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Reaching Critical Will is a programme of the
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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: Demonstration at Pine Gap military base in Australia © Tim Wright

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 on issues related to disarmament and arms control of many different weapon systems; militarism and military spending; and gendered aspects of the impact of weapons and of disarmament processes.

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IN THIS EDITION:

Editorial	3
Nuclear weapons	4
Feature: Courage, foresight, and accountability in nuclear disarmament	5
Biological and chemical weapons	7
Armed drones	8
Explosive weapons in populated areas	9
Side event: Preventing harm from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas	10
Side event: The use of explosive weapons in populated areas and forced displacement	10
Side event: Improvised explosive devices	11
Arms Trade Treaty.	12
Small arms and light weapons	12
Landmines.	13
Cluster munitions	14
Depleted uranium.	14
Cyber.	15
Side event: The UN, cyberspace, and international peace and security.	16
Outer space	17
Gender and disarmament	17
Disarmament and development	18
Protection of the environment in relation to armed conflict.	19



Reaching Critical Will

EDITORIAL: ON THE PURSUIT OF POWER THROUGH VIOLENCE, AND THOSE WHO CONFRONT THIS

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

What is it about the current world order that is so compelling to some governments?

Is it the relentless, illegal, and immoral bombardment in towns and cities in Syria and Yemen and Iraq and many other countries?

Is the astronomically high numbers of forcibly displaced people (over 65 million) or of refugees (over 21 million)?¹

Is it the increasing tensions between the leaders of countries like the United States and Russia that like to think of themselves as “superpowers” and flex their machismo through large, theatrical military exercises and threats of nuclear war?²

This question comes to mind because, despite all the evidence suggesting that the world is on fire, a number of governments appear committed to driving aggressively forward on the path to more violence, more conflict, more poverty, more inequality, more misery, more death, and perhaps, ultimately, armageddon.

We have the United Kingdom and United States selling billions of dollars worth of weapons to Saudi Arabia to bomb hospitals, schools, and homes in Yemen; Russia helping the Syrian government destroy Aleppo before the year's end;³ the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) testing nuclear weapons saying it needs them for its security; the United States saying the DPRK is delusional whilst performing its own nuclear weapon tests and saying a nuclear weapons ban is polarising and not credible.

The United States was not the only country to denounce the efforts of the majority of states from trying to outlaw the most dangerous, ridiculously overwrought weapon of all time. Russia and France also condemned the initiative to prohibit nuclear weapons through a legally binding treaty, with Russia saying it risks “plunging the world into chaos” and France saying it is delusional to think that it “could have the slightest concrete impact”.

Contradictory opposition aside, the bottom line is that these states—and some of their nuclear-supportive allies—believe that nuclear weapons bring them security and that stigmatising and making illegal their possession or reliance upon these weapons of terror is an affront to their apparent “right” to dominance through massive nuclear violence.

The current economic and political profitability of war and violence and weapons is likely the core motivation for these countries' positions in this forum and the world beyond. Fortunately, these states are vastly outnumbered and the majority has not been silent about their keenness to move forward across a number of disarmament agenda items. Many states seem to agree with Liberia “that the attainment of peace and the maintenance of security cannot become a reality unless the forces responsible for raising the levels especially of weapon-related anxiety are brought under some reasonable form of effective international control.”

The determination to take action in the interest of humanity can be seen in the statements of those countries seeking to end the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, reach universalisation of the instruments banning cluster munitions and antipersonnel landmines, effectively implement the Arms Trade Treaty, prevent the development of autonomous weapons, and establish new laws and regulations for drones, incendiary weapons, outer space, and the cyber sphere.

With the first week of general debate behind us, states only have a few weeks left to shape and agree upon the path forward for many of these critical issues. While a militarily-powerful minority clambers to maintain what they apparently see as an “advantage” through weapons and war, it's up to the rest of the world to remind them that their own citizens—and thus their own states—suffer from their intransigence and belligerence.

It was clear from the first week of general debate that the majority of states support a nuclear weapon ban treaty, with the African Group, Arab Group, Caribbean Community, Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, Association of Southeast Asian Nations, as well as European states such as Austria, Ireland, and Liechtenstein and Pacific islands countries such as Fiji and New Zealand, supporting the OEWG recommendation to commence ban negotiations next year. The US delegation argued that the assessment that the majority of countries supports a prohibition treaty “overlook[s] the billions of people who reside in countries that count on nuclear weapons as a deterrent or who are protected by an extended deterrent.” But in such a calculation, it is countries that are counted, not citizens of countries. For one thing, the UN General Assembly is not subject to voting by

individual citizens from within states. But perhaps more importantly, these citizens did not have a say over the development of nuclear weapons by their governments. Nuclear weapons have always been developed in secret, without public consent and away from public scrutiny, and at the expense of social and economic development. The same is true by citizens of countries that have entered into security arrangements with nuclear-armed states. Many populations, such as those of Australia and Japan, want their countries to pursue a nuclear weapon ban treaty and eliminate nuclear weapons.

We have “a unique opportunity” at this session of the First Committee “to move forward towards prohibiting the most destructive and inhumane weapon ever created”, said Lebanon. While France has stated its intention to “vigorously oppose” this treaty, and while it seems Russia and the United States will as well (the

UK did not mention the ban treaty and China has not yet spoken), the resolution to establish negotiations is on the table and it appears from general debate statements that it will go forward. •

Notes

1. Figures from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/figures-at-a-glance.html>.
2. Matt Payton, “Russia launches massive nuclear war training exercise with ‘40 million people’,” *Independent*, 7 October 2016, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/russia-nuclear-weapon-training-attack-radiation-moscow-vladimir-putin-a7345461.html>; Marcus Weisgerber, “The US Air Force Just Dropped Two Fake Nukes,” *Defense One*, 6 October 2016, <http://www.defenseone.com/business/2016/10/us-air-force-just-dropped-two-fake-nukes/132180>.
3. Patrick Wintour, “Eastern Aleppo could be destroyed by Christmas, warns UN Syria envoy,” *The Guardian*, 6 October 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/oct/06/aleppo-could-be-destroyed-by-christmas-warns-un-envoy-for-syria>.

NUCLEAR WEAPONS

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

All eyes are on the ban treaty this year at First Committee. Coming on the heels of the August session of the open-ended working group (OEWG) on taking forward multilateral negotiations for nuclear disarmament, delegation after delegation indicated their support for the group’s recommendation that the General Assembly convene a conference in 2017 to negotiate a legally binding treaty for the prohibition of nuclear weapons, leading to their elimination.

Divergence does remain, as the nuclear-armed states and some of their nuclear weapon-supportive allies insisted once again that the “step-by-step” approach is the only way forward, which they argue is more proven and pragmatic than prohibition.

A nuclear weapon ban treaty “is polarizing and forsakes long-standing principles of credible nuclear disarmament, such as verifiability,” argued the United States. France and Russia echoed this sentiment in their interventions. “Real nuclear disarmament continues right now, during the current session of the UN General Assembly,” Russia insisted. The Russian delegation said it is “offensive” to hear states say disarmament is progressing too slowly, arguing that it expends huge amounts of economic and human resources toward this goal. Decrying the ban treaty as “fundamentally break[ing] the established algorithm of multilateral work on nuclear disarmament,” Russia said it “abandons the strategic security context” and risks “plunging the world into chaos”. France declared that a ban treaty would “weaken the

non-proliferation regime” and would not have “the slightest concrete impact, particularly on the reduction of arsenals.”

Other delegations, however, did not appear to accept these arguments from states possessing nuclear weapons.

“Unless options for the negotiations of effective measures are pursued, the present and unacceptably slow pace of multilateral nuclear disarmament will continue,” warned the New Agenda Coalition (Brazil, Egypt, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, and South Africa). Not only are there no multilateral efforts on nuclear disarmament, but modernisation programmes “are in contradiction with the unequivocal undertaking given by the nuclear-weapon States to eliminate their nuclear arsenals.”

The Humanitarian Pledge to stigmatise, prohibit, and eliminate nuclear weapons “has emerged as a powerful guide in a complicated picture of disarmament,” said Chile. In the current context, many delegations argued, the prohibition of nuclear weapons is the most practical step towards this goal. As Chile went on to explain, a prohibition treaty will not result in the “automatic elimination” of nuclear weapons, “but will create a rule that stigmatizes their possession, laying the groundwork for negotiations for their total elimination verifiably and irreversibly.” Ecuador likewise contended that the ban treaty will “not solve everything” but that it is an essential step in the dis-

armament process. Jamaica described it as the “next realistic step” towards a nuclear weapon free world, while Brazil said it is “a rational and viable way to break the deadlock on nuclear disarmament.”

While the nuclear-armed states, and nuclear-supportive states including Australia, Germany, Hungary, Poland, and Portugal, raised concerns about the ban treaty’s alleged impact on strategic stability, the vast majority of states reiterated their contention that nuclear weapons do not bring security but in fact undermine it. The prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons, they argue, will bring increased strategic stability. It will also strengthen, not undermine, the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). “It would bring a needed effective legal measure for the implementation of Article VI,” explained Austria. “And it would strengthen the non-proliferation obligations of nuclear weapon free states that become states parties.”

New Zealand described the ban treaty as the “new mainstream,” noting that discrete regional voices with shades of difference in their vision for the best path forward had converged by the end of the OEWG “into a unified voice with a single vision,” as is set out in the recommendation to negotiate a prohibition treaty next year.

Interestingly, Russia also described support for a ban treaty as a “new reality”. From its perspective, this will “inevitably” lead to negative consequences for the in-

tegrity of the NPT. It is worth pointing out that is only states possessing or including nuclear weapons in their security doctrines that assert a prohibition on nuclear weapons will undermine the NPT. For the rest, including the state that led on the establishment of the NPT, a prohibition is a necessary and logical part of the Treaty itself. “Our objective is to see the NPT implemented and the disarmament machinery functioning, in a credible and inclusive manner,” stated Ireland.

Despite allegations that those seeking a prohibition of nuclear weapons are abandoning the pursuit non-proliferation measures such as the fissile material cut-off treaty, ban supporters have consistently endorsed continued work on these goals. They also widely condemned the nuclear weapon tests by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea and called for the entry into force of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. The difference between the general debate statements last week of nuclear-armed or nuclear-supportive states and their non-nuclear counterparts is that the latter reject all testing and possessing of nuclear weapons and support all measures towards their elimination. •

Due to the number of statements on nuclear weapons this report does not capture all positions and arguments. Please see ICAN’s live blog for further details: <http://www.icanw.org/campaign-news/live-updates-from-the-first-committee-of-the-un-general-assembly>.

FEATURE: COURAGE, FORESIGHT, AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

Rick Wayman | Nuclear Age Peace Foundation

On 5 October, the International Court of Justice determined that it does not have jurisdiction in the nuclear disarmament cases brought by the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) against India, Pakistan, and the United Kingdom (UK).

By an 8-8 vote, with President Ronny Abraham of France issuing the casting “no” vote, the Court declared that there was not sufficient evidence of a dispute between the RMI and the UK, and therefore the Court lacks jurisdiction. Similar judgments were issued in the cases against India and Pakistan, with those votes coming in at 9-7.

By dismissing the cases on the preliminary issue of jurisdiction, the Court did not examine the merits of the cases. The cases aimed to hold the nine nuclear-armed

states (US, Russia, UK, France, China, Israel, India, Pakistan, and DPRK) accountable for violating international law by failing to respect their nuclear disarmament obligations under the 1968 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and customary international law.

In the UK case, there was a striking split between judges from nuclear-armed and nuclear-allied states, and those from non-nuclear armed states. In his dissenting opinion, Judge Patrick Lipton Robinson of Jamaica argued the Court squandered its most important global role and responsibility: “One would be forgiven for concluding that, with this Judgment, it is as though the Court has written the Foreword in a book on its irrelevance to the role envisaged for it in the peaceful settlement of disputes that implicate highly sensitive issues such as nuclear disarmament.”

continued on next page

Reinforcing this idea of a missed opportunity by the Court, Judge Antônio Augusto Cançado Trindade of Brazil wrote:

A world with arsenals of nuclear weapons, like ours, is bound to destroy its past, dangerously threatens the present, and has no future at all. Nuclear weapons pave the way into nothingness. In my understanding, the International Court of Justice, as the principal judicial organ of the United Nations, should, in the present Judgment, have shown sensitivity in this respect, and should have given its contribution to a matter which is a major concern of the vulnerable international community, and indeed of humankind as a whole.”

The RMI showed remarkable courage and foresight in bringing these cases to the ICJ. When the cases were filed in April 2014, Tony de Brum, Co-Agent of the Marshall Islands, said, “Our people have suffered the catastrophic and irreparable damage of these weapons, and we vow to fight so that no one else on earth will ever again experience these atrocities. The continued existence of nuclear weapons and the terrible risk they pose to the world threaten us all.”

These cases brought by the Marshall Islands have inspired activists around the world and have demonstrated to other non-nuclear weapon states that it is possible to stand up to the nuclear-armed countries to demand justice for all humanity. •



Permanent Mission of Guatemala
to the United Nations



Banning nuclear weapons: commencing negotiations for a treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons in 2017

Friday, 14 October
1:15–2:45pm
Conference Room 7

In August, the open-ended working group on taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations (OEWG) recommended the commencement of negotiations in 2017 on a legally binding instrument to ban nuclear weapons, leading to their elimination. This event will examine the suggestions made during the OEWG about the content of a treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons, looking towards negotiations to establish a meaningful, practical, effective treaty. It will also evaluate the ramifications for and support of such a treaty by different states, from those that are nuclear-free to those that possess nuclear weapons or include them in their security doctrines.

Speakers

This panel will be moderated by Ray Acheson, Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, and will feature the following speakers:

- Ambassador Luiz Filipe de Macedo Soares, OPANAL
- Representative of Brazil
- Representative of Guatemala
- Senator the Hon Lisa Singh, Australian Labor Party
- Beatrice Fihn, International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons

BIOLOGICAL AND CHEMICAL WEAPONS

Kathryn Millet | Disarmament Dynamics and Biosecu.re

During the first week of general debate a number of states addressed issues surrounding biological and chemical weapons, with statements largely focused on the upcoming Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) Eighth Review Conference in November 2016 and the ongoing use of chemical weapons in Syria and beyond.

In addition to stressing their commitment and adherence to the BWC, twenty-seven states and regional groups emphasized the importance of the upcoming Review Conference. Hungary, as Chair of the BWC Eighth Review Conference, noted that the efforts undertaken by states during the preparatory phase had been taking place “in a positive and constructive atmosphere” and that there were early signs of areas of possible common ground, while also noting work remained to be done.

Areas of common ground were evident with the European Union (EU), France, Italy, Japan and Switzerland stressing the need for a more substantive intersessional work programme. The EU and Finland expressed support for the ability to take collective action between Review Conferences while some states expressed hope for a science and technology review process. A number of states also highlighted the importance of universalisation, international cooperation and assistance, and further support for the UN Secretary General’s Mechanism for investigation of alleged use of chemical and biological weapons. The Non-Aligned Movement, as well as Chile, Cuba, and India, emphasised the need to resume negotiations over a legally binding verification mechanism, with Cuba and the NAM also stressing the importance of equal access to science and technology for peaceful purposes (Article X).

A few interventions also looked at biological weapon risks. The UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs warned that risks associated with a deliberate release of a biological agent had the potential to constitute a “global health nightmare” and cautioned against a lack of preparedness for such incidents. Venezuela pointed out the danger of the militarisation of new technology, including genetic manipulation.

States speaking on the Chemical Weapons Convention highlighted the importance of universality of the Convention and full implementation of all of its provisions. In this context, Argentina, Australia, Bangladesh, Brazil, Ecuador, France, Italy, India, Ireland, Israel, Japan, Liechtenstein, the Netherlands, Poland, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United

Kingdom, and Venezuela condemned the use of chemical weapons in Syria by both the government of Syria and Daesh/ISIL in accordance with the findings of the UN-Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Joint Investigatory mechanism.

Several states and the UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs emphasised the need to uphold the norm against the use of chemical weapons and to remain clear that such use by anyone, anywhere, at any time, and under any circumstances is contrary to international law. Australia and Sweden also referenced chemical weapons use in Iraq while Liechtenstein was the sole state to raise the issue of recent allegations of chemical weapons use in Sudan, calling for the government of Sudan to fully cooperate with any future OPCW investigations. A number of states also called for the need for users of chemical weapons to be held accountable and Switzerland further called to refer such cases to the International Criminal Court. Speaking under right to reply, Syria alleged that the EU had provided chemical weapons to non-state actors groups for use in Syria. Syria further alleged that the EU assisted terrorist groups by routing chemical and other weapons through European airports to Syrian border countries.

The Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), Australia, Bangladesh, Ecuador, Finland, India, Italy, Japan, Portugal, South Africa, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom also stressed the importance of completing chemical weapons stockpile destruction and referenced the efforts of Libya and Syria in this regard. Brazil, Finland, France, Israel, the Netherlands, and Portugal nevertheless expressed concern over discrepancies in Syria’s declarations of its past programme. Poland called attention to its draft resolution, remarking that it is particularly important during this time of chemical weapons use.

Argentina, Bangladesh, Botswana, Colombia Georgia, Ghana, India, Italy, the Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Spain, Ukraine, and Viet Nam pointed to the dangers of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) terrorism. India expressed its willingness to host a conference on facing the challenge of the “WMD-terrorism nexus” in 2018. Bangladesh welcomed the Russian proposal to negotiate an international instrument on suppressing actors of chemical and biological terrorism within the Conference on Disarmament (CD).

A number of states, including Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Colombia, Italy, Georgia, Norway, the Republic of

Korea, Saudi Arabia, Spain, and Viet Nam, called for full implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1540 as a key instrument in preventing the use of WMD by non-state actors. Spain highlighted its ongoing efforts towards a resolution to strengthen the work of the 1540 Committee. Italy, the Republic of Korea, and Viet Nam stressed the importance of

the Comprehensive Review of Implementation of resolution 1540 underway in 2016. Georgia and the Philippines called attention to their efforts to prevent the diversion of chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) materials, and highlighted the UN Group of Friends of CBRN Risk Mitigation and Security Governance initiative begun in 2015. •

ARMED DRONES

Elizabeth Minor | Article 36

During the first week of the general debate, only four countries mentioned armed drones in their statements, along with Kim Won-soo, the Under Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs.

The Netherlands raised concerns in its statement this week similar to those that it highlighted at First Committee in 2015. The Dutch statement emphasised the issue of proliferation, both amongst states and in particular to non-state actors, as a key issue with respect to armed drones. Stating the applicability and importance of upholding existing law, and the need for greater transparency in the export and use of armed drones, the Netherlands stated its commitment to an “open international dialogue ... in order to guarantee transparent and responsible use.”

Venezuela lamented what it saw as the predictability with which armed drones have been used in an irresponsible and illegal manner by states and non-state groups, and expressed regret that the risks presented by new technologies have been neglected by the international community. Ecuador expressed concern over the increased use of armed drones along with its position on the challenge of autonomous weapons systems, noting serious moral, legal, and humanitar-

ian concerns. Last year at First Committee these states both noted concern at the use of armed drones for extrajudicial killings, with Venezuela urging legal regulation and Ecuador calling for urgent discussion of the issue and highlighting the number of victims resulting from airstrikes undertaken using armed drones.

Raising armed drones along with other “new challenges” such as autonomous weapons, cyber, and outer space, Lebanon called for the regulation of the use of these technologies “in a universal and inclusive manner based on the principles of Human rights and International Humanitarian Law.” Lebanon has not spoken on the issue of armed drones at First Committee during at least the past three sessions.

Finally, Kim Won-soo noted progress at the UN Register of Conventional Arms with respect to armed drones, with the Governmental Group of Experts on the Register recently recommending that such systems be included in the categories for reporting (see UN document A/71/259). The Register is a voluntary tool through which governments may report their international imports and exports of arms. A resolution to formally adopt this recommendation, which specifically refers to “unmanned combat aerial vehicles,” is expected at First Committee. •

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EXPLOSIVE WEAPONS IN POPULATED AREAS

Laura Boillot | International Network on Explosive Weapons

The First Committee's general debate heard states express concern over humanitarian impacts resulting from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas (EWIPA), and express support for the initiative that is underway to address this harm through the development of a political declaration.

Austria announced it was hosting a meeting of committed states "to start to look at possible elements of an international political declaration on the protection of civilians from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas". This meeting had the explicit support of the UN Secretary-General and was attended by states, UN agencies, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and civil society, Ambassador Hajnoczi explained.

Austria also expressed concern over the humanitarian harm civilians suffer as a result of the use of EWIPA, which is a "main reason for harm to civilians in many conflicts". Austria reminded other delegates that "it is harm caused by explosive weapons which has driven most of today's refugees and internally displaced persons away from their war ridden homes".

Costa Rica called on states to "develop stricter rules and commitments to prohibit and restrict use" over EWIPA. It also expressed support for the ongoing

initiative to restrict the use of explosive weapons with wide area effects in populated areas.

Ireland stated that it regards "the use of explosive weapons with wide area effects in populated areas as one of the most serious challenges facing us with regard to conventional weapons questions at this time," citing examples of the impact in Ukraine and Yemen.

Liechtenstein expressed concern over the humanitarian harm from EWIPA, and referenced the commitment that it endorsed, along with many other states, at the World Humanitarian Summit to work to "prevent harm from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas."

Norway expressed concern over the harm from EWIPA in Yemen, Syria, and Ukraine, referencing "the destruction of critical infrastructure such as housing, schools and hospitals affects the prospects for post-conflict rehabilitation, peace-building and reconstruction long after the actual fighting is over." Norway noted the UN Secretary-General's call on states to "refrain from the use in populated areas of explosive weapons with a wide area effect" and expressed a desire to see more states engaging in discussions on this issue, aiming for it to "influence practice and set standards." •



SIDE EVENT: PREVENTING HARM FROM THE USE OF EXPLOSIVE WEAPONS IN POPULATED AREAS

Margaret McNish | Reaching Critical Will of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

On 6 October, Austria and the International Network on Explosive Weapons (INEW) held a side event covering the issue of preventing harm from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. The panel discussion was led by Austrian Ambassador Thomas Hajnoczi along with Martin Butcher of Oxfam International, Roos Boer of PAX, and Laura Boillot of INEW.

Martin Butcher, a policy advisor on arms and conflict at Oxfam, explained how the number of countries in conflict that his organization operates in has increased over the last five or six years. He focused on how civilian populations are being impacted in Syria, Yemen, and Iraq from the use of explosive weapons. He noted that in Syria, there are "no kinds of conventional weapons that have not been used" in populated areas. In Aleppo and Damascus, civilians have been severely affected by the bombing and destruction to water systems. On 5 October, it was reported that 1.5 million civilians had no access to water. In Yemen, there are an average of 150 bombing raids a day, and most civilians that Oxfam talks to cite aerial bombardment as their main concern.

Roos Boer looked at some examples of explosive weapons with wide area effects and how they put civilians at risk. Boer explained that wide area effects can result from weapons with a wide blast and frag-

mentation radius, inaccuracy, and the use of multiple warheads. To put things into perspective, Boer displayed a graphic of a bomb being dropped on Third Avenue in Manhattan. The range of the blast would hit First Avenue and put 19,000 New Yorkers at risk. Boer argued that the pattern of harm from blast and fragmentation of explosive weapons can be addressed and called on states to stop using explosive weapons with wide area effects in populated areas.

In this vein, Laura Boillot outlined what international steps can be taken to halt the use of explosives in populated areas, noting that 92% of people affected by these weapons are civilians. INEW is calling for the development of a political instrument that would commit states to end the use of explosive weapons with wide area effects in populated areas and recognise the rights of victims and provide assistance to affected communities. This sort of declaration, she says, would not be an end goal, but instead "a building block for long term work."

A question that arose out of the discussion was how to enforce this sort of instrument on non-state actors. Ambassador Hajnoczi recognised that terrorist groups usually do not follow declarations of this sort. Boillot said that it is still the responsibility of states to set the standard. •

SIDE EVENT: THE USE OF EXPLOSIVE WEAPONS IN POPULATED AREAS AND FORCED DISPLACEMENT

Aurélie Beaujolais | Handicap International

Handicap International's latest report *Qasef: Escaping the Bombing* was presented on 5 October to states at the United Nations, in an event co-organised with the mission of Luxembourg to the UN.

In contribution to the discussions in the First Committee and as a contribution to the political process underway to address the harm caused on civilians by the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, Handicap International has documented the link between forced displacement in Syria and the use of explosive weapons in its report *Qasef: Escaping the bombing*.

The organisation has been responding to the humanitarian crisis in Syria since 2012, and works on a daily basis alongside refugees and displaced families. This presentation was another opportunity to ensure

that the testimonies of refugees are heard and that Handicap International's recommendations are taken into account.

Delegates from more than 20 states attended the event, chaired by Ambassador C. Brau, Permanent Representative of Luxembourg to the UN. He expressed the support of his government for Handicap International's work in response to the Syrian crisis.

Handicap International's Area Coordinator for Central Syria presented the main findings of the report:

- In populated areas in Syria, bombing is often indiscriminate and continuous;
- The use of explosive weapons not only injures and kills civilians, it also induces long-term traumas and damages civilian infrastructure; and

- This pattern of violence creates a long-term pattern of displacement, mostly due to the contamination by unexploded ordnance that it leaves behind.

The compelling testimony of Sami, a Syrian refugee living in Germany, was shared with UN delegates to illustrate this reality.

Richard Moyes, Managing Partner of Article 36 and joint Coordinator of the International Network on Explosive Weapons (INEW), explained the humanitarian concerns raised by the use of explosive weapons in populated areas and outlined INEW's suggestions for elements of a political declaration to end the use of explosive weapons with wide area effects in populated areas.

Alma Taslidzan Al-Osta reaffirmed Handicap International's recommendations towards parties to the Syrian conflict and the international community, which include:

- Parties to the conflict should immediately cease all attacks on civilians and civilian facilities;
- The international community should strongly

condemn the use of explosive weapons, especially those with wide-area effects, in populated areas in Syria;

- All warring parties and the international community should ensure unhindered access to principled humanitarian aid;
- The international community should support the implementation of risk education and clearance efforts in Syria in the short- and long term.
- The international community should ensure that all forcibly-displaced people are given a haven, and in the long run, a durable solution that fully respects their dignity; and
- The international community should ensure that the rights of victims of explosive weapons are recognized.

Interventions from the room were very supportive of Handicap International's efforts to raise awareness of the human consequences of the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. We hope that these recommendations will be taken into account and will result in definitive changes regarding the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. •

SIDE EVENT: IMPROVISED EXPLOSIVE DEVICES

Chanda Daniels | Reaching Critical Will of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

The Permanent Mission of France alongside Action on Armed Violence (AOAV) hosted a side event to discuss and provide recommendations on combating the use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs). The event was chaired by Ambassador Alice Guitton of France, who opened by stressing the security concerns that IEDs pose, especially in highly populated areas. The death toll from these devices has increased significantly over the last five years.

Mr. Iain Overton, Executive Director of AOAV, presented the launch of his organisation's first annual IED monitor, "Global Threat, Global Response: A review of the global impact of IEDs." He gave an overview of the monitor's seven key components, highlighting the current global situation and impact, how IEDs hinder humanitarian assistance, and the alarming rate these weapons are being used. He presented the challenges the improvised nature of IEDs present to eradication.

An expert from UN Security Council (UNSC) resolutions 1267/1988 Monitoring Team noted the measures that the UNSC Sanctions Committee are taking in order to combat IEDs. She highlighted actions such as placing sanctions on individuals and entities and passing the first resolution that measured IEDs. The presentation ended with strong recommendations to

combat IEDs, such as robust international and national cooperation and actively tracing the supply chain.

Mr. Daniel Prins from the UN Office of Disarmament Affairs presented the report of the Secretary-General on IEDs. Mr. Prins explained the main three components of the report: impact, production and delivery, and measures for addressing IEDs. He expressed the importance of improving dialogue between agencies, effective stockpile management, and creating practical preventative measures to tackle IEDs.

Ambassador Saikal, Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, discussed the relevancy of IEDs, mentioning that over half of world's countries are impacted, and the indiscriminate harm these devices cause. He pressed for a collective approach to combating IEDs with the overall theme of frequent reporting, open and ongoing collaboration, and establishing a trust to promote national capacity efforts.

The panel prompted discussion with the key interest on how to effectively implement multilateral information sharing to prevent IEDs. There was an overall consensus for practical measures, such as heightened information sharing, and accurate reporting in order to effectively understand and implement processes to tackle this increasing and ever changing threat. •

ARMS TRADE TREATY

Raluca Muresan | Control Arms

References to the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) in this year's First Committee general debate tended to focus primarily on the outcomes of the second Conference of States Parties (CSP2). Over 15 states, as well as the European Union and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), welcomed the decisions adopted in August this year. Several states noted the establishment of the Voluntary Trust Fund, which will enable states parties to access resources towards the Treaty's implementation, with the Netherlands and New Zealand pledging to contribute to it. Also highlighting the importance of international assistance were Costa Rica and Jamaica, which welcomed the support provided by the EU-ATT implementation support programme towards developing national legislation.

Finland, as the President-elect of the third CSP, noted its interest in moving the focus from establishing an administrative structure towards more substantive work, and welcomed contributions from the three working groups on implementation, universalization, and transparency and reporting toward this end. Bosnia Herzegovina, Israel, Jamaica, El Salvador, Liberia, and Zambia also delivered positive statements that focused less on universalisation or procedural issues and more on highlighting concrete steps towards the effective implementation of the ATT at the national level. Zambia highlighted that since joining the ATT it has worked towards enacting "appropriate national legislation, capacity building in various related institutions dealing with arms, enhancing interagency coordination and developing awareness of the Treaty obligations and its application."

Several states raised the universalisation of the ATT, with Hungary, Costa Rica, and Brazil in particular calling for major arms exporters and importers to join the Treaty "in order to turn ATT into a real milestone

in the regulation of international trade in conventional arms." CARICOM proudly noted that 14 of its 15 member are now states parties (Haiti has signed but not yet ratified) and that they are now moving towards the full implementation of the Treaty. Other states, such as Kazakhstan, Singapore, and Thailand, took this opportunity to reiterate their plans to accede to or ratify the ATT, while Colombia announced the passing through Congress of the ATT legislation in April 2016. Also notably Madagascar and Cape Verde acceded to the Treaty in September 2016, bringing the number of African states parties to 21.

A number of states also highlighted cross-cutting issues. Mexico, for example, recognised the importance of international arms control measures, including the ATT, in the context of development and called for the establishment of a group of experts to present a report with recommendations about the consequences of global conventional arms transfers on sustainable development. Several states emphasised the importance of the gender-based violence criterion in the ATT and the inclusion of women in disarmament and security issues. Zambia called for "sustained efforts" in ensuring that women affected by armed violence are allowed to participate in all phases of ATT and UNPoA implementation.

Many member states also made reference to current humanitarian crises, such as those in Syria and Yemen. However, few states made the link with the arms transfers that are fueling these crises. We call on all states to focus on how irresponsible arms transfers fuel atrocities and how these could be prevented if the ATT is properly implemented, in particular the core human rights and humanitarian provisions in Articles 6 and 7 on prohibitions and risk assessment. •

SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS

Rose Welsch | International Action Network on Small Arms

During the general debate, a significant number of delegations expressed concern regarding illicit, unregulated, and irresponsible small arms and light weapons (SALW) at sub-regional, regional, and international levels. They noted that such SALW fuel violence, conflict, crime, and instability, and hinder development as well as costing civilian lives. They have caused unprecedented carnage, emptied whole communities and cities, forced migrations, and caused

not only the loss of lives but also of livelihoods and of property, as described by the delegate of Nigeria.

Most delegations expressed their commitment to the UN Programme of Action on small arms (UNPoA), with many welcoming the successful outcome of the Sixth Biennial Meeting of States (BMS6) in June 2016. Several delegations positively noted the inclusion of gender and the Sustainable Development Goals in the

document. Delegations are looking forward to the 2018 Review Conference, which will provide an opportunity to submit new proposals to develop the UNPoA. Although ammunition is not explicitly included in the UNPoA, some delegations referred to it in their statements. Ghana, which led a statement about ammunition at BMS6, noted that “The real value of small arms depends on the availability of ammunition,” and called for the topic to be addressed at the 2018 meeting. The United States, Iran, and Egypt—three delegations opposing the inclusion of ammunition at BMS6—were largely silent on conventional weapons this week.

Guatemala and Tanzania commented on the slow progress being made against stopping small arms trafficking, with Guatemala lamenting that some states have not allowed the UNPoA to evolve, for example on ammunition. It is indispensable that the UNPoA retain its relevance, said the delegate.

Ireland, Zambia, and Italy spoke about the importance of ensuring that women are included in the small arms process. Another important issue was international cooperation and assistance to fill the gaps in the effort to address SALW problems. Several delega-

tions highlighted the importance of the International Tracing Instrument (ITI). “We need to continue working towards the adoption of legally binding instruments on marking and tracing, and on illicit brokering so that we can prevent the diversion of these types of weapons to the illegal market,” said Peru.

Several delegations from the Global South expressed appreciation for the support of the UN regional centres for peace and disarmament. Mr. Kim Won-Soo, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, highlighted that this is the thirtieth anniversary of the regional centres in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Asia. In the past decade, the centres have trained more than 20,000 personnel in arms control, helped destroy over 176,000 SALW and 132 tons of ammunition, and marked over 13,000 weapons. He also welcomed the 25th anniversary of the UN Register of Conventional Arms, calling it “one of our most important transparency instruments.”

Finally, although few delegations mentioned the role of civil society in the small arms process, Ireland, Liberia, Sudan, and Italy called for greater involvement of civil society in the disarmament work being carried out at the United Nations. •

LANDMINES

Amelie Chayer | International Campaign to Ban Landmines

In 2016 we celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Axworthy Challenge—an invitation in 1996 by the Canadian Foreign Minister to negotiate within one year a treaty banning landmines. 20 years on, not only do we have a highly successful international instrument prohibiting antipersonnel landmines, but tremendous progress has also been made in clearing minefields worldwide and in recognizing the rights of victims.

During the first week of First Committee debates, all delegations that took the floor to speak about antipersonnel landmines expressed support for the ban, for the treaty, or for the aim of eliminating landmines.

Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, Colombia, Iraq, Ukraine, and Viet Nam highlighted the devastating impact of the presence of antipersonnel mines or similar victim-activated devices on their respective territories. The central role of international cooperation was mentioned by delegations from both donor and affected states, including Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, Italy, Norway, Ukraine, and Viet Nam, as

well as the CELAC and the EU. Cambodia and ASEAN welcomed the recent inauguration of the ASEAN Regional Mine Action Center. South Africa called on states still outside the treaty to join without delay.

A lot remains to be done to fully deliver on the promises of the Mine Ban Treaty. States party have adopted the goal of finishing the job by completing the implementation of all components of the treaty by 2025. Chile will host the upcoming 15th Meeting of States Parties in November 2016, and is a key political leader promoting this “last stretch” of global implementation. All states are welcome to the meeting, whether they are party or not to the treaty.

Each year, about half of the states not party to the treaty vote in favour of the resolution on the implementation of the treaty, thus demonstrating their support for its humanitarian aims. The International Campaign to Ban Landmines calls on all states to vote in favor of the resolution, which will be tabled by Belgium, Chile, and Austria. •

CLUSTER MUNITIONS

Amelie Chayer | Cluster Munition Coalition

Horrifying reports on the impact of cluster munition use in Syria, Yemen, and a handful of other locations in recent years highlight the need to universalize the Convention on Cluster Munitions and to further strengthen the norm against these weapons. Just before the beginning of First Committee debates, a hospital in Aleppo, Syria was hit by a cluster munition attack, resulting in unspeakable devastation and civilian casualties.

In this context of ongoing use of the weapon, Costa Rica, Ireland, Lebanon, and Portugal strongly voiced their condemnation of the use of cluster munitions. Colombia stated that the elimination of cluster munitions is “a moral obligation of the international community.” Norway emphasised that it is “essential to uphold the fundamental norms set by the Convention on Cluster Munitions.”

The Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) said the use of cluster munitions on civilian populations is a clear violation of international humanitarian law (IHL), while the European Union called on “all actors” to fully observe the principles of IHL. The Netherlands, which presided over the 6th Meeting of States Parties to the Convention in September 2016, recalled that the meeting “condemned any use of cluster munitions by any actor.”

Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Lao PDR, Lebanon, South Africa, and Zambia called on states not yet on

board the Convention on Cluster Munitions to join it at the earliest opportunity. Ecuador stated that universalising the convention is “a priority” and referred to cluster munitions as “a particularly cruel weapon [with] lethal consequences on the most vulnerable.” Zambia “implored” states to join the convention, regardless of their ability to possess the weapon, and added: “There is a need for the global community to have a collective voice in favour of the ban, and for strengthening the body of international humanitarian law and demonstration of solidarity with affected countries and victims.”

Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iraq, Lao PDR, Lebanon, and Viet Nam spoke about the long-lasting consequences of cluster munition contamination on their respective territories. In particular, Lao PDR, the world’s most heavily affected country, mentioned the recent adoption of an 18th Sustainable Development Goal at the national level, tackling the impact of cluster munition remnants and unexploded ordnance on communities.

A resolution on the implementation of the CCM was submitted to a vote for the first time last year and had a strong start with a voting record of 139-2-40. No less than 32 states that have not signed the convention voted in favour of the resolution, sending an important signal of support for its humanitarian objective. The Cluster Munition Coalition calls on all states to vote in favour of this year’s resolution that will be tabled by Croatia, Germany, and the Netherlands. •

DEPLETED URANIUM

Doug Weir | International Coalition to Ban Uranium Weapons

The Non-Aligned Movement resolution Effects of the use of arms and ammunitions containing depleted uranium is biennial, with this session’s text the sixth since 2007. While its four opponents—the US, UK, France, and Israel—have remained the same over the years, its content has not, having expanded to include calls for research, for transparency measures, for a precautionary approach to the use of the weapons and in 2014, for the provision of assistance to states affected by contamination.

In 2014, Iraq led that call for international assistance—and for a global treaty ban on depleted uranium (DU) weapons—as it is still dealing with the legacy of contamination from the conflicts in 1991 and 2003. As First Committee drew to a close that year, US A-10 aircraft were on route to the Middle East for sorties over

Iraq and Syria, and we were urgently seeking clarity over whether they would be armed with DU. It would take until March 2015 for the US to state that DU had not and would not be used against Islamic State. The episode demonstrated that, in spite of the longstanding stigmatisation of the chemically toxic and radioactive weapons, the risk that they will be used again is still present.

With support for the resolutions running at 150 states or more since 2012, attention is inevitably focused on the remaining abstainers. In spite of repeated calls from the European Parliament for a moratorium on the weapons, and for a common EU position that better reflects the view of the parliament, EU members make up a disproportionate number of those still abstaining. We were delighted that Sweden and

Bulgaria voted in favour for the first time in 2014 but an otherwise productive First Committee was marred by the abstention of Germany and allegations of selective quoting in the resolution.

In moving to abstain, Germany claimed to be objecting to a quote from the UN Environment Programme relating to its fieldwork in the Balkans, which the NAM had included in the text. Germany accused the NAM of cherry-picking, in spite of having sought to cherry pick language itself during consultations on the draft. In a coordinated move, the Netherlands also raised the now dubious allegation of cherry-picking in its explanation of vote—although it subsequently voted in favour. German parliamentarians and NGOs

were as unimpressed as we were, and ICBUW was called to give evidence at a parliamentary hearing on the vote the following January.

Frustratingly, the sideshow in 2014 served only to detract from more serious issues—most pressing of which is the absence of formal post-conflict obligations on either DU users or affected states to address the contamination caused by the weapons. This is an area that states must tackle, and with resolutions only coming every other year, states need to stop make the most of the opportunities they provide and get serious about reducing the risks DU weapons pose to civilians. •



CYBER

Allison Pytlak

Over 20 statements made reference to cyber security during the first week of the general debate. Many were framed under the heading of “Information and Communications Technologies” or ICTs, the phrase used to describe the range of digital technologies and activities that the Committee considers, while others more explicitly used the term cyber security. The majority of statements took note of and welcome the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on ICTs, particularly its recent meeting in August, and emphasized the importance of developing norms and principles to govern behaviour in cyber space. This includes Australia, Cuba, the European Union, Israel, Italy, the Netherlands, and CELAC.

A few statements touched on the militarisation of cyber space. Indonesia expressed concern in this regard and supported the discussion and promotion of the use of the Internet for peaceful purposes. Lebanon reaffirmed the need to regulate the use of technologies including cyber in a “universal and inclusive manner based on the principles of Human rights and International Humanitarian Law.” The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) also stressed this and highlighted the important socioeconomic opportunities, in particular for developing countries, provided by ICTS. The Move-

ment’s statement underscored the need to prevent discriminatory practices and policies that hinder access by developing countries to the benefits of ICTs and called for the active and equal participation all states in the development of a legal framework to address these issues.

Singapore described the concrete steps underway to increase cyber security at the national level and in the region. In 2015 it established a Cyber Security Agency, and will soon be hosting Singapore International Cyber Week to “serve as a platform to deepen our collaboration on cybersecurity regionally and internationally.” The ASEAN Ministerial Cyber Security Conference will focus on efforts towards building a cyber-secure Southeast Asia while the international Cyber Leaders’ Symposium will bring together thought leaders to “exchange perspectives on measures necessary to build a resilient and secure cyberspace.”

The United Kingdom announced that the “impact of technology, especially cyber threats; and wider technological developments” will be one of four challenges to drive their security policy in the coming decade. Brazil gave a nuanced and detailed statement noting that strengthening multilateral ICT norms and prin-

ciples in the context of international security cannot happen at the expense of the free flow of information and the respect for human rights, in particular the right to privacy. It called on international community to examine the need to develop a specific legal framework to deal with cyber challenges and encouraged member states to consider the adoption of a “no-first-use” norm with regards to offensive operations using ICTs. As the Brazilian delegation explained, such a norm will “reduce the chances of a global ICT-related arms race, and reassure the international community that ICTs will not be used as tools of aggression.”

It’s positive to see a diversity of countries and regional blocs speaking about cyber security, as it is a growing

challenge for countries in all regions and therefore important that norm development is not dominated by any one group of states. There is still an interchangeable use of key terms and concepts, indicating that member states are coming to the cyber issue from different perspectives and understandings, or have different priorities. While ‘cyber conflict’ or ‘cyber war’ were not explicitly mentioned, there was a heavy security emphasis throughout most statements, and no significant take up of human rights concerns apart from a few. While this may be natural in the First Committee environment, member states are encouraged in their later statements on this issue to also consider the human impact of digital technologies. •

SIDE EVENT: THE UN, CYBERSPACE, AND INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY

Allison Pytlak

A side event organized by the UN Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) on Wednesday, 5 October helpfully illustrated how multi-faceted the cyber issue is while highlighting the aspects most relevant to First Committee delegates.

Kerstin Vignard of UNIDIR chaired the event and began by describing the work of the Group of Governmental Experts on Information Communications Technologies (ICTs), which is the body mandated by First Committee to discuss this issue. Karsten Geier of Germany, currently the Chair of the GGE, expanded on her remarks and explained that interest in participating in the Group has grown exponentially since it was first established. Its focus is strictly on state behaviour, and covers the key areas of applicability of international law, the development of behavioural norms in cyber space, confidence building measures, and capacity building. The group is closed, and operates on a consensus basis. This group will meet three more times in the coming year before making a report to the General Assembly in summer 2017.

It was noted by both speakers that while there has been very good substantive discussion in the GGE on these and other subjects, the Group’s mandate limits its ability to translate its conclusions or recommendations into anything formal. As well, it is not a body that is well-known beyond the UN community.

This theme was picked up on by the presentation delivered by Camino Kavanagh, an advisor to the GGE, who spoke about many of the other initiatives underway within and beyond the UN to develop laws and

norms to govern state behaviour in cyber space. Much of the work within the UN comes from the perspective of development, human rights, or terrorism and has been addressed by ECOSOC, the Special Rapporteur for Human Rights, the UNGA Third Committee, among other fora. Yet outside of the UN there are numerous regional agreements that establish cooperation between governments for mutual cyber security, such as in ASEAN and the Dutch-initiated Global Forum on Cyber Expertise as just some examples. She emphasized that it’s increasingly important that there be better coherence and connection between these discussions, particularly in order to move away from merely articulating norms and ideals and move applying them.

Daniel Stauffacher, President of the ICT4 Peace Foundation, outlined the work his organisation is doing to build state capacity and urged full inclusion of developing countries in the formulation of policy or norms about cyber space. It has conducted several workshops and trainings for national Computer Emergency Readiness Teams (CERTs). ICT4P further works to promote peace and security on the Internet, underscoring the point that it is risky to assume that the Internet and cyber space is automatically a militarised space.

This point came out as well in the discussion following the presentations when it was asked if the GGE is looking to adopt an arms control approach to cyber space activity. Other questions centered on access to information about the GGE meetings and plan for the process going forward. •

OUTER SPACE

Jessica West | Project Ploughshares

General debate statements on outer space security contained a measure of optimism following the agreement to a set of guidelines for the long-term sustainability of space activities at the Committee on the Peaceful Use of Outer Space in June 2016, referred to by the European Union (EU), United Kingdom (UK), Australia, and Italy. Further, the United States (US) claimed that it “will use this year’s First Committee session to advance space security and sustainability.”

But it is not clear how this will be done. The US favours transparency and confidence-building measures (TCBMs), specifically the recommendations of the 2013 Group of Governmental Experts study. The UK, India, and Italy, also lent support to the role of TCBMs, which Singapore highlighted as a focus of the upcoming ASEAN Regional Forum Workshop on Space Security. More specifically, the EU, UK, and Netherlands supported developing guidelines for responsible behaviour in space. However, there was also criticism of this approach, with the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in particular calling for any elaboration of rules for conduct in outer space to be in line with the appropriate mandates and processes of UN bodies.

Strong support for the need to prevent an arms race in outer space was met with diverging tactics. Calls for a binding treaty on the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space (PAROS) were limited to the NAM, India, Netherlands, and Bangladesh; the UK asserted that it is “committed to the prevention of an arms race in outer space” but fell short of calling for treaty negotiations, while France referred to TCBMs. Brazil called for states to support the draft resolution titled “No first placement of weapons in Outer Space” that it co-authored with Russia as a first, confidence building measure toward a legally binding treaty.

The general debate also revealed different views on the purpose of space as a security topic. Broad support for the non-weaponisation and peaceful uses of outer space by states including the NAM, Indonesia, France, Qatar, and India, was joined by an emphasis on space as a common resource. In particular Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, and the DPRK, expressed this view, with Egypt referring to “joint ownership” of outer space and Venezuela asserting that there should be no military uses at all. In contrast, the EU and Australia called for safety, security, and sustainability of the space environment and of access to space, while the US further narrowed the parameters further with a focus on “stability” in outer space. •

GENDER

Josephine Roele | Reaching Critical Will of WILPF

References to gender in the general debate came up in relation to three categories: nuclear weapons; small arms and light weapons (SALW); and participation in disarmament processes. It is also worth calling attention to the paucity of links between gender and disarmament made by states in the general debate.

Ireland and the New Agenda Coalition raised gender in the context of nuclear weapons, commenting both on the gendered impact that a nuclear weapon detonation would have, and in ensuring gender diversity in nuclear disarmament processes. Ireland’s statement welcomed the gender-balance in speakers in the open-ended working group taking forward multilateral negotiations on nuclear disarmament.

CARICOM, Chile, Zambia, Lebanon, and Ireland spoke on the gendered impact of small arms and light weapons (SALW), noting their disproportionate impact on women. When highlighting issues on violence against women facilitated by SALW, some states also raised concerns over the well-being of children. Categorising women and children as “vulnerable” in the same breath presents problems in the infantilisation and victimisation of women. This may undermine women’s participation and agency in disarmament processes and should be avoided. Ireland and Lebanon welcomed the language on gender in the Sixth Biennial Meeting of States for the UN Programme of Action for Small Arms and Light Weapons. Lebanon saw this as an “opportunity to reaffirm the necessity to continue mainstreaming gender issues in all aspects of the work of this [First] Committee.” Trinidad and Tobago, with the support of CARICOM, stated that it would again sponsor its resolution entitled “Women, Disarmament, Non-Proliferation and Arms Control” in this session of the Committee.

All states mentioned so far, as well as Italy and the European Union (EU), advocated for greater gender-balance in participation in disarmament processes. The EU stated that “active and equal participation and leadership of women in decision making and action, including in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation, is crucial in achieving peace, security and sustainable development.” Ireland also advanced in detail the links between gender, disarmament, and development. The UK, in a reference to women’s and girls’ empowerment in the Sustainable Development Goals, also drew an indirect link between disarmament processes and the need for greater participation from women. •

DISARMAMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

Josephine Roele | Reaching Critical Will of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

During the general debate, many states drew on the link between peace and sustainable development as an incentive to further disarmament efforts—and as being facilitated by disarmament. A number of aspects of disarmament and arms control, from the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons (SALW) to nuclear weapons to overall military spending, were cited as factors at the nexus of disarmament and development. As Jamaica said, “our deliberations must continue to be informed by the recognition that there is a mutually reinforcing and indivisible relationship between peace and security, disarmament and development. We are mindful that this fundamental and integral relationship should underpin our actions as an international community.”

Many statements in the general debate recognised SALW as posing a threat to sustainable development on two fronts. Firstly, that their proliferation through illicit arms flows undermines national and regional stability. Secondly, that their presence perpetuates insecurity in the form of armed conflict and armed violence, which directly hinder development efforts. The African Group noted that African states have suffered disproportionately from the instability that comes with the presence of SALW. Cameroon and Zambia restated the vital link between development and combatting the illicit flow of SALW. Zambia noted that women are particularly affected by the illicit trade in SALW and called for the greater participation of women in the context of the regulation of SALW, such as the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) and the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons (UNPoA). Botswana drew a direct link between barriers to socioeconomic development and the crime and conflict sustained by the presence of SALW. Statements from the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the European Union, Germany, Mexico, Argentina, and Jamaica also commented on the adverse impact of SALW on development.

Most states speaking on this issue recalled the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular goal 16 on peace, justice, and strong institutions. Lebanon, Germany, and El Salvador, among others, noted that the SDGs explicitly mention SALW controls in goal 16.4.

The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), Arab Group, CARICOM, Tanzania, Lebanon, Sri Lanka, Cuba, Bangladesh, and Burkina Faso emphasised that the diversion of financial resources to military or security expenditure severely detract from spending on sustainable development. Rather than being spent

on socioeconomic development, national budgets are spent on armaments or are forced to prioritise security spending because of conflict and crime. Burkina Faso noted that increased efforts on disarmament would free up resources for development and the elimination of poverty. Cuba stated that it is unacceptable to argue that there are insufficient resources to fight poverty, and advocated instead that military spending should be used for development purposes.

Fiji, the Philippines, Burkina Faso, and Botswana highlighted the continued existence and modernisation of nuclear weapons as a threat to human security and development. Fiji in particular expressed serious concern over the long-lasting effects of nuclear weapons on people and eco-systems. In light of the Pacific region's experience of over 300 forced nuclear tests, Fiji demanded that the international community take “concrete steps to provide effective redress for those who suffer the effects of nuclear testing” and its repercussions for development.

Other concerns included the weaponisation of outer space as a threat to sustainable development, as stated by Botswana and Bangladesh. Ireland and New Zealand were among the developed states that called for greater representation of developing states in disarmament machinery, for example through initiatives such as the voluntary trust fund of the ATT. Ireland also specifically recalled the role of disarmament and development in promoting gender equality. •

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PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT IN RELATION TO ARMED CONFLICT

Doug Weir | Toxic Remnants of War Project

Historically, First Committee has given only minimal consideration to the environmental consequences of armed conflicts and military activities. For example, the environmental damage that would be wrought by a nuclear exchange has been raised by many states over the years; indeed Venezuela, Paraguay, Liechtenstein, Fiji, and Cuba have all highlighted this threat already this session.

Similarly, since 1995 the Non-Aligned resolution on the observance of environmental norms, which is adopted each year without a vote, has encouraged regular reporting from states. Reports have documented the environmental standards applied to the destruction and management of everything from nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons, to small arms, rockets fuels, mines, and much else besides.

Sustainable development, of which the environment is one of three (or four) of its pillars has also featured in debates, typically in the context of the harm done to it by insecurity and the gross expenditure on arms. And this is about as far as First Committee has gone on the environmental dimensions of armed conflict. But could it do more?

In 2009, the UN Environment Programme published a major report on the inadequacy of international humanitarian law's provisions for the environment. The report catalysed what can be viewed as the third cycle of interest in conflict and the environment—or PERAC. The first, in the 1970s, followed the use of defoliants and weather modification techniques in the Viet Nam War. The second was a response to the burning oil fields in the 1991 Gulf War. This time, things are a little different.

Since the 1990s, our understanding of the environmental causes and consequences of conflicts has grown enormously. Whether this be the role that natural resources play in fuelling conflicts or in building peace, or the direct and derived consequences of wartime environmental degradation on civilians. Triggered in part by this understanding, in May the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA) passed the most significant UN resolution on conflict and the environment since 1992.

In urging states to cooperate closely on minimising and mitigating environmental harm, the UNEA resolution also made clear the links between environmental damage and civilian protection, highlighting the lamentable state of existing protection, which in turn is compounded by poor implementation. So far debate relevant to PERAC has taken place beyond First Committee, in the Security Council, at UNEA, in the Sixth Committee, the Human Rights Council and most recently at the International Criminal Court. But how can delegations, and First Committee as a whole, contribute to the developing PERAC discourse?

How wars are fought, where they are fought, what they are fought with, and what happens in their aftermath all have consequences for the environment, and by extension the health, lives, and livelihoods of its dependent civilian population. These are all themes that lie within the scope of First Committee's work and delegations could contribute to PERAC by meaningfully integrating environmental concerns into their work on particular classes of weapons, on the conduct of hostilities and military activities and above all, on the protection of civilians. •



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).

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