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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: Allison Pytlak and Ray Acheson

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Cover image: Ray Acheson

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Reaching Critical Will

EDITORIAL: RESIGN OR REVOLT—A CHOICE FOR FIRST COMMITTEE DELEGATES

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

First Committee is not typically punctuated by fist banging and outbursts of yelling, but the US government's announcement last week of its intention to withdraw from the Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty has brought some serious political tensions to a head. The Committee is not immune from external realities—the recent uses of chemical weapons, ongoing military actions and occupations, political maneuverings and manipulations: all of these have an impact on what happens in Conference Room 4. But until recently, it was rare to see delegates yelling at or mocking each other brazenly in front of the world. Now, it seems to be becoming the new normal.

This concept of a new reality, incidentally, has been thrown around quite a bit recently. "A new reality" is how some diplomats have described the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). A new reality in which nuclear weapons are prohibited; in which the world has ostensibly become safer. It's the same term the Russian delegate used to describe the "potential apocalyptic consequences" of US withdrawal from the INF Treaty. A new reality in which the former nuclear superpowers of the Cold War will rise from the ashes of the intricate networks of bilateral and multilateral agreements to control and restrain their arsenals of mass destruction to rebuild their weapons anew.

Are either of these realities new? Are either of them reality? Is the world safer because the majority of the world has outlawed weapons that their possessors are ever more desperate to retain? Is the world in more danger because the US wants to walk away, yet again, from an international instrument that constrains some of the worst of its bad behaviours?

Is it all a game? Was anyone ever really constrained? Do we have any possibility of making the world, this world, safer?

In seeking to answer these questions, an interesting point of investigation is the glimmer of unity amongst those considered powerful. The permanent five UN Security Council members, all nuclear-armed states (China, France, Russia, United States, and United Kingdom) do not seem to agree on much these days, across a range of political issues. Just on the nuclear question alone, they are clearly suspicious of each other's motivations and intentions, condemning each other's nuclear weapon modernisation activities, force postures, and security doctrines. In relation to other

First Committee issues, these countries are also at odds on questions of cyber security and the attribution of the use of chemical weapons, among many other things. Yet the one thing they can all agree on is that an international agreement prohibiting nuclear weapons for all is a Very Bad Thing. The only thing they hate more than each other's nuclear weapons, it seems, is the rest of the world opposing any of them having nuclear weapons.

And so the TPNW is painted as a security-destroying machination, something that will ruin "strategic stability" and the "international order". Yet simultaneously, the P5 rip up their own arms control agreements and provoke each other to rage in diplomatic conference rooms. This, it would seem, is their contribution to "persevering security and stability in the international security environment".

This unity is interesting in how it wreaks of hypocrisy and gaslighting. The unity is based around a common narrative in which those governments with the capacity to destroy us all are the ones who also have the best grip on stability and security for the entire world. That those who threaten to kill us—to slaughter us in nuclear holocaust, or drone strikes, or explosive weapons dropped on our towns and cities, or, perhaps soon, autonomous robots programmed to end life with an algorithm—that these folks are the ones best suited to determine how to keep us safe. The only thing they can agree on is that no one else should have a say over the "international order" they have built. Only they can destroy it, by tearing down what "they" have built in the past.

Witnessing the anger of the men in the room last week was reminiscent of witnessing the anger of US Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh during his job interview. Men with power, angered by what they perceive as a challenge to this power. Men with the power to destroy the world, outraged with each other for also having this power, outraged with the countries or the women who are demanding they behave better, participate in a world constructed for all of us rather than just a few of them.

It's not clear where the impetus for change lies in this situation, and yet hope is essential. The radical notion of hope, which Czech political dissident-turned-president Václav Havel said in 1990: "Hope is not a feeling of certainty that everything ends well. Hope is just a feeling that life and work have a meaning."

Our work does have meaning, if it is sometimes hard to see how we can make change in this “international security environment” controlled by men with weapons of mass destruction. Nevertheless, we persist. 50 countries banned together last week to deliver a statement highlighting the devastating humanitarian harm caused by the use of explosive weapons in populated areas and committing to address this problem through concrete action. Another group of countries, led by Canada, has sought to incorporate gender perspectives into First Committee resolutions this year, to try to tackle some of the serious gendered impacts of weapons and ensure that disarmament and arms control policies and processes account for gender norms and promote gender diversity. In this vein, the Latvian delegation, president of the next conference of states parties of the Arms Trade Treaty, announced the intention to examine gender-based violence as a priority theme in 2019. There is widespread acceptance of the relevance of disarmament for achieving sustainable development, and a rising focus on the concept of humanitarian disarmament as necessary for real security—that focused on human beings and our collective survival on this planet.

These seemingly small gestures or initiatives can seem insignificant in comparison to the gravity of the challenges we are up against. But this is precisely where their significance lies. The willingness and tenacity to keep trying to create change despite the obstacles is where hope lies and where change is achieved. Giving into the powers is not an option, for it is only in giving up that we fail. Dwelling on the words of French philosopher Albert Camus while sitting through First Committee is becoming increasingly essential: “Revolt is the certainty of a crushing fate, without the resignation that ought to accompany it.” Countries revolted when they adopted the TPNW; they revolted in insisting ammunition be included in international work on small arms and light weapons; and they revolt every time they come back to this room and try to make something out of the spectacle of belligerence performed by the nuclear-armed states. Our choice is to continue to stand up to build new approaches for collective, human-based security, or resign ourselves to accepting the world the way the nuclear-armed keep trying to impose upon us. It’s a choice that has to be made each day anew. •

NUCLEAR WEAPONS

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

Last Monday was the last day of the nuclear weapons cluster. However, the topic of nuclear weapons did not fade into the background in the following days: on Thursday, one week after the official deadline, Russia submitted a draft resolution on the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty in light of the US administration’s announced intention to withdraw from the Treaty. After providing more time for delegations to consider the matter, on Friday, 55 delegations of First Committee voted against accepting Russia’s resolution for consideration.¹ Whilst Russia warned against politicising the decision, delegations’ positions were—for the most part—aligned with geopolitical realities.

Delegates from Russia and those from the United States (US), the United Kingdom (UK), and France could not be more divided over issues surrounding the INF Treaty, yet they enthusiastically agreed on one thing: their firm opposition to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). In their joint statement delivered Monday, they and China’s delegation collectively reiterated that they will not accept any claim that the Treaty contributes to the develop-

ment of customary international law. Their arguments against the TPNW are by now well-known to First Committee: they believe it fails to address key issues; “contradicts” the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT); ignores the international security context; and “does nothing to increase trust and transparency between States”. In addition to this joint statement, France argued that “nuclear disarmament cannot be decreed or targeted against nuclear-armed states,” raising questions about what countries then it should apply to. Certain allies of the nuclear-armed states, such as Spain, Hungary, and the Czech Republic, also reiterated their opposition to the TPNW, whilst Finland, Portugal, Australia, Bulgaria, Turkey, the Republic of Korea, and Poland more vaguely argued for a step-by-step or “progressive approach” as the “only realistic and valid roadmap,” as put by Poland.

These statements were not without reply, however. On Monday alone, about twenty delegations stood up for the TPNW. Costa Rica argued that “this prohibition contributes to the (...) understanding that nuclear weapons are unacceptable by establishing a global norm that stigmatises them.” Austria added that



"The TPNW has closed a legal gap by establishing a comprehensive legal norm for the prohibition of nuclear weapons. This places nuclear weapons in the same category as other weapons of mass destruction, which are unconditionally outlawed for constituting fundamentally unacceptable means of warfare." Austria's statement thoughtfully dissects and refutes arguments against the criticism of the Treaty, pointing out that the nuclear ban strengthens the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards system, obliging states parties to—at a minimum—maintain existing IAEA safeguards; that it obliges nuclear-armed states parties to directly negotiate, conclude and maintain an adequate safeguards agreements; and that it strengthens the global norm against nuclear testing.

Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, Kyrgyzstan, and Senegal acknowledged the efforts made by civil society in the TPNW's development. Haiti emphasised the role of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) as one of the main faces for raising awareness for the prohibition of nuclear weapons. Sudan and eSwatini announced they will sign and ratify the Treaty soon. Nepal and the Philippines said they are in the process of ratification. Many of those delegations that have already ratified the Treaty or are in the process of doing so called upon others to promptly follow suit.

The modernisation of nuclear arsenals was again a topic of great concern to delegations, including those from Costa Rica, Philippines, Ukraine, Iran, Venezuela, Bangladesh, and the Arab Group. As Austria observed, nuclear-armed states "have entered a new cycle of modernising, investing billions of dollars into upgrading their arsenals and making nuclear weapons of reduced size and weight easier to deliver." Iran discussed the US 2018 Nuclear Posture Review, highlighting the US planned investments of \$1.3 trillion into building up its nuclear arsenal. Haiti and the Holy See, amongst others, encouraged nuclear-armed countries to divest funds for the modernisation of nuclear arsenals into the Sustainable Development Goals.

Various delegations, including Austria, Spain, Iran, Mexico, and Kazakhstan, expressed concern at the US administration's announcement that it might withdraw from the INF Treaty. Finland described the Treaty as a "landmark agreement that abolished a whole category of weapons in Europe." Poland called on Russia to "address in a substantial and transparent way all concerns regarding its compliance with the INF Treaty." The Netherlands, Finland, and the

UK expressed concern about Russia's non-compliance with the Treaty. France, Bulgaria, and Portugal called on both Russia and the US to preserve the INF in light of its importance for European and global security. During right of reply segments, as well as throughout the week, the US delegation and Russia repeatedly argued over the Treaty. The US reiterated that it has raised concern about violations in relation to the development and testing of a ground launch cruise missile for more than five years. It called upon Russia to destroy the missile and return to compliance with the INF. Russia denied these accusations, calling them "propagandist" and attempts to deflect from criticism towards the US. Russia further argued that there should also be concern about US compliance in light of American missile defence base containing MK41 launchers in Europe, supporting and developing short- and medium-range ballistic missiles. In response to the voting result on Russia's draft resolution, the Russian delegation warned against the US' uncontrolled build-up of nuclear weapons should it withdraw, indicating this signals it is "preparing for a war".

Moving to another agreement whose existence is also threatened due to US withdrawal—more than ten delegations reiterated their continued support to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). Portugal noted that the IAEA has repeatedly confirmed Iran's compliance with the agreement, and should hence continue to be implemented by all involved parties. Iran confirmed that the strong support for the JCPOA should continue. Australia and the UK expressed concern at Iran's ballistic missile programme, and the UK called on Iran not to undertake any activity to develop ballistic missiles that are able to carry nuclear weapons.

Support from more than ten delegations was expressed with respect to recent positive developments on the Korean peninsula. However, the UK and Hungary maintained that sanctions against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) should be enforced until the DPRK proves to be "credible" in its proclaimed intentions to denuclearise. France called on the DPRK to fully dismantle its nuclear ballistic missile programme. The Republic of Korea welcomed the DPRK's commitment, accompanied by a series of "'for the first-time' actions that were unthinkable only a year ago."

Around 15 delegations expressed again their broad support towards establishing a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction (WMDFZ) in the Middle East.

Many delegations reassured their support to Arab Group's resolution on convening a conference to negotiate a legally binding treaty for such a zone in the Middle East, discussed below. Israel accused the Arab Group of "hijacking another treaty on arms control". It stated that the Middle East was not ready for establishing such a zone in light of countries' continued possession of nuclear weapons and other WMD.

Resolutions

The following review accounts for resolutions available through the official document system by time of writing.

L.1, "Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East," contains only technical updates from previous years. The resolution urges further action on establishing this zone and to act in accordance with the spirit of such a zone in the meantime. It is typically adopted without a vote.

L.2, "The risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East," contains only technical updates from previous years. It calls for Israel's accession to the NPT and IAEA safeguards and for implementation of the 2005 and 2010 NPT outcomes related to the Middle East. This resolution is usually more controversial, with European states abstaining and Israel, the United States, and a handful others opposing.

L.4, "Conclusion of effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon states the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons," contains only technical updates from previous years. It reaffirms the need for negative security assurances and appeals to nuclear-armed states to work "actively towards an early agreement on a common approach" that could result in a legally-binding instrument.

L.14, "Follow-up to the 2013 high-level meeting of the General Assembly on nuclear disarmament," which previously called for the convening of a high-level meeting on nuclear disarmament to take place on 14–16 May 2018 in New York, now leaves the date open to review progress on the matter. The resolution continues to highlight the value of promoting 26 September as the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons in furthering nuclear disarmament.

L.19, "Mongolia's international security and nuclear-weapon-free status," last adopted in 2016, contains only technical updates.

L.22/Rev.1, "Convening a conference on a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction," is a new resolution tabled by the Arab Group. It calls for a conference by no later than 2019 dealing with the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. All states of the Middle East, the three co-sponsors of the resolution on the Middle East adopted by the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the NPT, the other two nuclear-armed states and the relevant international organisations are to participate. The aim of the conference is the elaboration of a legally binding treaty establishing a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at by the states of the region. The resolution is controversial, and the US and Israeli delegation have already expressed their opposition to the draft resolution.

L.23, "Humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons," tabled by Austria, was first introduced in 2015. It contains only technical updates from last year. The resolution highlights the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of the use of nuclear weapons and calls on all states to prevent any use or proliferation of nuclear weapons and to achieve nuclear disarmament.

L.26, "Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty," is updated to note the conference of the CTBTO Youth Group, established in 2016, that took place in October 2017, to build momentum for the universalisation and entry into force of the Treaty. This year, operative paragraphs (OP) 6 and 7 from 2016 are merged into OP 6, urging states to accelerate the ratification process. It further welcomes Thailand's recent ratification and Tuvalu's signature of the Treaty. It also welcomes the "establishment of over 91 per cent of the stations planned for the International Monitoring System network." With respect to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), OP 5 reflects recent developments, condemning the DPRK's six nuclear tests since 2006, but welcoming the DPRK's moratorium on nuclear tests and the inter-Korean summits and the summit between the US and the DPRK.

L.31, "Nuclear disarmament verification," was first introduced in 2016. It takes as its starting point that regardless of the path to the elimination of nuclear weapons, verification will be necessary once that point is reached. This year's resolution is only technical in nature and notes "that the group of governmental experts on nuclear disarmament verification has



commenced its work”.

L.42, “Reducing nuclear danger,” only contains technical updates. Tabled by India, this resolution calls for a review of nuclear doctrines and the de-alerting and de-targeting of nuclear weapons.

L.44, “Convention on the Prohibition of the Use of Nuclear Weapons,” contains technical updates only.

L.46, “Universal Declaration on the Achievement of a Nuclear-Weapon-Free world,” was last tabled in 2015 by Kazakhstan. At that time, it adopted the Universal Declaration on the Achievement of a Nuclear-Weapon-Free World annexed to the resolution. It again invites relevant actors to disseminate the Declaration and promote its implementation. It further calls on the UN Secretary General to submit a report on the progress of implementation of the Declaration. The resolution is updated to note the adoption, with a vote, of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in PP7, and also takes into account the Secretary General’s disarmament agenda, Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament in PP9.

L.48, “Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia,” last tabled in 2016, only contains technical updates.

L.52, “Decreasing the operational readiness of nuclear weapons systems,” contains a small addition to OP2 “while noting with concern the recent deterioration in the international security climate” after it welcomes “the increased confidence and transparency since the cessation of the cold war.”

L.58, “Treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices,” tabled by Canada, Germany, and the Netherlands, was a draft decision last year. Compared to 2016, it takes into account the adoption of the report of subsidiary body 2 of the Conference on Disarmament (CD) on the prevention of nuclear war, and added another PP stating that it was “looking forward to the Conference ... fulfilling its mandate”. Further PPs address consultative meetings and the outcome report of the high-level fissile material cut-off treaty expert preparatory group. In its last PP, it adds recognition of “the importance of concerted efforts to ensure that both women and men can participate equally, fully and effectively in the negotiation process of a future treaty.” In 2016, the resolution requested the establishment of an FMCT expert preparatory group, and now welcomes in its OP 2-6 the adoption

of the group’s report, calling on the Secretary-General to transmit the report to the CD prior to its 2019 session. It further requests that future negotiations of a treaty take into account the expert group’s report and urges the CD to “carry out further expert work to elaborate on all relevant aspects of a treaty”.

L.62, “Ethical imperatives for a nuclear-weapon-free world,” was first introduced in 2015 by South Africa. This text, only including technical updates this year, calls upon all states to acknowledge the humanitarian impacts and risks of a nuclear weapon detonation, and makes a series of declarations about the inherent immorality of nuclear weapons underlying the need for their elimination.

L.54, “United action with renewed determination towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons,” is tabled annually by Japan. Last year, it was the most controversial nuclear weapon resolution. Last year, its references to nuclear disarmament were significantly watered down, and its language on the Comprehensive Nuclear- Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) arguably undermined efforts to achieve that Treaty’s entry into force. This year, Japan again undertook considerable additions and restructuring of the text. Most of these changes seem oriented towards appeasing the nuclear-armed states, particularly the US government’s demand for “creating the conditions for nuclear disarmament” by changing calls to action to calls to facilitate action and to take into account the “international security environment”. The resolution does not mention the adoption of the TPNW.

Changes to the preamble of L.54 include:

- The addition of language stressing the essential role of the NPT “in the maintenance of international peace, security and stability” and recalling “the achievements ... of the Treaty as the cornerstone of the international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime, which has contributed to the achievement of major reductions in the nuclear arsenals of nuclear-weapon States;”
- The addition to the para on international peace and security and the promotion of nuclear disarmament being mutually reinforcing, “that it is in the common interest of all States to improve the international security environment and pursue a world free of nuclear weapons in line with article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons;”
- An additional para on being mindful “that civility in discourse and respect for divergent views contribute to facilitating a meaningful and realistic

- An addition to one para welcoming the recent visit to Nagasaki by the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Changes to the operative portion include:

- OP2: In relation to NPT article VI, it added “recalling the Final Document of the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons”;
- OP3: reverts back to the 2016 wording, including again for states to implement the steps agreed to at the 1995, 2000, and 2010 NPT conferences;
- OP6: Adds more language with respect to furthering meaningful dialogue, now also calling “for efforts to foster a dialogue through interactive discussion to improve understanding and develop measures that enable States to address the security environment and improve confidence and trust among all States.” •

Notes

¹Voting result at http://reachingcriticalwill.org/images/documents/Disarmament-fora/1com/1com18/votes/26Oct_accept-draft-resolution.pdf.

BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS

Filippa Lentzos | King's College London

Six groups and 41 individual states made statements on biological weapons in the thematic discussion cluster on “Other Weapons of Mass Destruction”.

Hungary introduced the draft resolution on the Biological and Toxins Weapons Convention (BTWC). The resolution welcomes the decision taken at the 2017 meeting of states parties to hold an intersessional process. It also notes progress on universalisation, with member states now numbering 182. The annual resolution has so far been adopted by consensus each year, and there are no indications that it would not also be adopted by consensus this year.

Despite this seemingly positive state of affairs, the BTWC faces many fundamental challenges. Of most immediate concern is the critical financial situation of treaty—addressed by most states in their statements. One of the most enduring challenges for the BTWC is compliance assessment. The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) statement, and individual statements by a number of NAM states, repeated the group’s position that the only way to ensure verification of the treaty is through a return to a legally binding verification protocol. A simple return to the protocol text, or to the mandate of the Ad Hoc Group negotiating the text, is, however, not possible. The political, security, scientific, legal, and normative contexts today are more complex than they were 20 years ago. Yet, that is not to say that the principles, concepts, mechanisms or procedures developed by the Ad Hoc Group should be rejected or ignored in their entirety. A discussion was begun at the experts meeting on institutional strengthening in August about how to develop an incremental, inclusive, practical and forward-looking approach to verification. This “stepping-stone” approach would build on the procedures and mechanisms within the Protocol, as well as the additional understandings reached at previous review conferences, mechanisms outside the BTWC but clearly con-

nected to its objectives, and other agreements related to international peace and security. The Nordic group statement succinctly summed up the ethos of the approach in urging states parties: “to move forward incrementally on those issues where consensus seems to be within reach.”

A number of states highlighted the challenges of rapid scientific advances for biological disarmament. Switzerland said: “It is vital that the BWC does not lose touch with the rapid progress in the biological sciences. These developments raise a number of challenges regarding the application and sustainability of the Convention, which must be addressed.” The Nordic Group said: “The potential for misuse of scientific innovations, for instance in synthetic biology, constitutes an ever-evolving security challenge.” Similar points were made by Kazakhstan, Germany, Bangladesh, and the Republic of Korea. Calls for increased transparency and improved confidence-building were also made. Notably, in its call for confidence-building, Russia raised concerns about a build-up of foreign military activity in biological labs in former Soviet Union states.

While some states maintained the need for biological disarmament initiatives to remain tightly within the BTWC, this perspective seemed to be in the minority. Several states expressed their support for the Secretary-General’s efforts to increase capacities to respond to the use of biological weapons and to coordinate an international response. The launch of the Health-Security Interface programme of the World Health Organisation, which aims to improve preparedness for possible outbreaks of communicable disease due to deliberate events, was welcomed. Considerable support was expressed in the room for UN Security Council Resolution 1540 and the work of its experts. The importance of export controls was also highlighted by several states. •



CHEMICAL WEAPONS

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

References to chemical weapons during the thematic cluster on “Other weapons of mass destruction” focused largely on condemnation of recent use; the necessity of upholding of norms and laws prohibiting chemical weapons; and attribution and ending impunity.

A majority of statements discussed chemical weapons use in Syria. Switzerland said that the repeated use of chemical weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic and the Islamic State might constitute a war crime that must be prosecuted. Canada, Germany, and the Nordic Countries called on Syria to disclose all relevant information about instances of use and fully complete its declaration under the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). The Republic of Korea stated that it is “deeply concerning that the issue of Syrian chemical weapons remains unaddressed five years after Syria’s joining the CWC in 2013” and that gaps remain in its declaration. The United States asserted that Iran and Russia protect Syria’s use of chemical weapons from international censure.

Syria defended its record of compliance with CWC obligations, despite the “difficult conditions” it is facing, and denied any use or intention to use.

Cuba expressed its “strongest condemnation” for the April 2018 US-led military operation conducted “under the pretext” of the “alleged use of chemical weapons by the Syrian government”. Iran also referenced this attack.

Delegates also highlighted recent steps taken by CWC states parties to establish an investigatory mechanism into chemical weapons use in Syria and attribute responsibility. A decision to do so was taken during the Fourth Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties to the CWC in June 2018 by a vote in which 82 states parties supported the move—brought forward by a group of 30 countries—and 24 voted against it.¹

At First Committee, the International Partnership Against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons², as well as Australia, Austria, Canada, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Mexico, the Netherlands, Nordic Countries, Republic of Korea, Spain, Switzerland, Ukraine, and the United Kingdom (UK), expressed their support for the decision. Australia, the UK, and Lithuania also touched on concerns expressed at the June conference regarding the historic jurisdiction of the UN Security Council on this issue, and on the politicisation and risk of non-impartiality in the investigation. Bangladesh noted,

“In the backdrop of unwarranted divisiveness within the Council, it is likely that parallel processes and mechanisms would be created at the expense of a consensus based approach.”

China and Argentina regretted that this decision had to be taken by a vote, while Brazil regretted the high level of polarisation and the “sapping of the culture of consensus in the policy-making bodies of the organization, especially in the Executive Council.” Cuba expressed its opposition to the decision entirely. Relatedly, Pakistan, El Salvador, and China stressed the necessity of impartiality, fairness, and/or a technical rather than political approach to the investigation. Iran argued that universality of the CWC is a better path forward than “coalition-based approaches and initiatives”, with specific reference to Israel.

Switzerland, meanwhile, urged cooperation and information sharing between the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and other relevant mechanisms, including the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism (IIIM) as well as the UN Commission of Inquiry (COI) on Syria.

Syria was not the only context of concern. The European Union, the Nordic Countries, Germany, South Africa, and New Zealand condemned recent use of chemical weapons in the United Kingdom, which the UK and Latvia attributed to Russia. Switzerland and Canada urged Russia to declare its Novichok—the name of the nerve agent used—programme to the OPCW. Russia denied any involvement. New Zealand and Germany, among others, condemned use in Malaysia and Iraq; Latvia and South Africa referenced the Malaysian incident. Malaysia reiterated the update it delivered in the general debate about the status of court proceedings investigating the incident that occurred there in 2016.

Poland, as sponsor of the annual draft resolution on chemical weapons, described the divergent views between member states on the resolutions’ content throughout the consultation process. It said that has tried to provide a fact-based text in a balanced way that reflects issues, which are critical for the CWC, but is also frank about the challenges it faces. The resolution had previously been adopted by consensus but in recent years has moved to a vote, following the introduction of references to incidents of use; which mirror the reality of this issue

States raised a number of other issues related to chemical weapons. Lithuania and Latvia referenced a recent

cyber operation directed at the OPCW. The Netherlands—host country to the OPCW—Germany and Latvia spoke out against the operation. The Non-Aligned Movement and the Caribbean Community called for support to victims of chemical weapons attacks.

The Nordic Countries welcomed the completion of destruction operations in Iraq and Libya. Canada announced it has contributed over \$41 million CAD for chemical weapons destruction, monitoring, verification and investigation efforts in Syria, Iraq, and Libya. Cuba and Iran called on the United States to complete destruction of its chemical weapons. South Africa noted that many old and abandoned chemical

weapons are hazards for people and the environment. Japan described progress made in destroying the abandoned weapons in its country. Russia spoke of having completed its destruction last year. •

Notes

¹ OPCW, “CWC Conference of the States Parties Adopts Decision Addressing the Threat from Chemical Weapons Use”, 27 June 2018, <https://www.opcw.org/media-centre/news/2018/06/cwc-conference-states-parties-adopts-decision-addressing-threat-chemical>.

² The International Partnership Against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons is a France-led initiative that represents a political commitment by participating countries to hold to account those responsible for the use of chemical weapons. It was launched in January 2018. See <https://www.noimpunitychemicalweapons>.

OUTER SPACE

Jessica West | Project Ploughshares

The precariousness of peace in outer space was on display this week through numerous accusations of weapons programs and an assertion by the United States (US) that it has been “transformed into a war-fighting domain.” While Ecuador and the European Union (EU) condemned anti-satellite (ASAT) tests and development of space weapons generally and the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) noted the dangers of anti-ballistic missile (ABM) capabilities, Russia pointed specifically to the ability of the US system to intercept satellites, joined by Iran, Pakistan, and Algeria who warned of the possible placement of interceptors in outer space. In turn, the US and the United Kingdom (UK) identified recent statements made by Russian military officials indicating the development of kinetic and laser ASAT capabilities and threatening on-orbit behaviour by what Russia calls a “space apparatus inspector” as proof that its repeated proposals for a political commitment on No First Placement (NFP) of weapons in space and a Treaty on the Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space (PPWT) are a “hollow and hypocritical” façade.

The political impasse over how to restore sanctity to outer space continues. Support for the PPWT is waning, favoured this week by Russia, China, the NAM, Kazakhstan, Venezuela, and Myanmar. The EU, UK, and Australia raised long-standing concerns that rest on the elusive definition of a space weapon and resulting limits on verification, which they also apply to the more widely-supported NFP commitment. Australia claimed that both “would provide limited comfort and could have counterproductive consequences by allowing unfettered development of terrestrial and dual-use counter-space systems.” Instead, along with Italy, they emphasise voluntary rules to limit bad

behaviour in space—akin to the now defunct Code of Conduct—which the EU now proposes be negotiated through the auspices of the UN.

Yet, this long-standing stalemate no longer limits governance efforts. Switzerland pointed to a flurry of recent activity including the creation of the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on the prevention of an arms race in outer space (PAROS), guidelines for long-term sustainability adopted by the Committee on the Peaceful Use of Outer Space (COPUOS), discussion of practical measures for transparency and confidence building (TCBMs) within the UN Disarmament Commission, and the creation of a subsidiary body on PAROS within the Conference on Disarmament (CD). Significantly, statements provided substantial support for each by emerging and major space actors alike. Additional proposals include greater coordination with the UN Office for Outer Space Activities (UNOOSA) and COPUOS (ASEAN, Malaysia, EU, Malawi, Switzerland), working through the UN General Assembly (South Africa, ASEAN), restricting debris (Japan, Morocco, Italy, Bangladesh, EU, Switzerland, France), and reinforcing adherence to the Hague Code of Conduct (Kazakhstan) and existing international law (Australia).

How to propel these initiatives toward concrete security measures is uncertain. Switzerland called on the First Committee to act as a “unifier of disarmament machinery” and consensus building. But even consensus is no guarantee of practical progress. There is overwhelming support for enhancing TCBMs in outer space, but as Russia noted, it is undermined by “divergent views on how to harness such measures.” Leadership is sorely needed to tame these devilish details. •



EXPLOSIVE WEAPONS IN POPULATED AREAS

Laura Boillot | International Network on Explosive Weapons

In an unprecedented joint statement delivered by Ireland, fifty states have expressed grave concern over the humanitarian harm caused by the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, highlighting in particular concerns over the use of explosive weapons with wide area effects in populated areas.

These states note the “overwhelming evidence” which has been undertaken documenting the humanitarian impact, and describe the devastating harm to civilians. This includes deaths and injuries, as well as long-term harm that results from “the destruction of housing, schools, hospitals, water and sanitation systems and other crucial infrastructure”, which it says, “far outlasts the conflicts in which they are used.” It emphasises that this devastation in turn “acts as a catalyst for the displacement of people within and across borders, rendering displaced persons and refugees vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.”

The statement calls for efforts to reverse the trend of high levels of civilian harm, and to enhance respect for and compliance with international humanitarian law (IHL). It notes however that in many conflict situations, questions remain over how the existing rules are being interpreted and translated into policies and practice on the ground.

Over the past several years the UN Secretary-Generals have made repeated calls on states to develop measures to address this problem, including, as the state-

ment notes, “the development of a political declaration, the development of common standards and operational policies or through the sharing of policies and practices.”

The endorsing states conclude that “[w]e remain seized of efforts to address the humanitarian harm caused by EWIPA, through the achievement of a possible future political declaration and by maintaining support for other relevant initiatives, including regional conferences,” expressing also continued support for civil society which has worked effectively over the past several years to address the challenges posed by EWIPA.

The states that endorsed the statement includes a diverse group of conflict-affected countries, states engaged in the conduct of military operations, and from all world regions, including: Angola, Argentina, Austria, Bangladesh, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Central African Republic, Chile, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, El Salvador, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Guatemala, Iceland, Indonesia, Ireland, Islamic Republic of Iran, Italy, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malaysia, Malta, Mexico, Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, Mozambique, New Zealand, Norway, Peru, Portugal, Samoa, San Marino, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Uganda, Ukraine, Uruguay, and Zambia. •

LANDMINES

Amelie Chayer | International Campaign to Ban Landmines

Government officials who, 20 years ago were in the middle of the intense race towards the entry into force of the Mine Ban Treaty would be pleased to see that in 2018, the Treaty generally enjoys broad support at the First Committee.

During thematic debate on conventional weapons, the European Union shared its assessment that the Treaty combines a strong legal norm and impressive results on the ground, while the Nordic Countries stated that the goal of a mine-free world is within reach. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) recalled that its Regional Mine Action Center provides technical support to affected states. The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) deplored the use of landmines and reiterated its commitment towards the Action Plan of the Treaty.

Canada and Paraguay called for further universalisa-

tion of the Treaty. In a statement made available online, Norway said it is “perhaps the single most successful multilateral arms-related treaty of recent times”, and outlined plans for its upcoming presidency of the Fourth Review Conference in 2019. Mozambique said that it “continues to solidify its commitment to the Convention, focusing its actions in the assistance to the victims of landmines.” The United States explained that humanitarian mine action plays an increasing role in stabilising post-conflict and conflict contexts.

Egypt, a state not party to the Treaty, spoke about its long-established moratorium on the production and export of antipersonnel mines, and deplored that the Mine Ban Treaty “fell short of addressing many key elements associated with the threat of landmines.” legitimate requirements of states with long borders.

India stated its view that CCW Protocol II, which restricts but does not ban the use of landmines, addresses the legitimate requirements of states with long borders. Singapore, also outside the treaty, mentioned its indefinite moratorium on landmine exports.

The European Union, the Netherlands, Norway, and Switzerland called attention to the current scale and intensity of improvised mine use. Norway said that improvised mines that meet the definition of an anti-personnel mine are covered by the Mine Ban Treaty and should be addressed as such by the humanitarian mine action community, as “any other approach seriously risks undermining [the treaty.]” Switzerland cautioned against duplicate initiatives and noted that the Mine Ban Treaty was an important framework to tackle the problems posed by improvised mines that

are victim-activated.

Draft resolution L.53 on the implementation of the Mine Ban Treaty, introduced by Afghanistan, Austria, and Norway, contains one new sentence: “stressing the need to take into account gender aspects in mine action.” In addition to the usual technical updates, it calls on states to pay their share of estimated costs and invites all delegations to the upcoming Treaty meetings (Geneva in 2018 and Oslo in 2019). The International Campaign to Ban Landmines encourages all delegations to support the resolution.

There were numerous calls and commitments for sustained financial and technical support, which will be summarized in an upcoming issue of the First Committee Monitor. •

CLUSTER MUNITIONS

Amelie Chayer | International Campaign to Ban Landmines

Well over 90 per cent of the recorded victims of cluster munitions in 2017 were civilians. This devastating impact was a common thread in most statements that referred to cluster munitions last week.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) deplored the use of “any explosive devices aimed at killing and terrorising innocent civilians”, and emphasised that people in the region continue to be affected by indiscriminate weapons such as cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war. The European Union welcomed positive developments in the implementation of the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM), while the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) highlighted the adverse humanitarian impact of cluster munitions, mentioning in particular the importance of ensuring social inclusion for victims. The Nordic Countries expressed their deep concern with reports of use of these weapons, which gravely affect civilians.

Mexico and the Netherlands condemned any use of cluster munitions by any actor. Canada, Mexico, and Paraguay called for further universalisation of the Convention. Mozambique spoke about its implementation efforts. In a statement made available online, Norway shared its assessment that the Convention has “made a substantial difference to human security” and has established norms that are widely respected.

Singapore, which is not party to the CCM, spoke

about its indefinite moratorium on exports of cluster munitions and said that it “continues to support international initiatives against the indiscriminate use of ... cluster munitions.” The Cluster Munition Coalition notes that due to their wide-area effect and high rate of unexploded submunitions, there is no such thing as the “discriminate” use of cluster munitions.

Draft resolution L.39 on the Implementation of the Convention on Cluster Munitions was introduced by Sri Lanka along with 33 other states. This year’s draft retains all previous components and features two new paragraphs, which highlight gender considerations on the impact of cluster munitions and on participation in disarmament processes. The other minor changes are: a call for accelerated universalisation, a reference to the consequences of cluster munition use that impedes sustainable development, and encouragements related to the financing of meetings. The draft is carefully worded and well-balanced: all states outside the Convention should be able to vote in favour, thus expressing their support for the humanitarian objective of eliminating the suffering caused by cluster munitions.

There were numerous calls for financial and technical support for the elimination of cluster munitions, as well as commitments of support, which will be summarised in an upcoming issue. •



SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS

Freya Tulloch | International Action Network on Small Arms and Nonviolence International-NY

During the thematic discussions on conventional weapons, states continued to welcome the outcome of the Third Review Conference (RevCon3) on the UN Programme of Action on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons (UNPoA). Japan particularly welcomed references to ammunition, gender-based violence, and gender equality. The United States said countries must build on the momentum of RevCon3, but should not create unattainable requirements, especially if not in the UNPoA's scope. While welcoming RevCon3 outcomes, Mexico said it's necessary to update the UNPoA by revitalising its scope, particularly in the areas of ammunition, parts and components, peace education, and civilian possession of SALW. The Netherlands was pleased that the RevCon3 outcome document acknowledges the integrated nature of conventional disarmament and the development agenda.

States also praised France's presidency of RevCon3. In a report on RevCon3 to First Committee, France lauded the significant increase in states participating in the conference's general debate, as compared to the previous review conference. France also noted that for the first time, all plenaries of the conference were open to civil society, a reflection of France's work to maintain transparency. Acknowledging that discussions at RevCon3 experienced difficulties regarding the inclusion of ammunition in the scope of the UNPoA and reference to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, France said that nonetheless, the conference resulted in the unanimous adoption of a substantial final document with a political declaration; two implementation plans concerning the UNPoA and the International Tracing Instrument; a section dedicated to promoting sufficient, effective, and sustainable international cooperation and assistance; and a monitoring schedule for the period 2018-2024.

The Nordic Countries, Caribbean Community (CARICOM), EU, Latvia, and Canada emphasised the importance of incorporating gender dimensions into SALW considerations. "By better including women in decision making and field-level work, states increase their effectiveness and pave the way for cost effective and durable results in the long run. There are no downsides to improving gender equality, only gains," emphasised Finland, speaking on behalf of Nordic Countries. CARICOM also noted the pivotal influence of women in discussions related to SALW, evident at a grassroots level in their own region. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) expressed concern over the diverse impact of SALW on women and children, as well as over the threat of emerging technologies.

CARICOM, the African Group, Nordic Countries, and Canada also drew attention to the relationship between disarmament and sustainable development. The African Group stressed the need to redirect funds from weapons production to development.

A number of countries reported on efforts they are making in their own countries regarding SALW. Mozambique said it has adopted a number of legal instruments on the record keeping, import and export, civilian possession, and transit of firearms. It also holds regular public awareness campaigns and workshops related to SALW. Jamaica reported it is working to ensure proper legislative policies in areas such as recordkeeping and firearms registration, and is working with private security companies to improve regulatory frameworks. Honduras said it has advanced in mapping SALW trafficking routes, and is in the process of adopting a new firearms law that will include more rigorous measures for the registration and control of SALW and ammunition. Singapore highlighted its strong export control regime. •



Photo: *Ammunition Control Practices in Latin America*, published by UNLIREC, 2018.

INTERNATIONAL ARMS TRADE

Aaron Lainé | Control Arms

The conventional weapons cluster began in the third week of First Committee, despite significant schedule delays, particularly due to tensions around a new resolution, introduced by Russia, on the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF). Nevertheless, 22 states voiced their positions on the international arms trade and the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) this week, the majority expressing similar sentiments to that of Singapore's view that the "widespread availability of small arms and light weapons (SALW) and their ammunition, particularly the misuse, diversion and illicit circulation of these arms and ammunition, threaten global peace, security and development."

Latvia, as President of the ATT's Fifth Conference of States Parties (CSP5), scheduled for August 2019, pledged that it will "spare no effort" to promote effective implementation and universalisation of the Treaty, and officially announced gender and arms-related gender-based violence as the priority theme of the CSP5. Latvia also introduced the annual ATT resolution, which it sponsors, and welcomed the support for it, which reached 83 co-sponsors this week.

The resolution has several new elements this year, including:

- PP9 [new paragraph], recognising the negative impact of unregulated trade in conventional weapons and ammunition on women, men, girls and boys as well as that the ATT is the first international instrument to call upon states to consider the risk of GBV and violence against women and children;
- OP3, which expresses concern about unpaid assessed contributions;
- OP7, referencing ammunition;
- OP8 that encourages steps to prevent diversion;
- OP9 recognises the added value of the outcome of the UN Programme of Action's Third Review Conference, and synergies between the instruments;
- OP10 calls on states to update their initial implementation reports;
- OP11 encourages the full and equal participation of women in Treaty implementation; and
- OP14 invites the engagement of "underrepresented stakeholders".

The Nordic Countries, CARICOM, Mozambique, the Netherlands, Canada, Paraguay, and Latvia called on member states that have not done so to accede to the ATT, while Singapore, a signatory, announced that "domestic consultations are ongoing between relevant agencies and stakeholders to put in place processes as well as possible legislative amendments

to enable Singapore to fully implement the ATT provisions." Positively, Guinea-Bissau deposited its ATT instrument of ratification this week, bringing the number of states parties to 99.

Some states reiterated the need for international assistance in effectively implementing the Treaty, welcoming the Voluntary Trust Fund (VTF) as a means to do so. Paraguay also noted Control Arms' initiative in support of effective ATT implementation in Latin America, referring to an ATT Academy workshop held in Mexico this September. Some states expressed concern over the high level of outstanding assessed financial contributions and low level of timely, accurate reporting which is necessary to build trust among states parties and foster transparency in the global arms trade.

Several states and regional groups, including Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), the African Group, and Egypt, reaffirmed their right to use conventional weapons for self-defense. As Morocco explained on behalf of the African Group, on the topic of the ATT, the Group reaffirms the sovereign right of states to acquire, manufacture, export, import and retain conventional arms, their parts and components for their self-defense and security needs in accordance with the UN Charter."

Other states were more hostile towards the ATT. Egypt, in explaining one of the ATT's "several shortcomings", claimed that the Treaty's lack of clear definitions undermines its potential effectiveness, and "makes it possible to abuse the treaty as a tool to manipulate and monopolise the legitimate trade in conventional weapons in a politicised manner, while ignoring the prevention of the intentional supply of weapons to unauthorized recipients such as terrorists and illegal armed groups." Cuba asserted that the ATT confers privileges to exporting states of conventional weapons, to the detriment of the legitimate interests of defense and security of other States. They also declared that the Treaty establishes subjective parameters that are easily manipulated for the approval and denial of arms transfers, and echoed Egypt's worry about the ATT's lack of consideration of transfers to non-state actors. •

GENDER

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

Gender and disarmament has continued to be a priority in many delegations' statements as the Committee moves through different thematic clusters. The First Committee increasingly recognises both the urgent need to ensure women's equal participation in all disarmament efforts, and addresses the gendered impact of different types of weapons. Five resolutions have included language on women or gender for the first time ever. Three resolutions have made their language on this topic stronger. In total, 13 resolutions have included gender considerations across a broad range of topics addressed at First Committee.

Various delegations, including Costa Rica, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), Canada, and the Nordic Countries urged to strengthen greater participation of women in all disarmament efforts. Australia reiterated that it champions the full participation of women and men in international security forums.

The Nordic Countries' statement highlighted First Committee's unique role of promoting gender perspectives as a cross cutting issue. They argued that by including women in decision-making and in field level work, states increase effectiveness and pave the way for cost-effectiveness. CARICOM also stressed the fact that women have a special contribution to make as evidenced in their own region where women's influence at the grassroots level has been important in de-escalating tension in situations of armed violence. It further highlighted the importance of women's participation in peace-building, humanitarian responses, and in post-conflict reconstruction. The Nordic Countries put it simply: "there are no downsides to gender equality, only gains."

The representative of France who briefed the Committee about the outcome document of the Third Review Conference of the Programme of Action on small arms and light weapons (SALW) welcomed its inclusion of a gender dimension. In the ensuing informal discussion, Japan said it is pleased about such considerations in this year's outcome document. The Nordic Countries and CARICOM added its appreciation for the consideration of gender-based violation in small arms control. CARICOM welcomed the increasing attention to mainstreaming gender dimensions into disarmament processes, including those related to conventional weapons. The Philippines highlighted the importance of including gender considerations in nuclear weapons discussions and Canada stressed the

need to include gender analyses in arms control. Ireland, who spoke on behalf of 50 countries on explosive weapons in populated areas (EWIPA), "encouraged further research into the gendered aspects of EWIPA". The Nordic Countries and CARICOM emphasised the differential impacts of armed conflict on men and women. Canada highlighted that conventional weapons perpetuate sexual and gender-based violence and exacerbate structural gender inequalities, also undermining the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Canada argued that this makes it imperative for member states to uphold and universalise norms on conventional weapons.

During the conventional weapons cluster, the European Union (EU) highlighted states' obligations to consider the risk of gender-based violence (GBV) before authorising arms transfers. CARICOM further urged to pay attention to the gendered impacts of the arms trade. Latvia announced that as the president of the next Conference of States Parties (CSP5) to the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), it will focus on gender and arms related GBV as a priority theme, as outlined further in a separate article in the First Committee Monitor on the ATT.

Resolutions

L.21, "Women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control". This biennial resolution is the only First Committee resolution exclusively dealing with women's participation in disarmament processes, and also addressing the correlation between the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW) and gender-based violence. Compared to 2016, the text has some minor additions in its PPs: with respect to the relationship between women's participation in disarmament processes and the attainment of the sustainable development goals, the text now explicitly acknowledges "that the success of efforts to achieve sustainable development and disarmament depends on the full and effective inclusion of women in all aspects of these efforts." A new PP recognises the crucial role of civil society organisations in promoting the role of women in disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control.

L.6, "Conventional arms control at the regional and subregional levels," for the first time recognises in its PPs the "importance of equitable representation of women in arms control discussions and negotiations".

L.8, “The Arms Trade Treaty,” also takes into account for the first time the impact of conventional arms and related ammunition on women and girls and calls upon states “to address the link between conventional arms transfers and the risk of serious acts of gender-based violence and serious acts of violence against women and children”. The text also includes now OP11 which encourages the “full and equal participation of women and men in pursuing the object and purpose of the Treaty and its implementation”.

L.34, “United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa,” has kept the same language relating to women’s role in disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control from last year’s resolution (PP5), and welcomes in OP6 efforts by the Regional Centre to promote the role and representation of women in disarmament activities.

L.38, “United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific,” also welcomes in PP9, as in previous years, efforts by the Regional Centre to promote the role and representation of women in disarmament, non-proliferation, and arms control activities.

L.56, “United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean,” has kept the same language from last year, recognising the Regional Centre’s important role in promoting women’s participation in the implementation of the nexus between sustainable development and disarmament. It also welcomes the Centre’s activities to promote the “equal representation of women in all decision-making processes” in disarmament.

L.35, “Consolidation of peace through practical disarmament measures,” last tabled in 2016, is among those resolutions that recalls for the first time “the valuable contribution of women to practical disarmament measures carried out at the local, national, subregional and regional levels in the prevention and reduction of armed violence and armed conflict, and in promoting disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control”. In its PP, it further emphasises that “the meaningful participation of women must be ensured in disarmament, including mine action and the control

of small arms and light weapons.”

Whilst **L.41, “Implementation of the Convention on Cluster Munitions,”** has previously addressed the impact of cluster munitions on women, this year the resolution includes stronger language as it recognises the gendered impact of cluster munitions and calls for “adequate, gender- and age-sensitive assistance to victims of cluster munitions”.

L.53, “On Implementation of Anti-Personnel Mines Convention,” reaffirms its determination to put an end to these weapons killing or injuring women and girls. This year, it adds new language, “stressing the need to take into account gender aspects in mine action”.

L.54, “United action with renewed determination towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons,” for the first time recognises the importance of gender parity “to enable a truly comprehensive approach to nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament”.

The recognition of the importance to ensure that “both women and men can participate equally, fully and effectively in the negotiation process” is also a first in L.58, “Treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices”.

L.60, “Countering the threat posed by improvised explosive devices [IEDs],” recognises both the importance of women’s equal participation in countering the threat posed by IEDs and, for the first time, underlines the gendered impacts of these weapons. It also calls on relevant stakeholders to be considerate of the different needs of women, girls, boys and men when seeking to prevent the use of IEDs or when providing support to reduce IEDs’ risks.

L.62, “Ethical imperatives for a nuclear-weapon-free world,” has kept the same language from last year. It declares that “greater attention must be given to the impact of a nuclear weapon detonation on women and the importance of their participation in discussions, decisions and actions on nuclear weapons.” •

DISARMAMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

Ariana Smith | Lawyers Committee for Nuclear Policy

During the remainder of the nuclear cluster, members continued to tie nuclear disarmament to the effective establishment of sustainable development initiatives. The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the Holy See, and Guyana said development programs would benefit exponentially from a reduction in nuclear stockpiles. The DRC called for eliminating weapons and redirecting nuclear funding to development agendas.

In the thematic discussion of other weapons of mass destruction (WMD), the Philippines urged the implementation of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) and said that its effective use would buttress the attainment of the sustainable development goals (SDGs).

Much of the week comprised thematic discussion on conventional weapons. The African Group—represented by Morocco—called for a reduction in military expenditures by the arms-producing countries and urged these states to invest in development instead. Cuba and Egypt also referenced increased military expenditures and the lack of resources devoted to socio-economic issues. Switzerland said the “increasing urbanisation of conflicts” with conventional weapons, and their effect on both civilians and infrastructure, should be addressed by a two-pronged approach: ensuring compliance with existing law, and continuously assessing whether to develop further measures.

The Nordic Countries, represented by Finland, addressed conventional arms control, particularly small arms and light weapons (SALW), as a development issue and called for language to represent this relationship. Guyana, representing CARICOM, discussed the scourge of violent crime in states suffering from illicit trafficking of SALW, which directly obstructs sustainable development. The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) explained that it is heavily affected by small arms-related violence, which exacerbates regional developmental struggles, including poor access to resources and deteriorating environmental conditions. Part of the solution, Antigua and Barbuda said in delivering the CARICOM statement, is addressing the divide between developed and developing countries.

Canada, Egypt (representing the League of Arab States), India, the Netherlands, Paraguay, and Switzerland, among others, emphasised that illicit flows of conventional weapons threaten the SDGs. SDG 16 (which promotes “peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development” and “access to justice for

all”) is essential in fighting organised crime, which thrives where arms are in excess, Paraguay said. The Netherlands commended the outcome document of the Third Review Conference of the UN Programme of Action on SALW for acknowledging “the integrated nature” of conventional disarmament and achievement of the SDGs.

Several member states together addressed the developmental harms of explosive weapons in populated areas (EWIPA). Ireland, on behalf of 50 states, stressed that these weapons destroy housing, schools, water and sanitation systems, and other crucial infrastructure. Such damage severely impedes recovery and development of affected communities. The effects of EWIPA “far outlast the conflicts in which they are used,” Ireland said.

Additionally, Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) presented the draft resolution “Relationship between disarmament and development.” (A/C.1/73/L.11) This draft mirrors the same document from 2017. It formalises concern about increasing global military spending that “could be otherwise spent on development needs.” The resolution urges the international community to devote resources from disarmament to development and to reduce the “ever-widening gap between developed and developing countries.” •



SIDE EVENT REPORT: NUCLEAR RISK REDUCTION

Carina Draper | Pace University

“Where do we go from here?” was the subtitle of a side event organised by the UN Office of Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) and the UN Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) on 16 October that called on states to think of solutions on how they can best reduce nuclear risks. To encourage dialogue between the experts on the panel, the event was conducted in a question and answer format.

The panel opened with Izumi Nakamitsu, the UN High Representative for Disarmament, who quoted the Secretary-General stating, “Nuclear disarmament is the highest priority of disarmament.” Yet, in a world where states hesitate to completely deplete their stockpiles, what can countries do in the mean time? The question of the effectiveness of nuclear risk reduction is apparently “not new” according to the event’s moderator, John Borrie of UNIDIR. Wilfred Wan, also of UNIDIR, noted that there are “more uncertainties than ever” due to an increase in nuclear arms production and modernisation; which the other panelists agreed is a new risk. Wan also spoke on the increase in the ease of use of nuclear weapons, as well as fissile weapons, due to newer weapon technologies

being more autonomous. Dr. Beyza Unal of Chatham House and later, many others, noted the importance of cyber security in regards to reducing nuclear risk, as there have been numerous weaknesses found in the cyber security systems surrounding nuclear weapons, particularly in the United States. Swiss Ambassador Sabrina Dallafior chose instead to focus on the norms that are under pressure, as polarisation on the topics of nuclear weapons is on the rise. She also noted the uncertainty caused from a lack of clarity by key states on whether they are still committed to nuclear disarmament. Journalist and Asia-expert Ankit Panda added that nuclear risks have not really been reduced, giving the example of the situations occurring in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) and the conflicts over the Taiwan Strait.

As nuclear risks are dynamic, many audience members wondered if it is more effective to address these issues in regional fora, to which the panel replied with an overwhelming, “Yes.” To close out the discussion, the importance of multilateral dialogues was emphasised alongside national action. •

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SIDE EVENT REPORT: 15 YEARS OF THE SPACE SECURITY INDEX

Jessica West | Project Ploughshares

The Government of Canada and Project Ploughshares hosted a side event celebrating the 15th anniversary of the Space Security Index (SSI). A collaboration of civil society and academic institutions, the SSI defines security in this global commons as the secure and sustainable access to and use of space, and freedom from space-based threats, providing an annual assessment based on 18 indicators. Remarks by Canadian Ambassador Rosemary McCarney stressed its valuable contribution to trust, transparency, and capacity building, and tracking change over time.

Time is both friend and foe. At the side event, SSI Managing Editor Jessica West described a qualitative change in how we use space such that it is now essential for every facet of security on earth: military, humanitarian, socio-economic, and environmental. Space security is now global security. But governance measures have not kept pace, particularly in the context of counter-space capabilities.

Theresa Hitchens from the Center for International and Security Studies at Maryland depicted an emerging arms race in the wake of growing geopolitical

tensions, pursuit of weapons technology, and lack of serious dialogue between the United States, Russia, and China. Meanwhile, multilateral arms control processes are stuck, further plagued by a sense of inevitable conflict.

Calling this situation “slightly terrifying,” Belgian Ambassador Jeroen Cooreman described discussions within the UN Disarmament Commission to identify specific and pragmatic transparency and confidence-building measures toward the prevention of an arms race in outer space. This process is learning from eight years of work within the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Space (COPUOS) chaired by Mr. Peter Martinez—now the Executive Director of the Secure World Foundation—which agreed to 21 guidelines on the long-term sustainability of outer space. Martinez claimed need for additional coordination of national rules and regulations to cope with new activities such as on-orbit satellite servicing and manoeuvres, which require enhanced cooperation between the First Committee and the Fourth.

While Cooreman observed broad agreement that



Reaching Critical Will

voluntary rules are needed for risk reduction and proper space management—echoed by McCarney as a way to allow creativity and services to flourish—he noted that those who believe current threats warrant a treaty fear settling for less.

This concern continued into discussion. Emphasising the need for a new narrative to mobilise state leadership, the 2030 Agenda for Space—aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals—was identified as an opportunity to inspire a broader collectivity of

stakeholders. But without direct engagement with questions of arms control, impact on strategic stability will be negligible.

The Space Security Index is available at www.spacesecurityindex.org. •

SIDE EVENT REPORT: DEVELOPMENT, USE, AND TRANSFER OF ARMED UAVS

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

Armed drones may not be a topic that commands as much interest and attention as some other weapons issues at the First Committee, but as a side event on the subject demonstrated, this will need to change. The drones market is growing exponentially, with new purchasers—and users—emerging each year, and the overall value of the market is expected by some to hit \$20billion USD by 2020.¹

The breakfast event on 24 October was organised by the governments of Germany and the Netherlands, and presented research and information from the UN Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), the Stimson Center, and PAX. In opening remarks, the representative of Germany noted there might be similarities between policy approaches to drones and to lethal autonomous weapons, and use of explosive weapons in populated areas.

George Woodhams of UNIDIR focused on the results of a new report (*Weapons of Choice? The Expanding Development, Transfer and Use of Armed UAVs*). He described growing trends in the development and transfer that include the production of unarmed vehicles that can be variously armed by purchasers and the increasing use as a way to augment other operations.

Rachel Stohl of the Stimson Center presented from her research (*The Arms Trade Treaty and Drones*) exploring if and how the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) can provide a legal framework for regulating drones transfers. She noted that while “unmanned aerial vehicles” does not appear among the list of regulated items in the ATT, its deferral to the UN Register of Conventional Arms as a minimum standard implies their inclusion. Other possibilities exist via other arms control regimes.

She also updated on the US-led process to develop guidelines and standards following a joint declaration.

Wim Zwijnenburg of PAX reinforced points made by UNIDIR by providing greater detail about the changing nature of the drones market and industry, in which not only are smaller countries becoming engaged but also smaller drones. He also described the “legal confusion” generated by use of drones in the battlefield, and outside of conflict. PAX’s report *Human Rights and Human Realities* explores this dimension of the issue further, including through case studies.

Closing remarks from the Netherlands touched its national perspective regarding the need for livelier and open debate about drones in the context of international law.

The discussion segment turned more to questions around the use of drones, noting the focus on non-proliferation and transfer issues can distract from concern about legality, transparency, and accountability in use. One panelist noted that the US has exported not only the weapons, but also an “unfortunate national precedent on use”; an audience member described the largely fruitless efforts on the part of some victims to receive answers as to why their family members have been attacked, or even receive retribution. It was also pointed out that drone use has potential to escalate conflicts and crises. •

Notes

¹ Based on remarks delivered by panelists.

SIDE EVENT REPORT: WHAT COMES NEXT FOR THE UN PROGRAMME OF ACTION?

Rose Welsch | International Action Network on Small Arms

France and the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA) held a side event on the topic of what comes next for the UN Programme of Action on small arms (UNPoA). Daniel Prins of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, suggested a novel approach to future meetings on the instrument. Rather than discussions that focus on improving global norms, he raised the idea of focusing on national implementation of the UNPoA. To achieve this, each country could set its own targets and report back on progress. Doing so would create a more bottom-up approach that produces concrete and measurable results, and that acknowledges the diversity of national situations. This approach, he pointed out, would also make it possible to set up targeted international assistance and cooperation because countries in need would have clear targets.

Dr. Natalie Goldring of IANSA said that following the June 2018 Third Review Conference (RevCon3) on the UNPoA, governments should be tasked with reviewing their own firearms legislation and sharing information on effective measures with other countries. RevCon3 had many good outcomes on gender, gun destruction, and ammunition she said, but failed to include language on the excessive and destabilising accumulation of small arms and light weapons (SALW). Though a breakthrough occurred on gender at RevCon3, she called for governments to ensure that women are included as full participants and not just tokens; that women be included in national commissions on SALW, and that dedicated funding be provided for activities mentioned in the RevCon3 outcome document. The document included language on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that is “enough to work with, but also impressively convoluted,” she continued in her analysis. “We are looking for action plans to see that people are integrating SALW work with official development work.” She also called for more

governments to ratify the Firearms Protocol to reduce armed violence in crime, and for more transparency in the import and exports of SALW and ammunition.

Himayu Shiotani of UNIDIR said the means and methods of SALW-related violence are evolving, necessitating a change in thinking about the UNPoA. The urbanisation of violence is increasing, and in some places violence is located in pockets rather than across countries, he pointed out, so we need to consider how UNPoA national implementation can target local violence. Moreover, the traditional category and acquisition of SALW by actors is evolving, he said, giving examples of industrial levels of craft weapons, weapons reactivation, 3-D printed firearms, and guns available on the dark web. Noting that IANSA was one of the founding entities that drove the UNPoA into existence, he called for closer work with civil society.

Diedre Mills of the Permanent Mission of Jamaica highlighted synergies as an area where there can be traction and action going forward, but said Jamaica views synergy in a broader sense that includes the SDGs, areas where assistance can be provided, and activities countries can undertake together to address the proliferation of SALW. “We don’t view synergies as the imposition of legal instruments,” she stated.

Ambassador Yann Hwang of France said that RevCon3 showed that multilateralism has something to say, something to do, and something to deliver. “The UNPoA is clearly a platform where we can show that we can cooperate together and move forward,” he stated. And at the end of the day, the UNPoA is not for diplomats, he emphasised. “It’s for people who suffer from small arms and light weapons on a daily basis.” •

SIDE EVENT REPORT: DISARMAMENT THAT SAVES LIVES

Carina Draper | Control Arms

In the third week of the First Committee meetings, the UN Office of Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) and the Permanent Mission of Germany held a high-level side event, “Disarmament That Saves Lives” which is the section of the UN Secretary-General’s disarmament agenda that focuses on conventional weapons. Small arms and light weapons (SALW) and their illicit

trade are one of the main contributors to violence around the world. In order to reduce the numbers of SALW the UN has outlined a plan to sustainably finance SALW control measures in states that need it most. The “Saving Lives Entity” or SALIENT, was inspired by the Secretary-General’s disarmament agenda and would contribute not only to the achievement of

the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, but also support the UN Programme of Action (UNPoA) on SALW. Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, spoke on the need to support SALIENT both diplomatically and financially. She emphasised the difference of SALIENT from other programs, as it allows states to combat SALW and their unlawful trade, while also allowing states to work toward wider development plans in a multi-dimensional framework. A portion of programme wide funds would go toward gender-related activities.

Other panelists included the three permanent representatives from countries deeply affected by SALW—Ghana, Jamaica, and Iraq. Each spoke on the effects and experience of SALW in their countries. Ambassador Mohammed Hussein Bahr Al Uloum of Iraq spoke of the displacing effects of improvised explosive devices, or IEDs, stating, “1.9 million Iraqis are still displaced and do not want to return due to IED’s and unex-

ploded weapons.” To further his point in the necessity of reducing IEDs, he described the haunting image of having to disarm and collect unexploded weapons including that of suicide belts from human remains. All emphasised the need for education of the public and enhanced information sharing. Ambassador Ms. Martha Pobee, of Ghana said that the reduction of SALW should be a prerequisite for achieving other disarmament goals; highlighting the importance of sensitisation of SALW to those living in urban areas, as cities are quickly becoming the main arena of conflict.

Ambassador Courtenay Rattray of Jamaica on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) reminded the audience of the grim fact that CARICOM countries do not produce SALW, yet armed homicide is one the leading causes of death in those states. All of the presentations underscored the need for a service like that of SALIENT and urged states for their support to it. •

SIDE EVENT REPORT: LAUNCH OF TWO REPORTS ON THE ARMS TRADE TREATY

Katherine Young | Control Arms

Transparency and reporting is a core element for export policy that serves as a confidence-building measure and contributes to peace and security, were the words of Ambassador Robbert Gabriëls of Netherlands as chair of a side event co-hosted by Control Arms and the governments of the Netherlands and Australia, with participation by Ireland and the ATT Baseline Assessment Project (ATT-BAP). During this event, Katherine Young of the Control Arms ATT Monitor, and Rachel Stohl of ATT-BAP presented two reports that contribute to effective monitoring of ATT transparency and reporting obligations.

Mr. Peter Horne of Australia described the findings of the ATT Monitor Annual Report 2018 as sobering when considering the lack of compliance and challenges faced by states parties to the ATT in reporting. The ATT Monitor’s discrepancy analysis shows these challenges in practical terms—namely, that only 1.6 per cent of transactions captured in ATT annual reports include exports that correspond exactly with imports reported where the type of weapon and country are

the same. Reasons for this include the aggregation of data provided by states parties, the use of differing definitions of exports and imports, the reporting of “authorised” versus “actual” transfers, and a lack of specificity on countries of origin and destination.

Frank Groome of Ireland highlighted the three categories of reports from States Parties—those not submitted or not made public, those that lack enough information to properly assess whether Treaty obligations were met, and those that provided comprehensive and detailed information. A detailed analysis offered by Rachel Stohl of ATT-BAP identified trends that are worrisome, including a decrease in reporting rates, an increased lack of knowledge over arms transfers, and difficulty in assessing the application of the ATT. Looking forward, all side event panellists agreed on the importance of continued dialogue between all stakeholders on ATT transparency and reporting obligations, and emphasised the role of civil society and research organizations, such as the ATT Monitor and ATT-BAP, in maintaining effective monitoring. •

SIDE EVENT REPORT: REVIEW OF ATT CSP4 AND PROSPECTS FOR CSP5

Nina Joyce | Control Arms

This annual First Committee side event offered a report from the fourth Conference of States Parties (CSP4) to the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) which was presided over by Japan as well as a look at plans and expectations for the fifth CSP5, under the presidency of Latvia.

Ambassador Takamizawa of Japan and President of CSP4, which took place in Tokyo, Japan on 20-24 August 2018, highlighted key aspects from the meeting, including its focus on diversion, and the discussions on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which confirmed that ATT implementation advances sustainable development. The final report of CSP4 is hosted on the new ATT website.

The CSP5 will be a “low cost and high impact” presidency, said Ambassador Karklins of Latvia. The priorities of the Latvian presidency of CSP5 are 1) implementation and compliance with the Treaty; 2) reduction of armed gender-based violence; 3) engagement with civil society and industry; 4) addressing financial issues; and 5) improving reporting on implementation of the ATT. Gender-based violence (GBV) will be the theme of CSP5 and one objective for the final outcome document is to include “10 tips” on assessing the risk of GBV while conducting an export risk assessment.

Control Arms’ Anna Macdonald welcomed Latvia’s focus on implementation and GBV and said that the

high level of state support for the ATT resolution thus far at First Committee was an indication of momentum and support towards CSP5. She shared common concerns over the decline in reporting levels, and also reporting discrepancies, which are an impediment to transparency and implementation. She also stressed that what is really missing from the ATT process is a focus on problematic arms transfers and called on states parties to take action towards making the ATT’s goal of reducing human suffering a reality.

The role of the ATT Secretariat is to support the ATT CSP President and the ATT Bureau and to contribute to the development of the programme of work for the ATT process, said Mr. Dumisani Dladla, Head of the ATT Secretariat. He echoed that the objectives and purposes of the ATT can be realized only with effective Treaty implementation. Regarding reporting challenges, Dladla noted that these could be caused in part by the movement of personnel within governments, non-establishment of national points of contact, and technical challenges. He stressed the need for different reporting options for states parties in order to alleviate these challenges.

Ambassador Karklins hopes to receive 100 co-sponsors for the ATT Resolution, which incorporates a task list for the ATT CSP5. Latvia is committed to meaningful outcome of ATT CSP5, which depends on the cooperation of all stakeholders. •

P5 STILL BEFUDDLED BY NUCLEAR BAN TREATY

Richard Lennane | Geneva Disarmament Platform

Undaunted by the eye-rolling and mockery prompted by their comments on the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) during the First Committee general debate, the P5 nuclear-weapon states sallied forth again during the thematic debate on nuclear disarmament. This time, the five made a joint statement (on 22 October), which is quite impressive given the sharp divisions among them on many issues, most prominently the INF Treaty dispute. It is almost touching that the TPNW is the one thing that can still bring them together.

The statement once again illustrates that the P5 have an apparently insuperable difficulty in understanding that the TPNW is just one step in a larger process leading towards nuclear disarmament (see “Misrepresenting the nuclear ban treaty” in 2018 First Committee Monitor No. 2). This time they assert

that the ban treaty “will not result in the elimination of a single weapon”. This may turn out to be true, of course—but is hardly unique to the TPNW. The Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and a potential fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT) will also “not result in the elimination of a single weapon”, but the P5 and most other states nevertheless support them because they are, along with other elements, part of a process that leads to nuclear disarmament (often called the “step-by-step” or “progressive” approach). The TPNW is also one of these steps—not a difficult concept, but one apparently beyond the reach of P5 officials.

The statement repeats the now familiar—but still totally unsubstantiated—claim that the TPNW will “undermine” the NPT. Pressed on Twitter for an explanation, US Ambassador Robert Wood (who, alone among his



his P5 colleagues, at least attempts to engage in dialogue on the TPNW from time to time) tweeted that Article 18 of the TPNW “clearly” undermines the NPT—but couldn’t or wouldn’t explain how.

Whether or not the TPNW “undermines” the NPT, the P5 statement also baldly asserts that the TPNW “contradicts” the NPT. This astonishing claim prompted me to read the two treaties afresh. The only thing I could find that could possibly be characterized as a “contradiction” is that the NPT allows (in the sense of does not prohibit) the five nuclear-weapon states to retain nuclear weapons, whereas the TPNW prohibits possession of nuclear weapons for all states parties. This is certainly a key difference between the two instruments, and of course is one of the main objectives of the TPNW, but to say the TPNW “contradicts” the NPT on this basis is ludicrous. By this measure, the Biological Weapons Convention and Chemical Weapons Convention “contradict” the 1925 Geneva Protocol—since the Protocol allows its states parties to possess chemical and biological weapons, but the BWC and CWC prohibit possession. Similarly, the 1997 Anti-personnel Mine Ban Convention “contradicts” Amended Protocol II of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, because it prohibits possession and use of AP landmines, while the CCW protocol allows both.

In general, newer treaties go further than old ones—that is the point. It is how international law develops. To say that a new treaty “contradicts” an older one, because it contains additional or more extensive obligations, is self-evidently absurd.

But the P5 have never let absurdity stand in their way when it comes to criticising the ban treaty. In First Committee sessions in previous years, the US warned us that a nuclear ban treaty could lead to “unintended and unforeseen consequences, not excluding the possible use of a nuclear weapon”, while Russia foretold that the ban would “undermine strategic stability... plunging the world into chaos and dangerous unpre-

dictability”. This year, with the ban treaty adopted and steadily gaining ratifications, the apocalyptic hysteria has been downgraded to mere irrational conjecture. France tells us that the TPNW—which, remember, will not eliminate a single nuclear weapon and does not “set any new standards or norms”—will nevertheless somehow “lead to a race to develop conventional capabilities and consequently military escalation”. I suppose we must award marks for creativity, but even by the dire standards of multilateral disarmament discourse, this is truly desperate stuff.

It is a puzzle as to how the otherwise capable and assured diplomats of the P5 come to a decision to put out this kind of nonsense. Do they sit around a table and say, “OK, what can we say that will attract general hilarity and derision, and thereby influence other countries to do what we want?” What is it about the ban treaty that paralyses their analytical capacity?

To understand, we need to look at the fundamental contradiction that lies at the heart of P5 reactions to the ban treaty. If, as the P5 assert, the TPNW will not eliminate a single nuclear weapon and does not establish any new norms, why do they care about it? They could simply ignore it, and continue as usual. Yet their actions show they care a great deal—enough to agree a joint statement in the midst of the bitter INF treaty dispute, to engage in demarches and representations around the world, to issue threats and ultimatums, to lean on allies, to boycott General Assembly conferences, to hold hilarious protests outside the TPNW negotiations, and more. The ban treaty matters: the P5 know it, but they can’t admit it, even to themselves. Their rhetorical contortions all come back to this.

The message that shines through this latest P5 statement is the same message that has been consistently telegraphed by P5 actions since their fateful decision to boycott the Oslo humanitarian impact conference back in 2013: we fear the ban, because it just might work. •

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).

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International Network on Explosive Weapons
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www.reachingcriticalwill.org | info@reachingcriticalwill.org



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