

## FIRST COMMITTEE MONITOR

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Reaching Critical Will is a programme of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

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- 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.

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Reaching Critical Will

# EDITORIAL: ICAN, THE BAN, AND THE PEACE PRIZE

Ray Acheson | Reaching Critical Will of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

In 2007 in Melbourne, Australia, a group of committed antinuclear activists founded a campaign that they envisioned would span the globe to work at grassroots and diplomatic levels to end the nuclear era. Ten years later, the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN)—comprised of 468 non-governmental organisations in 101 countries—has won the Nobel Peace Prize.

For most of its existence, the campaign has been working towards the creation of a treaty banning nuclear weapons. Working with partners within governments and international organisations like the International Committee of the Red Cross, ICAN brought back to the fore the humanitarian considerations of nuclear weapons. Most importantly, it demanded—and achieved—real action instead of rhetoric.

Working nationally and internationally, campaigners pushed governments to have the courage to stand up to those who wield the constant threat of massive nuclear violence, to declare enough is enough, and to take action against the worst weapons of mass destruction human beings have ever created.

On 7 July 2017, 122 governments voted for the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. 122 governments said yes to peace over power, to cooperation over conflict. In adopting the Treaty, “we acted on behalf of a grand coalition of committed activists, survivors, civil society, scholars and politicians,” explained Ambassador Courtenay Rattray of Jamaica on Tuesday. “They were the ones who steadfastly set aside the entreaties of the naysayers—that band of sceptics who at every turn told us we were embarked on a fool’s errand.”

Not that the naysayers have dissipated. The opening of First Committee heard from some of the small group of states opposed to the nuclear ban, as their clamoured to reiterate their tired rebukes of the Treaty and of those who support it. Mainstream media ran opinion pieces describing ICAN as “dangerous practitioners”.

It’s easy to laugh off the insults, but it will be harder to laugh off a nuclear war—which is the inevitable result of maintaining the status quo. Rather than a “fool’s errand,” prohibiting nuclear weapons is the only sane option when we’re faced with threats of use of nuclear weapons, threats of more nuclear tests, threats of ending non-proliferation agreements, and threats of abandoning legally-binding commitments to nuclear disarmament.

There must be an alternative to the insanity we face, insanity that is embedded deep within an apparently unwavering belief by some in the magical powers of nuclear weapons to exist in the world but never be used, to deter conflict whilst in reality raising the spectre of conflict—and of ending human civilisation and possibly the planet.

In his welcoming remarks to First Committee on Monday morning, the President of the General Assembly emphasised the importance of the Committee’s work “to the well-being and survival of millions of people around the world.” He urged delegates to focus “on how to save lives; secure lives; and improve lives.”

The best contributions First Committee delegates can make towards this goal is not to tell each other to not support international law against weapons of mass destruction—as the US delegation did on Monday. It’s also not to get into scraps for the last 30-45 minutes of every session, as various combinations of states did every day last week. The best contributions to saving lives that delegates could make is to actively support existing humanitarian disarmament laws and norms, to hold each other to account for violations through proper international political and legal procedures, and—especially for the hypermilitarised—to lead by example by eliminating their own stockpiles of death and destruction and ceasing the bombing and bombardment of other countries.

“If we listened to the tenor of the statements echoed through the Hall of this august organization by our Heads of State and Government just days ago, we would be forced to consider the ominous state of affairs that currently characterizes the world in which we live, including in the field of disarmament and international security, warned the Caribbean Community in its opening address delivered by Ambassador Pernelle Beckles of Trinidad and Tobago. Just weeks after suffering horrific devastation from hurricanes, these countries came to the United Nations to find, as the Secretary-General described it, “a world in pieces”.

But as countless delegates said during the opening week of First Committee, peace and security cannot be based on force or on weapons. “Disarmament is crucial to ending conflicts and preventing the emergence of tensions, generating confidence and stability,” said Ambassador Juan Sandoval Mendiola of Mexico. “That is, disarmament is necessary for peace and must continue to be an existential task for the UN that we should not postpone further.”

This year's Nobel Peace Prize is a testament to that. It is an award to the most diverse and intersectional grassroots antinuclear movement the world has ever seen. It is an award for peace, dialogue, and international law. It is an award to courage. To the survivors of nuclear tests and bombings. To the activists who have poured blood on nuclear missiles or chained themselves together across roads. Who have strategised tirelessly with like-minded governments, and equally tirelessly have engaged with those opposed to our efforts. Who have written letters, folded paper cranes, designed banners, made videos or graphics, or wore costumes to demonstrations. It is also an award to those we have lost along the way—including ICAN co-founder Dr. Bill Williams, who sadly passed away

around this time last year but perhaps would have worn his kangaroo costume to the ceremony in Oslo later this year if he had not.

Some may find some sort of comfort in describing ICAN, and the governments that share our vision and commitment, as irresponsible or irrational. But the courage it took for a bunch of activists to pursue an idea through to international law, despite being stripped of funding and at times dignity, and the courage it took for 122 governments to stand up to the power of the bomb wielded by a handful of aggressive, warmongering governments, is what reflects the best of humanity and the most promise for our future as a species. •

## NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Ray Acheson | Reaching Critical Will of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

As it does every year, the topic of nuclear weapons received the most attention during general statements in the first week of the Committee's deliberations. This year, however, with the threat of nuclear war looming on the horizon, the apparent US rejection of the hard-won agreement with Iran over its nuclear programme, and the recent adoption of a treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons, commentary on these heinous weapons took on a particular urgency.

Divisive positions on the nuclear ban treaty aside, nearly all delegations seemed to agree on at least two things: the rhetoric of nuclear war needs to stop immediately, to be replaced with dialogue and diplomatic initiatives; and the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) with Iran must be preserved. Even these perspectives, unfortunately, were not universal: the US and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) delegations contributed some aggressive rhetorical posturing in rights of replies throughout the week; while the US and Israel seem to think the JCPOA is problematic. Nevertheless, the overwhelming support of most of the world to calm the waters and ensure diplomacy is significant.

Participating states also seemed nearly unified in supporting the development of a weapon of mass destruction free zone in the Middle East—a promise that has been on the agenda for decades. But while most of the world seems keen to get moving on fulfilling this promise, Israel continues to express concern about how the process has been managed. It isn't clear what the next steps are, despite the roadmap agreed at the 2010 Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference.

Meanwhile, while there was near-unanimity on the above issues, opinions about the fate of 15,000 exist-

ing nuclear weapons—and their legal status—remained varied. While the vast majority of states called for an end to modernisation of existing nuclear arsenals and more vigorous activity towards nuclear disarmament, possessor states seemed to double down on their asserted "need" for nuclear weapons.

"For France and for many other States in Europe and Asia in particular, nuclear deterrence continues to play a role in preserving regional and international stability and security," said France. "The unpredictable international security environment we face today demands the maintenance of the UK's nuclear deterrent for the foreseeable future," said the United Kingdom. "We cannot ignore the current global security challenges that unfortunately make nuclear weapons necessary, both for ourselves and for our allies," said the United States. The Russian Federation indicated that it still supports the "vision" of a nuclear weapon free world, though argued that it is "premature" to prohibit nuclear weapons. China is unhappy it happened outside of the Conference on Disarmament.

72 years after the devastation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and 42 years after the entry into force of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)'s obligation on nuclear disarmament, it's difficult to see why any concrete activity aimed at eliminating nuclear weapons could be considered "premature". This is why the vast majority of states speaking during the opening week of First Committee reiterated their unequivocal commitment to nuclear abolition and why most of them also supported the recently adopted Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

"July 7, 2017 is a day that will never be forgotten—the day the majority of Member States adopted the



Treaty on the prohibition nuclear weapons,” said the Caribbean Community, noting that one of its members, Guyana, has already ratified the Treaty and more intend to do so soon. Meanwhile, the African Group said the opening for signature of the ban treaty “marks a watershed given the slow progress and frustrations that had characterized nuclear disarmament for so many years.” The Association of South East Asian Nations described the Treaty as a “vital step towards global nuclear disarmament” that “complements the existing non-proliferation and global nuclear weapons related instruments.” It highlighted Thailand’s ratification and the signature of several other states of the region.

The Nordic states—some of which supported the ban while others did not—acknowledged their division over the treaty. Yet they also argued that the Iran nuclear deal “shows that it is possible to achieve important results through diplomacy, even when the point of departure is difficult.” This understanding should be a good basis for embracing the nuclear ban treaty. The negotiation of the nuclear ban is “an example of the value of multilateralism and of the need to continue the multilateral negotiations on disarmament, and to strengthen the regimes established by existing Treaties,” noted Mexico. Those that tried to keep the Treaty from being negotiated because they knew the normative, legal, economic, and social impacts it would have on their support for nuclear weapons will now have to start dealing with those impacts. Most delegates at First Committee clearly believe that their best move would be embrace the rejection of nuclear weapons inherent in nuclear weapons and work to build a safer world for all by joining working to eliminate these weapons.




While the situation on the Korean peninsula poses a nuclear peril, said the UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, “we cannot lose sight of the fact that more than 15,000 nuclear weapons remain in the world.” She welcomed the adoption of the nuclear ban treaty as an “historic accomplishment,” noting, “The path to peace through disarmament does not lie waiting for the right security situation to materialize, while countries increase their military budgets and stockpiles year after year.” Similarly, the New Agenda Coalition—which includes several states that were part of the “core group” bringing forward the nuclear ban negotiations—agreed that the global security environment “is not an excuse for inaction—rather it reinforces the need for urgency.”

While the US, UK, France, and Russia, and a few nuclear-supportive allies, issued complaints about the futility or even “danger” of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, most understand this instrument



as an important step towards elimination. Jamaica argued that it would be “a misreading” to “interpret the outpouring of emotion that greeted the adoption of the Treaty as reflective of a naïve understanding of the realities of the international security environment. Quite to the contrary, we harbor no illusion that the treaty will immediately eliminate nuclear weapons. Rather, we firmly believe that it will, over time, delegitimize these weapons and strengthen the legal and political norms against their use.”

This was always the hope of the governments and civil society actors supporting this treaty, and this hope—and efforts to see it met—was awarded with a Nobel Peace Prize on Friday. Several delegations taking the floor Friday morning congratulated the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) on its honour, as did the Chair of the Committee. This award reinforces what the majority of governments and their populations understand to be true: that, as Austria said, “The intended prolonged existence of nuclear weapons as manifest in costly modernization programs and the failure to make progress in nuclear disarmament is a reason for nuclear proliferation. As long as nuclear weapons exist, the security of all States is in danger.” •

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Article 36

**Assisting Victims and Remediating the Environment:  
Putting the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear  
Weapons into Action**

**Side Event for UNGA First Committee  
12 October 2017 13:15 – 14:45  
Conference Room A, UN Headquarters**

History was made in July 2017 when 122 states adopted the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). The TPNW opened for signature on 20 September 2017 and over fifty states have already signed the treaty.

This ground-breaking treaty included a number of positive obligations for states parties. The positive obligations concerning victim assistance, environmental remediation and international cooperation and assistance will bring the treaty to life in affected communities and have a concrete impact on individuals around the world.

This panel discussion will explore what the implementation of the provisions concerning victim assistance, environmental remediation and international cooperation and assistance will mean for states party to the TPNW, and what steps should be taken in the run up to and following its entry into force. It is time to turn words on the page into action.

**Moderator:** Elizabeth Minor, Article 36

**Speakers:**

- Her Excellency Ambassador Pernelle Beckles, Permanent Representative of Trinidad and Tobago
- Bonnie Docherty, International Human Rights Clinic, Harvard Law School: “The TPNW’s Provisions on Victim Assistance and Environmental Remediation”
- Erin Hunt, Mines Action Canada: “Lessons Learned from Victim Assistance Implementation in the Landmine and Cluster Munition Ban Treaties.”
- Matthew Bolton, International Disarmament Institute: “Lessons for Environmental Remediation from Humanitarian Demining.”
- Oksana Leschenko, United Nations Development Programme : “UNDP’s Experience in Addressing Nuclear Contamination”

This event is sponsored by the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago to the United Nations and the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung.

# EXPLOSIVE WEAPONS IN POPULATED AREAS

Laura Boillot | International Network on Explosive Weapons (INEW)

Throughout September, 3,328 civilians were recorded killed or injured from the use of explosive weapons. This harm was experienced by civilians in twenty countries, with the highest levels of harm in Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, and Yemen. When explosive weapons were used in populated areas, 2,162 deaths and injuries were civilians, a level equating to 93% of all deaths and injuries.

Despite such high levels of civilian harm, few states have so far raised concern over this pattern of harm in their general statements at First Committee. Those that have, include Austria, Norway (on behalf of the Nordic states—which also includes Denmark, Finland, Iceland, and Sweden), and Switzerland, as well as the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu.

Austria emphasised that the use of explosive weapons in populated areas “has become the main reason for harm to civilians in many conflicts.” The Nordic states drew attention to the long-term consequences of bombing towns and cities, stating that “destruction of critical infrastructure such as housing, schools and hospitals also makes post-conflict rehabilitation, peacebuilding and reconstruction more difficult long after the actual fighting is over.”

Austria also reminded states that it is the use of explosive weapons in populated areas that drives people from their homes, becoming internally displaced and contributing to the refugee crisis. This subject was also the central theme of a report launched this week by Handicap International entitled “Everywhere the bombing followed us,” which interviewed Syrian refugees in Lebanon and found that the use of explosive weapons in populated areas drives multiple forced displacements and induces a pattern of displacement that increases the vulnerability of civilians.

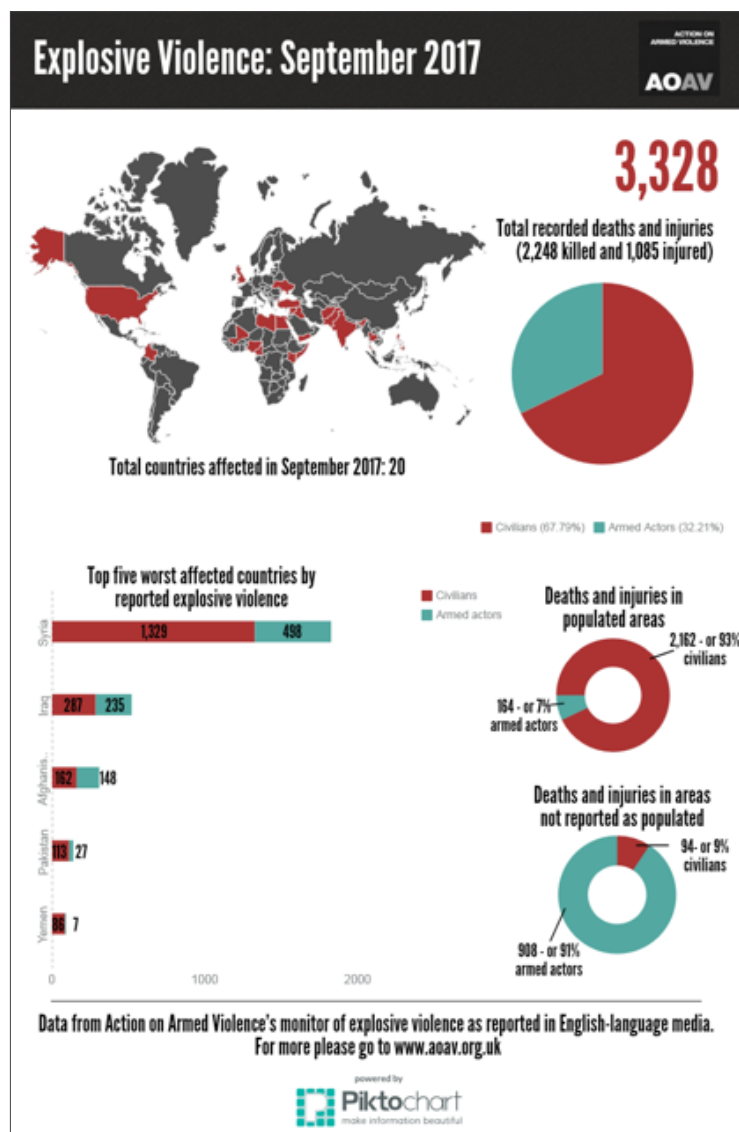
“The devastating toll caused by the use of explosive weapons in populated areas has been well documented,” the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs reminded states. “This is why the effort to seek a political commitment is an important step, which should be brought to fruition,” Ms. Nakamitsu said, further suggesting the convening of “expert-level discussions” to consider “concrete measures”. Austria stressed that the “international community has to address this issue and cannot

remain silent,” while the Nordic states said that they “would like to see many more countries participating in the ongoing discussions on how to enhance the protection of civilians in conflict.”

Colombia, Switzerland, and the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs spoke of the harm caused to civilians by the use of improvised explosive devices. Angola and Ukraine raised concern over harm presented to civilian populations after conflicts end as a result of explosive remnants of war. •

## Notes

1. Action on Armed Violence, *Explosive Violence: September 2017*, forthcoming on [www.aoav.org.uk](http://www.aoav.org.uk).
2. Handicap International, *Everywhere the bombing followed us*, October 2017, <http://bit.ly/2wElmXy>.



# FULLY AUTONOMOUS WEAPONS

Mary Wareham | Campaign to Stop Killer Robots

At least six countries and two regional groups have raised lethal autonomous weapons systems in their statements to the opening general debate of the UNGA First Committee on Disarmament and International Security: France, Germany, Hungary, Lebanon, Netherlands, and Philippines, as well as Indonesia for the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and Norway for the Nordic countries.

The NAM states called attention to the ethical, legal, moral and technical, as well as international peace and security related questions relating to lethal autonomous weapons systems as they are called at the CCW. They welcomed Pakistan's work as CCW president in securing last December's decision to establish a Group of Governmental Experts on lethal autonomous weapons systems at the Convention on Conventional Weapons (CCW).

Most of the statements saw states express regret that the first meeting of the CCW's Group of Governmental Experts on lethal autonomous weapons systems still has not been held yet.

Under "frontier issues," the UN Secretary General's High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu, also highlighted fully autonomous weapons in her UNGA First Committee remarks, stating that: "Rapid advances in the civilian and military application of artificial intelligence should continue to give impetus for formal deliberations on lethal autonomous weapon systems within the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons." •

# LANDMINES

Amelie Chayer | International Campaign to Ban Landmines

The Mine Ban Treaty (MBT) is one of the most universally-accepted international instruments. During the first week of general debate, delegations unequivocally demonstrated their commitment towards the Treaty.

Mexico referred to the strength of the MBT, while New Zealand said: "There can be few treaties which provide a clearer illustration of the compelling power, over time, of a norm laid down—initially in the face of formidable opposition—in order to protect our civilian populations." Chile shared its view that the MBT achieved a high level of synergy between international humanitarian law and disarmament, which it called a "virtuous relationship, from a human security point of view."

Angola, Colombia, Eritrea, Iraq, Sudan, Thailand, and Ukraine explained the impact of antipersonnel mines on their territory and outlined the efforts made to tackle the problem. Most called for further support from the international community. Algeria highlighted that in 2016–2017 it completed both the clearance of antipersonnel mines on its territory and the destruction of mines it retained for training as authorized under the MBT. Chile spoke about its new national law aimed at providing reparation and assistance to victims of landmines and explosive remnants of war.

In 2014, states parties adopted the goal of full treaty implementation by 2025. This aspirational deadline

was mentioned by Chile, the Netherlands, the Nordic countries, and Norway in its national capacity. Austria, the current president of the MBT, said that "while the aim [of 2025] is ambitious, it is definitely achievable."

Australia and South Africa called for further support for mine action, including for assistance to victims. The United Kingdom explained the components of its new three-year £100 million aid package for mine action. The Association of South East Asian Nations referred to the contribution of its regional mine action center, headquartered in Phnom Penh. The Netherlands said states need to step up efforts in light of "immense contamination challenges" in the Middle-East in particular, and it spoke about its multi-annual programme worth over €50 million.

The problem posed by the use of improvised mines by non-state armed groups, and the related clearance challenges, were mentioned by Colombia, the Netherlands, the Nordic countries, Norway in its national capacity, and Switzerland. The Nordic countries, in particular, said that "addressing large-scale contamination from improvised mines—and the suffering they cause—will require coordinated efforts, and dedicated resources from the international community."

Austria and South Africa called for further universalization of the MBT. Viet Nam, a state not party, expressed support for the humanitarian objectives of the treaty. •

# CLUSTER MUNITIONS

Amelie Chayer | Cluster Munition Coalition

Cluster munitions are indiscriminate at the time of use, because of their wide area effect, and also in the long-term because of the explosive submunitions they leave behind. Ongoing use in Syria by Syrian and Russian government forces, and in Yemen by the Saudi Arabia-led coalition, shows the horrible toll the weapon takes on civilians: over 90% of people recorded as injured or killed by cluster munitions are civilians.

During the first week of general debate, Austria, Honduras, and the Netherlands condemned the use of cluster munitions, while Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR), Senegal, and South Africa called on all states to join the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM). New Zealand said that "recent instances of use of this deplorably indiscriminate weapon ... have not been able to impede the growing normative influence of the Oslo Convention's ban of cluster munitions." Also referring to the norm against cluster munitions, the Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden) noted that the CCM has "established norms that go beyond [its] membership" and

that it has demonstrated its value with regards to the enhancement of human security.

Both Nicaragua—the newly-appointed President of the CCM—and Peru recalled the goal of a cluster munition-free zone in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Two of the countries most heavily affected by cluster munition remnants, Lao PDR and Lebanon, spoke about their experience tackling this long-lasting problem. Lao PDR encouraged states to support the implementation of its 18th Sustainable Development Goal on the elimination of unexploded ordnance. Australia called on states to "take all measures to reduce the suffering caused by ... cluster munitions," including by ensuring sustainable support for victims—a call that was also echoed by South Africa.

Viet Nam, a state not party to the CCM that is heavily affected by cluster munition remnants, expressed support for the humanitarian objectives of the CCM and called for international support on demining and assistance to victims. •

# SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS

Rose Welsch | International Action Network on Small Arms

First Committee discussions started on the heels of a mass shooting in the United States that killed at least 58 people and injured more than 500, prompting the Chair and several member states to express condolences to the victims in opening statements.

A number of member states acknowledged the tremendous human suffering caused by small arms and light weapons (SALW) worldwide, including at least 500,000 deaths every year, destroyed communities, forced migrations, and property loss. Eritrea stated that the major impact of illicit SALW proliferation is felt in developing countries, particularly in countries where state control is weak or non-existent. While some member states focused on SALW in fueling conflicts, others focused on their facilitation of organised crime, drug trafficking, and terrorism.

A number of states included ammunition in their SALW statements, with Senegal deploring the lack of consensus on ammunition at the Sixth Biennial Meeting of States (BMS6) of the UN Programme of Action of Action (UNPoA) on illicit trafficking in SALW, and CARICOM noting that they will highlight the topic in upcoming UN meetings on SALW. Sweden and Norway called for intensified efforts to control the illicit

trade in ammunition as well as SALW. Germany noted that fragile and conflict-affected areas need greater support in controlling their ammunition stockpiles and SALW, and said it is taking steps to provide that support. The High Representative for Disarmament Affairs said she is encouraged to see new initiatives on dealing with the problems posed by the excessive accumulation of ammunition.

Many states referred to the 2018 Review Conference (RevCon3) of the UNPoA, noting that it provides an opportunity to build on outcomes from BMS6, strengthen the UNPoA, discuss international aid and cooperation, and advance the International Tracing Instrument (ITI). Lebanon said it looks forward to RevCon3, particularly to focusing on gender aspects and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The High Representative for Disarmament Affairs also stated that eliminating the illicit trade in SALW is essential for the achievement of the SDGs, and RevCon3 provides an opportunity to take stock of progress toward this end. RevCon3 will be presided over by France, which promised to do its utmost to ensure that RevCon3 will be a success, and also promised to be vigilant in ensuring that preparations would be substantial, concrete, transparent, and inclusive.





Though the gender aspect of SALW was mentioned by several states, only Sweden specifically mentioned domestic violence, noting, "Societies are being brutalized, domestic and intimate-partner violence is increasing and the public space for women is reduced."

Most statements throughout the week were directed to the human costs of SALW, but several states also mentioned their environmental impacts, with Tanzania expressing its concern over environmental crimes such as the killing of endangered species.

While SALW discussions primarily focused on controlling illicit arms rather than destroying them, Colombia

highlighted its agreement with FARC guerrillas to lay down their arms, and surrender them for destruction as an important part of Colombia's commitment to disarmament. Ghana said it has demonstrated its commitment to reducing SALW proliferation and misuse through the destruction of more than 1300 illegal weapons in 2016, as well as an ongoing crackdown on local gun manufacturing.

A handful of states, most notably the United States, did not mention SALW in their statements. •

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## INTERNATIONAL ARMS TRADE

Raluca Muresan | Control Arms

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**D**uring the first week of this year's First Committee, a number of delegations stressed the devastating impact that the illicit trafficking of conventional weapons has on societies around the world. From conflicts and atrocities (Sudan, Lebanon, Australia, Tanzania, Switzerland), to an increase in terrorism (Nordic Countries, Argentina, Algeria, Spain, Nigeria) and international organized crime, including wildlife crime (Kenya, Tanzania) and drug trafficking (CARICOM, Tanzania, Sudan), states spoke on how arms trafficking and diversion can pose a serious threat to peace and stability and can undermine sustainable development. Trinidad and Tobago aptly noted, "Gun violence continues to be a relentless malignancy in our society."

A number of delegations made substantive reference to the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). Finland, the president of the Third Conference of States Parties (CSP3), called the Treaty a "bright spot" in the fight against the proliferation of conventional weapons. The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and Japan reminded delegates that the Treaty's main purpose is to reduce human suffering. Finland, Morocco, and Argentina highlighted the Treaty's role in combating human rights violations.

Work toward ATT implementation was described by the African Group, CARICOM, and 16 delegations that noted the Treaty's contribution to peace and security and regional stability and its role in protecting national security interests. CARICOM, Brazil, France, and Hungary also stressed the importance of all states parties involvement in Treaty's implementation, including major producers, exporters, and importers. Addressing the more practical terms of the Treaty's implementation, Peru and Netherlands highlighted the

importance of the Voluntary Trust Fund (VTF) while Guatemala noted that its ATT implementation project proposal was selected for funding by the VTF committee. Georgia, one of the vice presidents of the Fourth Conference of States Parties (CSP4) to take place in 2018 noted that "timely and transparent submission of national reports is at the heart of the Treaty." The same message for more transparency was echoed by Hungary, Japan, and Ghana.

Over 13 delegations also stressed the importance of the Treaty's universalisation. Zambia recommended the use of sub-regional agencies and stakeholders as a key way to promote and support the Treaty's universalisation. The African Group called for increased cooperation. Brazil and Angola reaffirmed their commitment to the ATT and Brazil noted that it has made adjustments to its legislation to be fully compatible with the Treaty.

A number of states highlighted cross-cutting issues. CARICOM, Nordic countries, Norway, and Lebanon stressed the importance of the gender-based violence provision and the Treaty's role in protecting women and children. Along with CARICOM and Trinidad and Tobago, Japan, the president of CSP4, highlighted the synergies between the ATT and the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons. France said, "The international community needs to mobilise more, with the support of civil society, to enhance compliance with international humanitarian law and achieve progress in the concrete implementation and universalisation of existing instruments including the ATT." Finland and Japan acknowledged the role of civil society in advancing universalisation and implementation of the ATT. •

# CYBER

Allison Pytlak | Reaching Critical Will of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

Approximately 20 delegations referenced cyber or information and telecommunications security during the first week of general debate. Most of these highlighted concerns about trends towards cyber attacks or even cyber warfare, and encouraged multilateral action on the issue.

Qatar emphasised that “electronic war” has become a reality that cannot be ignored, capable of destroying infrastructure and modern life. Indonesia also expressed concern over the threat by cyber attacks as well as the militarisation of cyberspace. Sri Lanka connected cyber to nuclear security by pointing out “the vulnerability of command and control, technical failures, human errors and cyber-attacks” on nuclear weapons and their systems.

Many delegations regretted the failure of the most recent UN Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on information and communications technologies (ICTs) to agree to a consensus report following their final meeting in June 2017. The High Representative for Disarmament Affairs noted that this session of the First Committee faces a “critical junction” on how to deal with the malicious use of cyberspace and hoped that states are able to “find a common approach to build upon the outcomes achieved by past expert groups.” The Republic of Korea said that the four in-depth rounds of GGE meetings have “taught us where we are now in terms of our collective efforts to ensure an open and secure cyberspace and to promote global cooperative framework.”

In this vein, there were references to the importance of articulating laws, guidelines, or other normative tools for behaviour in cyber space. Brazil stated that the recognition that international law and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations apply to state behavior in their use of ICTs “paves the way for a peaceful and stable and stable digital environment.” Brazil also urged the international community to examine the need to develop a specific legal framework, and encouraged member states to consider the adoption of a “no-first-use” norm with regards to offensive operations using ICTs. Italy supports developing norms in cyberspace and applauds confidence building-measures to that end. Nicaragua agreed that ICT use must be in line with the UN Charter and international law. Lebanon noted that existing international law provides solid guidelines but those are insufficient. Qatar said that penalising those who commit cyber attacks is necessary, especially for electronic piracy. China advocated building a “community of common destiny in cyberspace” and related establishment of a “peaceful,

secure, open, cooperative and orderly cyberspace”. Egypt noted that as cyber affects the infrastructure of all states, a “consensus” on standards is necessary so that cyberspace cannot be used negatively.

A few delegations provided updates on cyber-related activities or policy developments outside of the UN context. Paraguay has adopted a National Plan last April, to strengthen the security of its critical assets and to achieve a “secure, reliable and resilient” cyberspace. Thailand reported on behalf of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) that the regional body had convened a second Ministerial Conference on Cybersecurity in September 2017, at which member states expressed support for the development of basic, operational, and voluntary norms of behaviour to guide the use of ICTs in ASEAN in a responsible manner. Thailand said that this would be based on the 2015 Report of the GGE on ICTs. Similarly, Australia said it will continue to promote the common understandings of the GGE’s previous reports, guided by its own International Cyber Engagement Strategy. China has published “the International Strategy of Cooperation on Cyberspace” to advocate the principles of “peace, sovereignty, co-governance and universal benefit” for international co-operation in cyberspace.

A few statements linked cyber to other issues of the First Committee. Georgia said that it is examining the threats caused by new technologies and cyber security in relation to chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear weapons and materials. Trinidad and Tobago noted that increased cyber security has the potential to stymie the illicit manufacture, transfer, and circulation of illegal weapons, their parts, components, and ammunitions within the Caribbean region, which is why it supports the 2016 Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Implementing Agency for Crime and Security’s Cyber Security and Cybercrime Action Plan. Jamaica suggested that the international community should collectively tackle the issue of trans-national organised crime and cyber security, as the latter can wreak havoc on societies by exploiting vulnerabilities to cloud-based management platforms, critical infrastructure, and sensitive information. •

# OUTER SPACE

Jessica West | Project Ploughshares

In his opening statement to the First Committee as Chair, Iraq's Permanent Representative to the United Nations in New York, Mr. Mohammed Hussein Bahr Aluloom, took the opportunity to note the 50th anniversary of the Outer Space Treaty. He highlighted the need to make progress this year on preserving the security of outer space for all. Almost 30 subsequent statements by member states throughout the week expressed a near universal concern for the threat posed to the sustainability of peaceful uses of outer space by the potential of an arms race and weaponisation of outer space.

Nonetheless, divisions on how to proceed with additional governance measures remain. Efforts to develop new legal measures were supported by Belarus, Brazil, Russia, Indonesia, Egypt, and Sri Lanka, while the Nordic countries, Australia, Paraguay, Botswana, and the United Kingdom expressed support for normative measures. Ambassador Robbert Gabriëls of The Netherlands positioned these options as a question of timing, acknowledging the long-term benefits of a treaty on the prevention of an arms race in outer space (PAROS) but arguing that "in the meantime we should consider voluntary guidelines which can be implemented immediately." Others, such as Tanzania, called for adherence to existing arms control mechanisms, while Zambia emphasised the importance of maintaining no-first-placement of weapons in space.

The need for the Conference on Disarmament (CD) to end its inaction on arms control related to outer space was noted by The Netherlands, Viet Nam, and Norway, with Brazil's Ambassador Mauro Vieira asserting, "The paralysis plaguing the CD is unacceptable and must be addressed with a sense of urgency."

Addressing this inertia, a new initiative to advance consideration for arms control measures appears on the horizon. Russia and China described joint efforts to draft a new resolution on the establishment of a Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on PAROS, which was supported by Brazil. According to China's Ambassador Wang Qun, the "initiative is in line with the aspiration of the international community and is aimed at putting into practice the consensus of the international community of opposing the weaponization of outer space and preventing an arms race there." It is not clear if or how it is linked to their existing draft Treaty on the Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space, the Threat or Use of Force Against Outer Space Objects (PPWT), which has been divisive. Nonetheless, a similar GGE process on Transparency and Confidence Building Measures (TCBMs) in space, which issued its report in 2013, has received wide support in recent years, although ways of implementing its recommendations remain to be strengthened. •

# GENDER

Madison Goodliffe | Reaching Critical Will of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

During the opening week of First Committee, several delegations raised gender perspectives on topics ranging from the impact of nuclear weapons and small arms and light weapons (SALWs) to the necessary inclusion of women in disarmament discussions and processes.

The New Agenda Coalition (NAC) highlighted the adverse and unique biological impacts that nuclear weapons have on women. Chile also highlighted the gendered impacts that a nuclear weapon detonation would have on the international community, and the growing risk of this seemingly unimaginable catastrophe.

Sweden, Norway, Chile, and Guatemala spoke on the necessity for control of SALWs in the context of sexual and gender-based violence, explaining that there are immeasurable devastating impacts on socioeconomic development when women are victim to the effects

of these weapons. On behalf of the Nordic countries, Norway stated that international support of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) is extremely important towards preserving global stability and strengthening the fight against gender-based violence.

Austria mentioned the issue of women and children falling victim to landmines, namely in Iraq, Syria, and Myanmar, and went on to state that the outcome of the Review Conference in Maputo in 2014 was attainable, although extremely ambitious.

Thailand, Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, and the United Arab Emirates emphasised the need for women to be actively included in the discussion of disarmament amongst the international community. Trinidad and Tobago stated that "gender is an undeniable factor for peace and security. Women play a crucial leadership role in the ability of communities to counter violence and insecurity. Women must play a similarly

crucial role in disarmament.” To move forward with the disarmament process, the outlook regarding denuclearization must shift towards a view inclusive of women, it suggested.

Spain expressed concern over the lack of women present in the First Committee meetings, and went on to explain that as a nation, they are strongly in support

of the women’s rights agenda. Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu, the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, argued that only through disarmament would the international community be able to direct their attention towards global gender equality. Furthermore, she explained that “increasing dynamism in the First Committee” will help to ensure the equal voice of women in the process of disarmament. •

## DISARMAMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

Kathryn Balitsos | Pace University

**D**uring the opening week, several delegations made references to the link between disarmament and development, both in the context of military expenditure and in relation to the immediate impact of weapons or armed conflict on economies and livelihoods, including small arms and light weapons (SALW), cluster munitions, and nuclear weapons.

Chile, Peru, and the Nordic countries stated that SALW are a risk to development because their illegal trade and widespread use contributes to deaths and to sexual and gender-based violence. Nigeria remarked that terrorists use SALW to destroy communities and livelihoods, and to force migration. The African Group and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) expressed concern about the impact of SALW on the development of their regions.

The delegations of Dominican Republic and Guatemala, among others, explained that the life of citizens is endangered within states struggling with illicit SALW trade and use because the related insecurity further contributes to development problems.

Peru, Lao People’s Democratic Republic (Lao PDR), and Viet Nam said that cluster munitions hinder their

development. Lao PDR and Viet Nam also explained that the significant use of these weapons in their countries have had a lasting impact on their socioeconomic development. Cluster munitions are still being removed, which forces resources to be used on this instead of being invested into other aspects of their economies. Lao PDR explained that it has established its own Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) to eliminate unexploded ordnance because of the impact this would have on its economy.

Increasing military expenditure was described as a factor diminishing development, as it is a drain on the economy and sustainable socioeconomic growth. The New Agenda Coalition argued that “in a world where the basic human needs of billions are not being met the growing spending on nuclear weapons is both unacceptable and unsustainable.” Cuba, Lebanon, and Tanzania echoed this position. The New Agenda Coalition further suggested, “Governments should direct much-needed resources towards socio-economic development.” This position was also expressed by Cuba, Ghana, Kenya, Lebanon, Maldives, Nicaragua, and Paraguay in their calls for reduction in military spending in order for greater focus on the SDGs. •

## SIDE EVENT: THE EFFECT OF EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES ON NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT AND NON-PROLIFERATION

Allison Pytlak | Reaching Critical Will of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom

**T**he first side event of this year’s First Committee was a forward-looking one, considering “The Effect of Emerging Technologies on Nuclear Disarmament and Non-proliferation,” convened by the Mission of Kazakhstan and the UN Office of Disarmament Affairs.

Ms. Nakamitsu Izumi, the High Representative for Disarmament, noted that new technological developments have the long-term potential to not only

change how wars are fought, but can also impact international humanitarian law and human rights, citing the examples of “unmanned” aerial vehicles (UAVs) and cyber operations. She asked if the international community has enough understanding of these issues to make proper judgments and determine the scope of governance needed to prevent such technologies being destabilised or misused. Ms. Izumi urged including a diversity of actors in any policy discussions on these subjects.



Dr. Joan Freese-Johnson, Chair of National Security at the US Naval War College, focused her presentation on outer space, highlighting that the extremely dual-use nature of a lot of space technology creates security dilemmas because while most countries are aware of what technology others possess, there is less clarity around the intention for which they will be used. In addition, the near impossibility of defining what is a “space weapon” has become the primary obstacle to addressing this issue in the context of arms control. While there is a high degree of cooperation between technical communities working on these issues, there has not yet been a break through at the political level.

Dr. James Acton with the Carnegie Endowment for National Peace described the status of hypersonic weapons development, which largely refers to ballistic missiles that can re-steer themselves; boost glide vehicles; and hypersonic cruise missiles. He said that the United States, United Kingdom, and China have the most well developed boost glide systems and outlined the status of each. However, this has created the risk of a “nascent arms race” between the three countries and the existence of these weapons may exacerbate the risk of crisis escalation. He concluded by stating that at present there is not much evidence of action being taken to mitigate these risks.

The final panelist was Dr. Paul Scharre, Senior Fellow and Director of the Technology and National Security Program at the Center for New American Security. His presentation broke down the differences between automation, autonomy, and intelligence, noting however that in general, today’s artificial intelligence (AI) remains “narrow”. He explained that AI’s military applications include logistics and surveillance, and activities or items that are both armed and un-armed. He said it is unlikely that there is a role for it in nuclear development because it is largely an enabling technology. The largest impact on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation is likely to be in how AI impacts conventional warfare, broader stability, and the ability to control escalation. There is also the potential of automating many of the systems linked to nuclear weapons, like warning systems, but this also carries risks.

The discussion focused on next steps for outer space security, and if the word “intelligence” is misleading, because it denotes something that is also “smart”. One participant suggested that a moratorium or cessation of testing of hypersonic systems be the best way to prevent an arms race or further development of these weapons. •

## SIDE EVENT: AUTONOMOUS WEAPON SYSTEMS: UNDERSTANDING LEARNING ALGORITHMS AND BIAS

Allison Pytlak | Reaching Critical Will of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom

The second side event convened by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) at this year’s First Committee considered challenges presented by the existence of biased algorithms in machine learning and artificial intelligence (AI)—and what this could mean for autonomous weapon systems.

During her introduction, Kerstin Vignard of UNIDIR explained that bias is currently a hot topic in societal conversations about machine learning and AI. Whereas it used to be assumed that data is objective and neutral, there is growing awareness that this is not the case, that bias exists, and thus needs more attention. Weapons technology is not immune from this challenge.

Dr. Cathy O’Neil, a mathematician, and author of the blog [mathbabe.org](http://mathbabe.org) and several books on data science, including *Weapons of Math Destruction*, explained what it means to have bias in an algorithm and questioned our “blind faith” in their neutrality. Using

examples from algorithm-based corporate hiring, teacher evaluation, and child protection processes, she illustrated that the data informing any algorithm will always have a bias if it is derived from human behaviour and decisions, which cannot help but be biased in some simply because our views and perspectives have unique predispositions. She noted that many people trained to build algorithms do not have relevant ethical backgrounds or training from which to factor in the real human consequences of the algorithms they are building and optimising.

The second panelist, Dr. David Danks, of Carnegie Mellon University, largely focused on the importance of how one defines what is “success” with respect to the goal or outcome of an algorithm. For example, determining what is success in the context of an autonomous weapon is difficult. International humanitarian law (IHL) could give us some parameters but sometimes IHL is unclear or vague, and military or battle contexts can vary. He explained that values can be embedded into the success criteria for a weapon

using historical data, but that data can be biased, as was already discussed. Dr. Danks noted that sometimes bias is good and is deliberately introduced to counteract other bias; it can also arise by accident as the result of having multiple people working on different elements of a system who are not communicating with one another, or do not have perspective on the system's totality. Finally he touched on the proposal of keeping humans in the loop, also referred to as meaningful human control, which comes with benefits but also risks, particularly if the humans misinterpret the systems they are monitoring, or lack sufficient and/or relevant training.

Ambassador Gill of India offered informal remarks as a discussant. The Ambassador is chairing the group of governmental experts on lethal autonomous weapons systems (LAWS) set to meet in November, but drew on his engineering background for this discussion. He

responded to points raised by the panelists and emphasised being careful about jumping to conclusions about what are good success criteria. The unique problems of warfare give scope for misinformation in how machines and humans interact, an aspect of the discussion relevant to discussions on LAWS. The Ambassador suggested that a "distributed technology governance regime" may be the most viable approach to an issue like this, in order to account of the different layers and levels of people involved—from industry and developers to national governments, and the international community.

The discussion portion was held under Chatham House rules so cannot be summarised. Some key themes that emerged were accountability, adequate human training, and machine interaction; narrow versus general intelligence; as well as delving deeper into the concepts of bias and success. •

## SIDE EVENT: A DRAFT TREATY FOR A WMD FREE ZONE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Dorin Khoiee-Abbasi | Pace University

This side event, hosted by the Permanent Mission of Ireland, the British American Security Information Council (BASIC), and the American Iranian Council (AIC), examined the experiences of different regions in achieving weapons of mass destruction (WMD) free zones, while considering the specific context and challenges of the Middle East. In their opening remarks, Jackie O'Halloran of Ireland and Paul Ingram of BASIC acknowledged the strong commitment of civil society in disarmament work. They agreed that civil society engagement is necessary to create dialogue for disarmament and creativity, specifically in the Middle East.

Emad Kiyaei, Policy Adviser to the AIC, presented the background of the Middle East with respect to nuclear proliferation, citing this as one of the biggest problems in the region due to the security issues facing countries and the need to ensure that conflict does not spread. He provided two examples that indicate there is hope for achieving a WMD-free zone in the region. The first is the agreement of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) with Iran, seen as the "bedrock for boosting nuclear non-proliferation in the region". This deal has established a blueprint for how to take action involving political will, without war. The second example is of the success of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in lowering stockpiles of chemical weapons. Mr. Kiyaei said that one major obstacle remains to establishing a WMD-free zone and that is Israeli nuclear weapons, as they continue to pose a great threat, particularly

because Israel is not a party to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

The founder of the Israeli Disarmament Movement, Sharon Dolev, spoke about Israel. She explained that there needs to be more disarmament education within the country, and a better understanding of the situation in order to help move forward the establishment of a WMD-free zone. She posed several questions to the audience concerning the current obstacles to Israel's disarmament, such as how to approach the challenge of non-state actors; how to remove WMD in a peaceful way; and if peace, or disarmament, should come first. She also asked how to create a mechanism for states that do not talk to each other to do so, and suggested that capacity building would help as well as more good will from states. The Israeli Disarmament Movement has developed a draft treaty to advance establishing a WMD-free zone in the Middle East, which was presented. The draft is not meant for negotiation, but rather as a starting point for constructive dialogue.

All of the speakers indicated that they believe a WMD-free zone in the Middle East will occur but it is dependent on timing and political will. The discussion underscored earlier points about the complexity and instability found in many countries of the region, as well as about the important role of civil society and significance of the JCPOA as proof that progress is possible. •

# SIDE EVENT: THE TPNW AND THE NPT: LEGAL AND POLITICAL ASPECTS OF THEIR INTERACTION

Madison Goodliffe | Reaching Critical Will of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

The relationship between the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) has been a highly debated topic since the beginning of the nuclear ban process. This debate continued during the opening week of the First Committee meetings, with some nuclear-armed and nuclear-supportive states arguing in their general debate statements that the TPNW will undermine the NPT and ban-supporting countries arguing that the two instruments are complementary.

On 5 October, the Permanent Missions of Austria, Algeria, Thailand and Guatemala, along with the Arms Control Association, hosted a side event to discuss the possible effect of the TPNW on the NPT, the legal perspective of the overlapping of the two treaties, and how the international community should move forward in pursuing a world free of nuclear weapons. The panel consisted of Daryl Kimball of the Arms Control Association, Gaukhar Mukhatzhanova of the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies, and Zia Mian of Princeton University.

Daryl Kimball began by stating that he believes the TPNW will strengthen the NPT, although the impact of the TPNW will be made noticeable in the years to come. He went on to say that the TPNW has the ability to push the world in the direction of disarmament. The critics of the TPNW have said that the treaty is deeply ineffective and does not strengthen safeguard standards, however, Mr. Kimball explained that the two treaties do not conflict because the states that support the TPNW also explicitly support the NPT.

Gaukhar Mukhatzhanova analysed the relationship between the TPNW and the NPT from a legal perspective. She stated that from her research, she believes that the two treaties are compatible with one another. Critics perceive the TPNW as the NPT's weaker counterpart that possesses the ability to "distract" the international community from the NPT's most basic foundations; however, she emphasised that this is not true. There is room for both treaties, she argued, noting that they have the ability to support each other in regards to safeguard standards and the enforcement of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). Ms. Mukhatzhanova expressed the need for the international community to "agree to disagree" about the implications of the TPNW, whether these effects are positive or negative, in order to move

forward and focus necessary attention on the bigger picture: global disarmament.

Professor Zia Mian gave an extremely thought-provoking perspective on the effectiveness of the NPT. He explained that the international community should not be raising the NPT to the high standard it is being held to: "Looking backwards we would not have written the NPT the way it is now." He highlighted the fact that France and China had not signed the NPT for twenty years, and to this date, there continues to be four nuclear-armed states outside of the treaty. He believes that the TPNW has exposed the polarisation of the international community—something that is necessary to move forward with the discussion of disarmament. Dr. Mian expressed the necessity for states supportive of the TPNW to participate in collective talks amongst each other, instead of getting tangled up in the proponents of the NPT. •

upcoming side event 13/10/17

## HUMANITARIAN IMPACT OF ARMED DRONES

UNGA First Committee  
Conference Room 9, UNHQ  
13 October (13:15 - 14:30)



### About the Event

Humanitarian harm from the use of armed drones within and outside of armed conflict is a distinct and urgent problem.

The use of armed drones has raised significant challenges to international law, human rights, ethics and morality, peace and security, environmental protection, development, transparency, surveillance, privacy, policing, and more.

WILPF, Article 36, and the International Disarmament Institute at Pace University have published a collaborative study on the humanitarian impacts of armed drones, which aims to refocus the debate about drones on the harm caused to people by these weapons as specific technologies of violence.

This event features the editors and several authors of the study, which is being launched at First Committee.

### Speakers

- Ms. Elizabeth Minor, Moderator  
Article 36
- Mr. Matthew Bolton  
International Disarmament Institute, Pace University  
Introduction to the study
- Mr. Shahzad Akbar  
Foundation for Fundamental Rights  
Humanitarian impacts of armed drones
- Ms. Anna Diakun  
American Civil Liberties Union  
Secrecy and transparency on armed drones
- Ms. Ray Acheson  
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom  
Gender perspectives on armed drones

### CO-ORGANISERS



# 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, the disarmament programme of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF).

*Contributing organisations and campaigns to this edition:*

Campaign to Stop Killer Robots  
Cluster Munition Coalition  
Control Arms  
International Action Network on Small Arms  
International Campaign to Ban Landmines  
International Network on Explosive Weapons  
Pace University  
Project Ploughshares  
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

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