once

said about regulating the international arms trade. Yet by the end of the general debate, 112 countries had signed onto the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), the text of which was adopted by the General Assembly in April 2013. About 50 countries welcomed the ATT in their general debate remarks, focusing on the contribution its implementation should make to reducing armed violence and human suffering. Many of these governments appealed to arms exporters to ratify and robustly implement the Treaty and to take more proactive measures to control weapons exports.

The positions and priorities reflected at the UNGA debate are important to keep in mind as move into First Committee. They give an indication of the direction of some of the conversations that will be held throughout October and they give delegations something upon which to build their actions. The interconnectivity highlighted in this report only scratches the surface of possibilities; we look forward to pursuing these and other connections over the next month.

Notes

¹ *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2010*, United Nations, 2010, p. 4.

² Nitin Desai and Jayantha Dhanapala, "A Peace Dividend for Developing Countries Would Pay Off," *New York Times*, 22 December 2000.

Reaching Critical Will, with the assistance of WILPF's PeaceWomen programme, tracked all references to disarmament and arms control at this year's UNGA general debate. The *Disarmament Index* is available at www.reachingcriticalwill.org. PeaceWomen maintains an index on gender and women, available at www.peacewomen.org. •

The establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East

Tuesday, 8 October 2013
13:15–14:30
Conference Room 7
North Lawn Building

*Organized by the Permanent Mission of Egypt to the UN
and the Egyptian Council for Foreign Affairs*

Speakers:

- H.E Ms. Angela Kane, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs
- H.E Mr. Ibrahim O. A. Dabbashi, Permanent Representative of Libya to the UN
- H.E. Mr. Desra Percaya, Permanent Representative of Indonesia to the UN
- H.E. Mr. Mikhail Ulyanov, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation
- H.E. Mr. Matthew Rowland, Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom to the CD
- H.E. Mr. Thomas Countryman, US Department of State



THE “HUMANITARIAN CAMPAIGN”: WHERE ARE WE GOING?

Beatrice Fihn | Reaching Critical Will of WILPF

The growing discourse on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons has changed the way governments, UN agencies, and other international organizations address these weapons of terror. Many civil society groups have clear ambitions for the direction of this discussion, as a catalyst for the comprehensive prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons.

Ever since the 2010 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) outcome document included a reference to the humanitarian consequences of the use of nuclear weapons, the discourse around this concept has grown significantly. It was followed by a joint statement on this topic by 16 governments at the 2012 NPT Preparatory Committee, by 35 governments at the 2012 General Assembly First Committee, and 80 governments at the 2013 NPT Preparatory Committee.

The Red Cross/Red Crescent movement adopted a resolution on the topic in 2011, which stated that the movement “finds it difficult to envisage how any use of nuclear weapons could be compatible with the rules of international humanitarian law, in particular the rules of distinction, precaution and proportionality,” and urges states to abolish nuclear weapons. In November 2013, the Red Cross/Red Crescent movement is expected to adopt a follow-up resolution, which will focus on implementation and action.

The humanitarian approach reached a new level when the Norwegian government hosted a conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons on 4–5 March 2013. The conference was attended by 127 participating governments, many international organisations, and civil society representatives. The five NPT nuclear weapon states did not attend, opting instead to criticize the meeting as “distracting” from their “work” on nuclear disarmament. The chair’s summary reflected the increasing global concern regarding the effects of nuclear weapons detonations, and recognized that this is an issue of fundamental significance to us all. At the end of the meeting, the Mexican government announced that it will hold a follow up conference on 13–14 February 2014 in Nayarit, “to continue the discussion.”

A few of the nuclear-armed states may have collectively dismissed the Oslo initiative on humanitarian consequences as “distracting” or as detrimental to existing “plans,” but in reality, the Oslo conference proved to be the most relevant meeting on nuclear weapons held at the intergovernmental level in many years. Rather than being divisive, it brought 127 govern-

ments together to acknowledge that the use of nuclear weapons would cause unacceptable devastation to human health, the environment, economies, development, infrastructure, and more; that there is no possibility of an adequate national or international response to such a catastrophe; and that this fundamental challenge to human and planetary survival must be addressed through preventative measures. There is no sign that the momentum on the humanitarian impact is diminishing—rather the opposite: it has gained forceful strength amongst non-nuclear weapon states, international organizations, and civil society. It has re-energized a nuclear disarmament movement that has struggled since the end of the Cold War to remain relevant.

At the same time, it has raised many questions about the direction of this initiative. One of the most common questions asked about the conference in Oslo, the coming meeting in Mexico, or any of the joint statements on the humanitarian impact is “where is this going?”

As with all international initiatives, actors have different aims and objectives behind the pursued paths. Some are using the humanitarian impact discourse to delegitimize nuclear weapons. Some are using it as a method of moving forward when many traditional fora and paths are deadlocked. And some, in particular civil society groups, are using it as a stepping-stone to a ban on nuclear weapons.

Whatever “motives” might be associated with this initiative, and whatever the end result of the initiative turns out to be, it is clear that it is making traction as a discourse and as action. Nuclear-armed states are expressing significant discomfort with discussions about the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons. By moving ahead with the humanitarian impact discourse, non-nuclear weapon states are setting the stage to change the status quo and are providing conditions for real progress on nuclear weapons.

For civil society actors such as the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), the work around humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons is a compelling way to make progress on reducing the reliance of states on nuclear weapons in the world. It delegitimizes the use and possession of nuclear weapons, emphasizing the unacceptable harm they would cause to people, the environment, the economy, development, and more. It moves forward where many arms control and reduction initiatives

continued on next page

have failed, by adding a new and refreshing dimension to the international discussion.

There is no doubt that this reframing has given a boost to civil society work around nuclear weapons, but it has also re-energized the diplomatic community. It has empowered those that previously have not been considered “key” actors on this issue, such as UN agencies, the ICRC, and non-nuclear weapon states.

The humanitarian discourse presents a key question stemming from the conclusion that nuclear weapons have unacceptable effects and must be prevented from ever being used: should these weapons remain legal for some or should we prohibit them once and for all? For civil society, the humanitarian impact discussion makes it clear that any credible path towards a world free of nuclear weapons must begin with prohibiting their possession. •



Reaching Critical Will

Round table discussion

TWENTY YEARS OF RENUNCIATION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS BY BELARUS, KAZAKHSTAN AND UKRAINE: LESSONS LEARNED AND PROSPECTS OF NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

*organised by the Permanent Missions of Belarus, Kazakhstan, Ukraine
and Reaching Critical Will*

Thursday, 10 October 2013

**1:15-2:30 pm
Conference Room 3
United Nations**

To be held on the heels of the High Level Meeting of the General Assembly on nuclear disarmament, the round table will provide its participants with an opportunity to consider the historic value of the decision taken by Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine and exchange their views on the future of nuclear disarmament.

Featuring among others:

- **H.E. Aleksandr Mikhnevich**, First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belarus
- **H.E. Barlybay Sadykov**, Ambassador-at-Large, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan
- **H.E. Yuriy Sergeyev**, Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations
- **Ms Ray Acheson**, Director of 'Reaching Critical Will'
- **Ms Gamba Virginia**, Director and Deputy High Representative for Disarmament Affairs

All permanent missions and permanent observer missions are invited to attend. For further information and to confirm participation please contact Mr Nikolai Ovsyanko, Counselor of the Permanent Mission of Belarus (e-mail: ovsianko@hotmail.com, tel: 212 772 2354).

REPORT ON WOMEN AND DISARMAMENT RESOLUTION HIGHLIGHTS ACTIONS TO PROMOTE WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION

Sofia Tuvestad | Women's International League for Peace and Freedom Swedish Section (WILPF Sweden)

The UN General Assembly resolution 67/48 calls on states, regional organizations, and UN agencies to promote women's participation in all decision-making on disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control, relating in particular to the prevention and reduction of armed violence and conflict. Following this resolution, states and UN entities were invited to provide summaries of their efforts to promote women's rights in disarmament. Replies from states and organisations were recently compiled into a report by the UN Secretary-General.

The report includes submissions from Argentina, Australia, Colombia, Cuba, Jamaica, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Portugal, Switzerland, Trinidad and Tobago, and Ukraine. The European Union also submitted a report, as well as several UN entities. A number of these reports draw mainly on efforts relating to more general gender mainstreaming and implementation of UNSCR 1325. While these measures are good as such, they do not necessarily imply that efforts have been taken to advance women's rights in disarmament specifically. In addition to this, a few submissions report on government support to civil society to promote the participation of women and women's civil society organisations in disarmament debates, namely around the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). These are positive developments, as continued civil society support will be crucial to ensure gender-sensitivity, including through women's full and equal participation, in implementation processes for the ATT.

Good examples include Australia's support to the participation of Pacific and Caribbean women's civil society organizations in the ATT negotiations, as well as to the participation of women in the UN Disarmament Fellowship Programme. The submission from Trinidad and Tobago lists efforts undertaken at international, regional, and national level such as the appointment of women to key positions on arms control, as well as support to publications and events on gender and disarmament. Switzerland rightly underlines the importance of gender-sensitive budgeting for programmes and projects in the field of disarmament, non-proliferation, and arms control.

UN Women conveys in the Secretary-General's report that the lack of reliable, sex-disaggregated data impedes policy development on how particularly small arms and light weapons (SALW) exacerbates gender inequality. However, besides this and a few other

exceptions, the submissions introduce little analysis. Future submissions should include more reporting on transforming support into action, as well as analysis on obstacles that need to be addressed and lessons learned.

Looking at recent developments in the multilateral arms control and disarmament arena, states should be feeling increased pressure to ensure their efforts are gender-sensitive and promote women's rights. The inclusion of gender provisions in the ATT has paved way for further recognition and commitments, conveying a growing recognition of the linkages between gender inequality and arms proliferation as well as increasing support for gender-sensitive measures in this area. This can be seen in the newly adopted first-ever Security Council resolution on SALW (UNSCR 2117), in which the Security Council urges member states, UN entities, and organizations to take further measures to ensure women's participation in policymaking and implementation processes related to combatting negative effects of SALW. It further recalls "with grave concern" that the illicit transfer, destabilizing accumulation and misuse of SALW has a disproportionate impact on violence against women and girls as well as exacerbates sexual and gender-based violence. Similarly, resolution 2106 on preventing sexualised violence in conflict, adopted by the Security Council in June this year, promotes the effective participation of women in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes, and refers to the gender-specific criterion of the ATT.

The resolution on "Women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control" will be tabled once again at this year's First Committee. Given recent developments in this area, delegations should take the opportunity to discuss and identify ways of improving the text, for example through stronger language on incorporating a gender perspective in disarmament-related programmes and policies. The Secretary-General's report on this issue next year should include gender analysis as well as information about preventing armed gender-based violence and the contribution of women to disarmament, non-proliferation, and arms control in reports on these issues.

Sofia Tuvestad is a political officer with Internationella Kvinnoförbundet för Fred och Frihet (WILPF Sweden).

UNSC RESOLUTION ON SMALL ARMS RELATES TO WOMEN, PEACE, AND SECURITY

Abigail Ruane and Maria Butler | PeaceWomen of WILPF

On 26 September 2013, the UN Security Council adopted its first ever resolution on small arms and light weapons (SALW) with 14 votes in favor and 1 abstention (Russia).

This resolution is part of ongoing work of UN bodies linking disarmament, human rights, and gender, including the passing of a resolution by the Human Rights Council (HRC) on the "Impact of arms transfers on human rights in armed conflicts" (A/HRC/24/L.32/Rev.1), the General Assembly resolution "Women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control" (A/RES/67/48), and work by Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, including the forthcoming General Recommendation on Women in Conflict Prevention, Conflict, and Post-Conflict.

Resolution 2117 recognizes the interrelationship between small arms and light weapons, women, peace and security, and human rights. It recognizes the disproportionate impact of SALW on violence against women and girls and how SALW exacerbate sexual and gender-based violence (PP 10). It stresses the importance of integrated approaches to SALW in line with SCR 1325, which recognize women's rights and provide for women's full, meaningful, and effective participation (PP 14, OP 12). It urges further measures be taken in facilitating women's full and meaningful participation and access in all policymaking, planning, and implementation processes, including through consultation with women's organizations and civil society and regarding disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) and well as security sector reform

(SSR) processes (OP 12). It also demands that parties to armed conflict comply with international humanitarian, human rights, and refugee law obligations (OP 13) and reaffirms the responsibility to protect civilians (PP16). It also urges states to sign and ratify the Arms Trade Treaty and encourages capacity building to enable fulfillment of treaty obligations (OP 19).

However, gaps remain in the text: gender was not integrated throughout the resolution but instead is primarily restricted to three paragraphs (PP 10 and 14, and OP 12). Consequently, issues such as sanctions regimes and arms embargoes are addressed without critical gender considerations.

Despite the above analysis and the importance of the discussion of SALW as an international security matter, we must underline the purpose of SCR 1325 is to prevent conflict and therefore challenge the prolific arms industry. It must be reiterated that the top sellers of arms are represent by the permanent members of the UN Security Council. Globally just six countries export 74% of the world's weapons: US, Russia, Germany, UK, China and France. The US sells 35% of the global total. The policies of arms exporters are incongruent and contradictory, and often unquestioned. We remind states that there can be no peace and security without women, and that women's rights are human rights while always challenging the root causes of war and violence.

Maria Butler is Director and Abigail Ruane is Associate of WILPF's PeaceWomen programme. •

CALENDAR OF EVENTS FOR THE WEEK OF 7–11 OCTOBER 2013

When	What	Where	Who
Monday, 7 October 13:15–14:30	The Nuclear Security Summit	Conference Room 3 Conference Building	Permanent Mission of the Netherlands to the UN
Tuesday, 8 October 13:15–14:30	Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other WMD	Conference Room 7 North Lawn Building	Permanent Mission of Egypt to the UN; Egyptian Council for Foreign Affairs
Wednesday, 9 October 13:15–14:30	Steps toward a Middle East weapons of mass destruction free zone	Conference Room 3 Conference Building	Permanent Mission of Egypt to the UN; NGO Committee on Disarmament, Peace and Security
Wednesday, 9 October 13:15–14:30	Cyber threats: information as a weapon?	Conference Room A Conference Building	UNIDIR
Thursday, 10 October 13:15–14:30	20 years of renunciation of nuclear weapons by Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine: lessons learned and prospects of nuclear disarmament	Conference Room 3 Conference Building	Permanent Missions of Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine to the UN; Reaching Critical Will

CIVILIAN PROTECTION REQUIRES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Doug Weir | Toxic Remnants of War Project

How would conflict look if it were treated as a peacetime industrial accident? What forms of assistance would be made available to assist affected communities, and which regulations and obligations would apply for both the polluter and the government? What balance would be struck between safeguarding public and environmental health and the needs of industry?

International humanitarian law (IHL) provisions for the protection of the environment during conflict have remained largely static since the late 1970s, even as peacetime regulatory frameworks, such as the EU's wide-ranging REACH system on chemicals in consumer products, have proliferated. Although widespread, intentional attacks on the environment have mainly been consigned to history, and environmental degradation remains a hallmark of conflict. The consensus view of legal specialists, and the International Committee of the Red Cross and UN Environment Programme, is that there is significant room for improvement in how the environment is protected, monitored, and restored, during and after conflict.

It would be naïve to underestimate the scale of the challenge. Conflict and the environment encompasses everything from the role of resource scarcity in triggering conflicts to environmental degradation from displaced populations; from the deliberate targeting or looting of industrial facilities to the civilian health and environmental legacy of substances released or abandoned during military activities. While the scope of the topic appears overwhelming, its very diversity provides opportunities: in this respect it is not simply an environmental issue; instead it provides entry points on security, development, gender, governance, peace-building, and the protection of civilians.

The protection of civilians during and after conflict is intrinsically linked to safeguarding and restoring environmental quality. Civilian areas subject to intense fighting can face localised, but severe, environmental pollution, with contamination from pulverised building materials, industrial materials, sewage, and munitions residues all commonplace. The capacity of affected states to assess and monitor these pollutants is typically low, while input and assistance from the international community may be limited, or provided on an ad hoc basis with little follow-up.

Of particular relevance to First Committee is our research on munitions residues. This has shown that data on the levels and risks posed by these contami-

nants in conflict or post-conflict settings are almost wholly absent. In some respects this was surprising, as many of these substances—which together could be viewed as toxic remnants of war—are recognised as hazardous and regulated in peace time. What little data there are available typically come from firing ranges, where contaminant levels in many countries have been regularly shown to exceed national standards for environmental protection.

Heavy metals, explosives, propellants, and obscurants have all been identified as problematic and, while some states have begun taking steps to reduce the use of the most harmful materials, more attention must be focused on their post-conflict health and environmental legacy. Until this happens, an EU citizen purchasing furniture will continue to enjoy greater protection from toxics than civilians caught up in conflict.

The Toxic Remnants of War Project invites states and NGOs interested in exploring initiatives on conflict and the environment to raise the topic during First Committee. For more information please visit our research hub www.toxicremnantsofwar.info or follow @detoxconflict. Doug Weir is the Project Manager of the Toxic Remnants of War Project. •



FIRST COMMITTEE MONITOR

The *First Committee Monitor* is a collaborative NGO effort undertaken to make the work of the First Committee more transparent and accessible. The *Monitor* is compiled, edited, and coordinated by **Reaching Critical Will** of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF).

Contributing organizations and programmes to this edition:

PeaceWomen of WILPF

Reaching Critical Will of WILPF

Toxic Remnants of War Project

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom Swedish Section

www.reachingcriticalwill.org | info@reachingcriticalwill.org



Reaching Critical Will