

FIRST COMMITTEE MONITOR

NGO Reporting on the United Nations General Assembly
First Committee on Disarmament and International Security
7 October – 8 November 2019

VOL.17 NO.3

21 October 2019



Photo: Adri Tormo / Unsplash

IN THIS ISSUE

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| 1 Editorial | 14 Small arms and light weapons |
| 3 Nuclear weapons | 15 Outer space |
| 7 Chemical weapons | 16 Cyber |
| 8 Biological weapons | 17 Gender and disarmament |
| 9 Fully autonomous weapons | 18 Disarmament and development |
| 10 Armed drones | 19 "Youth Champions for Securing
our Common Future" |
| 10 Explosive weapons | 21 "The erosion of arms control" |
| 11 Landmines | 22 "Peace in the nuclear age" |
| 12 Cluster munitions | |
| 13 International arms trade | |



Reaching Critical Will

www.reachingcriticalwill.org



www.wilpf.org

DISRUPTING THE DIRECTION OF MILITARISM

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

As general debate came to a close on Friday, many First Committee participants were privately speculating over what will transpire on Monday, steeling themselves against another potential fight to adopt the programme of work. It is not the programme itself that is controversial, but whether or not to proceed with the work when representatives of certain countries are not being granted visas to enter the United States and be at the UN. During the opening days of this Committee, member states decided to conduct the general debate while UN authorities worked with the host country and affected states to find a solution to the visa issue that has disrupted work. But the remainder of the work programme needs to be adopted in order to proceed with thematic debate and the consideration of draft resolutions. It's not clear what will happen on Monday, but it is clear that action on disarmament is desperately needed.

While the nuclear-armed states continue to posit the necessity of having the ability to incinerate cities, pretty much everyone else has either already rejected this or seem to be growing increasingly uncomfortable with the situation. Most of the states that claim "protection" from US nuclear weapons expressed great concern with the dismantling of Cold War nuclear arms control treaties and rising threats of use of nuclear weapons. "Given the heightened tensions, we must be careful not to enter the path of a new arms race," cautioned the Italian delegation. "Instead, we need a collective renewed commitment towards preserving international institutions and instruments, and guaranteeing their proper functioning." The Netherlands similarly reiterated its commitment to the "fundamentals of the rules-based system" and called on all states to put forward their "strongest efforts in jointly upholding the existing nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament architecture."

Yet these states also continue to insist on a step-by-step, or sorry, building blocks, no wait, progressive

approach, ermmm.... stepping stones! approach to nuclear disarmament, which has not achieved the desired results in more than twenty years. Many of these nuclear umbrella countries also invest heavily in militarism themselves, seeking profits from the arms trade and weaponised "security" as the answer to rising tensions and threats. Several condemn the use of chemical weapons in Syria but sell weapons to Saudi Arabia so it can bomb Yemen into rubble. So what is the rules-based order they seek to protect? Is it genuinely multilateral? Does it serve the interests of human security, or a narrow definition of state-based "national security" and seemingly only applicable to some countries? If we are calling for multilateralism and the rule of law on one hand, and investing in militarism and the arms trade and supporting the possession of nuclear weapons (in select countries) on the other hand, what does that mean for disarmament?

Herein lies a key challenge, as the joint civil society statement on gender noted on Friday: militarism and violence are consistently posited as the best answers to tension or conflict in our international system. Understanding why, in the opinion of WILPF and the other organisations supporting the statement, requires examining the limitations on our thinking imposed by the sex/gender binary. This binary is dominated by heteronormativity and hegemonic notions of violent masculinity and passive femininity. It obscures the systems upon which conflict is built—it makes it difficult to see why we circle back, again and again, to violence as the answer to conflict. To the supposed necessity of weapons as the solution to insecurity.

It is exactly why France, a nuclear-armed state, ridicules even considering the humanitarian impacts of nuclear weapons, saying that those involved in that effort are "ignorant" of the complexities of the international security environment. It's why France also demanded states "move away from the logic of stigmatization" of nuclear weapons. France

tested nuclear bombs on the populations, land, and waters of the Pacific, yet belittles the survivors of that experience and denies the validity of their perspectives on the international stage. Perspectives such as those of Samoa, which said nuclear weapons pose “needless, uncalled for, and unnecessary threats”. Or those of Senegal—a country France formerly colonised—which argues that preventing the humanitarian consequences of weapons should become principle for all disarmament initiatives.

This addiction to militarism as the solution to the problems of militarism is not unique to our sector. As Haudenosaunee author Alicia Elliott writes in her book *A Mind Spread Out on the Ground*, “Capitalism forever positions itself as the solution to the problem of capitalism. Colonialism forever positions itself as the solution to the problem of colonialism. As though shoveling more of what we’re currently choking on into our mouths would ever help.” Militarism, bound up in the practice of both capitalism and colonialism, is merely part of this self-reinforcing system of violence and inequality. But there are governments who reject this approach, who want to turn from the endless cycle of weapons production and war to building a different kind of security, one that actually serves people and the planet. This can be seen in the growing momentum for the entry into force of

Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, to which countless states expressed their commitment throughout the general debate, and which a thirty-third country, Dominica, ratified on Friday. It can be seen in the number of states who have, here at First Committee and at the recent conference on urban conflict in Vienna, indicated their support for developing political and operational mechanisms to address the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. It can be seen in the expressions of commitment to the prohibitions on landmines and cluster munitions and the updates on stockpile destruction, land clearance, and victim assistance.

“Disarmament is a driver of security,” explained Ireland. The international security environment “is not a pretext to shirk obligations or to defer progress on disarmament. Concrete progress on disarmament creates an enabling environment, enhances security and provides a reinforcing loop to allow further progress.” This is the approach that is urgently needed in our work here at First Committee and beyond. It is the only approach that supports our collective survival in a world beset by challenges, risks, and tensions. As delegates consider the way ahead on Monday, we hope this is the perspective guiding their engagement.

NUCLEAR WEAPONS

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

In the second week of the general debate, the majority of states reiterated their opposition to the continued existence of nuclear weapons. Most delegations based this opposition on the **grave humanitarian and environmental consequences** of these weapons, including the Lao’s People Republic, Namibia, San Marino, Ecuador, Botswana, Italy, Nepal, Malawi, Fiji, Angola, Sweden, Malaysia, Iraq, Nigeria, Venezuela, Tanzania, Lesotho, Guinea-Bissau, Libya, Tanzania, Palestine, Cuba, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), Global Zero, and the civil society youth statement.

Lao PDR, Botswana, Palestine, Nigeria, and Iraq also underscored the horrific effect on the environment if a nuclear weapon was to be used. Fiji and Samoa recalled the effects of nuclear testing on their territories, which Fiji said are still being felt “in the form of environmental degradation, and growing health challenges.” It further said that “compensation mechanisms and the study of long-term impacts of tests and storage are in their infancy,” reminding us “daily why the world needs to comply with the non-proliferation frameworks.” Samoa reported back from the UN Secretary-General’s visit to the Pacific earlier this year. It recalled his concerns regarding

the state of the nuclear waste storage facilities in the region. Samoa explained that “given the Intensity and frequency of natural disasters fueled by climate change, these storage facilities are on the brink of breaking apart, posing significant long-term negative impacts on the health of the Pacific people as well as the environment especially the health of our oceans.”

Most delegations argued nuclear disarmament is imperative for security because of their humanitarian and environmental impacts. Zambia noted multilateral efforts to eradicate poverty and engage in climate action “may not be tenable if the threat posed by nuclear weapons and other destructive weapons” are not dealt with. New Zealand cited former UNOG Director General Michael Moeller’s farewell speech, in which he said that “whenever States seek security not in the collective value of diplomacy and dialogue but in the false protection of weapons, they are sleepwalking into disaster.”

In light of the “first-hand knowledge of these catastrophic humanitarian consequences, our inability to provide adequate humanitarian assistance to the victims of a nuclear attack, and the general incompatibility of nuclear weapons with IHL have underpinned,” as observed by the ICRC, many states—including Thailand, Samoa, Namibia, Palestine, Liechtenstein, Timor-Leste, Panama, Ghana, Honduras, Botswana, Jamaica, Tanzania, Comoros, Myanmar, South Africa, Cote d’Ivoire, Malaysia, Brunei Darussalam, Cuba, Angola, Nigeria, Lesotho, Chile, Burkina Faso, Venezuela, Guinea-Bissau, Nicaragua, Ethiopia, New Zealand, Singapore, ICAN, and the civil society statement on humanitarian disarmament—expressed their support for the **Treaty on the Prohibition for Nuclear Weapons (TPNW)**. Thailand, Palestine, Ghana, Ireland, Liechtenstein, Cambodia, Chile, Ethiopia, Nicaragua, the ICRC, Comoros, and Brunei Darussalam, amongst others, reiterated the Treaty’s complementarity to the NPT and other international legal instruments. Botswana described the Treaty as “an instrument towards the prohibition, stigmatization and elimination of nuclear weapons,” while Ghana called the TPNW as a “universally agreed path towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons.” Liechtenstein

noted that “in a time of eroding international norms, the TPNW is a lesson in multilateralism and a reason for hope in a world increasingly suffering from unsustainable big power politics.”

ICAN reminded that during the high-level ceremony on the TPNW on 26 September this year, nine additional nations signed and five ratified the Treaty. Thailand congratulated all states that either signed or ratified the TPNW at the high-level week. Dominica ratified on 18 October. The Treaty is therefore “now precisely two-thirds of the way to becoming binding international law.” Mongolia, Jamaica, Ghana, Ireland, Timor-Leste, Comoros, Tanzania, Nepal and Myanmar all indicated that they were in the process of ratifying the Treaty. Lao PDR, Botswana, Zambia, Malaysia, South Africa, Nepal, Ireland, Lesotho, Venezuela, Honduras, Ghana, ICAN, and Cuba called for remaining states to sign and ratify to ensure the Treaty’s early entry into force. Ecuador argued that the best tribute to the victims of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings would be to sign and ratify the TPNW.

Very few states expressed their opposition to the Treaty in the general debate. Sweden informed that while it participated in negotiation of the Treaty, it decided this year that it will refrain from signing and ratifying the Treaty in its current form due to some “shortcomings,” but that it will be an observant state once the Treaty has entered into force. France said that the humanitarian disarmament approach, which led to the TPNW, is “disconnected to the security environment”. Israel emphasised that the Treaty “does not create, contribute to the development of, or indicate the existence of customary law related to the subject or content of the Treaty.”

Meanwhile, other existing nuclear related treaties are under threat. The majority of states continued to express grave concern at the erosion of multilateralism and the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation architecture in particular.

Many states expressed concern at the uncertainty of extension of the **New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START)**, which could “set the stage for the

beginning of a new and more dangerous type of global military competition,” as observed by Jamaica. Jamaica further reminded that if there is no extension of New START, there will be no legally-binding limits on the world’s two largest nuclear arsenals for the first time since 1972, a prospect that “remains frightening”. Singapore, Canada, Portugal, Turkey, Sweden, Italy, Iceland, Cambodia, Ireland, Slovenia, Bulgaria, France, and Global Zero, amongst others, therefore called for the extension of New START. Sweden observed that an early agreement for an extension of the agreement would be a “key scene setter” for the tenth Review Conference of the NPT.

Many states, including France, Bulgaria, Cuba, the United Kingdom (UK), Lithuania, Switzerland, San Marino, Portugal, DPRK, Malaysia, and Belarus, also expressed deep concern at the demise of the **Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF Treaty)** and the implications for the Euro-Atlantic region. Malaysia expressed concern at the start of a new arms race with the development and testing of ground-based missiles following the INF’s disintegration. The UK, Slovenia, Lithuania, Bulgaria, and Iceland argued that the INF’s collapse was solely Russia’s responsibility. The Netherlands announced that it will take “together with Allies and partners ... balanced, coordinated and defensive measures in response.” Liechtenstein argued that while the allegations of INF violations “weigh heavily on the credibility” of Russia, it said that abandoning the INF “without any attempts at resolving disputes within its framework” is inconsistent with Article VI obligations under the NPT. Global Zero called on the US and Russia to agree on a mutual moratorium on INF-class deployments in Eurasia. Belarus informed that it didn’t have the intention to withdraw from the INF. It suggested states adopt a declaration that would maintain the INF’s achievements. It said that the key element of such declaration would be an unambiguous commitment of countries not to manufacture and to deploy intermediate or short-range missiles.

The **Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)** is another agreement with daunting prospects. Thailand, Portugal, Slovenia, Turkey, the UK, Ireland,

Italy, Spain, Jamaica, Hungary, and France, amongst others, continued to reiterate their support to the JCPOA. Israel however reminded that it was opposed to the agreement since its inception. The US said in a right-of-reply that the JCPOA was agreed with the hope that it would lead to Iran’s “improvement of behaviour” aside from the nuclear issue. Singapore, South Africa, and Thailand called on all relevant parties to fulfil their obligations. Sweden, Spain, Slovenia, and South Africa expressed regret at the US’ withdrawal to the agreement and re-imposition of sanctions. Iran observed that the United States violates UN Security Council Resolution 2231, and that it threatens “others either to violate that resolution or face punishment.” Ireland stressed that it does not accept the argument that the JCPOA “is quid pro quo and that observance of its terms can be traded, varied or modified on a unilateral basis.”

Thailand, Ireland, Slovenia, Bulgaria, France, Portugal, Sweden, Italy, the UK, and Singapore called on Iran to return to full compliance with the JCPOA. The UK and Sweden urged Iran to continue cooperation with the IAEA. Spain, Ireland, Saudi Arabia, and Italy regretted the latest information by the IAEA stating that Iran expanded its centrifuge R&D activities that are prohibited under the JCPOA. In a right-of-reply, Iran assured that all of its nuclear activities continue to be under IAEA’s supervision. It underscored however that it alone “cannot, shall not and will not take all of the burdens anymore to preserve the JCPOA. We cannot and will not stand idly by against non-compliance of the other participants.” It argued that its recent steps are taken in full conformity with the JCPOA’ paragraphs 26 and 36 which say that in case of re-imposition of sanctions, Iran has the right to “cease performing its commitments under this JCPOA in whole or in part.” Iran stressed that recent measures taken are reversible.

With respect to developments on the **Korean peninsula**, Thailand, the UK, Sweden, Turkey, the UAE, Ireland, and Mongolia welcomed efforts by all parties engaging in dialogue in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) and expressed their hope that this would lead to a denuclearised

Korean peninsula. However, Japan, the Netherlands, Malaysia, Turkey, Spain, Italy, and others expressed concern at the DPRK's recent ballistic missile launches. Singapore and Ireland urged the DPRK to abide by its international obligations. Some of those states urged the DPRK to ratify the CTBT. Japan and Bulgaria called on states to fully implement relevant UN Security Council resolutions. The UK, Italy, the Netherlands, and Portugal underscored that all sanctions need to be implemented until the DPRK has taken concrete steps towards denuclearisation. The DPRK said that the US openly conducted and tested inter-continental ballistic rockets. It noted that such hostile moves "run counter to an atmosphere of dialogue and reconciliation." In a right-of-reply, the DPRK said that it does not seek dialogue for the sake of dialogue. The substantive dialogue of denuclearisation can only begin when threats and destabilising blocks are clearly removed.

In terms of other nuclear disarmament instruments, many states expressed their concern about the Conference of Disarmament's (CD) inability for more than two decades to agree on further steps in support of the elimination of nuclear weapons. To advance nuclear disarmament, several states agreed that the commencement of negotiations of a **fissile cut off treaty (FMCT)** in the CD, as well as the entry into force of the **Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT)** are crucial steps towards this goal. Portugal and Myanmar welcomed Zimbabwe's recent ratification of the CTBT. Ireland said that the CTBT's entry into force would also "offer robust protection to our fragile planet and climate from the negative effects of a nuclear detonation." Canada informed that together with the Netherlands and Germany, it will present a decision on an FMCT for adoption by the First Committee.

Against this backdrop, many states expressed their hope that the tenth Review Conference of the **nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)** next year, which will also mark the 50th anniversary of the Treaty's entry into force, will deliver a substantial consensus outcome. The majority of states stressed that the Review Conference is to reinforce the NPT as key multilateral instrument for international peace and

security, and that it should enhance universalisation and implementation.

Others regretted that the NPT hasn't lived up to its promises. In the words of Ghana, "the overall objective of achieving a world without nuclear weapons in the context of the NPT has eluded us for decades." Liechtenstein observed that "the NPT's ultimate purpose—the total elimination of nuclear weapons—fades more into distance with every announcement of plans to stock-up and modernize nuclear arsenals and lower thresholds for the use of nuclear weapons."

In this context, many delegations condemned the **modernisation of nuclear weapon systems**, such as San Marino, Venezuela, Liechtenstein, Singapore, Iran, Namibia, Cuba, Libya, Kuwait, Sweden, Honduras, Philippines, Cambodia, the Holy See, Indonesia, Ireland, Malawi, and the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN). Others criticised the strengthening of the **role of nuclear weapons in military and security doctrines**, such as Cuba, Venezuela, Tanzania, Ecuador, Nepal, Kuwait, Honduras, and Indonesia. Cuba and Iran criticised the US nuclear posture review which lowers the threshold of use of nuclear weapons, including in response to non-nuclear strategic threats, cautioning that this would open the door for resumption of nuclear explosion tests. Delegations including Cuba, San Marino, Botswana, Zambia, Nigeria, Tanzania, and Jamaica also expressed concern at the **increased military spending on nuclear weapons arsenals**. Cuba noted that as the only state that has used nuclear weapons twice, the United States continues to invest most in those weapons.

Most delegations warned that the "international security environment" cannot be used to justify **delaying the implementation of nuclear disarmament obligations**. Samoa stressed that "global security challenges cannot be used selectively as a convenient cover for continued reliance on nuclear weapons." Chile argued that maintaining peace and security without nuclear deterrence is an ethical obligation and a feasible goal, and is in line with human rights protection.

Many delegations, including from Japan, Eritrea, Libya, Turkey, Lithuania, Spain, Myanmar, and Canada encouraged NPT states parties, and especially the nuclear-armed states, to implement their commitments, including under Article VI. Brunei Darussalam and others urged states to implement commitments from previous Review Conference outcome documents. Switzerland observed that “backtracking won’t serve anybody’s interest.”

For the RevCon next year, New Zealand said that as part of the De-Alerting Group, they will prioritise demands to nuclear-armed states to **lower the readiness of nuclear weapon systems**. Sweden informed that 16 non-nuclear armed states gathered in Stockholm earlier this year to mobilise for political momentum for the RevCon in 2020. Sweden outlined the possible elements of a common ground package and noted that its proposed “**stepping-stone-approach**” identifies actionable measures under Article VI of the NPT. Spain and Japan expressed support for the approach. In terms of other “building blocks” towards nuclear disarmament, many states referred to nuclear risk reduction measures, disarmament education, the creation of nuclear-weapon-free-zones, and verification measures.

The Chair of the Group of Governmental Experts on **nuclear disarmament verification** reported back from the Group’s three sessions and its consensus report. He presented possible guidelines for verification mechanisms, and announced that a resolution has been tabled for continued work on this issue. The Netherlands noted that it supports efforts to realise a follow-up process. Hungary, France, and the UK expressed their support for continued work on this issue. Others, such as Egypt and Cuba were more critical of the report. Egypt said that the report could have been more balanced, and that it may lead to an implicit assessment that nuclear disarmament can’t advance because of a lack of technical expertise, while the imperative for nuclear disarmament is “political rather than technical.” Iran expressed similar views.

Some states, including Japan, Montenegro, and Hungary, welcomed the US’ proposed approach of

“**Creating the Conditions for Nuclear Disarmament**” (CEND) and its related Conference held earlier this year. Japan hopes that the Conference’s outcomes will be shared with all member states.

Many states reaffirmed the importance of **nuclear weapon free zones (NWFZ)** to global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. The Philippines called for “stronger cooperation and coordination between and among them, and with the nuclear weapons states, [which] would help affirm this important role.” The Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL) informed about its activities in the past year, including that it issued a Declaration on the occasion of the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons or that it submitted a position paper to the Third Preparatory Committee for the 2020 NPT Review Conference. Mongolia informed that it will hold a conference of nuclear-weapon-free-zones to be held on the margins of the 2020 NPT Review Conference in May 2020. South Africa and OPANAL, amongst others, welcomed this.

Iraq, Qatar, Iran, and Kuwait, amongst others, expressed particular concern at the lack of implementation of the NPT 1995 resolution on the Middle East to establish a **zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) in the Middle East**. Iraq, the League of Arab States, and Kuwait said that the lack of implementation threatens the NPT’s credibility and universality. The majority of states, including France, the UAE, Ethiopia, Morocco, Myanmar, Oman, Nicaragua, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Brunei Darussalam, Nigeria, Namibia, Nepal, Afghanistan, Iraq, Spain, Qatar, Malaysia, South Africa, Turkey, the Philippines, and Belarus welcomed the UN General Assembly’s decision 73/546 on the decision to hold a conference on the establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East in November 2019, to be chaired by Jordan. Kuwait underscored the importance to come up with a legally binding instrument so to preserve international peace and security. In this respect, Oman noted that security cannot be achieved by “wishful thinking,” but that tangible measures must

be taken. Iraq, South Africa, Spain, and Malaysia stressed the importance for all states to participate in the conference. Israel argued that this initiative goes against the guidelines and principles of NWFZs as agreed by consensus in the Un Disarmament

Commission of 1999. It announced that it will not participate in the conference. Palestine said that “a decision of self-exclusion” by one party is part of Israel’s “longstanding delaying tactic” to establish such a zone.

CHEMICAL WEAPONS

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

References to chemical weapons throughout the general debate centred largely on the importance of defending the norm against chemical weapons use as established through the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), and the new attribution capacity of the Organisation of the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) to investigate recent use in Syria.

Switzerland, Italy, Turkey, France, Japan, Canada, Spain, Iceland, Georgia, Congo, Ireland, Lithuania, and Bulgaria either welcomed the recent establishment of the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) within the OPCW, or the capacity for attribution and accountability more broadly. Colombia said it sees the OPCW as the relevant body for this kind of activity and reiterated the importance of strengthening the OPCW. India, Brunei, Colombia, and Bangladesh also spoke of strengthening the OPCW.

Other states expressed disagreement with the IIT. Cuba said creating mechanisms outside of the CWC and modifying the technical mandate of the OPCW is unacceptable. Belarus favours decisions about the OPCW that enjoy consensus and does not welcome actions that lead to its politicisation. Indonesia argued that the way to maintain the OPCW’s credibility is to maintain a mandate free of politicisation. Argentina said it is necessary to maintain “unity of purpose” and avoid political divisions that weaken the OPCW.

Israel said the “use of chemical weapons by regimes in the Middle East, against their own population and neighboring countries, occurred five times since the Second World War” and that two additional cases of member states from the region violating the CWC need to be further investigated.

Turkey, Honduras, France, Canada, Switzerland, Brunei Darussalam, the Netherlands, and Ethiopia, among others, reminded that the use of chemical weapons contradicts international law. Virtually all delegations that spoke on this subject condemned use of any form. France explained that it launched in 2018 its International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons, now joined by 39 partners, in order to help restore the credibility of the ban on chemical weapons. Canada shared that it is now a champion or sponsor of six actions under the UN Secretary-General’s Agenda for Disarmament, including Action 9 on, “restoring respect for the global norm against chemical weapons”.

France said it is essential that this year’s UN First Committee resolution on chemical weapons be firm and substantial.

Syria, in rights of reply throughout the week and its formal statement, asserted that the chemical agents used in Syria were provided by foreign governments with assistance from Turkey, and used by non-state actors.

A few states provided updates on relevant national activities. Cambodia shared that it has adopted laws on that ban the production, recycling, transfer, and transportation of all kinds of chemical weapons in the country. Through this law the government of Cambodia has also established a National Authority for Chemical Weapons. Brunei Darussalam is working closely with OPCW to develop national measures and legislation and has held two workshops in this regard. Cuba highlighted that the United States has not completed destruction of its stockpiles.

BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS

Filippa Lentzos | King's College London

Over 30 delegations referred to biological weapons in the second week of the First Committee. Most of these focused their remarks on the importance of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC) and the need to adhere to, implement, and strengthen it.

Hungary noted, that, following usual practice, it had prepared a draft resolution on the BWC, which it hoped would be adopted by consensus, as is ordinarily the case. Substantive changes in the draft reflect the decisions taken by the 2018 Meeting of States Parties on financial matters, as well as the need for the 2019 Meeting of States Parties to consider practical arrangements for the 2021 Review Conference.

A few other delegations were also looking ahead to the upcoming Review Conference. Brazil noted, for example, the need to strengthen the BWC at the Review Conference, while the Philippines underscored the necessity for concrete outcomes. India pushed for the inter-sessional meetings to have authority to take substantive decisions without waiting for the five-year cycle of review conferences.

As the Chair of the BWC Meeting of States Parties this year, France welcomed the substantive contributions and discussions at the Meeting of Experts over the summer, and hoped that the momentum would continue. France stated that its objective for the year is to work for operational cooperation between states parties.

Montenegro and Armenia highlighted the significant importance of the BWC's confidence-building measures in "strengthening confidence and compliance with the provisions of the Convention". Countering Moscow's view on peer reviews presented in Russia's prepared statement last week, Georgia emphasised the importance of openness and transparency, and reminded delegations of the successful peer review visit to its Richard Lugar

Center for Public Health Research undertaken by twenty international experts in November 2018. The Netherlands echoed support for both confidence-building measures and peer reviews. Cuba, Nepal, Spain, and Thailand voiced their support for a legally binding verification mechanism. Cuba also emphasised its rejection of unilateral measures and coercive sanctions that limit the right of states to access and use biological agents for peaceful purposes.

Scientific advances in the biological field were referenced by a number of delegations. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) reminded delegations that while scientific developments may be inevitable, their weaponisation is not: "It is a choice that must be taken in light of humanitarian, legal, military and ethical considerations. It must be based on realistic assessments of these technologies and their actual – or foreseeable – humanitarian impact in armed conflict."

France and Canada championed developing a framework to respond to the use of biological weapons as based on action 11 of the UN Secretary-General's Disarmament Agenda.

FULLY AUTONOMOUS WEAPONS

Isabelle Jones | Campaign to Stop Killer Robots

Fourteen states, including Ecuador, Liechtenstein, Bulgaria, San Marino, Ireland, Japan, Cuba, India, Libya, Italy, Portugal, Switzerland, Netherlands, Austria, mentioned fully autonomous weapons in the second week of the general debate of the First Committee. In addition Thailand, Singapore, Cuba, Brunei Darussalam, India, Botswana, South Africa, Zambia, Kenya, Guinea, Philippines, Fiji, Senegal, Eritrea, Cambodia, Ghana, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, Nigeria, Angola, Timor-Leste, Nepal, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Cote d'Ivoire, Nicaragua, Guinea-Bissau, Burkina Faso, Venezuela, Congo, Myanmar, Lesotho, Morocco, and Palestine aligned their statements with the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) delivered by Indonesia last week, which called for the "urgent need to pursue legally-binding instrument on lethal autonomous weapons systems". Bangladesh and Colombia, among others, also mentioned the broader threats of emerging technologies including artificial intelligence.

Libya spoke for this first time on this subject and noted its concern at the development of new technologies including fully autonomous weapons and the likelihood that "illegal groups" will acquire them. Also speaking for the first time on the issue, San Marino stated that human choice over life and death must be preserved. Since 2013, 93 states have publicly elaborated their views on killer robots in a multilateral forum.

Across statements, the commitment to retaining meaningful human control over the use of force was clear. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) said it shares the rising concerns over the "loss of human control over the use of force, which would present serious risks for protected persons in armed conflict—both civilians and combatants no longer fighting—and bring significant risks of violations of international humanitarian law." Ireland reiterated that weapons systems must "always remain under meaningful human control," and Italy noted "any existing or future weapon system must be

subject to human control, particularly in relation to the ultimate decision to use lethal force."

Several delegations made strong calls to support the negotiation of a new treaty on autonomous weapons. Liechtenstein stated there is "a need for new regulation in the area of lethal autonomous weapon systems, in the form of binding standards to legally ensure a human component in the decision-making processes of such systems" and Austria repeated its call for "immediate commencement of negotiations for a legally binding instrument."

The Campaign to Stop Killer Robots called on states that want to ensure meaningful human control over the use of force to speak in favour of negotiations to address this issue through a legal instrument. Political declarations, guiding principles, and codes of conduct are not enough. The Campaign said that a new treaty is the "normative framework that's needed to future-proof humanity from this serious threat."

The Campaign, which is a coalition of 130 non-governmental organisations in 60 countries, stands ready to work with all states that are committed to achieve this goal. The Campaign will hold a side event on 21 October in Conference Room IV.



Image: Campaign to Stop Killer Robots

ARMED DRONES

Danielle Samler | Lawyers Committee on Nuclear Policy

A few delegations raised the issue of armed drones during the general debate, including Kuwait, Yemen, Libya, Cuba, San Marino, Nepal, Saudi Arabia, and the UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs.

In her opening remarks, the High Representative reminded delegates of the unique challenges that drones pose due to their “low barrier to acquisition and the propensity to be used for attacks with low levels of perceived risk.” Kuwait seconded this concern, also noting that the use of armed drones to carry out attacks against national facilities is deeply troubling. It called for the establishment of mechanisms to control the use of drones, increase accountability, and increase transparency. Libya and Nepal also expressed their fears about the weaponisation of drones, among other emerging technologies. Cuba argued that the Convention on

Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) is the ideal forum to negotiate a legally binding instrument to regulate the use of drones.

During civil society statements, PAX raised concerns with the use of armed drones for extrajudicial targeted killings. On behalf of a number of civil society groups, PAX urged states to increase transparency in their use of armed drones and to outline their legal justification for using lethal force. The statement reminded delegates that drones “leave a trail of death, destruction and psychological trauma and can cause an escalation in force deployments.” It also expressed concern that further proliferation of armed drones will lead to “more civilian casualties and potentially unlawful deaths; the destruction of civilian infrastructure; and the displacement of communities fearing more strikes.”

EXPLOSIVE WEAPONS

Laura Boillot | International Network on Explosive Weapons

In the second week of general debate, Angola, Austria, Ireland, Italy, Malaysia, New Zealand, the Philippines, San Marino, Switzerland all raised concern over the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, alongside the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the International Network on Explosive Weapons (INEW).

Following the Vienna Conference on the Protection of Civilians in Urban Warfare, which took place earlier in the month and was attended by 133 states, several delegations highlighted urbanisation of conflict as a top issue of humanitarian concern. This, the ICRC said, is characterised by the bombing and shelling of cities, placing civilians at high risk of harm, including at risk of death, injury, disability, mental harm, and the destruction of homes and infrastructure,

as well as numerous indirect effects and forced displacement.

The ICRC urged states to urgently take prompt action in a number of areas including targeting, training, data collection, and civilian casualty mitigation—and to put in place and implement policies and practices that will enhance the protection of civilians and facilitate compliance with IHL in urban warfare, including policies and practices to avoid the use of explosive weapons with a wide impact area.

Several delegations expressed their support for developing an international political declaration to prevent and reduce harm from the use of explosive weapons on populated areas, including Austria, Ireland, Malaysia, New Zealand, and San Marino.

INEW laid out possible elements of an international political declaration to address harm from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, including that such a declaration should commit states to:

1. Develop operational policies and procedures that will stop the use of explosive weapons with wide area effects in populated areas;
2. Share positive practice and experiences;
3. Provide assistance to victims and affected communities
4. Support and undertake data gathering disaggregated by age, sex and disability;

5. Enable effective humanitarian and protection measures; and

6. Build a community of practice, including through regular meetings to discuss the issue and progress towards reducing harm.

In doing this, it will strengthen the normative framework—and will make it clear, at a time when armed conflict is increasingly waged in urban settings, that we need to ensure greater protection of civilians in towns and cities from the humanitarian impact of explosive weapons.

LANDMINES

Jelena Vičentić | International Campaign to Ban Landmines

The significance of the upcoming Fourth Review Conference of the Anti-personnel Mine Ban Convention (Mine Ban Treaty) and the staunch confidence in the momentum of its 20th anniversary remained the predominant theme throughout the general debate on this subject. Switzerland, Italy, the Netherlands, Cambodia, Bulgaria, Slovenia, Portugal, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) expressed expectations and hopes for the Review Conference. Switzerland would like that it introduce an important impetus towards the achievement of the “visionary purpose” of a mine-free world by 2025.

Italy and the Netherlands reminded states of the extensive use of anti-personnel mines of an improvised nature (improvised mines), especially in urban areas, and the indiscriminate impact. Both pledged their commitment to the elaboration of the Oslo Action Plan 2020-2024 and noted their contributions to the work of the Review Conference. Iraq highlighted that in addition to landmines and unexploded ordnance (UXO) killing and maiming people, they are also causing terrible environmental, social, and economic impacts. Afghanistan stressed that it is the country most affected by the indiscriminate and unlawful use of improvised

explosive devices (IEDs, which include improvised mine types), resulting in thousands of civilian lives lost, including women, children, and the elderly. Afghanistan's call for more decisive action on the part of states and international actors to address the impact corresponded with Italy's points on international cooperation and gender- and diversity-responsive victim assistance as key components of a comprehensive approach to mine action.

Thailand, expressing firm determination to efficiently complete clearance before the set goal of 2025, proudly declared 86 per cent of its total contaminated territory has been cleared. Ethiopia joined in declaring the commitment to clear its minefields under their current extension request. Angola, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Slovenia, Sudan, and Tajikistan expressed appreciation of the Mine Ban Treaty and its significance for the achievements in mine clearance. Cambodia mentioned the significance of the assistance provided to its mine clearance efforts. Similarly, Angola reminded of the detrimental effects of mine contamination resulting from years of civil war and emphasised that the alleviation of this problem was only made possible through processes of cooperation between the governments and its partners, both governmental and non-governmental.

Several states, including Switzerland, highlighted the life-saving humanitarian normative framework set out by the Mine Ban Treaty. Thailand stressed the “steadfast belief in the mutually reinforcing nature of disarmament mechanisms and development approaches to create peaceful, sustainable and thriving societies” as a guiding principle of its disarmament efforts, as embodied in its commitment to the Convention. Haiti took the opportunity to

address the normativity and interconnectedness of the disarmament mechanisms including Mine Ban Treaty. Portugal reiterated the view that the Treaty is a key example of success in disarmament work. The ICRC urged the states to join the Mine Ban Treaty. The ICBL elaborated on this theme by framing universalisation of the Treaty as an expression of confirmation that multilateral solutions address global challenges.

CLUSTER MUNITIONS

Jelena Vičentić | Cluster Munition Coalition

The second week of general debate saw several important declarations of the continued strong commitment to the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM). Switzerland announced its chairmanship of the Second Review Conference of the Convention on Cluster Munitions and expressed its intention to contribute fresh energy and enhance momentum towards full implementation of Convention’s provisions by all states parties, and to promote its universalisation and strengthening adherence to the norm of non-use. The Netherlands expressed its commitment to the universalisation and implementation of the Convention with the ultimate aim of upholding the norm of non-use. The Cluster Munition Coalition (CMC) noted that 2020 marks ten years since the Conventions’ entry into force and that the Second Review Conference, as a critical juncture, needs “to address ongoing use, and to convert Treaty progress to date towards the rapid achievement of implementation goals”.

Several states, including Honduras, Guinea-Bissau, Burkina Faso, Montenegro and more recent members such as the Philippines, communicated their adherence to, and appreciation for, the Convention. A state party since January of this year, the Philippines reported on their support to the work of the Coordinating Committee on the Convention’s universalisation. Ecuador, in addition to expressing support for the universalisation of the Convention, called on added efforts to rid the world of this “weapon of particular cruelty ...

especially affecting the most vulnerable ones” by divesting from companies involved in the production of cluster munitions. Burkina Faso made an appeal to the states to join and adhere to the Convention, as cluster munitions still present a “source of insecurity” and are the cause of enormous losses in too many countries.

Regarding implementation of the Conventions provisions, Montenegro indicated that the work to clear all contaminated areas of the country is expected to be completed by August 2020. Lao PDR elaborated on the dangers of cluster munitions and their indiscriminate and dangerous long-term effect on people and development. Unexploded ordnance (UXO) including cluster munition remnants continue to cause death and injury to the population and obstruct the development of the country. Lao PDR reported that it is unable to estimate the time frame for the completion of its clearance, due to the extensive size of UXO-contaminated areas, and made an appeal for increased and substantial international assistance and cooperation. Despite such obstacles, Lao PDR reported on the national implementation measures that include the establishing a national Sustainable Development Goal 18: “Lives Safe from Unexploded Ordnance”. Guinea-Bissau reported on taking steps to fulfil obligations under Article 3 of the Convention—addressing issues of stockpile destruction and retention—which it noted had previously been postponed due to technical reasons.

INTERNATIONAL ARMS TRADE

Aaron Lainé | Control Arms

As the general debate continued into the second week of First Committee, 26 states referenced the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) in their statements, many highlighting its important role in curbing the illicit trafficking of arms and in reducing human suffering. Iceland urged to make full use of the Treaty, as “conventional arms, not least small arms and light weapons, have been coined the true weapons of mass destruction, with over half a million people killed every year.” On an optimistic note, Cameroon expressed that the adoption of the ATT shows “we can advance the agenda of the disarmament and non-proliferation when there is a constructive and pragmatic state of mind.”

Argentina reaffirmed the importance and commitment to the Treaty, announcing its presidency to the Sixth Conference of States Parties (CSP6) in Geneva 2020. Japan expressed support for the CSP6 theme of “Information Sharing and Transparency for the Prevention of Diversion,” having focused on diversion when it presided over CSP4 in 2018. Hungary likewise supported the theme of diversion.

Several states including Portugal, Iceland, and Ireland welcomed the ATT’s focus on gender and gender based violence. New state party Canada praising Latvia’s efforts as president of CSP5 in improving consideration of gender perspectives in the Treaty’s operation and in strengthening application of the gender-based violence criterion for arms exports.

New state party Botswana urged states to “go beyond their administrative obligation in regulating the arms trade by discussing how to implement the ATT more effectively.” Italy, Netherlands, Hungary, and Burkina Faso likewise called for the effective implementation of the ATT, while seven states including Senegal, Portugal, Japan, and Italy shared France’s view that “we must make every effort so that the Arms Trade Treaty becomes a truly global Treaty.”

A few non-states parties referred to the ATT in a positive light, signifying their intentions to accede or ratify. Signatory Thailand described the Treaty as a “core multilateral instrument that promotes transparency and accountability of the illicit use and transfer of arms while also bearing in mind humanitarian principles,” and expressed commitment towards ratification. Angola likewise expressed intention to ratify in the near future. Singapore described itself as a “committed signatory” and encouraged states to “report the international transfer of arms for greater accountability and the establishment of common international standards.”

Control Arms Coalition delegate Monterrat Martinez of 24-0 México delivered the NGO statement on the international arms trade, and called on states to:

1. Adopt the highest possible standards and establish rigorous structures to regulate the global arms trade to ensure that the Treaty can make a huge difference in the lives of millions of people, particularly from vulnerable groups, around the world.
2. Support transparency to help ensure accountability in arms-transfer decisions, prevent diversion of arms and ammunition, and boost confidence-building and mutual security among States Parties.
3. Develop robust risk assessment processes that provide specific training and resources related to gender-based violence and the Treaty.

The full statement can be found at <https://bit.ly/32otKvv>.

SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS

Rose Welsch | International Action Network on Small Arms

During the second week of general debate, states expressed concern over the uncontrolled spread and widespread availability of small arms and light weapons (SALW). They also highlighted the consequences of this availability: the fueling of terrorism, human rights and international humanitarian law violations, transnational crime, violent deaths and injuries, impeded socioeconomic development, and other scourges.

A number of delegations outlined concrete steps that they are taking nationally to address the problem. Guinea highlighted its establishment of a national commission on SALW, its marking of government weapons, and destruction of weapons and obsolete ammunition. Congo said it is in the process of establishing a National Commission to combat the proliferation of SALW and of strengthening its policy and legislative frameworks on the management of SALW. Kenya and Comoros said they have strengthened their policy and legislative frameworks on SALW management, and Kenya said it is also addressing legal loopholes. Liberia stated it has strengthened its national legal framework by ratifying bills related to SALW. Sudan reported that it held a workshop with neighbouring countries that aimed to hinder SALW proliferation. Côte d'Ivoire announced it digitalised its arms inventory and ensured the marking of weapons. Ethiopia said it's working on adopting new national policy and legal frameworks to improve cooperation and coordination between law enforcement agencies and on raising public awareness to reduce illicit trafficking of SALW. Samoa spoke of its gun amnesty programme that encourages people to turn in illicit weapons, and Honduras highlighted a new law it adopted to control firearms and ammunition.

The diversion of SALW to non-state actors is an issue that several delegations flagged. Cuba, Jamaica, France, and Colombia called for this diversion to be impeded, and Nigeria decried that innocent civilians are the primary victims of diverted SALW. Mali

said it is a major victim of the illicit trade in SALW and called for more states to support its annual resolution on assistance to states to stop this trade. Colombia stated that the dimensions of the diversion and illegal trafficking of SALW show that it combines national realities with regional and global flows and variables. It announced it will present an omnibus resolution it co-authored with Japan and South Africa on the illicit trade of SALW in all its aspects.

Some states, including Colombia, encouraged not only the control of SALW, but also of its ammunition. Côte d'Ivoire emphasised that in order to combat the proliferation of SALW, ammunition has to be included in the discussion as part of a redefined strategy by member states. Senegal pointed out that the final document of the Third Review Conference (RevCon3) on the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms (UNPoA) opened up prospects on ammunition and other topics and said it is the responsibility of states to contribute to the success of the results. Fiji underscored that the work of First Committee is so vital because despite international arms control mechanisms, the proliferation of illegal arms and ammunition has worsened.

Fiji, Sudan, and the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA) linked climate change and armed violence. Pointing out that large percentages of populations around the world continue to be displaced due to armed conflicts and that SALW are catalysts for conflict, Fiji also pointed out that climate change and its impacts on water safety worsen security contexts in many regions. Sudan said it has been affected by climate change, drought, desertification, and the intensification of competition between the population for water and pasture resources, which spurs parts of the population to acquire weapons and makes their control difficult. IANSA noted that climate change is a threat multiplier and that young people are inheriting a world with one billion guns and millions more added annually in a context of climate crises. IANSA urged

delegations to demonstrate plans to meet their RevCon3 commitments for the seventh Biennial Meeting of States, to focus on gender-based action to curb SALW proliferation, and to include civil society

OUTER SPACE

Jessica West | Project Ploughshares

For the first time in many years, a new proposal to enhance security in outer space has been suggested: Canada said in its First Committee statement that it “would support a multilateral solution to address ASAT [anti-satellite] tests and thereby increase confidence and transparency among outer space actors.”

The need for new ideas is urgent. Across varying national perspectives, concern for the fragility of outer space as an environment for human activity is clear. As France noted, space is becoming a focus of strategic and industrial competition. Threats posed by more aggressive military doctrines and uses of space were highlighted by Burkina Faso, Cote D'Ivoire, Cuba, Switzerland, and Venezuela, alongside the civil society statement delivered by Mr. Cesar Jaramillo of Project Ploughshares. He emphasised the lack of restraints to prevent the escalation toward warfare and weaponry.

This escalation also has socio-economic and humanitarian consequences. Both Argentina and Malaysia raised the connection between space and the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development; Bangladesh noted the importance of its first satellite. Threats to the sustainability of the physical environment, particularly the production of debris, were highlighted by Canada, France, and Ghana.

Interest in efforts to prevent an arms race in outer space (PAROS) is also strong, supported by at least 19 delegations such as the League of Arab States, Brazil, Ethiopia, India, Italy, and Singapore. But how to take preventive action remains contentious. A need to negotiate a treaty or new legal instrument was expressed by Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Nicaragua, and Venezuela. Support seems

representatives on national delegations to sure diverse leadership from survivors, youth, and other traditionally underrepresented groups.

greater for alternative mechanisms, such as the transparency and confidence-building measures (TCBM) recommended by Canada, France, the Holy See, Italy, Jamaica, Malawi, and San Marino. Canada, France, Ghana, Italy, Jamaica, Malawi, Portugal, Singapore, and the United Kingdom (UK) expressed interest in such measures, overlapping with a focus on responsible uses of outer space to promote safety and sustainability. The agreement to 21 guidelines on the long-term sustainability of outer space activities within the UN Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UN COPUOS) is held as a successful example of this approach by Canada and Italy.

Frustration with the failure of past attempts to bridge this practical divide between legal and normative approaches—specifically the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) process intended to identify further effective measures to support PAROS—was expressed by Belarus, India, and Italy. Brazil—which chaired the GGE process, asked if states should accept business as usual, or contend that unusual behaviour is acceptable?

In this context, Canada's proposal could advance discussion. A “multilateral solution” to ASAT tests represents a practical way to unite concerns for arms control, environmental sustainability, and rules of behaviour while building trust and transparency. This small but specific measure does not address all challenges, particularly concerns for the placement of weapons in outer space. But the development and demonstration of ASAT capabilities is a pressing danger. Importantly, in line with Morocco's statement, such effort could facilitate renewed commitment to arms control in this growing domain of activity, helping to ensure that humanity can realise its full benefits.

CYBER

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

References to cyber security or information and communications technologies (ICTs) in the remainder of the general debate built on themes established the previous week. Virtually all delegations that spoke to this issue welcomed the establishment of the two new UN processes on cyber security and ICTs: an open-ended working group (OEWG) and group of governmental experts (GGE). Singapore urged that these entities build on work done by earlier GGEs in this area. Brazil—which is the chair of the sixth GGE on responsible state behaviour in cyber space—joined Portugal, the Netherlands, Cuba, Chile, Indonesia, Senegal, Hungary, Ghana, Lithuania, and Morocco in encouraging the GGE and OEWG to work in a complementary manner. Cuba welcomed the “open composition” of the OEWG and Jamaica highlighted that the OEWG makes it possible for the full UN membership to contribute to discussions on this issue. Hungary referenced the important role of regional organisations in this area. Ireland looks forward to the intersessional session that will enable input from civil society and industry. Liechtenstein regretted the “unduly restrictive mandate on civil society engagement” during the first OEWG session and said it sees “this discussion in the First Committee as an opportunity to overcome silos and reach out to other Committees or discussion formats dealing with the same issue from different angles such as the rule of law, sustainable development or human rights.”

Some delegations set out in greater specificity how those two entities should focus their work. Switzerland said it will be essential that they “enable progress in the operationalisation of the norms applicable to the cyberspace, particularly international law, voluntary standards and confidence-building measures.” Iceland said the OEWG should focus on building awareness of existing international frameworks and norms, explore how to build capacity, and safeguard human rights and fundamental freedoms in the cyber domain. Malaysia

and a joint civil society statement highlighted the importance of attribution mechanisms. Canada said that in the OEWG, it will encourage states to propose concrete measures to implement the norms and confidence building measures proposed by previous GGEs. It said it will also seek to advance gender issues, including the link between ICTs and the Women, Peace, and Security agenda.

The Netherlands, Kenya, Italy, Brazil, Chile, Ghana, Fiji, Burkina Faso, and Myanmar referenced the benefits that ICTs offer and variously underscored that this is why their protection is vital. “The freedom allowed by the Net needs to be balanced with far greater responsibility by state parties and by individuals. This is a huge challenge. But we need to get this right. Otherwise this will have a negative impact on societies, creating tensions which will fuel, amplify and exacerbate existing conflicts and/or create new conflicts,” Fiji observed.

Delegations indicated how they view threats in this area. Cuba rejected the “undercover and illegal use of ICTs, with the purpose of subverting the legal and political systems of States.” It also repudiated the militarisation of cyber space by some countries, naming the United States.

Japan referenced cyber attacks in the context of nuclear weapons. The Philippines, among others, spoke of transnational cyber crime. Kenya warned that there can be direct impacts on the safety and human rights and urged stopping terrorists and criminals from “appropriating cyberspace” and using it to plan terror attacks and recruit and radicalise youth. Indonesia stated that non-state actor cyber attacks are unacceptable and reminded that the UN Charter and international law is applicable to cyber space. Canada, Italy, Kenya, Iceland, Montenegro, Lithuania, San Marino, Bulgaria, Liechtenstein, and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) stressed the applicability of international law and norms; San Marino and civil society also spoke

of defending human rights online. Liechtenstein said it is looking into the extent to which the Rome Statute applies to cyber attacks and cyber warfare. Venezuela spoke of advancing a binding legal framework. The ICRC further explained that IHL provides “an additional layer of protection against the effects of hostilities in the unfortunate event of an armed conflict” and is preparing a position paper on IHL and cyber operations during armed conflict.

Argentina said it is convinced that the militarisation and use of telecommunications (as well as space technology) threatens peace and security as well as

the 2030 Agenda. Israel said its

global position in cybersecurity is based on a “domestic ecosystem that promotes real-time information sharing, the development of adequate methodologies, encourages

educational programs and raises public awareness of cybersecurity.” A joint civil society statement expressed concern at the militarisation of cyber space and urged for a halt to the development of offensive cyber capabilities and a human centric approaches to cyber security.

GENDER AND DISARMAMENT

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

During the second week of general debate, states continued to refer to gender aspects of disarmament. Several underscored the importance of including a gender perspective in disarmament processes, such as Canada, Namibia, Slovenia, Portugal, and the Philippines. Portugal expressed hope that this will “help revitalize the disarmament machinery.”

Namibia reiterated the UN High Representative for Disarmament's call for member states to take a proactive stance to include gender language in First Committee resolutions this year.

WILPF and other non-governmental organisations supporting the civil society gender statement welcomed the growing interest in gender and disarmament but urged states to reflect more robustly on the gendered norms associated with weapons, war, and violence in order to effectively address challenges associated with the proliferation of weapons.

Various delegations, including Canada, Botswana, Italy, Samoa, and Namibia, argued for the need to recognise gendered impacts of weapons and armed violence and conflict.

Botswana observed that “women often suffer disproportionate or differential harm from development, use and weapon trade.” Chile reminded that the trafficking and availability of small arms and light weapons (SALW) exacerbates incidents of gender-based violence (GBV). In this respect, Ghana welcomed the successful outcome of the Third Review Conference on the Programme of Action on SALW (UNPoA) in 2018 that included references to the gendered impacts of arms in its final outcome document. The International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA) urged states to focus on gender-based action to curb SALW proliferation and violence.

Various participants, including Canada, Montenegro, Slovenia, Samoa, Ireland, Portugal, the Control Arms Coalition, IANSA, and those organisations supporting the civil society gender statement welcomed this year's priority theme of gender and gender-based violence of the Fifth Conference of States Parties (CSP5) to the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). Canada and Samoa welcomed that CSP5 paved the way to strengthening the Treaty's authorisation criterion relating to GBV. Iceland called for the urgent implementation of the ATT with its “unique capacity to address [GBV]”. Ireland observed that discussions at the Conference “brought valuable new insights

into how we best apply the Treaty, and could offer lessons for other work.” Samoa welcomed the adoption of the list of practical recommendations.

Samoa informed that in its development for a national implementation plan of the ATT, it has benefitted from a regional summit on “Women, Peace and Security” held this summer together with New Zealand. The conference highlighted the links between the ATT, the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Canada expressed its appreciation of the draft Oslo Action Plan for the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (Mine Ban Treaty) Review Conference, which seeks to ensure that gender is considered in the full implementation of the Convention.

The Cluster Munition Coalition and the International Campaign to Ban Landmines called on states to promote the adoption of gender, age, and disability inclusiveness in the implementation of the Mine Ban Convention and the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

Canada informed that it will seek to advance gender issues in the recently established Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG) in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international

security (ICTs), including the link between ICTs and the WPS agenda.

Various delegations referred to gender diversity in disarmament, arms control, and non-proliferation processes in their statements such as Botswana and Iceland. Italy stated its commitment to the full empowerment of women. The United Kingdom, Portugal, Namibia, Canada, Iceland, and IANSA, amongst others, called for the meaningful and full and equal participation of women in decision-making processes. The United Arab Emirates said this is important to “ensure development of innovative policies addressing pressing issues of our times.” Nepal also argued that the engagement of women would facilitate spreading awareness and support the advancement of “a worldview in support of accelerated disarmament.” Iceland said that participants need to take concrete steps to make sure that women have an active and equal role in line with the WPS agenda. Armenia informed that its National Action Plan on the WPS agenda mainstreams, amongst others, the role of women in the security sector reform. The Chair of the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on nuclear disarmament verification observed that only three countries participating in the GGE designated women experts. He expressed hope for better balance in future meetings.

DISARMAMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

Danielle Samler | Lawyers Committee on Nuclear Policy

During the second week of general debate, several states highlighted the direct links between military expenditure, the arms trade, violent conflict, weapons of mass destruction, and the reduction of resources available for socioeconomic development. Delegations expressed concern not only with the lack of available funding for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) due to an increase in military spending, but also that the mere existence of weapons undermines sustainable

development.

Many delegations spoke about the particularly negative impact that conventional weapons have on development. Chile noted that trafficking of small arms and light weapons (SALW) and ammunition has untold destructive effects and has a direct impact on socioeconomic development, human rights, and gender-based violence. Guinea-Bissau mentioned that in the Sahel region, there are many terrorist

groups operating with military arsenals, which hinders development of countries in the region. Liberia also brought up this point, linking the illicit trade, possession, and manufacturing of SALW with negative effects on humanitarian and socioeconomic development.

SALW were not the only weapons raised, however. Lao PDR highlighted “the danger of cluster munitions as its use creates an indiscriminate and dangerous long term impact on people and development.” They also pointed out that unexploded ordnance continues to kill and maim their people thus hindering the development of the country. Guinea expressed concern that weapons of mass destruction, including chemical weapons, also compromise the implementation of the SDGs. Cuba pointed out that the development of new nuclear weapons and the modernisation of existing systems threatens the peace and security of all peoples. The competition between continued modernisation and expansion of weapons systems and the achievement of

sustainable development was articulated by Libya, which said, “We can continue with the arms race or advance development, but we can’t do both at the same time.”

Military expenditure continued to be a point of concern for many delegations including Lao PDR, Cuba, Libya, Botswana, Jamaica, Honduras, Bangladesh, Zambia, Nepal, San Marino, Nigeria, Haiti, Myanmar, Tanzania, and Nicaragua. Nigeria expressed deep concern about the “astronomical proportion of global defence budgets, including the enormous resources devoted to the maintenance and upgrading of nuclear arsenal systems by nuclear weapons states.” Myanmar, Jamaica, and Nepal reminded delegates of how much global military spending has increased, reaching 1.78 trillion USD in 2018. Nepal said it is “concerned that scarce resources are squandered for militarisation to decimate fellow human beings but not to bring people out of poverty, hunger, and disease.”

“YOUTH CHAMPIONS FOR SECURING OUR COMMON FUTURE”: 75 YOUTH MEMBERS PLAN ACTIONS AS AGENTS FOR CHANGE

Sumiko Hatakeyama and Meri Joyce | Peace Boat

The UN Secretary-General’s Agenda for Disarmament sets out that the young generation is “the ultimate force for change.” Alongside the three pillars—disarmament to save humanity, disarmament to save lives, and disarmament for future generations—the agenda highlights youth engagement as key for successful disarmament initiatives. Earlier this year, the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) launched the “Youth4Disarmament” initiative to provide young people with knowledge and skills and empower them to make their own contributions.

Peace Boat collaborated with UNODA as part of this initiative to co-organise on 11 October a day of youth-focused programming, “Youth Champions for Securing our Common Future”. In view of next year’s 75th anniversary of the UN, 75 young people were invited to spend the day learning with UNODA officials, diplomats, and representatives of civil society networks such as the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, the International Action Network on Small Arms, and the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots.

The strength of youth lies in their openness to different views. The morning session at UN headquarters attending the First Committee general debate exposed youth champions to various approaches to disarmament issues. At a subsequent side event, “Building Empathy through learning from Atomic Bomb Survivors,” they were reminded of the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons through testimony by Hiroshima atomic-bomb survivor Toshiki Fujimori and a screening of the film “Pictures from a Hiroshima Schoolyard” with director Bryan Reichhardt.

The ultimate aim of the event was to encourage youth to be changemakers themselves. In the afternoon, youth champions boarded Peace Boat, docked in Manhattan as part of its global voyage for peace. There, disarmament experts from UNODA, member states, and civil society engaged in lively exchange with the youth champions: on the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, a participant asked how nuclear-armed states can be incentivised to be part of the treaty; on the issue of the small

arms trade, another participant underlined the need for youth from underrepresented regions to be more systematically included in relevant discussions; and on autonomous weapons system, the critical role of the business sector was discussed. The ensuing brainstorming on action plans led to proposals including an online platform for information related to disarmament issues, a campus-wide advocacy campaign on arms trade, engaging the public health sector, and an arts and music competition for awareness raising.

The biggest challenges to disarmament efforts are overcoming indifference and collaborating with those with opposing views. If anybody, youth have the tools and creativity to break these impasses. As Rebecca Hallin from the EU delegation highlighted, “the only way to face these challenges that we see today is by doing it together.” Peace Boat looks forward to continuing to further the Youth4Disarmament initiative and to provide a platform for youth engagement. For future work of Peace Boat, please visit <http://peaceboat.org/english>.



Photo: Peace Boat

EVENT REPORT: THE EROSION OF ARMS CONTROL

Paul Meyer | Simon Fraser University and Canadian Pugwash Group

This 17 October side event was sponsored by the Permanent Mission of Brazil and International Pugwash Group, represented by its president Sergio Duarte and Secretary General, Paolo Cotta-Ramusino. Its focus was on addressing the crisis multilateral arms control currently faces and identifying any possible remedial action. The panelists brought a variety of perspectives to the event, but all shared a deep concern with the present impasse and the need to revive cooperative arms control for national and global security.

Professor Nina Tannenwald of Brown University stressed the danger represented by the “unraveling” of nuclear norms and suggested the following steps in response: reaffirmation by the nuclear-armed states of the Gorbachev-Reagan statement that a “nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought”; challenge loose and irresponsible talk that lowers the threshold for nuclear weapons use; and seek commitments to no new missile deployments and mobilise civil society and the media to redefine what being a responsible nuclear power requires.

Paul Meyer of Simon Fraser University and the Canadian Pugwash Group recalled the concrete achievement of arms control in the past and the potential for it to advance common security goals again in future. He proposed four actions: a revival and re-investment in diplomacy to respond to security challenges; an overhaul of existing disarmament machinery set up by the first Special Session on Disarmament in 1978 to allow for negotiations in fora not vulnerable to veto by any single state; encourage “Middle Powers” to exercise leadership in advancing the arms control agenda; and support initiatives for conflict prevention in the environments of outer space and cyber space.

Anne Kemppainen of the European Union (EU) spoke to how the demise of arms control agreements negatively impacts on the security of all states. She noted the need for the arms control architecture

to be strengthened in light of rapid technological developments. She also argued that the current tense political content cannot be an excuse for not striving to make progress. The EU has active dialogue on non-proliferation and arms control with all its partners has backed up its aims via its policy on sanctions and the inclusion of a non-proliferation clause in its agreements with third parties. The EU has also been supportive of the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification (IPNDV) and the “Creating the Environment for Nuclear Disarmament” (CEND) initiatives, and has founded relevant work by the UN Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) and the academic non-proliferation consortium.

Andria Bakiitsky of the PIR Centre and CSIS stressed the need to renew US-Russian strategic cooperation. He recalled that bilateral agreements like the 1973 accord on the Prevention of Nuclear War is still in force and its restraints need to be re-affirmed. An effort to preserve positive aspects of agreements under threat (such as parity and transparency) could take forms other than formal arms control accords. Unilateral or reciprocal pledges such as non-deployment of ballistic missiles might also have a role to play.

It in the lively discussion segment a series of issues were raised including how to engage China in a multilateral nuclear disarmament process; President Putin’s mid-August letter to European leaders seeking to preclude new missile deployments; prospects to utilize creative diplomacy to circumvent blockages in existing arms control fora; and how to move beyond mere exhortation in pressing the eight hold-outs to Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty ratification. It was recognised that the 2020 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty’s review conference will be an important opportunity to demonstrate concrete measures to reinforce the NPT regime and the architecture for nuclear arms control and disarmament in general.

EVENT REPORT: PEACE IN THE NUCLEAR AGE

Christian N. Ciobanu | Nuclear Age Peace Foundation

Recognising the importance of youth education in the field of nuclear disarmament, the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation convened “Peace in the Nuclear Age: Humanitarian Perspectives” with Fordham University’s Humanitarian Student Union on 17 October. The speakers included: Jamie Walsh, the Deputy Permanent Representative of Ireland to the Conference on Disarmament; Veronique Christory, Senior Arms Control Advisor for the ICRC; Susi Snyder, Nuclear Disarmament Program Manager of PAX; and David Onazi, International Councilor of IPPNW Nigeria.

Jamie Walsh underscored Ireland’s historic position on nuclear disarmament. Specifically, he explained how the Irish resolutions led to the creation of the NPT. He then discussed Ireland’s strong emphasis on nuclear disarmament education and views concerning the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons. He further affirmed Ireland’s commitment to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW).

Veronique Christory presented “What if We Nuke a City,” a video that underscores the effects that nuclear weapons can have on cities. The video highlighted that “the world today needs the promise of a future without fear of annihilation, and this promise is one step closer to becoming a reality with the adoption of the TPNW in 2017.” She also highlighted the ICRC’s first-hand experience with the bombing of Nagasaki, which provided them with knowledge about the humanitarian horrors of atomic bombs. She also discussed the ICRC’s continued relationship with the survivors of the atomic bombings. She further emphasised the ICRC’s support for the TPNW and encouraged students to become nuclear abolitionists.

Susi Snyder discussed PAX’s 2019 report of Don’t Bank on the Bomb. As part of her explanation, she encouraged the students to contact their banks through the online help feature and ask their banks

on whether they invest in nuclear weapons. She emphasized that all clients have the right to ask their banks about their investment policies. Following her presentation about the TPNW, Snyder highlighted the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) and the TPNW. She touched upon why civil society and states are supporting this new treaty and highlighted the number of states that have ratified the treaty. She concluded her presentation with an overview about local actions in New York, including the two New York City Council’s resolutions (Res. No. 976 and Intl No. 1621), which would call for NYC to divest public employee pension funds from companies involved in nuclear weapons production and maintenance.

As the final speaker, Dr. David Onazi presented IPPNW’s study on nuclear winter. He explained how the effects of a nuclear war would dramatically decrease the earth’s temperature and adversely affect the growing seasons causing severe crop failures which could lead to global famine. After discussing the ramifications of a nuclear war, he underscored IPPNW’s position on the TPNW.

The students resonated with the ICRC’s video. Many of them were unaware about the effects of nuclear weapons. Additionally, the students were excited that they could contact their banks about their policies.

FIRST COMMITTEE

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).

Contributors to this edition:

Campaign to Stop Killer Robots, Canadian Pugwash Group, Cluster Munition Coalition, Control Arms, International Action Network on Small Arms, International Campaign to Ban Landmines, International Network on Explosive Weapons, Lawyers Committee on Nuclear Policy, Kings College London, Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, Peace Boat, Project Ploughshares, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom



Reaching Critical Will

www.reachingcriticalwill.org



www.wilpf.org

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.

FIRST COMMITTEE MONITOR

Vol. 17, No. 3

21 October 2019

Editors: Ray Acheson and
Allison Pytlak
disarm@wilpf.org

The views in this publication are not necessarily those of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom or the Reaching Critical Will programme.