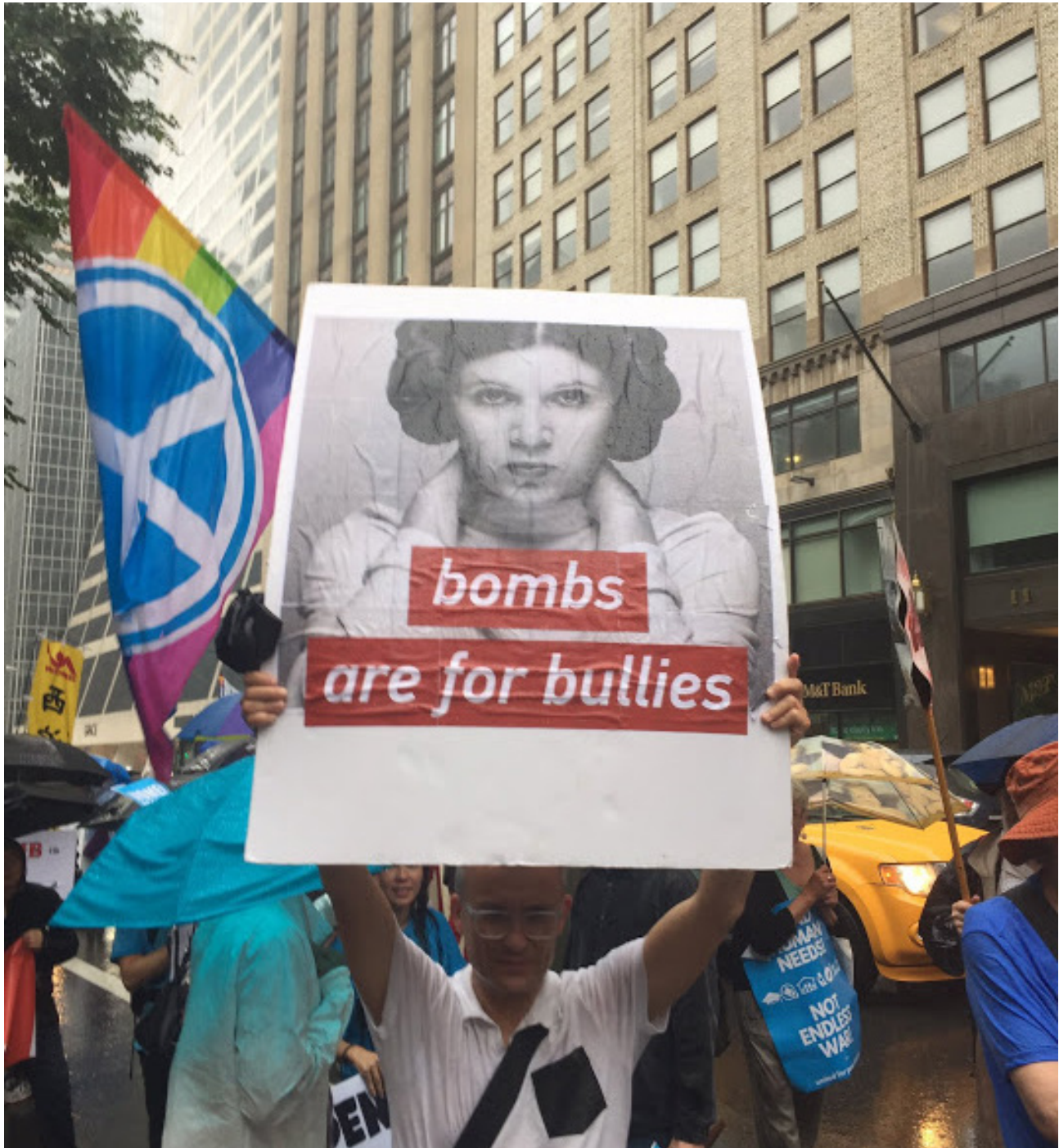


FIRST COMMITTEE MONITOR

NGO Reporting on the United Nations
General Assembly First Committee on
Disarmament and International Security
8 October–8 November 2018

NO. 1
8 October 2018



FIRST COMMITTEE MONITOR

2018 No. 1

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

www.reachingcriticalwill.org
www.wilpf.org
email: info@reachingcriticalwill.org

Editors: Ray Acheson and Allison Pytlak

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: Women's March to Ban the Bomb, NYC June 2017

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.

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

On www.reachingcriticalwill.org you can find:

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

IN THIS EDITION:

Editorial: Disarming the patriarchy.	3
First Committee briefing book extracts	4
Safeguarding peace in cyber space	6
Standing strong against nuclear weapons	8
New report show radioactive fallout from French nuclear testing spread through Pacific region	9
Reflections on the UN General Assembly	10



Reaching Critical Will

EDITORIAL: DISARMING THE PATRIARCHY

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

Countless women and other survivors of sexual violence watched in fury as the misogynist, patriarchal rage of a powerful straight white man whose entitlement was questioned live on television the final week of September. The nomination of Brett Kavanaugh to the US Supreme Court and subsequent allegations of sexual assault from several women unleashed a renewed dialogue about assault, survivors, and privilege not just in the United States but also around the world. This fight, which has been elevated throughout the #MeToo era, reached a fever pitch as the nominee and his powerful white male allies railed against survivors of violence to ensure that their privileged position of power and dominance would remain in tact.

Some may wonder what any of this has to do with First Committee, with disarmament and international security. Two things come to mind. First of all, weapons are tools of the patriarchy. Secondly, whether the debate is about sexual violence or armed violence, the fight is the same: it's about changing norms, about what is considered by society as acceptable behaviour.

The patriarchy is a social order dominated by men—in particular, men performing a certain brand of militarised masculinity that associates weapons and war with power. This form of masculinity influences the possession, proliferation, and use of everything from nuclear weapons to small arms. This is a masculinity in which ideas like strength, courage, and protection are equated with violence. It is a masculinity in which the capacity and willingness to use weapons, engage in combat, and kill other human beings is seen as essential to being “a real man”.

This type of violent, militarised masculinity harms everyone. It harms everyone who does not perform that gender norm—women, LGBTQIA-identified people, non-normative men. It requires oppression of those deemed “weaker” on the basis of gender norms. It results in domestic violence. It results in violence against women. It results in violence against gay and trans people. But this kind of masculinity also means violence against other men performing violent masculinities. Men mostly kill each other, inside and outside of conflict. Violent masculinities make male bodies more expendable. Women and children, obnoxiously lumped together in countless UN resolutions and media reports, are more likely to be deemed “innocent civilians,” while men are more likely to be considered militants or combatants. Often, in conflict, civilian men are targeted—or counted in casualty recordings—as militants only because they are men of a certain age.

But militarised masculinity is not just about death. It is also a major impediment to disarmament, peace, and gender equality. It makes disarmament seem weak. It makes peace seem utopian. It makes protection without weapons seem absurd.

It also makes it impossible to achieve gender equality. It keeps men and women in binary boxes based on their biological sex. It maintains a strict hierarchy between these binary boxes, in which men are tough, rational, and violent, while women are weak, irrational, and passive. In this narrative, men are agents; women are victims.

The norm of violent masculinity will continue to cause suffering and reinforce inequalities until we get serious about doing something differently. This is a project of dismantling the patriarchy, which is a big project, but it starts with the language we use here in the UN or in civil society, in our resolutions as well as our policies and practices. It starts with taking on these norms, deconstructing them, and building something better for all of us.

So much of our work for disarmament is about effecting normative change. The UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, for example, is about codifying the unacceptability, immorality, and illegality of nuclear weapons in international law. It challenges dominant narratives that nuclear weapons provide security and destroys the normative values that for years have enabled a handful of governments to risk total annihilation of the entire planet just so they can maintain their privileged position of power.

Sound familiar? To those who have survived abuse, assault, and harassment it sure does. And just as survivors are working to burn down the norms that privilege abusers over their victims, so too are disarmament advocates working to prioritise norms of peace over weaponised power.

Disarmament, as Trinidad and Tobago said at the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons event on 26 September, is about preventing and ending violence, supporting sustainable development, and upholding the principles of humanity. This is what First Committee delegates should be working towards. •

FIRST COMMITTEE BRIEFING BOOK EXTRACTS

To provide inspiration to delegates at First Committee, Reaching Critical Will has published a briefing book with background information and recommendations on some of this year's most pressing topics. The following are abbreviated recommendations from each chapter. The full briefing book can be downloaded from www.reachingcriticalwill.org.

Nuclear weapons

- Express support for the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and, for those that have not yet done so, declare their intention to become a state party to the Treaty as soon as possible;
- Highlight and condemn as illegitimate any ongoing activities that are prohibited under this Treaty, such as threats to use nuclear weapons, testing of nuclear weapons, and the development and modernisation of nuclear arsenals; and
- Call for all resolutions on nuclear weapons to include a reference to the TPNW.

Biological weapons

- Reaffirm and strengthen their commitment to the BWC;
- Report on measures taken to implement provisions from the Convention; and
- Constructively discuss the Secretary-General's proposal to establish a core standing coordinating capacity within the UN for investigating use, and the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs' efforts to develop a framework for coordinated response.

Chemical weapons

- Highlight and publicly condemn any ongoing activities that are prohibited under the CWC;
- Indicate support for the OPCW's renewed mandate to identify the perpetrators of the use of chemical weapons in Syria;
- Endorse the UN Secretary-General's recommendations on chemical weapons; and
- Report on measures taken to implement provisions from the Convention, and pledge financial support.

Armed drones

- Recognise the ethical, legal, and humanitarian concerns that drones bring to the use of force in the contemporary landscape, and state commitment to reducing and addressing harm and ensuring the protection of rights;
- Recognise the grave risk that international legal frameworks could be eroded through the use of armed drones, in the context of practices that challenge existing norms;

- Assert the need for transparency in the use of drones by any and all states, for the recording of casualties and the addressing of victims' rights, and for accountability and democratic oversight; and
- Recognise the need for a broader multilateral conversation about what role drones should play in the use of force and the specific limits and standards for their use.

Fully autonomous weapons

- Articulate their national policy on fully autonomous weapons, including their position on the call to preemptively ban development, production, and use; and
- Elaborate their desired outcome for the CCW deliberations, including recommended mandate of work in 2019.

Explosive weapons in populated areas

- Acknowledge that the use of explosive weapons in populated areas frequently causes severe harm to individuals and communities and furthers suffering by damaging vital infrastructure;
- Endorse the UN Secretary-General's and International Committee of the Red Cross' recommendation that states should avoid the use of explosive weapons with wide area effects in populated areas; and
- Indicate support for the development of an international political instrument on explosive weapons to protect civilians.

Landmines

- Report on measures taken in 2018 to implement the Maputo Action Plan or to otherwise put an end to the suffering caused by landmines;
- Pledge financial support for the implementation of Treaty obligations, including land clearance and assistance to survivors, their families, and communities;
- Reiterate that any use of landmines by any actor is unacceptable;
- Report on progress towards joining the Mine Ban Treaty;
- Engage bilaterally in discussions on the universalisation or implementation of the Mine Ban Treaty;
- Vote in favour of the resolution on the Mine Ban Treaty and encourage others, such as regional group members, to do so as well.

Cluster munitions

- Report on measures taken to implement the Dubrovnik Action Plan, including "discouraging, in every way possible" the use of cluster munitions;

- Condemn recent instances of use of cluster munitions;
- Vote in favour of the resolution on cluster munitions and encourage others, such as regional group members, to do so as well;
- Report on steps taken to join the Convention; and
- Engage bilaterally in discussions on the universalization or implementation of the Convention.

Depleted uranium

- Raise concerns over the potential use of DU in current operations in Syria, Iraq, and the Ukraine in regional and national statements; and
- Explain how they are implementing A/RES/71/70, Effects of the use of armaments and ammunitions containing depleted uranium, in their national and regional statements.

Incendiary weapons

- Call for a formal review of Protocol III
- and amendments to address the negative humanitarian impacts of incendiary weapons; and
- Publicly condemn incendiary weapons use in Syria and urge the Syrian government to accede to the Convention on Conventional Weapons and its Protocol III.

Small arms and light weapons

- Work to implement RevCon3 outcomes;
- Prepare proposals to encourage states to exchange good practices on preventing, combatting, and eradicating the illicit trade in SALW and ammunition;
- Emphasise the importance of addressing pervasive SALW violence and crime, recognizing that the vast majority of deaths and injuries with SALW do not take place in situations of armed conflict;
- Focus on gender-based action to curb SALW proliferation and violence, and work to ensure women's full participation and representation in arms control programmes and diplomatic processes; and
- Strengthen the focus on achieving SDG 16 and respecting human rights law governing the use of force.

Arms Trade Treaty

- Highlight and challenge arms transfers that appear to be in violation of the Treaty;
- Encourage continued universalisation of the Arms Trade Treaty;
- Contribute to substantive discussions taking place in side events and elsewhere in order to share expertise and strengthen capacity for the robust implementation of the ATT; and
- Support an ATT resolution that calls for strong and effective Treaty implementation.

Outer space

- Pledge not to use any space- or ground-based capabilities, whether exclusively military or multi-use in nature, to deliberately damage or destroy space assets;
- Highlight the importance of preventing the weaponisation of outer space to preserve peace and security and benefit all humankind;
- Condemn any anti-satellite tests and the development of weapons to be placed in orbit or any system to be used to target space-based assets; • Indicate support for the negotiation of a treaty preventing an arms race in outer space and for interim transparency and confidence-building measures toward that end; and
- Seek to find common ground between legal and political or rules-based approaches to enhancing the security of outer space.

Cyber

- Speak out against hostile and provocative actions in, and the militarisation of, cyberspace;
- Work cooperatively to identify and establish an inclusive and transparent mechanism by which to continue work on behavioural norms in cyber space and to promote a cyber peace approach; and
- Express concern about unlawful surveillance and digital censorship activities that violate human rights.

Gender and disarmament

- Welcome the gender perspectives included in recent forums and commit to advancing the goals contained therein;
- Collaborate to make First Committee resolutions more gender-sensitive;
- Welcome the inclusion of the provision on gender-based violence in the Arms Trade Treaty and highlight the need for implementation of this aspect of the Treaty;
- Highlight the need to ensure gender diversity in disarmament discussions and negotiations; and
- Share their experiences with ensuring gender perspectives in disarmament policies and initiatives.

Disarmament and development

- Recognise and reinforce the specific ways in which disarmament, non-proliferation, and arms control can advance development, including the SDGs;
- Address the issue of the underrepresentation of lower-income countries and regions in multilateral disarmament forums, and suggest practical measures to correct this; and
- Suggest new ways for the UN General Assembly to effectively engage in this issue.

Protection of the environment in relation to armed conflict

- Acknowledge the link between conflicts, military activities, environmental pollution, and health; and
- Make greater use of the annual resolution Observation of environmental norms in the drafting and implementation of agreements on disarmament and arms control in articulating concerns over the lifecycle environmental impacts of weapons.

Disarmament education

- Strengthen the disarmament and non-proliferation education resolution by reinvigorating efforts to promote peace and disarmament education, and amplifying the voices of survivors;
- Ensure that a commitment to support disarmament education as integral to treaty universalisation is included in any TPNW resolution(s);
- Welcome the UNSG's 2016 report and express the ongoing relevance of the 2002 Study, UNSCR 2250, the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as the contributions of civil society and educational institutions in providing disarmament and non-proliferation education; and
- Report on their disarmament education initiatives and call on states, international organisations, civil society, and educational institutions to make submissions to UNODA for the 2020 report.

First Committee briefing book



Reaching Critical Will

2018

SAFEGUARDING PEACE IN CYBER SPACE

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

Cyber security has largely remained something of a fringe topic at First Committee despite the ubiquity of the challenges that it presents. In 2018, this seems poised to change, with greater interest and energy coming from a wider cross-section of states, alongside more side events and the launch of new tools and resources.¹

It's time for a broader prioritisation of this issue. To say that technology is outpacing international law in this area is a massive understatement. We need a serious re-examination of which stakeholders are at the table, and we need to come to grips with the fundamental differences in perspective that divide states on this topic. We also need to re-examine methods and approaches being utilised, to determine if they bring us closer to cyber peace or serve to only further militarise the domain.

Part of the problem has been the exclusive nature of the primary UN entity charged with addressing this issue. Since 2004, Groups of Governmental Experts (GGEs) on "information and communications technol-

ogies" or ICTs have been meeting in a closed setting to discuss the landscape of the threat as well as what the boundaries for state action in cyber space should be. An overarching goal of the GGEs has been to elaborate norms of state behaviour in cyber space. Negotiated, consensus-based reports have been brought back to the UN General Assembly (UNGA) via the First Committee for adoption, but there has not been an opportunity for other states or experts to input to those reports. The most recent GGE was unable to agree a consensus report, which in turn meant that the UNGA did not provide a mandate for a subsequent Group, bringing discussion to a standstill.

Positively, this seems to have sparked an exploratory dialogue among member states over the last year about the status of the ICT work in the UN and how it can be improved. Participation has been a key part of that discussion, following criticisms from a growing number of states about the lack of inclusion and openness, particularly toward developing countries. This was a clear message from the high-level event on cyber security organised by the Mission of Bangladesh



Reaching Critical Will

on 25 September, in which the potential of ICTs to assist states in meeting the Sustainable Development Goals was underscored by a number of speakers. As one panelist said, developing countries have “rolled out digitisation rapidly” in an effort to close the digital divide, yet lack the capacity to defend their new technological systems, much of which has been created with software and hardware originating elsewhere. Despite claims about how the asymmetrical nature of cyber conflict can potentially upset international relations as we know it, the primary actors in most conversations about norm development are developed and “powerful” nations.

Different formulations for a more inclusive method of moving the ICT norm conversation forward have been presented over the last year, ranging from regional consultations that will feed into a new GGE to adopting a format similar to the open-ended consultations on a fissile materials cut-off treaty (FMCT). The draft resolution on ICTs being presented by the Russian Federation will likely resurrect the GGE format, but it will need to address the participation issue in order for any future entity—and the work it produces—to have legitimacy. Claiming that the UN membership has endorsed the work or norms articulated by the Group simply because they voted yes to a resolution containing the report is not a substitute for meaningful participation and engagement.

Apart from process, the last GGE also suffered from significant differences in perspective that impacted matters of substance. The primary breakdown in 2016 was around the applicability of existing international law to cyberspace, including international humanitarian law (IHL), and the right to self-defence as enshrined in the UN Charter. This speaks to fundamental differences in how states view their role in acting within cyberspace. As of late, there have been increased calls by many Western states and institutions to focus not on articulating further norms but on operationalising those set out by the 2015 GGE, possibly as a measure to avoid further confrontation. Other states prefer to focus on refining or expanding the 2015 list.

Any new entity will need also to situate its purpose in the context of the many other initiatives in this area, some of which are making progress on confidence-building measures and regional norm development.²

It’s also vital that states consider how their treatment of this issue is shaping possible policy responses and contributing to the militarisation of cyber space. For example, the voluntary norms set out in 2015 are intended to prevent conflict in cyber space, yet by approaching cyber space the same way that the international community has addressed specific weapons,

it takes for granted that states will develop offensive capabilities, use cyber as a form of weaponry, and treat the cyber domain as a place of conflict. This approach both shapes and reinforces the nature of the possible responses that are outlined, alongside a notion of security that is politicised and militarised. It also overlooks the fact that while the number of malicious cyber operations is growing exponentially, the vast majority of these operations have not crossed a threshold of causing severe damage, and tend to constitute acts of crime, espionage, or human rights violations rather than what we would equate with armed attack in the offline world. In the on-going discussions about norms of responsible behaviour in cyberspace, it’s essential that space is also given to articulating a vision of cyber peace. •

Notes

1. For example, the UN Office of Disarmament Affairs has launched an online training course and the UN Institute for Disarmament Research will launch a Policy Portal in December 2018.
2. For example, France has recently announced a “Paris Roadmap” that seeks the adoption of a political declaration in November 2018. Other multilateral initiatives include the Global Conference on Cyberspace; the Global Cooperation in Cyberspace initiative, and several regional agreements. From the private sector, the Microsoft-led “Tech Accords” have brought together more than 60 companies to protect and promote security in cyber space.

**Subscribe to receive the
First Committee Monitor by
email each week**

reachingcriticalwill.org

STANDING STRONG AGAINST NUCLEAR WEAPONS

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

On 26 September, nuclear weapons took another big normative hit. States and civil society gathered during the high-level segment UN General Assembly to mark the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons. Heads of government, foreign minister, and other officials delivered statements that overwhelmingly welcomed the adoption of the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). That afternoon, the UN hosted a special ceremony for more states to sign and ratify the Treaty. Simultaneously, campaigners with International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) around the world visited branches of the French bank BNP Paribas to demand that it divest from nuclear weapons. It was a bad day for nuclear weapons, and for those that support them.

Supporters of nuclear weapons are becoming increasingly isolated—and increasingly visible in this isolation. Most did not even attend the International Day event at the UN. The only nuclear-armed states to participate were China, India, and Pakistan. The only nuclear-supportive ally to participate was Japan. Most countries that support nuclear weapons were at a meeting next door, in the UN Security Council. This meeting was convened by the US government to talk about the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). There, states that possess nuclear weapons, host US nuclear weapons on their soil, and/or insist that nuclear weapons are fundamental to their national security, decried other countries for possessing or using WMDs. “The devastating consequences of the use of weapons of mass destruction underline the urgent need to take action,” said the Dutch government for example, without acknowledging that it hosts WMDs on its territory; is complicit in preparations for their use; and refuses to join the treaty outlawing them.

In contrast, seven countries signed the TPNW on 26 September—Antigua and Barbuda, Benin, Brunei, Guinea-Bissau, Myanmar, Seychelles, and Timor-Leste—and four ratified it—Gambia, Samoa, San Marino, and Vanuatu. During the high-level event for the International Day, several countries including Angola, El Salvador, Guatemala, Kazakhstan, Namibia, South Africa, Sudan, and Tanzania announced that they would soon be signing or ratifying the Treaty. The day after, Angola and Saint Lucia also signed the Treaty. The President of the UN General Assembly, María Fernanda Espinosa of Ecuador, expressed her hope that all countries will support the TPNW.

During their statements to the International Day event, countries around the world highlighted their support for this Treaty as a meaningful contribution to facilitating nuclear disarmament and building peace. Liechtenstein described the TPNW as “our best source of optimism today,” highlighting the way it draws a clear legal line against all attempts to justify the use of nuclear weapons. “The Treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons is a beacon of hope that humanity will one day be rid of the threat of nuclear warfare and its catastrophic impacts,” said Peter Maurer, President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

Some focused on what the Treaty has accomplished already. Austria noted that it sends a powerful message to nuclear-armed states that the rest of the world is not willing to accept the status quo, while Egypt welcomed its adoption as an important step to eliminate nuclear weapons. Ireland argued the TPNW is successful not just in its revolutionary substance but as an example of what can be achieved by states and civil society when they act together. Similarly, Thailand highlighted the importance of the collective action to achieve the Treaty, saying it marks “the beginning of our journey to a nuclear weapon free world,” while Costa Rica described the change in discourse around nuclear weapons already underway.

The TPNW is clearly having an effect. As ICAN said in its statement to the International Day, “This treaty is the new international standard on nuclear weapons.” Recognising that many states are experiencing pressure not to sign or ratify the Treaty—just as many of them were subjected to pressure not to support its development, to participate in its negotiation, or to vote for its adoption—the Campaign encouraged all governments to not give in. “The world changes when people work together relentlessly to change it. Don’t give up. Stand strong, stand together, and make it clear that we are living in a new reality in which nuclear weapons are illegal and where the only option for any reasonable state is to reject and eliminate them.” •

NEW REPORTS SHOW RADIOACTIVE FALLOUT FROM FRENCH NUCLEAR TESTS SPREAD THROUGH PACIFIC REGION

Matthew Bolton | International Disarmament Institute, Pace University

This article is the first in a series that First Committee Monitor will run over the coming weeks that summarize new research by Pace University's International Disarmament Institute on the importance of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in addressing the humanitarian, human rights and environmental impact of nuclear weapons.

Radioactive fallout from atmospheric nuclear weapons tests in French Polynesia was detected throughout the Pacific region, raising serious humanitarian concerns, two new reports from Pace University's International Disarmament Institute show.¹

Between 1966 and 1996, France conducted 193 nuclear weapons tests (46 were "atmospheric"—above-ground or on or under water) in the non-self-governing territory of French Polynesia, claiming there were no risks to people or the environment. However, radioactive particles dispersed over much of the territory, including Tahiti, and far beyond.

Our researchers analysed archival reports showing that the Aotearoa New Zealand² and Australian government monitoring stations detected radioactive fallout in their own territories, as well as in the Cook Islands, Fiji, Niue, Samoa, Tokelau, Tonga, and Tuvalu; some 30 million people now live in these states. Mexico and Peru also detected fallout. Venting and leaching of radioactive materials from France's underground test sites into the ocean also poses ongoing environmental risks.

Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia's data was crucial to their 1973 case against France at the International Court of Justice. Aotearoa New Zealand's submissions to the Court outlined the potential multigenerational health effects of fallout, including "slow destruction, particularly of the blood-forming tissues, organic lesions and destruction of the body's natural means of protection", as well as cancers and "impairment of fertility."³ To date, there has not been sufficient monitoring of potential medical, psychological nor environmental implications for Pacific peoples.

The Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific (NFIP) movement spurred advocacy and diplomatic action to end French nuclear tests and many from the region have participated in the Nobel Peace Prize-winning International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN). At this year's Pacific Islands Forum, regional

leaders "reaffirmed their commitment to addressing the outstanding security threats from nuclear legacy issues, including radioactive contaminants" and called "on all responsible parties to rectify the ongoing impacts of contaminants in our Ocean to sustain our future generations."⁴

In September, Fiji told the UN General Assembly that "rigorous implementation" of the 2017 Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) offers a crucial opportunity to address the "human and environmental impact of nuclear testing," which "remains a threat to the pursuit of sustainable development by the Pacific States."⁵

The TPNW not only bans nuclear weapons, it provides a new normative framework for addressing harms they have caused. It obligates states parties to assist victims, remediate contaminate environments and engage in international cooperation and assistance to help affected countries.

In the Pacific region, Aotearoa New Zealand, Cook Islands, Palau, Samoa, and Vanuatu are TPNW state parties; Fiji, Kiribati and Timor Leste are signatories. Marshall Islands, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tonga, and Tuvalu voted for adoption. Australia, Federated States of Micronesia, France, UK, and US boycotted the treaty negotiations. Our reports recommend strong regional action to universalise and implement the treaty. •

Notes

1. Matthew Bolton, Sydney Tisch, and Dimity Hawkins, *Fallout on Countries Downwind from French Pacific Nuclear Weapons Testing*, 2018, International Disarmament Institute, New York, <https://bit.ly/2OAzNtd>; International Disarmament Institute, *Nuclear Veterans and Radioactive Fallout: Aotearoa New Zealand*, 2018, New York, International Disarmament Institute, <https://bit.ly/2zOh0Cw>.
2. Aotearoa is the Indigenous Maori name for New Zealand; our reports use both names together.
3. New Zealand, "Application Instituting Proceedings submitted by the Government of New Zealand," *Nuclear Tests (New Zealand vs. France)*, 1973, p.6, <https://www.icj-cij.org/files/case-related/59/9447.pdf>.
4. Pacific Islands Forum, "Forty-Ninth Pacific Islands Forum: Communiqué," 6 September 2018, https://foreignminister.gov.au/releases/Pages/2018/mp_mr_180906a.aspx.
5. Satyendra Prasad, "Statement at the High-Level Meeting to Commemorate and Promote the International Day Against Nuclear Tests," <http://statements.unmeetings.org/media2/19408108/fiji.pdf>.

REFLECTIONS ON THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2018

Katrin Geyer | Reaching Critical Will of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

The United Nations' 73rd year is only the fourth time that a woman, María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés from Ecuador, has presided of the General Assembly. Her vocal commitment to gender equality—as well as nuclear disarmament and other crucial issues—is an important step to ensure women's equal representation within the UN and beyond. Yet, as Liechtenstein cautioned, “the UN, supposedly a trailblazer on the empowerment of women, so frequently misses opportunities to make appointments that resonate outside this building.”

This year's UN high-level general debate once again accentuated the divide between the tiny minority of powerful war profiteers and the great majority of states that believe in multilateralism—“the battle with ideas and arguments rather than with weapons,” as described by Belgium. It is this divide between those few states that boast about their military spending, and those states that expose and criticise militarism, that perhaps best describes our world today. The president of Ecuador could not have put it better: “Maybe because we were idealist teenagers, and because we continue to be non-conforming adults, we do not understand how the big powers invest in arms instead of investing in the development of peoples. We do not understand how those countries, that are developed and have achieved military superiority, that have experienced wars through their own children, that those countries invest in conflicts that do not concern them, without seeking to solve them, but that aggravate or even perpetuate them.”

As it does every year, WILPF tracked governments' references to disarmament issues during the high-level debate. Below are a few key extracts. The full Index is available at www.reachingcriticalwill.org.

Nuclear weapons

Amidst growing concern about a new nuclear arms race, the majority of governments expressed their hope and support for a real possibility of a denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula in light of the recent inter-Korean agreements. Whilst many states explicitly encouraged the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's (DPRK) rapid disarmament, a few states also encouraged the US government to match the pace. China, for instance, maintained that “we believe it is also right for the [USA] to make timely and positive responses so as to truly meet the DPRK half way.”

Governments in support of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) highlighted the historic adoption of the Treaty last year, and reaf-

firmed their commitment to the Treaty's swift entry into force. The nuclear-armed states said little to none about their arsenals or about nuclear disarmament. Australia, which continues to say it includes US nuclear weapons in its security doctrine, argued that “overwhelmingly, our peoples expect us to prevent further proliferation of nuclear weapons,” but failed to mention that the vast majority of peoples also wish for rapid disarmament of existing nuclear weapon arsenals.

The catastrophic consequences of the use of nuclear weapons was a key concern for those that have suffered from nuclear testing in the past. Kiribati, Tuvalu, and the Marshall Islands highlighted the grave humanitarian impacts of nuclear testing on their populations. Palau followed suit stating that “nuclear tests have negatively impacted the environment, human health, food security and economic development. Weapons of mass destruction have no place in this world.”

The USA's withdrawal of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) was a particularly contested issue at this year's General Assembly. Many governments reaffirmed their commitment to preserve the nuclear deal. In contrast, the USA called on all states to “isolate Iran's regime as long as its aggression continues.” In response, Iran observed that “it is the first time in the history of the United Nations that such a general invitation to violation of law is coupled with threatening law-abiders with punishment.”

Arms trade and small arms

Many states raised the issue of arms trafficking in the context of other challenges such as drug trafficking or human trafficking. A few states, such as Paraguay and Mexico, referred to the arms trade in regard to the achievement of the negotiation and adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). Both governments, along with Costa Rica, emphasised that they supported the Treaty's effective implementation. Latvia drew attention to the interconnectedness of arms control and development and said that becoming a state party to the ATT would directly contribute to the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Sierra Leone acknowledged the “continued relevance of the Programme of Action” for the prevention and eradication of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons (SALW). Jamaica also expressed its particular interest in combatting the illicit trade of SALW. On a regional level, a few African states, such as Gambia and Botswana, expressed their commitment to the African Union (AU) Commission's decision to “silence the

guns by 2020". Cameroon was pleased to have hosted the first Conference of the Kinshasa Convention under which the Central African States have committed themselves to combating the proliferation of SALW.

Autonomous weapons

UN Secretary-General Guterres made it very clear that "the prospect of machines with the discretion and power to take human life is morally repugnant," and Mongolia observed that the "use of technological advancements in armed conflicts is making the circumstances more dangerous than ever." Suriname was one of the few countries that openly rejected "the research of artificial intelligence for warfare purposes".

Military spending

Various governments called out the vested interests behind the promotion of the military industry and fomentation of conflict, including Cyprus, Mongolia, and Malaysia. Malaysia noted that "today's weapons cost millions. Fighter jets cost about 100 million dollars. And maintaining them cost tens of millions. But the poor countries are persuaded to buy them even if they cannot afford.... So, while their people starve and suffer from all kinds of deprivations, a huge percentage of their budget is allocated to the purchase of arms." Bolivia, exposing the "culture of war," argued,

"the world cannot live at the expense of those who believe that it is their right to produce and use weapons that are capable of the total destruction of life on this planet." These analyses are powerful in challenging the dominant narrative by those states that are profiting from wars and conflict. They stood in stark contrast to the USA's boasting of its forecasted military spending next year, making the US military "more powerful than it has ever been before".

Conclusion

Much work is needed on disarmament and arms control to protect civilians, enhance human security, and support development and peace. The general debate provides a snapshot of government interest in this subject. It seems that states, in the face of ever-growing global challenges, suffer from "a bad case of Trust Deficit Order," as described by the UN Secretary-General Guterres. Indeed, we need to rebuild trust. Yet, we can only build trust if we can actually believe what states proclaim when they are standing on the UN podium, speaking of peace. As Bolivia pointed out: "Many leaders, above all those that possess most of the weapons in the world, come to this Forum to talk to us about peace." But as long as militarism is prioritised over peace, these words will remain empty rhetoric. •



ICAN Australia Nobel Peace Ride ends in Canberra on 20 September 2018 © ICAN Australia

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:

International Disarmament Institute, Pace University
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

www.reachingcriticalwill.org | info@reachingcriticalwill.org



Reaching Critical Will