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THROUGH THE SMOKE, WE SEE THE FIRE

Ray Acheson | Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

“No, YOU'RE the bully!” is probably not what most people entering the United Nations would expect to hear in an official meeting. Not unless those people had spent the last few years participating in the UN's disarmament machinery. Here, it has become fairly typical—though some might credibly argue that it is getting worse. For having only two days of substantive work last week, First Committee has already seen a lot of fire. Three of the nuclear-armed states have gone for each other's jugulars, so to speak, while almost every other delegation participating so far has expressed alarm about the new arms race, rising tensions, rising military spending, and weakening arms control architecture. All of this is transpiring while people are on the streets of major cities around the world engaged in nonviolent direct action to demand governments declare a climate and ecological emergency, halt biodiversity loss, and cut greenhouse gas emissions. All of this transpiring while people living in conflict and violence around the world watch their lives, homes, and communities be destroyed by war profiteering and geopolitical war mongering.

So yeah, someone is a bully. Multiple someone's. We know who they are. But we don't come to the United Nations to call someone a bully. We come to talk, to work it out, to find another way to live together without killing each other. To build community, not burn it down.

But the United States seems intent to burn it all down. It has walked away from multiple multilateral and bilateral arms control and non-proliferation arrangements over the past few years. First Committee was stalled for two days last week because the US government apparently denied visas to the diplomats from certain countries, causing Russia and Iran to ask for the work of the Committee to be postponed on the basis that this is discrimination and manipulation of countries' participation in the United Nations. Then, when work finally got underway after an agreement was

reached to hold the general debate while efforts are made to resolve the visa issue, the United States issued a statement blasting Russia and China as “autocratic powers ... determined to undermine the liberal democratic order established in the wake of the Second World War and upon which the United Nations was founded.” The US delegation called on all UN member states “from every region of the world that value the democratic way of life and share a sincere interest in further progress on disarmament” to “demand that Russia and China join the United States at the negotiating table in good faith, to initiate a new era of arms control for the sake of international peace and security.”

In turn, China said the US remarks were “replete with jaundiced ideological bias and anachronistic sentiments.” It said the international community “bears collective witness to the US perversities in international affairs, in defiance of norms and reason.” Russia, meanwhile, said it and China are on their “best behaviour,” in full compliance with international law and norms, while the world witnesses the United States “deliberately dismantling the system of arms control agreements developed for decades, that it now believes to be unacceptably limiting in terms of its capabilities to project and use force.”

The space allowed for this editorial does not permit a thorough accounting of the ways in which all of these statements are direly hypocritical when applied against these governments' own behaviour. What's important for First Committee and for disarmament is the fundamental problem that these statements illuminate. It's something the Prime Minister of Malaysia touched upon in his remarks to the UN General Assembly last month: “Almost three quarters of a century ago five countries claimed victory in the Second World War, he said. “On the basis of that victory they insisted on the right practically to rule the world. And so, they gave themselves veto powers over the rest of the world

in the organisation they built—an organisation they claim would end wars in the solution of conflicts.” That veto power allows each of them to “negate the wishes of the nearly 200 other members. It is totally and absolutely undemocratic. Yet, there are among them those who berate other countries of the world for not being democratic or being not democratic enough.” Furthermore, “that very power has resulted in an arms race. Each one of the five rely on their military might in order to challenge any attempt to take their power away.” The Malaysian Prime Minister identified this as the key structural impediment that renders the United Nations “incapable of achieving its principle objectives—that of preventing wars between nations. Indeed, the structure enabled the promotion of war within countries and between countries.”

This is a problem felt very acutely in the Committee that deals with disarmament and international security. The system is set up for the benefit of the five permanent members of the Security Council, and now they are destroying many pieces of that system, accusing each other of lighting the fire while they all throw on the fuel.

We can see it everywhere in the disarmament machinery, a system in which militarism and might make right, where those who spend the most on weapons get to have the biggest say in how our world is ordered and who benefits from it. It’s why some governments express outrage about the use of chemical weapons, saying, as the European Union did, that “we must ensure accountability and end impunity,” or, as Germany did, “that we must enforce the rules we’ve set for ourselves,” but at the same time defend the “necessity” of certain states possessing even more horrific weapons of mass destruction. It’s why the major arms producing and exporting states parties of the Arms Trade Treaty scold developing countries for failing to meet their financial obligations to the Treaty while profiting wildly off the blood their weapons spill in countries around the world. It’s why some states bomb towns and cities, violating international humanitarian law and human rights, devastating civilians lives and homes and hospitals, and then claim they are acting

in the interests of preserving “security and stability” or acting against imperialism or terrorism.

We see this dynamic again and again and again. It is a constant in the disarmament field, disrupted only when other states band together with activists and international organisations to throw off the shackles of despair and take real action. This is how landmines, cluster bombs, and nuclear weapons were prohibited. It is how we can create new structures and systems for disarmament that do not privilege those with weapons over those without.

If the United States wants to draw a line between disarmament and democracy, great. Let’s eliminate the veto power of the UN Security Council. Let’s allow voting in all of the UN disarmament machinery and end the Kafkaesque insistence on absolute consensus that allows a single state to prevent work from even beginning. Let’s hear from survivors of gun violence, of drone strikes, of explosive weapons, chemical weapons, nuclear weapons—let’s allow them to take a seat at this table. Let’s all meet to discuss a new era for disarmament. Let’s use First Committee to do it—we’re already here in the most democratic body of the United Nations. It would certainly be a better use of time and resources than calling each other bullies, delaying action, deferring responsibility, and deflecting blame. The nuclear-armed states can go do that on their own time. The rest of us have work to do.



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NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Ray Acheson | Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

With the erosion of the nuclear arms control architecture as a background to this year's session of First Committee, the vast majority of delegations expressed their concern with the emergence of a new nuclear arms race and backtracking from nuclear disarmament commitments and obligations. Lebanon, for example, noted that instead of progress towards the elimination of nuclear weapons, the world is witnessing a battle for strategic influence among the nuclear-armed states, and a return to rhetoric that justifies possession of nuclear weapons without taking into account human security concerns. The African Group, Arab Group, Caribbean Community (CARICOM), European Union, New Agenda Coalition, Non-Aligned Movement, and Nordic Countries all vocalised opposition to this state of affairs and urged international efforts to correct course. While all reiterated their commitment to the achievement of a nuclear weapon free world, their ideas how to get there continue to vary.

"It is unacceptable that we still have to live under the threat of 14,000 nuclear weapons," said Mexico's delegation, especially while the nuclear-armed states boast of increasing their arsenals and their preparedness to use them. "Normalising this rhetoric would be a serious mistake." The African Group similarly noted that more than seven decades have passed since the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. "The time has come for the world to speak with unanimity towards ensuring a world free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction. It is also the moment to raise our voices against the slow pace and the lack of good faith and commitment on the part of nuclear-weapon States to dismantle these weapons."

In this context, the majority of states speaking during the opening days of general debate reiterated their support for the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), adopted by the UN General Assembly in July 2017. The Association of

Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Sistema de la Integración Centroamericana (SICA), as well as Guatemala and Uruguay, said the TPNW complements other instruments such as the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). SICA noted that the TPNW strengthens nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament and offers a path to the total elimination of nuclear weapons in a verifiable, irreversible manner. The African Group, ASEAN, and CARICOM welcomed their members' signatures and ratifications of the TPNW and urged all states to join. Guatemala said it is in the final stages of ratifying the Treaty.

The New Agenda Coalition and Kazakhstan said that the adoption of the TPNW expressed the desire of the overwhelming majority of countries for urgent action on nuclear disarmament. Kazakhstan cited the "obvious lack of progress in this sphere and a decline in trust" leading to the majority of non-nuclear-armed states "to seriously address the gaps and imbalances in the prevailing nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation regime." Yet the states that include nuclear weapons in their security doctrines, the so-called nuclear umbrella states, continue to insist that there is a better way to achieve nuclear disarmament. While their oppositional rhetoric to the TPNW seems to have softened, these states continue to promote a "step-by-step," "progressive," "stepping stone," or "building block" approach—which they assert is more pragmatic, realistic, and practical despite the lack of tangible progress on this agenda for more than twenty years. But, many of these states are starting to recognise that the system and process they continue to defend is under even more of a grave threat than inaction. Germany noted that the NPT and other nuclear arms control architecture is at a crossroads. In the current security environment, it argued that reducing the risk of inadvertent nuclear escalation "is the call of the day". Germany called for dialogue on threat reduction and on nuclear doctrines, but was also clear that this must not replace nuclear disarmament. The

escalation Germany and others warned of was on full display during the mere two days that First Committee met last week. The UK delegation delivered a statement on behalf of the “Nuclear Weapon States Recognised by the NPT”—otherwise known as the permanent five members of the UN Security Council—explaining how the five have come together to discuss difficult issues such as doctrines, transparency, and threats; are continuing to work on updates to their “glossary of key nuclear terms” from 2015; and will submit reports to the 2020 NPT Review Conference. Mere minutes later, however, the US delegation delivered a scorching rhetorical attack on Russia and China as “two large autocratic powers with global reach and ambition—armed with nuclear weapons.” It went on to explain how Russia and China are seeking to destroy the “liberal democratic order” and called on all UN member states to demand Russia and China join the United States “to initiate a new era of arms control for the sake of international peace and security.”

China and Russia both reacted to this statement the following day. The international security situation has become complicated and arms control is at a crossroads, said China, arguing that the United States is making a desperate attempt to gain security supremacy. Russia said the “striking difference” between it and China on the one hand and the United States on the other is that Russia and China “remain steadfast” in their “principled approaches” to international conduct and comply with norms of “good behaviour”. The fight continued into right of replies at the end of Friday’s meeting, with more promised for Monday.

While this exchange may seem like schoolyard theatre, it has real world implications. Billions of dollars are being spent on nuclear weapon modernisation programmes and the building-up of nuclear arsenals; and the nuclear-armed states are very clearly putting the world at risk of the use of nuclear weapons. In addition, the current US approach to agreements and diplomacy also

means that it has walked away from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) with Iran and is flailing in its diplomatic efforts with the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK).

Many delegations at First Committee expressed concern with both situations. ASEAN called for work to continue towards full and lasting peace, security, and denuclearisation on the Korean peninsula, including through the implementation of recent agreements and declarations. Germany also indicated its support for diplomatic efforts for the denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula. Kazakhstan said it is ready to share its experience of denuclearisation with DPRK and others working for peace on Korean peninsula. But Australia, Estonia, Germany, Peru, Poland, and others also expressed concern with the DPRK’s missile tests and demand the country denuclearise now, with many saying sanctions must stay in place until it does so.

The European Union, as well as Estonia, Germany, and Kazakhstan, amongst others, urged Iran to reverse the activities that are inconsistent with the JCPOA. While the EU “deeply regrets” the withdrawal of the United States from the JCPOA and its re-imposition of sanctions against Iran, it asked Iran to “refrain from any further steps that risk aggravating the situation.”

In both cases, full compliance by all parties to the relevant agreements is crucial. But denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula is not just about the DPRK, as civil society campaigns such as Korea Peace Now have argued. Peace and security require reciprocity and building of trust. Similarly, with Iran, the EU’s position would be strengthened if it were to overcome the unilateral sanctions imposed by the United States, in order to keep the JCPOA alive. The tensions between the nuclear-armed states are frightening, given the destructive power they possess. In this time of crisis, it is up to non-nuclear-armed states to build and sustain the structures for disarmament and non-proliferation for sustainable and equitable peace and security.

NUCLEAR WEAPONS **BAN** MONITOR

The Permanent Missions of Austria, Ireland and New Zealand invite you to the launch of the

NUCLEAR WEAPONS BAN MONITOR 2019

**1.15 - 2.30 pm Wednesday 16 October 2019 in
Conference Room A**

Featuring

Grethe Østern (Norwegian People's Aid), Editor, Nuclear Weapons Ban Monitor
Stuart Casey-Maslen, Honorary Professor, University of Pretoria
Frances Collins, Deputy Director, Disarmament and Non-Proliferation, Department of
Foreign Affairs and Trade, Ireland

**Lunch will be provided from 1pm
at the Cafe Vienna, top of ramp on left side**



CHEMICAL WEAPONS

Allison Pytlak | Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

Around 25 delegations referred to chemical weapons during the first two sessions of the general debate. Many of these, including the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Central American Integration System (SICA), the Nordic Countries, the European Union (EU), Germany, Peru, Finland, and Sri Lanka expressed that the use of such weapons constitutes a violation of international law and norms and called for adherence to relevant instruments. "Our most urgent priority is to uphold the norm against the use of chemical weapons and to ensure that those that violate it are held to account," Finland noted.

Accountability was a message reinforced by many of the delegations that spoke on this subject, in reference to a recent decision by states parties of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) to grant the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) a mandate to assign attribution for chemical weapons use. Australia and Estonia welcomed this decision. Peru and the Nordic Countries spoke of the importance of non-impunity. The High Representative reiterated the UN Secretary-General's "full confidence in the professionalism, objectivity and impartiality of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons."

Others expressed a different view. Russia said that the OPCW "appears to be divided under the pressure by the Western countries." It cited two reasons for the division: "The Western countries attempted to politicise the so-called Syrian 'chemical dossier' beyond all limits. The Technical Secretariat in violation of the CWC assigned to the OPCW attributive functions to 'identify those responsible' in using chemical agents." China urged strengthening

the implementation mechanism of the CWC and mitigating "the tendency of politicisation" in OPCW.

Poland suggested that given this context, the "General Assembly has to uphold a strong, united and unambiguous signal of support of the whole international community for the CWC integrity and the OPCW's role." It urged states to further enhance the implementation of the CWC and strengthen the OPCW, as the "only way to defend against chemical weapons challenges and threats as well as to deter any future state and non-state perpetrators."

The EU, Poland, the United States (US), Peru, and Norway condemned chemical weapons use in Syria. Poland and Peru expressed concern over use in Iraq, Malaysia, and the United Kingdom. Syria responded to these charges in rights-of-reply.

ASEAN welcomed the progress made in eliminating chemical weapons stockpiles since the entry-into-force of the CWC 20 years ago in 1997. China strongly urged the US to effectively implement its CWC stockpile destruction obligations. In a right-of-reply, the US said that it would do so by 2023.

Kazakhstan and Russia urged states to begin developing an international convention on suppressing acts of chemical and biological terrorism.

Algeria called for fostering international cooperation to allow transfer of chemical (and biological) technology, especially for developing countries. The Caribbean Community spoke of specialised training it had received from the OPCW in emergency response to deliberate or accidental use of chemical agents.

BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS

Filippa Lentzos | King's College London

There were limited references to biological weapons in the shortened, opening week of the First Committee. States stressed the importance of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC) and the need to adhere, implement, and strengthen it.

The exception to this was Russia, which laid out its position on the BWC in some detail in its prepared statement. Russia highlighted its commitment to a legally binding protocol to the BWC with an efficient verification mechanism and proposed establishing an open-ended working group. Russia encouraged BWC states parties "to support the initiatives to use [Russian] mobile medical units and establish a Scientific Advisory Committee within the Convention, and, to update confidence-building measures."

Referring to voluntary peer review efforts within the BWC community, and to efforts to create a standing capacity within the UN Secretariat to investigate alleged biological weapons incidents, Russia said: "We consider it unacceptable to create alternative BTWC verification mechanisms in contravention of the UNSC and the provisions of the Convention." Russia's position is that "any disarmament and arms control mechanisms should be discussed and adopted by states parties' consensus at specialised international fora, in this case, the BTWC."

In reference to the lack of a substantive outcome document from the 2018 Meeting of States Parties, Russia said it would pursue the adoption of a meaningful final document at this year's upcoming Meeting of States Parties in December 2019.

The Nordic Countries statement underscored the adverse financial environment of the BWC—a message echoed in Norway's statement. Algeria called for international cooperation to allow for the transfer of biological technologies, especially to the benefit of the developing countries. Australia encouraged BWC states parties to focus on ideas likely to attract consensus ahead of the next Review Conference in 2021.

In a right-of-reply against the United States, the Syrian representative repeated earlier accusations that the United States is developing clandestine biological weapons in more than 25 countries.

Kazakhstan and Russia both emphasised the urgent need for an international convention on the suppression of acts of chemical and biological terrorism.

FULLY AUTONOMOUS WEAPONS

Mary Wareham | Campaign to Stop Killer Robots

Yet again, the "killer robots" challenge has received high-level attention at the annual opening session of UN General Assembly (UNGA). To re-cap, in 2018 UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called the prospect of machines with the power and discretion to kill "morally repugnant and politically unacceptable," while Germany's foreign minister Heiko Maas urged nations to support his government's proposal to ban fully autonomous

weapons. This year during the high-level opening of the UNGA, Maas and foreign minister Jean-Yves Le Drian of France appealed to states to prioritise urgent multilateral action to tackle the killer robots threat, climate change, girls' education and three other "politically relevant" issues of international concern. At least 16 foreign ministers followed Maas and Le Drian's invitation to co-sign a political declaration endorsing the objective of "developing

a normative framework” that would address autonomous weapons. Yet, there is little agreement about what that means in practice. Does this mean more informal guidelines or a new international treaty to prohibit or restrict lethal autonomous weapons systems?

At the opening of the First Committee on Disarmament and International Security, the UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Izumi Nakamitsu, welcomed a set of “guiding principles” agreed last year as part of a Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) established by the Convention on Conventional Weapons (CCW). She reminded states that “more work remains to be done to ensure humans remain at all times in control over the use of force.”

Australia, China, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Kazakhstan, Poland, Sri Lanka, and Uruguay referenced autonomous weapons in their First Committee statements this week. Germany said “the world seems to be at the beginning of a new arms race, fueled to a considerable extent by new technologies. If left unchanged, our current arms control architecture risks being eroded by future weapons systems featuring autonomous functions.” Sri Lanka warned that killer robots would create “unprecedented risks and challenges to humanity” while China flagged their “profound impact on global security, giving rise to ethical and legal concerns.” Kazakhstan noted, “it remains to be proven that an autonomous weapon system would be able to comply with the three fundamental principles of IHL namely those of proportionality, distinction and precautions in attack.”

The Non-Aligned Movement highlighted the “urgent need to pursue legally-binding instrument on lethal autonomous weapons systems,” reiterating its long-

held position. Guatemala repeated its call for states to negotiate a ban on autonomous weapons, while Sri Lanka urged the negotiation of “a binding legal framework ... with meaningful human control as its central thrust.”

Proposals from western states for dealing with the the threat of killer robots were much more unambitious. The Nordic Countries requested “continued work” at the CCW in Geneva, where diplomatic talks since 2014 on lethal autonomous weapons systems have produced no credible result besides the guiding principles. Poland raised peace, security, and other concerns over autonomous weapons, but only proposed “pragmatic solutions” such as transparency and confidence-building measures. Finland said its aim is “an effective normative framework.”

Almost all statements on autonomous weapons expressed a desire for the CCW talks on the issue to continue, with many dubbing this an “appropriate forum” for addressing this challenge. Estonia and Finland identified the CCW’s Sixth Review Conference, scheduled for the end of 2021, as the deadline for producing as credible CCW outcome.

The Campaign to Stop Killer Robots views principles, declarations, and other measures that fall short of new international law as completely insufficient to address the serious accountability, ethical, moral, legal, security, technological, and other challenges posed by removing meaningful human control from the use of force. Our coalition of 121 non-governmental organisations in 60 countries calls on all states that have not yet done so to endorse the call from the UN Secretary-General to negotiate an international treaty to ban fully autonomous weapons. The Campaign will hold a side event on 21 October in Conference Room IV.



Members of the Alliance for Multilateralism. Photo: Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations.

LANDMINES

Jelena Vićentić | International Campaign to Ban Landmines

As the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) looks forward to its first decade after entering into force, two recent states parties highlighted the context of their enthusiasm for the Convention during the First Committee. Sri Lanka noted that it recently became a state party in March 2018. It emphasised its swift engagement as President of the 9th Meeting of States Parties to the Convention. Having taken such a significant role so soon after joining the Convention, Sri Lanka also duly stressed the importance of the Meeting of States Parties in adding to the growing momentum for the CCM's Second Review Conference which will be held in November 2020 in Switzerland. In particular, Sri Lanka highlighted having adopted a methodology for handling requests from states parties for the extension of cluster munition clearance deadlines under the Convention.

The Maldives, also a new state party to the Convention, placed its ratification of the CCM in the broader context of disarmament and non-proliferation as a "path of peaceful co-existence" and that "security and strength is achieved not through weapons and war but through investment in our people and our environment." The Maldives' accession brings the Convention closer to realising the goal of achieving 130 states parties by the Second Review Conference. Lebanon, a state party heavily affected by cluster munitions, emphasised its long record as a strong champion of the CCM. In calling for an end to the production and use of the weapon, Lebanon also raised the issue of increasing universalisation. A total of 120 states have joined the Convention to date, 107 of which are states parties and 14 are signatories.

CLUSTER MUNITIONS

Jelena Vićentić | Cluster Munition Coalition

All delegations that spoke about this issue in the course of the opening days of the First Committee took note of the 20th anniversary of the ground-breaking Anti-personnel Mine Ban Convention (Mine Ban Treaty) and its Fourth Review Conference scheduled for November 2019 in Oslo, Norway and the Nordic Countries expressed the wish for a strong outcome of the Review Conference. Poland and Finland conveyed its appreciation for the preparatory work carried out by the Norwegian Presidency and the draft outcome documents presented to states parties—the Oslo Action Plan, the Oslo Declaration on a Mine-Free World, and the Review of the Operation and Status of the Convention. Norway expressed pride in holding the presidency of the Fourth Review Conference and called on all states to contribute to a strong outcome.

The European Union (EU), Guatemala, and Estonia called for the universalisation of the Treaty. Guatemala used the occasion to remind about the remaining threat to civilian lives and the possible humanitarian consequences of landmines still buried in the ground.

The EU called for improved implementation of obligations under the Mine Ban Treaty, while the Nordic countries expressed the need for increased progress in mine clearance. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) described its contributions to the implementation of the Treaty through its Regional Mine Action Centre in Phnom Penh. Sri Lanka reaffirmed its target of being mine-free by 2020 and reported on cooperation with various national and international stakeholders, as well the progress achieved in clearing “nearly 90% of the mines”, and enabling resettlement of the internally displaced. Estonia referred to its support to the United Nations Mine Action Service and other humanitarian projects. Yemen re-stated its commitment to the Convention and described its efforts toward mine clearance, while recognising the challenges posed by recently laid landmines.

Poland stated its firm commitment to the Mine Ban Treaty as an important instrument of international humanitarian law. Norway joined in emphasising the strength of the norm established by the Convention.

EXPLOSIVE WEAPONS

Laura Boillot | International Network on Explosive Weapons

In the opening couple of days of First Committee, the UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu, and the delegation of Uruguay both raised the issue of explosive weapons in populated areas. They also both referenced the recent meeting on this theme which took place in Vienna on 1–2 October 2019. The Vienna Conference on the Protection of Civilians in Urban Warfare was hosted by the Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and saw the participation of 133 states as well as international organisations and civil society. It concluded with plans to start discussions for an international political declaration, which will commence at a meeting in Geneva on 18 November 2018.

In her statement, the High Representative also referenced the latest joint appeal from the UN Secretary-General and the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross on explosive weapons: Explosive weapons in cities: civilian devastation and suffering must stop (see [Bit.ly/EWIPAJointAppeal](https://bit.ly/EWIPAJointAppeal)), which was issued last month. The appeal calls on states and parties to conflict to “avoid the use of explosive weapons with a wide impact area in populated areas” and encourages states to develop an international political declaration as well as appropriate limitations, common standards, and operational policies relating to the use of explosive weapons in populated areas.

INTERNATIONAL ARMS TRADE

Aaron Lainé | Control Arms

Most delegations intervening in the two days of general debate last week highlighted the consequences of the poorly regulated and illicit trade in conventional weapons, citing concerns over arms fueling conflict, terrorism, and organised crime. In her address, the UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Izumi Nakamitsu, highlighted that “military spending, arms transfers and the incidence of armed conflict worldwide all remain high. Global anxiety about international security continues to grow as the international security and arms control architecture shows signs of unraveling.” This sentiment reverberated throughout the room for the remainder of the week. Mexico reminded the plenary that small arms and light weapons proliferation produce the most victims, are used for almost half of all deaths globally, and are alarmingly being used in a more generalised manner. The African Group, drawing attention to the need for all states to address these concerns, urged states parties to the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) to “implement it in a balanced and objective manner that protects the interests of all States and not just the major international arms producing and exporting states.”

In total, 18 states referenced the ATT, some citing it as a necessary instrument to tackle some of these shared concerns. In a strong statement by the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the group emphasised that it remains “fervent in our conviction that the ATT can contribute significantly in freeing many of our citizens and countless people around the world, especially women and children, from the deadly tyranny associated with the pervasiveness of unregulated small arms and light weapons.”

The European Union, after urging UN member states, in particular major arms exporters, importers, and transit countries to join the ATT, welcomed the outcome of the Fifth Conference of States Parties (CSP5). It highlighted the recommendation for states to share information and build voluntary guidance on the Treaty’s gender-based violence criterion for their national export control risk assessments. The Nordic Countries, Guatemala, Finland, and Australia likewise welcomed the progress made on gender and gender-based violence in the context of the ATT, with Finland hailing the Treaty’s “pioneering role” in this regard.

Several states called for the effective implementation and universalisation of the ATT. Finland stressed that with over 100 states parties, progress on universalisation has been “remarkable”. It welcomed the recent announcement by China of aiming to accede to the Treaty, hoping it will encourage other major exporters and importers to do the same. Just two weeks ago, the Maldives acceded to the ATT, bringing the total number of states parties to 105. The Maldives’ accession is significant as it is the fourth country to join the Treaty in Asia, a region which has so far made limited progress towards Treaty universality despite Japan’s active outreach during their Presidency of the fourth CSP.

Guatemala reiterated concerns raised at CSP5 over punitive measures taken on states unable to fulfil their financial obligations. Explaining that the ATT is young and should focus on concrete steps towards effective regulations on the arms trade, Guatemala claimed that these actions are contrary to the spirit and letter of the Treaty, particularly if universalisation is a priority.

SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS

Rose Welsch | International Action Network on Small Arms

Fifty million people are currently affected by armed conflict in the world, noted the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs during the opening week of First Committee. Pointing to a global increase in arms transfers as well as conflicts and threats worldwide, the Chair of First Committee urged delegations to put people at the centre of their disarmament work, in accordance with the UN Secretary-General's disarmament agenda. Mexico noted that small arms claim the most lives of people on a daily basis, and pointed out that about 90 percent of deaths from firearms occur outside of zones affected by armed conflicts.

The Central American Integration System (SICA) emphasised that its member states will continue to focus on the prevention of illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons (SALW), and will incorporate the United Nations Programme of Action on SALW (UNPoA) and the International Tracing Instrument (ITI) into their respective national laws to counter the diversion of weapons to non-state actors or unauthorized users. Most of these diversions, they noted, are strongly linked to transnational organised crime. Mexico also noted that SALW are a favourite supply of organised transnational crime and terrorism, and are closely linked to drug and human trafficking. Referring to an Easter Sunday terrorist task in Sri Lanka earlier this year, the Sri Lanka delegation mentioned the devastation caused by the ability of non-state actors to easily acquire illicit access to SALW. Ukraine also expressed concern over the illicit trafficking in SALW fueling global terrorism.

On the topic of ammunition, the High Representative stated that there is a clear opportunity for progress to be made on the issue given that a group of governmental experts will convene in 2020 to consider in depth the range of safety and security challenges arising from conventional ammunition.

Guatemala welcomed the inclusion of ammunition in the final report the 2018 Review Conference (RevCon3) of the UNPoA. SICA emphasised that all control of weapons, ammunition, parts, and components should have the purpose of preventing conflicts, armed violence, and violations of international law and international humanitarian law. Peru asserted that in addition to being a staunch supporter of the control of SALW and their ammunition, it is committed to promoting a culture of peace to reduce armed violence.

In June of 2020, the seventh Biennial Meeting of States (BMS7) of the UNPoA will give states a chance to report on their implementation of UNPoA commitments, including new commitments adopted at RevCon3. The African Group, Caribbean Community, and the Arab Group expressed that they look forward to the convening of BMS7. However, the Arab Group also stated that it rejects attempts to impose obligations related to controversial agreements that were ratified without taking international consensus into consideration. The High Representative for Disarmament Affairs pointed out that BMS7 will be an important opportunity for states to engage constructively with the recommendations of the latest report of the UN Secretary-General on SALW—in particular considering a new focus on national target-setting and addressing various recent technological developments.

While states primarily spoke about SALW threats in relation to conflict, terrorism, and organised crime, Mexico also highlighted that SALW are the “perfect instrument” for those who espouse hate speech and racial and religious supremacy. Referring to a mass shooting against a population of Hispanic origin in Texas earlier this year, Mexico said such crimes are possible because of indiscriminate access to weapons, and represent a trend that is increasingly present.

OUTER SPACE

Jessica West | Project Ploughshares

Statements on outer space this year are shadowed by a growing concern that it is already being treated as a domain of warfare. Some of this concern comes in the form of accusations. China and Russia each asserted that the United States (US) is turning outer space into a new battle ground, with Russia also pointing to France's proposed "active defense" in space. Others such as Mexico lamented that warfare activities in outer space contradict the use of technology for peaceful purposes. Speaking on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), Indonesian Ambassador Dian Triansyah Djani stated that it "rejects" the notion of "space as a warfighting domain" or "next battlefield."

Nonetheless, states expressed hope that peace can be maintained in outer space and an arms race prevented. Sri Lanka stressed that it is "the last frontier that needs protection" for peaceful purposes and from military conflict. Likewise the European Union (EU) reiterated the commitment of its member states to the prevention of arms race in outer space. But the ability to pursue preventive measures seems increasingly fragile.

Significant attention was paid to the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on further effective measures for the prevention of an arms race in outer space (PAROS), which failed to reach consensus on recommendations earlier this year. While Russia specifically blamed the US for this failure, the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu, noted that the GGE "represented the most in-depth and substantive discussion since the item was first introduced in the Conference on Disarmament in 1985." Indeed the process was

welcomed by Egypt, Sri Lanka, and the Group of Arab States, with the Republic of Korea and Russia expressing hope for continued work.

Many governments called for steps toward the negotiation of a legally binding instrument on PAROS, including China, Peru, Egypt, Sri Lanka, and NAM. But in a right of reply, the US pointed to one such proposal and stated that it is flawed and not in the interest of it or its allies. This is the draft Treaty on the Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space, the Threat or Use of Force Against Outer Space Objects (PPWT) proposed by Russia and China at the Conference of Disarmament in 2008 and again in 2014.

In response to this increasingly stale stalemate, Russia continued to press for political statements supporting No First Placement (NFP) of weapons in space as well as transparency and confidence-building measures (TCBMs). The EU echoed support for voluntary TCBMs negotiated within the framework of the UN, while Australia emphasised support for strengthening norms of responsible behaviour alongside applying international rules as laws in order to preserve "the space domain as a secure, safe and sustainable environment for the benefit of all."

Despite the growing alarm with which military activities in outer space are escalating, proposals and patterns of support for varying mitigation measures thus far suggest that one can expect this impasse to continue. The cost of inaction is high. As noted by Guatemala, military conflict in outer space would be "tragic for human life."

CYBER

Allison Pytlak | Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

A large number of delegations referenced cyber security issues last week. Most focused on the two new UN processes devoted to this subject, while others discussed emerging challenges.

The President of the General Assembly, the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), the European Union (EU), the Group of Arab States, Australia, Estonia, China, Sri Lanka, Egypt, Norway, and the Republic of Korea took note of the two new processes established by the UN General Assembly in 2018 on this subject: an Open-ended Working Group on information and communications technologies (ICTs), and a sixth Group of Governmental Experts on responsible state behaviour in cyber space. Most of these delegations urged the two processes to work in a complementary way. Norway encouraged the processes to build on the achievements of previous GGEs and ensure continued commitment to international peace and stability "in a manner that guarantees the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms." Estonia reinforced the importance of protection fundamental freedoms and human rights online.

The EU, NAM, Australia, and Estonia underlined the applicability of existing international law and norms in cyberspace. The EU also spoke of the importance of implementing norms of responsible state behaviour and further developing and implementing confidence building measures, cooperation, and capacity building. The Central American Integration System said it favours the strengthening of international norms. China believes that all states "should abide by international law and the fundamental principles governing international relations based on the UN Charter," and that they should "effectively respect the sovereignty of states in cyber space and refrain from the use of ICTs to carry out activities which run counter to the task of maintaining international peace and security or interfere in other states' internal affairs."

Poland suggested that as a result of the rapidly evolving nature of cyber-related challenges, legally binding instruments "might not provide us with adequate solutions." It urged looking for more pragmatic solutions, such as increased transparency and confidence building measures. It also supports advancing greater accountability of states in cyberspace to discourage irresponsible behavior.

Egypt said it looks forward to the development of binding rules that would prevent cyber space from becoming a field of conflict. China "resolutely" opposes the United States' practice of abusing 'national security' as a pretext for obstructing the development and cooperation of ICTs. Mexico is alarmed that cyber space is seen as an area of war or for militarisation and urged promoting peaceful use of this space. Germany warned that new technologies are fueling a new arms race of future weapons that may erode the current arms control architecture.

A few delegations spoke in greater detail about specific cyber threats. Sri Lanka highlighted the vulnerability of nuclear weapons to cyber attacks. It also spoke of the heavy financial losses incurred as a result of cyber crime. The Caribbean Community described in length the impact of cyber crime in the region. The High Representative for Disarmament Affairs said that the number and severity of attacks is growing at a rapid rate. Poland warned of hybrid warfare in which new technologies are used to conduct malicious activities but that they fall short of the traditional thresholds of the armed force.

Lebanon announced that in August 2019 it adopted a national cyber security strategy.

DISARMAMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

Danielle Samler | Lawyers Committee on Nuclear Policy

Opening the first week of First Committee, the President of the General Assembly reminded delegates of the relationship between development and disarmament. He said “disarmament and international security underpin the priorities for the Seventy-Fourth Session, which are poverty eradication and zero hunger; quality education; climate action and inclusion. We cannot make progress in these areas or Agenda 2030 in its entirety, if we live in an insecure world.” Several states picked up on this in their statements by framing disarmament through a development lens. The Maldives noted that “security and strength is achieved not through weapons of war, but through investment in our people and our environment—by reducing poverty, investing in sustainable development, guaranteeing fundamental human rights.” The Maldives also noted that disarmament is a condition for sustainable development.

Several member states made it clear that there is a direct relationship between the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and military spending. The Central American Integration System (SICA), Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), and Arab Group pointed out the gross over-expenditure on military equipment. SICA said it regrets the increase in military spending and would instead like to see those resources steered towards the implementation of the SDGs; NAM echoed this concern. The Arab Group said it is imperative to rid humanity of weapons and to harness the immense resources devoted to those weapons for development.

Specific SDGs highlighted were goals 5, 11, and 16. These goals are: to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls; to eliminate

all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres; to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable; and to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) made specific reference to the importance in achieving sustainable development goal 5.2, to eliminate violence against women and girls.

CARICOM also pointed out that the high prevalence of illegal firearms threatens the safety and security of their citizens, upon which sustainable development of the region depends. The New Agenda Coalition also recognised the grave threat that illicit weapons pose and said, “far from strengthening international peace and security, this state of affairs serves to weaken it, aggravating international tensions and conflict, and jeopardizing the collective well-being of all States and peoples, as well as the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.” Guatemala seconded this notion saying that the illegal trafficking of small arms and light weapons hinders the establishment of the appropriate environment to foster human development.

Lebanon highlighted the need to adopt a comprehensive approach to disarmament that accounts for its interconnectedness with sustainable development. This point was further elaborated on by Mexico, which noted the particular dangers that nuclear weapons pose, not only to global security, but to ecosystems, sustainable development, and human life.

GENDER AND DISARMAMENT

Katrin Geyer | Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

In the first two days of the general debate, delegates called for the inclusion of various gender aspects in the work of UN First Committee and beyond. A number of speakers participants, including this year's President of the UN General Assembly Ambassador Tijjani Muhammad-Bande of Nigeria, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu, and the Nordic Countries called for the inclusion of a gender perspective in all peace and security efforts. Ms. Nakamitsu urged delegations to further "take a proactive stance in the coordination of gender-related language" across First Committee resolutions this year. Last year, an unprecedented number of 17 adopted resolutions included gender considerations. Finland was pleased that gender mainstreaming is increasingly highlighted across different disarmament and arms control fora, and noted this is a key part of implementing commitments under the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda.

Some participants referred to the gendered impacts of weapons and armed conflict and violence. In his opening remarks, Ambassador Muhammad-Bande stressed the need to understand better the differential impact on women during and after conflict. Ms. Nakamitsu and Uruguay also urged to address the gendered impact of weapons. The New Agenda Coalition (NAC) reminded that the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) recognises "the strong gendered impact of a nuclear weapon detonation."

The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) expressed hope for the potential contribution of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) to protect "especially women and children" from the grave impacts of unregulated small arms and light weapons. The Nordic Countries, Guatemala, and Australia welcomed this year's priority theme of gender and gender-based violence at the ATT's Fifth Meeting of States Parties (CSP5). Guatemala asserted that important advancements were made to continue addressing this subject in the

ATT's working groups and upcoming CSPs. Australia noted the topic's strong link to the WPS agenda in this respect.

The Nordic Countries welcomed efforts to integrate gender into all aspects of mine action. Norway said that it set a strong example of this during its presidency of the Mine Ban Convention that it assumed in 2018.

The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) underscored that the First Committee can make contributions to the 2030 Agenda, including to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5.2 on violence against women and girls. The Central American Integration System (SICA) also stressed the need to increase synergies between the 2030 Agenda and disarmament, underscoring, amongst others, the link between First Committee's work and SDG 5 on gender and gender-based violence.

In terms of gender diversity, Ambassador Muhammad-Bande observed that women's inclusion is not only the right thing to do, but that the UN would not achieve its goals if it "[excludes] half of the world's population." He urged First Committee delegates to ensure the "full and equal participation and leadership of women" in the Committee's work. Ms. Nakamitsu echoed his words and argued that diversifying voices in this forum will help to revitalise discussions. Ms. Nakamitsu further referred to the UN Secretary-General's disarmament agenda, in which he notes that gender parity is "a moral duty and an operational necessity." She said that in light of the underrepresentation of women and women leaders in disarmament fora and decision-making, she has called on all member states to ensure gender balance in their nominations for Groups of Governmental Experts and other bodies. Australia informed that it champions the full and effective participation by women and men in international security fora.

NEW SHAPE FORUM TAKES FRESH LOOK AT DISARMAMENT

Richard Lennane | Geneva Disarmament Platform

As delegates prepared for First Committee, the Geneva Disarmament Platform and the Global Challenges Foundation hosted the 2019 New Shape Forum: Weapons Governance in Geneva on 30 September and 1 October. The event introduced the concept of weapons governance as means of considering disarmament, arms control, non-proliferation, and international humanitarian law (IHL) in an integrated way, as a subset of global governance, and aimed to bring in tools and approaches from other areas of global governance to examine if and how they might be applied in the disarmament sphere.

The forum gathered an eclectic group of participants from a range of fields, including artificial intelligence, public health, astrodynamics, biotechnology, climate change, and finance, as well as disarmament diplomats and civil society representatives working on disarmament issues. It began with a moderated discussion between Gilles Carbonnier (Vice-president of the International Committee of the Red Cross), Angela Kane (former UN High Representative for Disarmament) and Eric Borremans (Pictet Asset Management), reviewing the history of weapons governance efforts since 1945 and examining current challenges and setbacks. They discussed how the significant progress made with multilateral disarmament and IHL treaties since the Second World War and throughout the Cold War was under threat and starting to unravel, as we faced a situation that was “multipolarity without multilateralism”.

This sobering opening was followed by a series of seven “governance stories”: short presentations from people with experience with particular governance tools and approaches used in other fields. Harjeet Singh (ActionAid International) spoke about civic and private sector roles in climate governance; Sulzhan Bali examined lessons from global health governance for health security; Niek

Savelkoul (iGEM) discussed safeguarding the future of biotechnology; Bob Trafford (Forensic Architecture) presented the applications of machine learning in monitoring and verification; Moriba Jah (University of Texas) introduced techniques for developing space situational awareness; Alejandra Quevedo (FATF Latin America) spoke about standards-based governance and peer review mechanisms in combating money laundering and terrorist financing; and Daniel Faggella (Emerj Artificial Intelligence Research) examined critical dual-use applications and trends of artificial intelligence.

Armed with these fascinating accounts, as well as an inspiring keynote speech from Nobel Peace Prize laureate Leymah Gbowee, who emphasised the need to give weapons governance a human face, participants split into working groups to discuss how these ideas and approaches—and others—might be combined with the existing mechanisms to improve weapons governance. The five groups considered the question from different angles: delegation, distribution and coordination; inclusion and agency of non-state actors; data and monitoring; soft law, standards and codes; and forecasting and adaptation. The groups produced a wealth of wide-ranging ideas and suggestions, as well as identifying problems and obstacles.

A final plenary discussion, moderated by Patricia Lewis (Chatham House) and Rakesh Sood (Observer Research Foundation) attempted to draw out the most promising areas for further development. These included developing “citizen science” data collection and analysis capacities to support compliance monitoring and verification efforts, developing networks for collaborative governance (involving states, sub-state actors, the private sector and civil society), and perhaps most notably, establishing an “International Panel on Weapons Governance,” loosely modelled on

the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, to provide independent global data, analysis, and assessment on weapons governance issues.

A report of the Forum will be issued shortly, and video of the main sessions is available on Youtube.

The Geneva Disarmament Platform and the Global Challenges Foundation will be organising follow-up consultations and activities to further develop the ideas shared at the New Shape Forum. If you would like to be involved, please email sofia@globalchallenges.org.

BLANK SLATE ART INSTALLATION GRAPHICALLY HIGHLIGHTS DANGERS OF DRONES AND AUTONOMOUS WEAPONS

Essam Attia | Blank Slate

At approximately 9:45 am on 7 October a crowd gathered outside the United Nations in New York when, from across the street, a nearly to-scale replica of a US Air Force Predator Drone approached. A single voice could be heard yelling the words, "Double tap!" after which the gathering replied, "Drone strike!" and all fell to the ground. This is Blank Slate, a public art intervention coinciding with the start of the UNGA First Committee meetings as well as the anniversary of the United States' (US) invasion of Afghanistan, where drones are a mainstay in combat and could soon be joined by autonomous weapons of war.

Though decommissioned in 2018 the Predator was the genesis of the US drone programme, with replicas produced by China, and US models sold to Italy, Turkey, United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Morocco. It is a symbol of the future of warfare. The Bureau of Investigative Journalism estimates that drones have killed upwards of 12,000 people in four countries, approximately 1700 of which were civilians.¹ A Stanford University study found that during the Obama administration as little as 2 per cent of those killed in Pakistan were high value targets.² This all occurred before the current US administration under President Trump revoked reporting requirements on civilian casualties in unofficial wars, while simultaneously increasing the number of drone strikes by up to four times. Blank Slate represents the civilian casualties

caused by US drone strikes. With accountability standards weakening and proliferation on the rise, the performance serves as a warning of a future with semi- and eventually fully autonomous weapons if we don't take action immediately.

DARPA-backed defence contractors are developing uncrewed weapons and systems based on artificial intelligence (AI) at a staggering pace, and though AI has not quite reached the level of "general human intelligence" it is highly capable of following complex instruction. If we continue to arm drones and create robotic weapon systems we will quickly find ourselves in a world where robots are given the authority to take human life without human oversight. There is a technical distinction to be made between armed drones as they currently stand, which are classified as semi-autonomous weapons, and fully autonomous weapon systems (AWS) that will inevitably take their place if not banned pre-emptively. Drones that are currently semi-autonomous, with human pilots often half a globe away, will be aided by software developments like those being created at Duke University's HAL laboratory in order to make the transition to full autonomy in the very near future.³

This transition is poised to be one of the greatest challenges of the 21st century and if we don't take a stand in defense of human life and liberty now we may quickly find ourselves in an almost

unrecognisable reality. This would be a reality in which machines are dispatched from all corners of the globe to seek and destroy human targets; where land, sky, and sea can be used to mobilise swarms of autonomous weapons with this single purpose. The size and cost of robotics is continually decreasing and energy efficiency improving giving ideological groups with minimal resources the power to utilise these weapons against whomever they want. There will be no boundaries, geographic, financial or racial that will protect humanity from autonomous weapons in this unregulated future.

1. Jack Serle and Jessica Purkiss, "Drone Wars: the Full Data", *The Bureau of Investigative Journalism*, 4 September 2019, www.thebureauinvestigates.com/stories/2017-01-01/drone-wars-the-full-data.
2. *Living Under Drones: Death, Injury, And Trauma To Civilians From Us Drone Practices In Pakistan*, *The International Human Rights*

At the end of the performance a lone individual remained standing and held signs that read, "By March 2019, 1725 civilians have been killed by robots of war. Then we stopped counting. Ban autonomous weapons."

It is time to act and Blank Slate is here to remind us all how serious the problem is. We must clean the slate and begin anew our relationship with robotics, using their proliferation for good and putting an end to the death, destruction, and intimidation their war time use causes.

and Conflict Resolution Clinic At Stanford Law School And Global Justice Clinic At NYU School Of Law, 2012, <https://www-cdn.law.stanford.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Stanford-NYU-Living-Under-Drones.pdf>

3. *For information on the Humans and Autonomy Lab*, see hal.pratt.duke.edu/drone-piloting-research.



Photo: Mariam Wardak

HIBAKUSHA APPEAL: OVER 10 MILLION SIGNATURES SUBMITTED TO THE UN

Kimiaki Kawai and Akira Kawasaki | Soka Gakkai International and Peace Boat

It was in April 2016 when Hibakusha—atomic bomb survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki—stood up for the first time to launch the Hibakusha Appeal International Signature Campaign for the Prohibition and Elimination of Nuclear Weapons. Since then, a broad-based coalition has been formed and signatures have been collected both in Japan and internationally. To date 10,517,872 signatures have been collected. Hiroshima survivor Toshiki Fujimori, Assistant Secretary General of Nihon Hidankyo (Japan Confederation of A- and H-Bomb Sufferers Organisations), came to New York to present this number to the UNGA First Committee, with a young campaigner Keina Suzuki.

The signatures have been previously presented during the UNGA First Committee and nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Preparatory Committees. When Fujimori submitted them for the first time in October 2016, the number had reached 560,000. Now it exceeds 10 million, showing how the momentum has grown with the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) in 2017 and the growing number of countries signing and ratifying the instrument.

On 10 October, a Hibakusha Appeal side event was held, co-sponsored by the Permanent Mission of Austria and supported by Soka Gakkai International (SGI) and Peace Boat. Following the opening remarks of Ambassador Jan Kickert, Fujimori shared how he lost his family members. He was only one year old when the bomb was dropped. Fujimori reminded those present that the very first UN General Assembly resolution called for the elimination of

nuclear weapons and remarked on how exciting it is to see that 32 states have now ratified the TPNW. Suzuki said, “We are approaching the day we will no longer be able to hear Hibakusha’s testimony,” and encouraged people to join forces with Hibakusha to achieve the goal of nuclear disarmament.

Following this event was an evening concert at the Community Church of New York called “Atomic-Bomb Testimony and Music for Peace”. Insheart, a music duo from Nagasaki, performed several songs about embracing human life, including the story of a Nagasaki survivor who lost her child. Yasuaki Yamashita, a Nagasaki survivor living in Mexico, shared some remarks.

On 11 October, the over 10 million signatures were presented to Ambassador Sacha Sergio Llorentty Solíz, Chair of the UNGA First Committee, and the UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu. Llorentty warmly shared his memory of visiting Hiroshima, and Nakamitsu stated how encouraging the signatures are for those tackling nuclear weapons at the UN. A popular Japanese actress, Chizuru Azuma, also joined the presentation.

The signature campaign will continue until 2020, and plans for bringing it to the NPT Review Conference are now being developed. The campaign is growing, learning from the past catastrophes and guided by the prospect of hope, to protect all that we treasure. Anyone can join the campaign by visiting the Hibakusha Appeal website at <https://hibakusha-appeal.net/english/>.

FIRST COMMITTEE MONITOR

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

Contributing organisations and campaigns to this edition include: Blank Slate, Campaign to Stop Killer Robots, Cluster Munition Coalition, Control Arms, Geneva Disarmament Platform, International Action Network on Small Arms, International Campaign to Ban Landmines, International Network on Explosive Weapons, Lawyers Committee on Nuclear Policy, Kings College London, Peace Boat, Project Ploughshares and Soka Gakkai International.



Reaching Critical Will

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Reaching Critical Will is the disarmament programme of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), the oldest women's peace organization in the world. Reaching Critical Will works on issues related to disarmament and arms control of many different weapon systems; militarism and military spending; and gendered aspects of the impact of weapons and of disarmament processes.

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

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