

FIRST COMMITTEE MONITOR

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THE UNBEARABLE HEAVINESS OF HYPOCRISY

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

It was a rough five weeks at First Committee this year. The conduct of the vast majority of delegates is commendable, particularly in the face of the belligerence and bluster of two delegations who spent many of the Committee's meeting hours acting out the role of comic book archnemeses. Throughout the theatrical performance, most diplomats behaved diplomatically, working to find solutions for the significant challenges related to weapons and international security. However, the problems of the relations between those two countries—as well as some of their allies—are directly affecting the Committee's work. This means, in some cases, competing resolutions, repetitive debates, and a distinct lack of forward motion; in other cases, outside of First Committee, it has led to total stalemate. At times it looked like the same fate awaited us here, but fortunately the Committee operates under UN General Assembly rules, allowing its participants to vote democratically rather than be stymied by an oppressive application of veto-by-consensus.

In the end, for now, First Committee is still standing. It will meet in New York in 2020, with the efforts to get agreement to move it to Geneva or Vienna next year having failed. The US government's denial of visas to certain delegations, however, remains a critical issue. The Committee on Relations with the Host Country issued a report calling upon the host country to ensure entry visas to all representatives of member states and members of the Secretariat and to review its differing processes of granting visas to personnel of certain missions. But as long as this problem persists, so will the procedural headaches of engaging in substantive work at New York-based meetings. Russia warned as much in its many interventions on the subject. And for this, the US accused Russia of taking the disarmament machinery hostage. In a strongly-worded exhortation of amendments Russia tabled for a resolution on the Disarmament Commission, which aimed to tie the commencement of its 2020 session to the issuance

of visas, the US argued that if this kind of “hostage taking” is tolerated, “it will spell the beginning of the end of the United Nations” and we will “never get the UN back.” (See the article on multilateralism on for details.)

None of the disarmament machinery should be able to be blocked one or a handful of states. But the criticism of Russia's behaviour is difficult to accept when it comes from one of the main blockers of reaching agreement in consensus-based bodies. The Disarmament Commission was for many years unable to reach consensus agreement on recommendations, largely due to the United States. The Conference on Disarmament has not even been able to adopt and implement a programme of work in more than twenty years, due in recent years to Pakistan's objection to negotiations of a fissile material cut-off treaty but previously due to the US government's refusal to permit action on various agenda items, such as preventing an arms race in outer space. The US and Russia are both notorious for using consensus as a personal veto, intimidating or forcing others to acquiesce to their positions regardless of the clear majority view.

The grossly hypocritical positions of the most weaponised governments on the planet are holding us all hostage. We only need to look at First Committee for a plethora of examples. Russia and Syria, and a few allies, condemn efforts to investigate and attribute the use of chemical weapons in Syria. They say this is political, while people suffer horrific injuries and death. At the same time, however, many of those that condemn chemical weapon use, and demand that perpetrators be held accountable, simultaneously defend the right of certain states to possess and even use nuclear weapons. Why it is acceptable to threaten to incinerate entire cities and commit massive radioactive violence on generations of people, but it is not acceptable to incinerate people with chemical weapons? Why is nuclear deterrence the bedrock of security for some states,

while the idea of a chemical weapon deterrent would undoubtedly be considered at odds with international conscience and morality? A joint explanation of vote from many delegations delivered on the chemical weapons-related resolution, delivered by the US, declared that “all responsible nations must have the courage of our convictions to banish the scourge of chemical weapons to the past forever.” Yet the US and many others who signed onto that statement condemn those who had the courage of their convictions to banish the scourge of nuclear weapons by negotiating and adopting the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

Russia, meanwhile, says that preventing an arms race in outer space is a top priority. During voting on related resolutions, the Russian delegation noted that we still have a possibility to take preventative measures, but that if we miss this chance we will find ourselves taken hostage by those who decide to gain advantage by setting up a destructive force in space. Yet Russia, as well as the US and a handful of others, are pursuing just such an advantage—not only in outer space, but also here on Earth, with the development of fully autonomous weapons. Russia, the US, and a few others have been blocking the development of preventative measures to ensure that meaningful human control is retained over weapons and the use of force.

And then there is compliance with existing treaties. Russia’s resolution on strengthening the system

of relevant treaties was adopted with only five abstentions and no votes against. Several countries speaking about the resolution said they supported its words, but were concerned about the deeds of its main sponsor. The US and United Kingdom said they are mistrustful of Russia as a treaty partner—surely raising the eyebrows of all of the parties to treaties that the US government has walked away from recently, or of the civilians whose homes and hospitals are being destroyed by British-made bombs dropped on them by Saudi Arabia and coalition partners in Yemen.

So yes, First Committee is, for now, still standing. And once again the majority of delegates came to do the work to curtail armaments and prevent humanitarian harm. But the minority of states, seeking profits from weapon production and power from weapon possession, continue to prevent the real, meaningful actions we need in order to truly build international security through disarmament. Doing so is not impossible: only certain governments make it seem that way, by continuing to invest in weapons and war at the expense of people and planet. Moving on from these five weeks, it is up to the rest of us to take the necessary actions—real actions, not just resolutions or words spoken in conference rooms—by banning and eliminating weapons, building better relations among states and peoples, and working for a world where our shared humanity, rather than our shared hypocrisy, provides the basis of our decisions and actions.

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NUCLEAR WEAPONS

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

This year's debate on nuclear weapons demonstrated once again that the vast majority of UN member states are committed to achieving the abolition of nuclear weapons, while the nine nuclear-armed states and some of their allies continue to assert the necessity and importance of nuclear weapons for their security. Most states participating in the work of First Committee value greatly the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), which is nearing entry into force. The vast majority of states are very concerned with the overarching peril facing the nuclear disarmament, arms control, and non-proliferation regime, in particular the withdrawal from and lack of compliance with a variety of long-standing treaties and commitments.

The adoption of nuclear-related resolutions at First Committee plays a role in preserving the system of nuclear weapon governance that has been built over decades. This system has serious flaws, some of which are addressed by the TPNW. But other pieces of this system are important for achieving the goal, held since the creation of the United Nations, of the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. One of the resolutions, Japan's L.47, undermines existing agreements. Rewriting or ignoring past commitments is not a path to abolition but is rather a path back to the nuclear arms race. New agreements and arrangements will be necessary for nuclear disarmament. But these must be built upon—not destroy—existing international law and norms.

Resolutions

Explanations of vote on the resolutions adopted on Friday, 1 November continued on Monday, 4 November. Voting records and analyses of these resolutions can be found in previous editions of the *First Committee Monitor*. On Thursday, 7 November, three remaining resolutions were adopted. The following reporting on explanations of vote (EOV) is not necessarily comprehensive.

In regards to the cluster of nuclear-related resolutions, India and Pakistan, which are non-parties to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), informed that they abstained from any resolutions or individual paragraphs referring to the NPT, either calling for its universalisation or recalling obligations under past NPT Review Conferences. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), as a non-party to the NPT and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), also made similar remarks with respect to various resolutions referring to both the NPT and the CTBT.

L.1, “Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East”. Belarus voted in favour, arguing that the implementation of past decisions on this issue are a fundamental factor to secure stability in the region. Syria also voted in favour, believing in the vital importance of this matter.

L.2, “The risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East”. The DPRK expressed its support for the resolution as it underlines the importance of confidence building measures to enhance peace and security in the region. India argued that the focus of L.2 should be limited to the region it addresses.

Switzerland voted in favour, reflecting the ongoing importance of the full implementation of commitments undertaken under the NPT. But it noted that the resolution references only one dimension of nuclear proliferation in the region and continues to single out one state. It argued that the resolution would be strengthened if it addressed the situation in the region in a more exhaustive manner.

Syria voted in favour, believing in the vital importance of this matter.

L.12, “Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons”. Argentina abstained as the text energetically desires states' signing and ratifying,

which Argentina hasn't done yet. It informed that it has started the process of evaluating the impact of the Treaty on the non-proliferation regime, the NPT, the CTBT and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Argentina argued that the TPNW or any other future instrument has to strengthen the NPT.

China, France, Russia, the US, and the UK, the permanent members of the UN Security Council (P5), explained their vote against the resolution. They reiterated their opposition to the TPNW and argued that the best way to achieve a nuclear free world is through a gradual process that takes into account the international security environment. They asserted that the Treaty contradicts and undermines the NPT and doesn't support trust and transparency building between states. They said the TPNW creates divisions which could make further progress on nuclear disarmament even more difficult.

The P5 and India stressed that the Treaty will never be binding on them, and that they do not accept claims that the Treaty contributes to international customary law.

Japan also explained its vote against the resolution, underscoring that it is essential that all states work together for nuclear disarmament. Singapore had similar concerns and abstained on voting. Singapore also abstained from any resolution or individual paragraphs that reference the TPNW. It underscored that during the TPNW's negotiations, its concerns weren't taken into account, and argued that the TPNW should not affect the rights and obligations of the NPT, the CTBT, and the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, as well as treaties establishing nuclear weapon free zones (NWFZs).

France also said that it opposed any reference the TPNW in all resolutions. Pakistan informed that it perceives the TPNW to have various shortcomings and therefore abstained on L.12, "Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons," as well as abstained on or voted against various paragraphs in relevant resolutions. India also reiterated that it didn't participate in the negotiations and will not join the Treaty or be bound by its obligations.

Switzerland noted that it abstained from L.12, as well as for specific paragraphs in other resolutions on that subject, including L.19, L.20 and L.40. It informed that based on decisions taken by the government in 2018 and 2019 it will not adhere to the Treaty at this stage. It said that it continues to have questions regarding the Treaty's provisions and their impact on the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime based on the NPT. It informed that it will re-evaluate its position before the end of 2020.

L.13, "Humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons." Pakistan said that while it understands the growing sense of frustration of the slow pace of nuclear disarmament, it abstained from this resolution because the discourse on nuclear weapons cannot be solely reduced to humanitarian and ethical dimensions by trivialising the consideration of those states that rely on nuclear weapons for their security.

Japan explained its vote in favour as it shares the goal of the total elimination of nuclear weapons, recognising the humanitarian consequences based on first-hand experience. India also voted in favour, premised on the shared concern of the serious threat of nuclear weapons to the survival of humankind.

L.18, "Convention on the Prohibition of the Use of Nuclear Weapons". Pakistan explained that it abstained from the resolution because India, the main sponsor of the resolution, which claims to promote norms on nuclear disarmament, has recently threatened nuclear weapons use and continues to modernise its arsenals.

Ecuador voted in favour of L.18 but put on record that achieving the goal of the resolution is through the entry into force of the TPNW, which prohibits the use of nuclear weapons.

L.19, "Nuclear disarmament". Pakistan said that it is ironic that a resolution on nuclear disarmament only continues to promote the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons.

L.20, “Towards a nuclear-weapon-free world: accelerating the implementation of nuclear disarmament commitments”.

The DPRK explained its abstention to this resolution, arguing that its calls for the DPRK to abandon its nuclear programme and to adhere to the NPT and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards agreement are biased. It said that the resolution unilaterally calls on the DPRK to denuclearise without any mention of the root cause of the problem. The DPRK stressed that when the threats and “stumbling blocks” are clearly removed, only then can we talk about a nuclear-weapon-free world. It informed that it will be not be bound by this resolution.

Pakistan acknowledged the value of the resolution but it abstained from voting on the resolution as a whole and against individual paragraphs. In relation to PP12 and OP24, Pakistan argued the TPNW has “glaring procedural and substantial shortcomings”.S

Switzerland welcomed the reference to the UN Secretary-General’s Disarmament Agenda in PP4. While it has some reservations, it appreciates the Agenda’s exhaustive approach that gives disarmament efforts the necessary momentum.

L.21, “Ethical imperatives for a nuclear-weapon-free world”. Pakistan said that while it understands the growing sense of frustration of the slow pace of nuclear disarmament, it abstained from this resolution. Pakistan argued that the discourse on nuclear weapons cannot be solely reduced to humanitarian and ethical dimensions by trivialising the consideration of those states that rely on nuclear weapons for their security.

India abstained on voting but said that it agrees with several provisions, including that nuclear disarmament is a public good, and the reference to the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons. It argued that questions of morality have to be examined by sovereign states, and that India’s nuclear weapon doctrine achieves a balance between morality and security concerns.

L.24, “Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty”.

Belarus explained that it voted in favour of the resolution as the CTBT’s entry into force is a crucial part of the disarmament process. Pakistan also explained its voting in favour, reminding that it also voted in favour of the Treaty’s adoption.

Syria abstained and regretted that the resolution doesn’t call for the universality of the NPT.

Iran voted in favour of the resolution but regretted that the resolution doesn’t call on nuclear-armed states to refrain from qualitatively modernising their nuclear weapons systems, including through tests and simulations.

Egypt and Ecuador expressed concern that PP4 refers to UN Security Council (UNSC) resolution 2310. Egypt abstained from this resolution in 2016 and had expressed its reservations of its content in detail. It criticised the practice of selectively resorting to UNSC resolutions on matters not falling in its mandate, therefore abstaining on this paragraph. Pakistan, voting in favour, observed that it is wary of the UNSC defining legislative requirements, thereby entering into areas not falling under its jurisdictions. Iran had similar concerns and therefore abstained on voting. While voting in favour, Ecuador invited the main sponsors of the resolution not to include in future resolutions references to this UNSC resolution as it doesn’t facilitate the entry into force of the CTBT.

L.26/Rev.1, “Nuclear disarmament verification,” was adopted with a vote of 137-1-4.

Egypt expressed appreciation for Norway’s leadership in developing the resolution and put on record its multiple reservations about the nuclear verification GGE report which it will submit in writing.

Russia voted against the resolution as it does not agree with its approach to nuclear disarmament verification. It argued that based on its experience, verification requires the sharing of sensitive information that cannot be provided remotely or in advance. It noted that verification is a distraction from primordial issues of security that impact nuclear disarmament.

L.31, “Follow-up to the 2013 high-level meeting of the General Assembly on nuclear disarmament,” was adopted as a whole with a vote of 115-35-18.

France, UK, and US explained their vote against this resolution, arguing that the resolution doesn't take into account the current security environment. They stressed that the sole reference to the NPT in form of underscoring obligations under Article VI is insufficient and imbalanced.

Netherlands, on behalf of a group of countries, noted that recommendations for a high-level meeting on nuclear disarmament were not taken on board. The Netherlands and France, UK, and US also observed that the resolution doesn't recognise the NPT as the cornerstone of the non-proliferation regime, and therefore voted against the resolution.

Switzerland explained its abstention and said that while it is convinced of the need to develop new legal instruments, a convention is not the only or most promising way forward.

Cuba expressed its support for the resolution and urged others to vote in favour.

A separate vote was called on PP14, which was retained by 137-33-10. The paragraph expresses concern about nuclear-armed states' modernisation and their inclusion of nuclear weapons in security doctrines.

L.40, “Follow-up to the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons,” was adopted as a whole by 132-32-17. A vote was called on three separate paragraphs.

PP9, noting the UN Secretary General's Disarmament agenda, was retained by a vote of 135-1-30. PP17, welcoming the TPNW, was retained by a vote of 116-36-14. OP2, calling on all states to engage in multilateral negotiations on nuclear disarmament, including under the TPNW, was retained by a vote of 114-36-15. India called this paragraph “ambiguous”.

Cuba expressed its support for the resolution and called on nuclear-armed states to show the political will needed to advance nuclear disarmament. It observed that the resolution reaffirms that the continued existence of nuclear weapons represents a threat to humanity.

India said it was unhappy with the changes to the resolution this year, including the removal of the usual conclusion around a nuclear weapons convention.

L.41, “Treaty on the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone (Bangkok Treaty),” was adopted without a vote.

L.47/Rev.1, “Joint Courses of Action and Future-oriented Dialogue towards a world without nuclear weapons”. Some states, including Malaysia, the US, and France commended Japan for its efforts to forge common ground or to build bridges. Malaysia informed that it voted in favour of the majority of separate paragraphs, being cognisant that this resolution was tabled at First Committee and therefore doesn't need to be compared exactly to NPT language. It therefore voted in favour of the resolution as a whole but noted that some paragraphs could be improved.

Belarus voted in favour of the resolution and welcomed the fact that it reflects calls for the establishment of new NWFZs.

Other delegations expressed strong criticism of the resolution. New Zealand, abstaining on the vote, was sorry that Japan's decision not to present its usual resolution, which was divisive last year, did not “signal a move away from the divisive approach toward nuclear disarmament”. New Zealand argued that the NPT won't be the cornerstone of the disarmament and non-proliferation regime anymore “if we attempt to re-draft and move away from existing legally-binding NPT commitments.” It regretted the “low level of ambition” of this resolution. Austria expressed similar views, expressing concerns about the resolution's negative language and its impact on the NPT's integrity.

Iran abstained from voting on this resolution, saying it failed to strike an acceptable balance between nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, and that the resolution was lacking calls for nuclear-armed states to implement fully and effectively their obligations. It voted in favour of paragraphs calling for the universalisation of the NPT, such as in PP2, 4 and 19, and the reaffirmation of the validity of steps agreed in final Review Conference documents.

Ecuador observed that the lack of reference to the TPNW makes the resolution not ambitious.

Egypt stressed that this resolution undermines nuclear disarmament obligations and the special responsibilities of nuclear-armed states. It noted that the resolution implicitly links the implementation of nuclear disarmament obligations to an ambiguous set of preconditions and aims to lower the pace of implementation commitments. It also said that the resolution omits reference to the agreed objective of establishing a NWFZ in the Middle East, and hoped that this will be included in the future to strike a reasonable balance.

The Republic of Korea (ROK) abstained from voting on this resolution. It noted that while it does support the overall goal and purpose of the resolution, it regretted the terms used that refer to atomic bomb survivors only in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It noted that language should have been phrased differently to also reflect atomic bomb survivors from other parts of the world. The ROK also argued that the OPs move away from previously agreed language and do not capture a balance.

The US explained its abstention from the resolution. It noted with satisfaction that the resolution uniquely encourages states to conduct candid dialogue on the relationship between nuclear disarmament and security. It applauded Japan for its efforts to strike the right balance.

In regards to specific paragraph, Pakistan voted against PP2, reiterating that it cannot support the universalisation of the NPT as it considers this to be an “unrealistic and impractical” objective.

Pakistan voted against PP8, as it is concerned that the resolution only seeks to address non-proliferation aspects of fissile materials.

PP11 refers to nuclear disarmament verification. Egypt reminded that it has reservations on the report adopted by the GGE on verification, which is referenced in this paragraph.

Austria voted in favour of PP18 to continue to have the fundamental issue of the humanitarian impacts of nuclear weapons reflected, but said that its voting in favour cannot be seen to its accepting of weak language for the upcoming NPT Review Conference. Ecuador also noted that PP18 doesn't reflect the great concern of UN member states. It therefore abstained. Egypt, Iran, and Austria noted that the language in this paragraph weakens the language of previously agreed undertakings under past NPT Review Conferences. France said that it abstained from this paragraph as the humanitarian impacts have been known for a long time, and already appear in the NPT's preamble. France refuses the link between the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons, and the call for nuclear disarmament. France argued that there was no consensus on the fact that this approach underpins efforts towards nuclear disarmament.

Egypt abstained on OP1, noting that the language in this paragraph weakens the language of previously agreed undertakings of past NPT Review Conferences. Malaysia had similar concerns and abstained. It observed that it doesn't reference the specific responsibility of nuclear-armed states to attain a world free from nuclear weapons. New Zealand voted against this paragraph as it “distorts” the fundamental commitment set out in Article VI of the NPT.

New Zealand said OP3 reflects the low level of ambition for nuclear disarmament in this resolution.

OP3 (c) relates to calls for negotiating an FMCT. Pakistan voted against, as it was concerned that the resolution only seeks to address non-proliferation aspects of fissile materials.

France abstained because the OP doesn't reference the Shannon mandate for FMCT negotiations. India abstained, explaining that the question of a moratorium on the production of fissile material doesn't arise. Iran noted that negotiations should commence within the context of an agreed, balanced and comprehensive programme of work, a view that isn't reflected in the draft. It therefore abstained.

Egypt abstained on OP3 (d) and argued that this paragraph doesn't observe the established categorisation that only recognises nuclear-armed states and non-nuclear armed states. Malaysia, abstaining, observed that the language doesn't contain an explicit call for Annex II states to sign and ratify the CTBT, not placing sufficient emphasis on the imperative to bring the Treaty into force. New Zealand and Austria had similar concerns. New

Zealand, abstaining, quoted language from OP1 of resolution L.24 as better language in reference to the CTBT. Austria voted against this OP. Belarus welcomed the reference encouraging states to sign and ratify the CTBT and voted in favour.

New Zealand, abstaining on OP3 (e), argued that nuclear disarmament verification shouldn't only be done through the framework of just one process, imposing "an unnecessary straightjacket" on this area of work. Austria informed that it meant to vote in favour of this paragraph but it was recorded as abstention.

Iran voted in favour of OP3 (f) because of the need to raise awareness about the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons use by the United States in 1945.

CHEMICAL WEAPONS

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

In the final week of First Committee, states took action on draft resolution L.10 "Implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction". This annual text continued to be a controversial resolution at First Committee, once again eliciting five paragraph votes and several explanations of vote.

What makes it controversial, or at least, subject to multiple paragraph votes and EOVs, is that it has since 2014 become more specific in describing specific incident of chemical weapons use as well as relevant UN Security Council (UNSC) decisions and investigation mechanisms of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). Some states have accused Poland, the resolution's main sponsor, and its supporters of politicising the resolution. In contrast, the resolution's supporters assert that doing so is important for the resolution's relevance and impact.

As in 2018, states voted on five paragraphs: preambular paragraph (PP) 5 and operative

paragraphs (OPs) 2, 3, 4, and 16, as well as the resolution as a whole. PP5 re-emphasises "unequivocal support" for the OPCW to continue its mission to "establish the facts" around the use of chemical weapons and toxic chemicals in Syria and recalls relevant UNSC resolutions. It was retained with a vote of 125 in favour, 7 opposed, and 31 abstentions. It mirrors PP14 of the 2018 resolution, which was also voted on.

The four OPs that received paragraph votes are the same four as in 2018. OP2 "condemns in the strongest possible terms that chemical weapons have since 2012 been used in Iraq, Malaysia, the Syrian Arab Republic and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland" and lists specific reports by the OPCW's Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) and the United Nations. It was retained with a vote of 116 in favour, 13 opposed, and 36 abstentions. OP3 takes note of the results of the OPCW fact-finding missions in Syria. OP3 was retained with a vote of 117 in favour, 12 opposed, and 35 abstentions. OP4 recalls the decision taken during a special session of states parties to the

Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) in June 2018 to apply attribution for the use of chemical weapons and stresses the importance of this decision's implementation. OP4 was retained with 111 in favour, 18 opposed, and 38 abstentions. OP16 expresses "grave concern" that despite the verified destruction of 27 Syrian chemical weapons production facilities, the OPCW's Technical Secretariat cannot fully verify that the declaration submitted by Syria on joining the CWC can be fully verified. This paragraph was retained by a vote of 106 in favour, 13 against, and 46 opposed.

The resolution as a whole was adopted with a vote of 148 in favour, 7 opposed, and 23 abstentions. A general trend across voting was fewer "yes" votes, and more abstentions.

Poland presented the resolution in a general statement ahead of voting. While regretting that the resolution has lost its consensual character, Poland stated that the international community needs "strong and clear message" about unconditional implementation of the CWC. The resolution reflects factually the current state of CWC implementation, including that related to its conferences and decisions taken there such as at the 2018 special session. Poland noted that the resolution also includes reference to stockpile destruction, verification, the risks posed by non-state actors, and international cooperation.

Syria and Russia provided general statements that reinforced what each had said on this subject during thematic debate. Syria asserted that it has met all of its obligations under the CWC and that it does not possess chemical weapons and will never use them. Syria pointed to its initiative in 2003 to propose a draft resolution on a weapons of mass destruction (WMD)-free zone in the Middle East as evidence of its opposition to WMD. It accused the United Kingdom (UK), France, and the United States (US) as using the context of chemical weapons use as a pretext to intervene in the domestic affairs of another state. Russia regretted that L.10 does not have any call on the US to destroy its chemical weapon stockpile. It said that the decision of CWC states parties to grant

the OPCW an attributive function runs counter to CWC provisions and infringes on UN Security Council prerogatives. It rejected accusations of being linked to the chemical weapon incident that occurred in Salisbury, UK. Russia had "no choice" but to vote against L.10.

Cuba, France, Syria, Iran, Venezuela, Egypt, Malaysia, Israel, India, China, Japan, Turkey, Nicaragua, and the US on behalf of many states provided EOVs.

Among other points, Cuba had concerns about reflecting non-consensual decisions or debates from the UNSC in First Committee resolutions and the policing impact of doing so. Iran raised questions about the impartiality and thoroughness of the investigative reports cited and also about politicisation, causing it to vote against the resolution. Venezuela and Nicaragua made similar points. Egypt highlighted that it cannot support this resolution when its main proponents are resisting the creation of a WMD-free zone in the Middle East, pointing to their reliance on nuclear weapons. Malaysia commended the work of the OPCW but takes a more cautious approach to the decision taken by CWC states parties in the 2018 special session around attribution. China expressed its concern over the US' failure to destroy its stockpile. It believes that OPCW attribution measures have deviated from normal solution tracks.

France supported the specificity in L.10 and wished it would have recognised and welcomed the OPCW's fact-finding mission. It expressed that voting on this resolution is a test for the international community in preventing the hostage-taking of the chemical weapons non-proliferation regime, points echoed by Israel. India, Turkey, and Japan spoke favourably of the resolution; Turkey would have liked to have seen it include even stronger language condemning users of chemical weapons. The group EOV delivered by the US would have also liked stronger language and specific calls to Russia and Syria with respect to chemical weapons access and use. The joint statement also stressed the importance of ending impunity.

BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS

Filippa Lentzos | King's College London

Resolution L.44 on the Biological and Toxic Weapons Convention (BWC) was adopted in the First Committee on 4 November 2019 without a vote. Unlike the resolution on the Chemical Weapons Convention, where several highly politicised elements have hampered consensus, the BWC resolution continues to achieve unanimous support, reflecting the international community's undisputed norm against this particular WMD.

The resolution welcomes the increase in ratifications of, and accessions to, the BWC, while underscoring the continuing need to achieve universalisation. BWC membership currently stands at 183 states parties, with Tanzania the most recent addition as of August this year. There are 14 states which have not yet joined the Convention.

The resolution reaffirms the importance of national measures in implementing the Convention, and it calls on all states parties to participate in the implementation of review conference recommendations, including the exchange of data under the confidence-building measures. It recognises the importance of ongoing efforts to enhance international cooperation and assistance, and it encourages states parties to submit requests for, and offers of, cooperation and assistance, as well as to provide information on their implementation of Article X of the Convention.

The resolution reiterates decisions of the Eighth Review Conference, notes ongoing intersessional activities, and encourages preparations for the Ninth Review Conference in 2021. The detrimental financial situation of the BWC is given considerable attention, and the resolution calls upon states parties to tackle the Convention's financial deficit as a matter of urgency.

The call for action on the adverse financial situation was also emphasised in a statement delivered to the First Committee on 30 October 2019 by the Chair

of the BWC Meeting of States Parties, Ambassador Yann Hwang of France. The statement was given on behalf of the Chairs of the four disarmament conventions hosted by the United Nations Office at Geneva (APLC, BWC, CCM and CCW), and stressed how the serious financial difficulties experienced across the four conventions compromise the progress of work and the credibility of the disarmament Conventions. It noted that "over the years, meetings approved by all States Parties have been cut short due to lack of funds, and several unacceptable cost-cutting measures, including the sacrifice of the interpretation of our meetings and the translation of official documents, have been taken. In addition, the precarious financial situation also threatens the very existence of certain support units for implementation, which are essential for the implementation and strengthening of the Conventions it serves." The joint statement appealed to the respective states parties to consider additional measures to tackle non-payment beyond those already introduced.

A summary of financial contributions to the BWC as of 31 October 2019 has been issued by the Financial Resources Management Services of the United Nations Office at Geneva, and is available online.

BWC states parties will meet 3–6 December 2019 in Geneva. So far, the provisional agenda, provisional programme of work, report on universalisation activities, and annual report of the Implementation Support Unit have been published. A robust set of side event activities has been scheduled, and time has been set aside in the programme of work for civil society statements.

FULLY AUTONOMOUS WEAPONS

Mary Wareham | Campaign to Stop Killer Robots

There were few references to fully autonomous weapons, or killer robots, after the conclusion of the debate on conventional weapons, though five states raised this concern on 29 October during the thematic debate on “other disarmament measures and international security measures”.

Pakistan described the development of lethal autonomous weapons systems as “the next revolution in military affairs that would fundamentally change the nature of war.” It found that “any weapon system that delegates life and death decisions to machines is by nature unethical” and warned that killer robots will lower the threshold for going to war, resulting in “serious implications for regional and global security.”

Pakistan again called for the development of an international legally binding instrument to ban killer robots. It said that after six years of meetings, the Convention on Conventional Weapons (CCW) talks on killer robots “can only be sustained if it yields concrete results, heeding the concerns of all States.” Pakistan suggested that killer robots “be comprehensively addressed by the UN disarmament machinery,” including by the moribund Conference on Disarmament. It did not indicate if it could support

a stand-alone process to negotiate a treaty banning killer robots, but Pakistani officials have told the Campaign the government cannot participate in disarmament treaties negotiated outside UN auspices.

Cuba urged states to “move forward” multilaterally by developing legally-binding instrument to prohibit lethal autonomous weapons systems. Ecuador said it categorically rejects such weapons systems. Egypt and India also raised killer robots in their remarks.

There has never been a UN General Assembly (UNGA) resolution on killer robots. First Committee adopted the UNGA’s 2019 resolution on the CCW (L.54) without a vote on 5 November, which simply “welcomes” CCW work this year on lethal autonomous weapons systems.

States will decide on the future of the CCW’s inconclusive deliberations on killer robots at the CCW’s next annual meeting at the UN in Geneva on 13–15 November. The Campaign to Stop Killer Robots will hold a side event on 13 November in Conference Room XXI, while the decision on future work will be contained in the final report of the annual meeting to be adopted on 15 November.

EXPLOSIVE WEAPONS IN POPULATED AREAS

Laura Boillot | International Network on Explosive Weapons

It has been nearly a decade since civil society first raised alarm over the predictable pattern of harm from the bombing and shelling of towns and cities, often with severe reverberating effects for years after the bombing ends. This has been experienced across a range of contexts during this time—Syria, Yemen, Gaza, Ukraine, Cote d’Ivoire, Afghanistan, and Iraq are some examples.

Heavy explosive weapon systems that impact a wide area such as large aircraft bombs, indirect fire systems such as mortars, rockets and artillery guns, and inaccurate systems including multi-barrel rocket launchers, are unsuited for use in populated areas where civilians are present. Recognising the dire state of protection afforded to civilians in conflict, the UN Secretary-General has repeatedly

called on states to avoid use of explosive weapons with wide area effects in populated areas. This is a recommendation reiterated by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), which has advised states to develop an avoidance policy, establishing a presumption of non-use.

A political process is about to begin, aimed at addressing this problem by setting a new international standard against the use of heavy explosive weapons in towns and cities, that can in turn drive change at the policy and operational level, ultimately aimed at changing military practice.

Consultations to develop an international political declaration on explosive weapons in populated areas begin in Geneva on 18 November 2019. The government of Ireland has invited all states to participate in this initial discussion, which will be the first of at least three open consultations—all in Geneva, with a view to finalise and adopt a declaration in 2020.

This first meeting will provide an opportunity for government delegates to share views on what they think should be in a future political declaration aimed at preventing and reducing harm from explosive weapons in populated areas, and ahead of a text being drafted. A draft declaration will be drafted and shared after the first consultation and form the basis of subsequent consultations.

INEW is urging government delegations to put humanitarian considerations at the forefront of efforts. As a starting point, this means including a clear description of the harm we are concerned about and are seeking to address in the declaration text. This means recognition of the high levels of civilian deaths and physical injury, including physical impairment, as well as psychological trauma. It should also describe and seek to address the destruction of housing, water and sanitation, health, energy, education, transport infrastructure, and interruption of associated services. It should recognise the impact of bombing urban areas as a driver and trigger of displacement, and how it leaves land contaminated by explosive remnants of

war which not only forces people to flee, but also prevents their return. It should recognise how it contributes to environmental degradation.

Secondly, a declaration should contain strong commitments upon endorsing states. The centrepiece of such should be a commitment aimed at stopping use of explosive weapons with wide area effects in populated areas. Without a commitment along these lines, a declaration is unlikely to have the necessary impact of preventing and reducing the harm we are concerned about. Having such a commitment embedded in a political declaration would set a standard at the political, policy and operational level. This can be translated into action through the development of national and other military and operational policies and procedures, and in doing so, shape military practice and behaviour and strengthen the protection of civilians in armed conflict.

Given the number of people impacted, and the extensive costs and work associated with rebuilding towns and cities, a declaration should also contain a standalone commitment to assist people and affected communities. This includes fulfilling the rights of victims of explosive weapons, ensuring basic needs are met in a timely manner such as shelter, protection, medical provisions, food, water and sanitation. It also means safe and timely access to services such as medical care, education, employment, and social inclusion. Victims should also have the right to receive compensation for the loss of their homes and livelihoods due to widespread destruction and costs of the damage to infrastructure and services

States have already recognised that victims and survivors of weapons should receive assistance towards the fulfilment of their rights as a matter of principle, as expressed in instruments such as the Convention on Cluster Munitions. A commitment along these lines in a political declaration on explosive weapons would reinforce and strengthen protection and assistance to people impacted by conflict and fulfilment of their rights.

LANDMINES

Jelena Vićentić | International Campaign to Ban Landmines

Firm commitment to full implementation and appreciation of the strong normative effect concerning the ban on landmine use and proliferation, stockpile destruction, and assistance to victims has been the leitmotif of this year's Mine Ban Treaty references at First Committee. Several states, including Haiti, Poland, Norway, Portugal, Switzerland, and Thailand highlighted the Mine Ban Treaty as the most positive achievement of disarmament efforts and as a guiding model for normativity and interconnectedness in disarmament. Numerous statements throughout the Committee's work, including those by Angola, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Slovenia, Sudan, Thailand and Tajikistan, emphasised the significance of the international cooperation for successful clearance operations, only made possible through existence of the Mine Ban Treaty.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations highlighted the exemplary cooperation under Mine Ban Treaty and the work conducted through its Regional Mine Action Centre in Phnom Penh as a form of regional cooperation crucial in regional disarmament initiatives, to be replicated in other contexts. In a similar manner, the statement delivered by the Chairperson of the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters considering how actors "in and beyond the United Nations could systematically tackle and prevent the suffering that civilians are enduring as warfare moves from battlefields to urban areas" noted how collecting landmine data played a crucial role in the development and eventual adoption of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. He proposed the collection of information on the effects of explosive weapons in urban environments. Trinidad and Tobago delivered a statement of behalf of 79 states calling for improvement in gender balance in the disarmament machinery and, in this context, welcoming the focus on gender considerations for the upcoming Review Conference of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention.

Draft resolution L.45, "Implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction," was adopted with a recorded vote of 161 in favour, none against, and 19 abstentions. The number of votes in favour was higher than the previous year. Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, China, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lao PDR, Libya, Micronesia, Mongolia, Morocco, Singapore, and the United Arab Emirates, although states not parties to the Treaty, voted in favour of the resolution, thus recognising the need to put an end to the suffering caused by landmines. Cuba, Egypt, Iran, India, Myanmar, Pakistan, and Republic of Korea gave an explanation of their abstentions. Myanmar recognised initiatives taken to deter indiscriminate use of landmines and the need to urgently address humanitarian consequences of their use, while expressing intent to eventually join the Treaty. Cuba, Iran, Republic of Korea, and Pakistan discussed their security situations and asserted the value of landmines in securing borders, an argument long abandoned by the majority states. Egypt referred to the challenge of meeting demining obligations as well as issues of legal responsibilities for states.

Singapore explained its vote in favour of the resolution with its unwavering support to initiatives against indiscriminate use of landmines and the work of the Mine Ban Treaty, highlighting its indefinite moratorium on landmine exports as an expression of the wish for a "durable and truly global solution".

Afghanistan, Iraq, Ukraine, the Netherlands, Italy, Guatemala, Kuwait, and the Non-Aligned Movement used the opportunity of this year's First Committee to remind states of the remaining challenges towards tackling the problems of landmine contamination and ensuring the provision of adequate assistance to survivors. The Fourth Review Conference of the Mine Ban Treaty taking place this November in Oslo,

Norway—another frequent theme highlighted in many of this year’s First Committee statements, including the ones delivered by Algeria, Austria, Brazil, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Czechia, DRC, Ecuador, France, Guatemala, Ireland, Indonesia, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands, New Zealand,

Portugal, Spain, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, and Turkey—will undoubtedly provide an impetus for further work of the states on full implementation of the Mine Ban Treaty and progress towards the aspirational goal of a world free of the scourge of antipersonnel landmines by 2025.

CLUSTER MUNITIONS

Jelena Vićentić | Cluster Munition Coalition

Resolution L.46, “Implementation on the Convention on Cluster Munitions,” was adopted by a vote of 138 in favour, one against (Russian Federation), with 39 abstentions. Preambular paragraph 14, which takes note of the UN Secretary-General’s disarmament agenda, was retained with a vote of 147 in favour, none against, and 16 abstentions. 31 states not parties to the Convention voted in favour of the resolution, confirming previous weeks’ expressions of overall support for the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) and its values.

Eight states—Argentina, Brazil, Cyprus, Egypt, Iran, Myanmar, Republic of Korea, United States—spoke on their decision to abstain from the vote. Egypt and Iran explained that they abstained because they cannot support an instrument negotiated outside the United Nations. Myanmar, abstaining due to “capacity constraints,” still expressed support for the provisions of the Convention. The Republic of Korea, although unable to support the resolution, expressed shared concerns with the international community on the humanitarian impact of cluster munitions and its intention to contribute to mitigation of the consequences of their use.

The United States reiterated its position that it would not accept the CCM as an emerging norm in

international law, arguing that cluster munitions are an effective way to conduct war in accordance with the international humanitarian law (IHL)—a view dismissed by the majority of states of the world once the CCM entered into force in 2010. This year’s US reference to the idea that cluster munitions can be “less indiscriminate” and can be used in accordance with IHL, while including the concept of “collateral damage” as part of IHL, was equally inappropriate as it’s explanation last year, when the US gave an unwarranted interpretation of the Marten’s Clause as “not a rule that prohibits any particular weapon”.

Egypt expressed concern that the definition of the cluster munitions in the CCM was tailored to fit the specific production requirements of some states. Brazil, reminding the states that it did not participate in the diplomatic process to ban cluster munitions, expressed disagreement with provisions of the Convention allowing use of cluster munitions with sophisticated mechanisms manufactured by a small number of technologically advanced defence industries. Argentina said it abstained because the Convention is not sufficiently ambitious or comprehensive. It views Articles 2 and 21 of the CCM as contrary to non-discrimination and full elimination. Cyprus, a signatory since 2009, reported on its ongoing ratification process, which it says has been complicated by its security situation.

SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS

Rose Welsch | International Action Network on Small Arms

Throughout this year's First Committee, states recognised the devastating effects of the illicit trade, transfer, and circulation of small arms and light weapons (SALW)—including deaths, injuries, hindrance of development, sexual violence, forced displacement and migration, terrorism, crime, conflict, human rights abuses, violation of international humanitarian law, drug and human trafficking, and wildlife poaching. Many states also recognised how vital the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms (UNPoA) and its International Tracing Instrument (ITI) are given, that these are the only global, consensus-based instruments with the scope to deal with these issues. Furthermore, many states indicated that they are looking forward to the seventh Biennial Meeting of States (BMS7) of the UNPoA in June 2020, which gives states an opportunity to report on their progress on UNPoA implementation.

Action on resolutions

States took action on several resolutions related to SALW during the last week of First Committee. Colombia, along with South Africa and Japan, presented omnibus resolution **L.43, "The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects."** Colombia reminded states that SALW proliferation has humanitarian and socioeconomic consequences, and that the draft resolution highlights collective efforts at national, regional, and international efforts to strengthen different instruments. L.43 was adopted as a whole without a vote. However, states voted on three of its paragraphs. As with last year, the United States and Israel were the only states to vote against preambular paragraph (PP) 7, which welcomes the successful conclusion of the 2018 Third Review Conference (RevCon3) on the (UNPoA), and against operative paragraph (OP) 6, which endorses the outcome of RevCon3. However, in a new move that reflects the Trump administration's attempt to withdraw its signature from the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) earlier this year, the US cast

the sole vote against PP22, which welcomes the inclusion of SALW in the scope of the ATT. Sixteen states abstained from voting on that paragraph.

The Netherlands presented resolution **L.30, "Transparency in Armaments,"** to support the UN Register for Conventional Arms. L.30 was adopted by a vote of 145-0-23, but states voted on PP7: "Welcoming the entry into force of the Arms Trade Treaty on 24 December 2014, as it enhances transparency through reporting on arms transfers as well as through other mechanisms, and noting that the Treaty remains open for accession by any State that has not signed it." The United States cast the sole vote against it. Iran explained that it abstained from voting on this resolution in its entirety because having a UN mechanism for transparency in conventional weapons without one for weapons of mass destruction is not balanced and comprehensive.

On behalf of states of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Mali presented annual resolution **L.27, "Assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons and collecting them."** Mali explained that the resolution seeks to consolidate stability in the West African region by strengthening initiatives and regional efforts to reduce the proliferation and illicit trade in SALW. Mali also noted that this annual resolution has always been adopted by consensus in its entirety since 1997, and expressed regret that a separate vote on PP16 was requested for the first time this year. PP16 welcomes the inclusion of SALW in the scope of the ATT, as well as the Treaty's international assistance in its provisions. Again, the US cast the sole vote against this paragraph. 149 states voted in favour and 20 states abstained. The resolution as a whole was adopted without a vote.

L.23, "United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific," was adopted without a vote. Regarding SALW, L.23 expresses

appreciation to the Regional Centre for its promotion of confidence-building measures that include the organization of national and subregional workshops on SALW control, subregional training courses for states on conventional ammunition stockpile management, and a capacity-building project for states on gun violence and illicit small arms trafficking from a gender perspective.

L.38, “United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa,” was also adopted without a vote. Regarding SALW, L.38, expresses appreciation for the Centre’s assistance to African States to control SALW. This assistance includes capacity-building for national commissions on SALW and support by the Centre to help states prevent the diversion of SALW, especially to non-state armed groups and terrorist groups. The resolution also expresses appreciation for the Centre’s support to states for their implementation of the Central Africa (Kinshasa) Convention on SALW and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Convention on SALW, and well as for the Centre’s support for security sector reform initiatives and for East Africa states’ programmes to control the brokering of SALW.

L.42, “United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean,” was adopted without a vote. Regarding SALW, L.42 welcomes the ongoing support provided by the Regional Centre to Member States for their implementation of the UNPoA. It requests the Centre to continue to take into account proposals submitted by countries of the region regarding combating and eradicating the illicit trade in SALW and ammunition. It also recognizes that the Regional Centre has an important role in promoting and developing agreed upon regional and subregional initiatives that include SALW, the relationship between disarmament and development, and the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Moreover, L.42 encourages the Regional Centre to further develop activities in all countries of the region and to provide support upon request to member states in national implementation of relevant instruments such as the UNPoA.

L.53, “Problems arising from the accumulation of conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus,” was adopted without a vote. L.53 encourages all interested states to voluntarily assess—in conformity with their legitimate security needs—whether parts of their stockpiles of conventional ammunition are considered to be in surplus. It also recognises that stockpile security must be taken into consideration and that appropriate controls regarding security and safety of stockpiles of conventional ammunition are indispensable at the national level to eliminate the risk of explosion, pollution, or diversion.

Preparing for BMS7 on the UNPoA

Despite recognition of grave SALW-related problems and statements of support for the UNPoA and BMS7, few states assessed their progress toward implementing the results of RevCon3, which was held in June 2018 (A/CONF.192/2018/RC/3). The final outcome document for RevCon3 included strong commitments to address many issues, including on ensuring that gender concerns are mainstreamed in policies on SALW transfers, and on destroying surplus, confiscated, seized, and collected SALW. Most states, however, did not announce plans at First Committee to meet their RevCon3 commitments for BMS7. States missed the opportunity to present proposals to encourage to encourage states to exchange good practices on preventing, combatting, and eradicating the illicit trade in SALW and ammunition, or to demonstrate proof of gender-based action to curb SALW proliferation and violence, or to present current or planned work to ensure women’s full and effective participation and representation in arms control programmes and diplomatic processes.

It was largely African states that reported on policy and legislative changes they have adopted or plan to adopt in the near future to meet their UNPoA commitments. Frustration by many states and UN bodies with the pace of progress in implementing the UNPoA and the ITI led the UN Secretary-General to propose in his 2019 report on the illicit trade in SALW (A/74/187) that a new approach should be adopted to strengthen national implementation. Recognising

the enormous variations in national contexts and the primacy of domestic decision making and responsibility, each state would be requested to set their own measurable targets on SALW control based on an updated national action plan to implement the UNPoA and ITI.

The six-year cycle of UN meetings would allow each state to report on their concrete progress in terms of their measurable targets and, where appropriate, to match resource needs with international assistance, rather than to use all of the time in the UN meetings to try to reach consensus on a global outcome document. However, the possibility of negotiating additional agreements would remain open. It remains to be seen whether member states will adopt this approach, and whether it would result in concrete progress on the ground or in the weakening of multilateral momentum and collective advancement on key issues.

The importance of controlling ammunition

It's encouraging that in their First Committee statements, many states and regional groups expressed concern about the illicit trafficking, diversion, surplus stockpiles of ammunition, and role of ammunition in conflicts and criminality. As UN Secretary-General António Guterres stated in his *Securing our Common Future*, "High levels of arms and ammunition in circulation contribute to insecurity, cause harm to civilians, facilitate human rights violations and impede humanitarian access."

The issue of whether to explicitly include SALW ammunition in the scope of the UNPoA had sparked fierce debate in previous UNPoA meetings, including at RevCon3. Although a Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) will convene in 2020 to discuss problems arising from the accumulation of conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus, it is the view of IANSA and many states that the UNPoA meetings should be the principal venue for discussing SALW ammunition issues. Given that the UNPoA allows for a broader discussion of all facets of SALW ammunition issues, states should prepare fully for discussion on ammunition at the BMS7.

Synergies among instruments

Expressions of support for synergies among international and regional instruments that address many aspects of the regulation of SALW were disappointingly sparse. Nevertheless, several resolutions adopted on SALW drew attention to the relevance of the ATT. Argentina reiterated the importance of the need to explore synergies among the UNPoA, the ITI, the Firearms Protocol, and the ATT. Thailand supported promoting synergies between the ATT and other vital relevant frameworks, such as the UNPoA, the ITI, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development—particularly in regards to mainstreaming gender perspectives and reducing financial and arms flows. It's important that states view relevant instruments holistically rather than in isolation, and develop and take advantage of synergies among them to enhance their implementation.

The need for international assistance and cooperation with states and civil society

To deal with the global scale and harm caused by the uncontrolled spread, widespread availability, and illicit trafficking of SALW, many states—particularly in the Global South—need more international assistance and cooperation from other states. The Caribbean Community (CARICOM), for example, reiterates annually that it is not a significant producer, exporter, or importer of SALW, and yet it is burdened with diverting time and resources from development programs to combat the illicit trafficking of SALW. The European Union (EU), Japan, and individual European states reported on the support they are providing on SALW control projects, particularly to African countries. The EU funds a project to mainstream gender into the fight against SALW trafficking—an invaluable initiative given that women are often disproportionately affected by armed conflict and violence and yet have long been underrepresented in planning, decision-making, and implementation of efforts to counter SALW. The UN Office for Disarmament Affairs announced the launch of the Saving Lives Entity facility (SALIENT) at a side event during First Committee. SALIENT, expected to

begin in 2020, will provide funds for select countries to better mainstream control of small arms in development efforts and policies. So far Japan and New Zealand have contributed to the fund. It's critical that more members of the international community join in providing such support. Moreover, as agreed in resolution L.27 that was adopted, it is essential that the international community not only encourage civil society collaboration with national commissions

to support efforts to prevent and combat the illicit trade in SALW and to implement the UNPoA—especially given the important role that civil society organisations play by raising public awareness. It also needs to provide technical and financial support to strengthen the capacity of civil society to do this work—without leaving women and other traditionally underrepresented groups behind in the process.

INTERNATIONAL ARMS TRADE

Raluca Muresan and Aaron Laine | Control Arms Coalition

During the final week of First Committee states took action on several resolutions that referenced the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT).

L.25, “The Arms Trade Treaty,” welcomes decisions taken by the Fifth Conference of States Parties (CSP5) earlier this year, particularly the progress made by the Treaty’s standing working groups on effective treaty implementation, transparency and reporting, and universalisation, in advancing the object and purpose of the Treaty. It also welcomed the “adoption of action-oriented decisions on gender and gender-based violence”. The resolution, introduced by Argentina as the President of the Sixth Conference of States Parties (CSP6), recognises that enhancing reporting rates, transparency, and information sharing, in line with Treaty obligations, are fundamental measures to achieve the goal of preventing and tackling diversion. Seeking to further consolidate the Treaty’s institutional framework, L.25 welcomes the efforts undertaken at CSP5 to address the Treaty’s financial situation, expressing concern about the “unpaid assessed contributions of States and the potential adverse implications that this has for the Treaty processes.”

L.25 was adopted with a vote of 150-1-26 and had 97 co-sponsors. Lebanon, Malaysia, Vanuatu, China, Papua New Guinea, and Botswana co-sponsored the resolution for the first time while Angola, eSwatini, and Mozambique co-sponsored the resolution after not having done so for a few years. Disappointingly,

20 ATT states parties did not co-sponsor the resolution this year, although 18 of them voted in favour of it. Fiji reversed its position to an abstention, from last year when it voted in favour of the ATT resolution for the first time. China not only co-sponsored the ATT resolution for the first time this year but also announced that it “has initiated the domestic legal procedures to join the [ATT].”

The sole ‘no’ vote on the ATT resolution is from the United States and is likely a consequence of US President Trump’s decision earlier this year to withdraw the US’s signature from the ATT.

The US decision to withdraw its signature from the ATT is yet another step back from rules-based international cooperation, but is also an opportunity for other countries to take a leading role. China’s potential accession to the Treaty—as the fifth biggest arms exporters in the world—would be a big step towards universalisation. It is equally important that the Treaty’s provisions are effectively implemented and a rigorous risk assessment process is applied to all Chinese arms exports and imports to ensure compliance with international humanitarian and human rights law.

In an explanation of vote, Iran stated that the political and commercial interests of arms exporting countries have higher priority than observance of the fundamentals of international law. Iran also highlighted major violations of the ATT’s provisions,

citing the transfer of weapons to Israel. Other abstainers that delivered EOVs included Cuba and Armenia. They expressed concern over the Treaty potentially limiting the right of states to self-defense. The explanations from Egypt and Syria criticised the Treaty for failing to address exports of arms and ammunition to terrorist and other armed groups.

Three paragraph votes were also requested for L.25. This included preambular paragraph (PP) 9, which takes note of the UN Secretary-General's disarmament agenda. It was retained by a vote of 155-0-15. Operative paragraph (OP) 4 encourages the universalisation of the ATT and was retained by a vote of 137-1-31. OP9 acknowledges outcomes from the Third Review Conference (RevCon3) of the UN Programme of Action on small arms and light weapons (UNPoA) as well as synergies between it and the ATT. It was retained by a vote of 136-2-31.

In explaining why it abstained on OP9, Cuba expressed concerns about establishing artificial synergies between the ATT and other instruments that are universally accepted, a sentiment shared by Iran. The US and Israel voted against OP9 because of its references to the RevCon3 outcome document, which includes references to ammunition that the US had opposed during that Conference.

L.30, "Transparency in armaments," which had 57 co-sponsors, was adopted with 154 votes in favor, 0 against, and 23 abstentions. The Netherlands described the UN Register on Conventional Arms (UNROCA) as an important instrument of transparency and confidence-building measures in arms transfers. Voting was necessary for PP7, which notes the "concern expressed in the report of the 2019 group of governmental experts that the current level of resources of the [UN] Secretariat in the field of database management is insufficient to carry out the effective operation of the register". The Secretariat explained that under the terms of OP6, the General Assembly reaffirms its decision to keep the scope, the participation in, and the use of the Register under review, and requests the UN Secretary-General with assistance from a group of governmental experts to be convened for a week,

twice in 2020 and once in 2021, to prepare a report on the relevance of the UNROCA. This report should take into account on the work of the Conference on Disarmament, relevant deliberations within the UN, views of member states and the reports of the UN Secretary-General on the continuation of the Registrar and its further development.

Echoing some of the concerns raised by states who abstained from voting on L.30, including Iran, Cuba stressed that the UNROCA is unbalanced because it focuses on small arms and light weapons (SALW) without considering other categories such as weapons of mass destruction.

Seven other resolutions adopted at the First Committee included references to the ATT. Resolutions **L.27, "Assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons and collecting them,"** and **L.43, "The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects,"** both welcome the inclusion of small arms and light weapons in the scope of the ATT in their preambular paragraphs. Other aspects of those resolutions are described in the article on SALW. Resolutions **L.23, L.38, and L.42,** all adopted without a vote, highlighted the work done by the United Nations Regional Centres for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific, Africa, and Latin America and the Caribbean respectively, toward building national and regional capacity and providing technical assistance for the implementation of the ATT.

L.61, "Regional confidence-building measures: activities of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa," encourages states to provide assistance to those members of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa that have ratified the Arms Trade Treaty, and encourages those that have not yet joined it to do so. **L.43, "Problems arising from the accumulation of conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus,"** welcomes the ATT's provision on establishing and maintaining a national control system to regulate the export of relevant ammunition and munitions.

OUTER SPACE

Jessica West | Project Ploughshares

On the topic of outer space, UN member states emerged from First Committee more divided than ever. Four resolutions were presented to advance political discussions, but for the second consecutive year, not a single one received consensus. Additionally, persistent political divides were exacerbated by separate votes on particularly troublesome preamble and operational paragraphs. Statements and explanations of votes point fingers in multiple directions, but taken as a whole indicate a stark absence of political trust or goodwill. This outcome stands in contrast to the cautious optimism two years ago when two new processes were adopted to advance both potential legal measures for arms control in outer space through a Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) process and practical measures to implement agreed upon transparency and confidence-building measures (TCBMs) through discussions at the UN Disarmament Commission (UNDC). Their fates this year are key to understanding the current state of affairs on space security.

Discussions on TCBMs at the UNDC—advanced at the time by consensus as part of an ongoing resolution traditionally co-sponsored by China, Russia, and the United States (US)—have been stalled by organisational challenges facing the Commission. Only a few states such as Switzerland, Argentina, and Japan made statements urging their continuation. Instead, the focus of this year's annual TCBM resolution broadened to include other efforts such as implementation of 21 voluntary guidelines adopted in 2018 by the UN Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS). It also split into two resolutions: one sponsored initially by the United States (US) and United Kingdom (UK) (**L.55**), and another led by China and Russia (**L.60**). Dividing them is reference in L.60 to the draft treaty Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space, the Threat or Use of Force Against Space Objects (PPWT) proposed by Russia and China, as well as political statements in support of no first

placement of weapons in outer space (NFP), both of which are contentious (see below). Following failed efforts by the US and UK to reach agreement with other states on a single text, they withdrew the L.55 version of the resolution prior to voting. Russia welcomed this move and characterised the US effort to “keep seeking compromise” as “constructive.” And yet resolution L.60 proceeded with its non-consensus elements intact. The final vote was 166 in favour, two against (US and Israel), and 5 abstentions (Australia, Georgia, Palau, Ukraine, and UK). The US explanation of vote nonetheless expresses strong commitment to TCBMs and rules of behaviour, suggesting that this outcome reflects a political failure to build on substantive support for efforts to improve the operating environment in outer space.

L.58, “Further practical measures for the prevention of an arms race in outer space,” which is linked to the GGE, has for the past two years garnered constructive engagement if not consensus. But it suffered a similar erosion of support this year, largely due to the addition of two contentious clauses: preamble paragraph (PP) 4 included reference to “the objective of shaping a community of shared future for humankind,” and operative paragraph (OP) 3 “Expresses regret that, due to the position of one expert, consensus could not be reached on the final report of the Group of Governmental Experts.” PP4 references a phrase that has emerged domestically within China as a vision for global governance and has been introduced on space security resolutions since 2017. But it is not part of the established parlance of the UN. France, on behalf of it, the US, and UK, described it as “China's own vision of geopolitics” and objected to the “inclusion of national language in multilateral documents.” Japan noted that the language has not been adopted by consensus at the General Assembly, and encouraged “all states not to use language that could decrease trust between nations.” India was unclear what the phrase means. This clause garnered 110 yes votes, 40 no, while 12 abstained.

More damaging was OP3 singling out a single state—which earlier statements by Russia clearly named as the US—for the failure of consensus on the GGE process. Switzerland asserted that this clause “not only breaks with the practice established in our committee, but could also complicate the future work of the GGE,” which Germany noted clearly operated under the rule of consensus. The lack of consensus is an outcome of the GGE as a whole, according to Japan. Voting on OP3 gained the support of only 55 states, with 50 no votes and 48 abstentions. Resolution L.58 as a whole was adopted by a vote of 124 in favour, 41 against, and 10 abstaining.

L.59, “No first placement of weapons in outer space,” also included reference to “common efforts towards a community of shared future for humankind” in PP5, which was retained with a vote of 114-42-40. The resolution as a whole resulted in familiar patterns of support and dissent. However, reflecting the changed politics of the L.60 resolution on TCBMs described above, Russia suggested that NFP is in fact the “only practical” TCBM measure. Yet statements by the European Union (EU), Switzerland, Japan, Germany, France with the US and UK, and others continued to raise concerns about the lack of definition of a “space weapon” in a domain dominated by dual-use capabilities and a corresponding lack of verification, which are also leveled at the PPWT. Also different this year was marked concern that like the PPWT, the NFP initiative overlooks the proliferating threat of ground-based anti-satellite (ASAT) weapons

and other counterspace measures, as indicated by Switzerland, Japan, Germany, and the US. Some states noted that such capacities are under development by some of the resolution sponsors. Nonetheless, Mexico supported the effort given “the importance and urgency of preventing an arms race in outer space,” asserting that this does not by default indicate acceptance of the use of Earth-based weapons in space or of the right to be the second to place weapons in outer space. The resolution was adopted by a vote of 114 in favour, 42 against, and 10 abstentions.

Within this fray, the decades old resolution L.3 calling on efforts within the Conference on Disarmament to begin negotiations on prevention of an arms race in outer space (PAROS) was intended to “bridge gaps and provide common ground,” according to co-sponsor Sri Lanka. At one point adopted by consensus, this marked the second consecutive year in recent times that the resolution was put to a vote: 175 in favour, two against (Israel and US), with no abstentions. Reflecting on the overall level of discord, Egypt expressed “hope that we can all rise above narrow conference room politics” to find consensus once again in the future. But while the politics of space may seem narrow, the differences run deep. Indeed, while the focus of the Committee is the prevention of an arms race in outer space, it is difficult not to conclude that space is a domain already marred by conflict. The question now seems to be whether states have the political will to contain it from violence.

CYBER

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

It's just a little bit of history repeating. Member states adopted two First Committee resolutions on cyber security and information and communications technologies (ICTs) last week. The tabling of two substantive resolutions, when simple decisions or a single resolution would have sufficed, was surprising and viewed by many as unnecessary and regrettable. The UN processes that each resolution corresponds to are currently in progress and no action is required by the Committee at this time. While not as extreme as in 2018, the tone and dynamics surrounding each resolution, and in particular between their lead sponsors the United States (US) and Russia, contributed to a now all too familiar feeling of politicisation and manufactured divide.

L.49/Rev.1, "Advancing responsible State behaviour in cyberspace in the context of international security" was adopted with a vote of 161-10-8.

L.50/Rev.1, "Developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security" was adopted with a vote of 124-6-48.

L.49/Rev.1 was introduced by the US as its main sponsor. In its general statement, the US reflected that the resolution includes previously agreed language and incorporates amendments from member states in order to show its commitment to consensus. It said it was "saddened" that Russia could not do the same and has instead "driven a wedge into the international community". Here the US was referring to content within L.50 that was not acceptable to it and other states, prompting, as in 2018, the tabling of a second resolution where historically there had always been one.

While not its main sponsor, Cuba provided a general statement on L.50/Rev.1 in advance of voting. It explained that the resolution reflects concern over the use of ICTs for military purposes and underscores the central role of the UN in

promoting dialogue. Cuba stated that the UN's open-ended working group (OEWG) on ICTs—which was established by Russia's 2018 resolution—is the right way to address the concerns of the international community on this issue because of the openness and transparency of its format.

Russia, Malaysia, China, Brazil, Chile, the European Union (EU), Switzerland, and Cuba delivered explanations of vote (EOVs) on L.49/Rev1. Australia, the US, Malaysia, Israel, the United Kingdom (UK) and Canada, Brazil, Chile, New Zealand, US, Japan, Switzerland, and the EU provided explanations of vote on L.50/Rev1. Some may be applicable to both resolutions, however.

Virtually all states expressed regret over lack of consensus on the issue, meaning either the lack of a single cyber resolution or that neither resolution could be adopted by consensus.

The Russian explanation emphasised the importance of returning to consensus on this issue, which would mean a single ICT resolution. It highlighted ways in which the US has made that impossible and referred to a "pseudo compromise" in which all US amendments to L.50/Rev1 would have had to be accepted. Russia indicated that by tabling a second ICT resolution again this year, the US has undermined unity. It also raised specific concerns with the content of the resolution, including its focus on the group of governmental experts (GGE), which has a less inclusive format than the OEWG.

The US explanation returned similar blunt concerns against Russia and its unwillingness to work together or find compromise.

The US, Australia, and a joint EOV from the UK and Canada noted that as the GGE and OEWG are distinct processes, it is procedurally appropriate to have two corresponding resolutions. These states voted yes on L.49/Rev.1 and abstained on L.50/Rev.1 and cited

frustration that proposed amendments were not addressed.

China said that what merits revision in L.49/Rev.1 is not just the language but the “political attitude” of treating the two UN cyber processes differently. Cuba said it did not see reason for L.49/Rev.1 because the GGE process that it corresponds with has not yet started.

Switzerland voted yes to both resolutions. It noted that L.49/Rev.1 more closely mirrors language from past resolutions and that L.50/Rev.1 would have benefitted from greater support if it had relied on agreed language. Japan, Israel, the EU, and New Zealand made a similar point. In particular, the absence of reference to the 2013 and 2015 consensus reports of earlier GGEs and to the applicability of existing international law to cyber space was of concern to Switzerland. The US suggested that language in L.50/Rev.1 goes beyond the mandate of the OEWG. Israel added concern over new language referring to “negotiations” in L.50/Rev.1.

The UK-Canada EOJ also stressed that while they voted against L.50/Rev.1 it doesn't indicate opposition to the OEWG. A joint explanation from the US and the UK also noted they will participate in the OEWG despite voting against L.50/Rev.1.

Malaysia voted yes to both resolutions as it believes that both carry value in moving forward global discourse on cyber issues and that GGE and OEWG are complementary, which was also noted by Brazil.

L.15, “Role of science and technology in the context of international security and disarmament,” was adopted without a vote. Pakistan stressed in an explanation of vote that the right to peaceful use of technology should be non-discriminatory. Brazil highlighted that preambular paragraph (PP) 5 is not ideal but that the formulation in the resolution adds a balanced approach. It also linked the reference in PP4 on regulating the transfer of technologies for peaceful uses to several disarmament instruments. This was also underscored by France in a joint statement with the US.



Convention on Conventional Weapons annual meeting

SIDE EVENT BRIEFING

How to Ban Killer Robots, and Why It's Time

Conference Room XXI, Palais des Nations
United Nations Geneva

Wednesday, 13 November 2019
13:00-14:30

MULTILATERALISM

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

Throughout the 2019 session of First Committee, the majority of states expressed profound concern with the erosion of multilateralism and existing international and bilateral disarmament, arms control, and non-proliferation agreements. Furthermore, the work of First Committee was significantly disrupted by the denial of visas by the United States (US) to delegates of certain countries, in violation of the UN Headquarters host country agreement and against the spirit of multilateralism. Three draft resolutions addressed these issues: the annual Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) resolution on multilateralism; a new resolution on the system of treaties and agreements related to disarmament, arms control, and non-proliferation; and a new draft decision on the location of First Committee's 2020 session. In addition, this issue affected draft resolution L.52/Rev.1 on the UN Disarmament Commission, for which amendments were proposed in draft resolution L.62.

L.32, "Promotion of multilateralism in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation," was adopted with a vote of 124-4-52.

L.56/Rev.1, "Strengthening and developing the system of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation treaties and agreements," was adopted with a vote of 174-0-5.

A few minor changes were made to the original version. Preambular paragraph (PP) 8 previously stressed the importance of "stable and appropriate financial support" for relevant instruments and regimes; the updated version stressed the "appropriate and sustainable financial support". PP10 and operative paragraph (OP) 5 now refer to actions instead of measures.

Before the vote, the European Union (EU) and a number of aligned countries said they would vote in favour of the resolution because they are strong supporters of the international rules-based order.

They said it is important for all countries, including the main sponsor of L.56/Rev.1, Russia, to work to preserve and further advance agreements for arms control, disarmament, and non-proliferation. They reiterated their call for the sponsors to join relevant conventional weapon treaties without delay, including the Arms Trade Treaty and the Mine Ban Treaty. These states also regretted that the issue of compliance was not included in the resolution, highlighting their concerns about non-compliance with the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty and the avoidance of a new nuclear arms race. Switzerland likewise warned there is a clear contrast between L.56/Rev.1 and recent developments, including the demise of the INF Treaty, while the US and UK in a joint explanation of vote criticised Russia's actions in relation to the INF Treaty and nuclear weapon modernisation and development. The United Kingdom (UK) and US voted in favour of L.56/Rev.1 because they are "committed to the principles in the resolution" but argued that Russia's sponsorship "stands in sharp contrast to its history of violating these principles."

The EU and aligned countries further expressed dismay by attempts to challenge the authority and integrity of international organisations such as the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), and recalled Russia's veto against the Joint Investigative Mechanism in relation to the use of chemical weapons in Syria as well as Russia's cyber attacks against the OPCW. Switzerland likewise expressed concern with objections to the establishment of identification and attribution mechanisms in light of violations of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), noting such objections go against the main provisions of L.56/Rev.1. The UK and US accused Russia of violating the CWC in 2018 and undertaking hostile cyber operations against the OPCW.

The EU and aligned countries also raised concerns about the financial crisis facing international arms

control, disarmament, and non-proliferation treaty bodies and forums. These states called on all countries to pay their assessed contributions to treaties in full and on time. They also highlighted the importance of gender equality and women's participation and leadership in non-proliferation and disarmament efforts and regretted that L.56/Rev.1 does not reference this.

Mexico, which voted in favour of L.56/Rev.1, explained that it disassociates from OP8 because it is not accurate that multilateral disarmament, non-proliferation, and arms control agreements and measures must always be based on consensus. It explained that each treaty and fora are different, and while consensus is always a valuable aspiration, it should not be comparable to unanimity or used to justify paralysis.

Draft decision L.57/Rev.1, "Improving the effectiveness of the work of the First Committee," originally sought to move the 2020 session of First Committee to Vienna or Geneva in order to avoid the US denial of visas. The revised version takes a more incremental approach, as Russia explained. It requests the UN Secretary-General (UNSG) to report by 1 February 2020 on the compliance of the US with its host country obligations and to report by 1 March 2020 on his own efforts to ensure the full implementation of the UN Headquarters Agreement. It further requests the UNSG to report by 1 April 2020 on alternative venues for First Committee and budget implications, if there is no progress on the visa issue and decides that if the issue is not resolved "in a reasonable and finite period of time" the General Assembly "shall consider convening the First Committee session for 2020 in Geneva or Vienna."

The draft decision was not adopted, with 18 votes in favour, 69 against, and 72 abstentions.

Before the vote, the US strongly urged all member states to vote against it, arguing that L.57/Rev.1 threatened to "dismember" a principle organ of the UN. The EU argued this issue of visas does not belong in First Committee, and the Netherlands

expounded on this, noting that this draft decision preempts the course of action being taken in Sixth Committee. Others including Austria, Ecuador, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mexico, Pakistan, and Switzerland agreed with this sentiment while expressing concern with the denial of visas. Austria said its vote against the draft decision is guided by its own commitment as host country of the UN in Vienna, arguing that any issues with a host country must be dealt with directly with that country and in appropriate fora. Algeria called on the host country to fully comply with its obligations and believes a comprehensive review should be done in the host country committee. Switzerland said that L.57/Rev.1 has many unanswered questions about the process it proposes. New Zealand argued that moving First Committee would have financial consequences and impact the ability of smaller delegations without representation in the suggested locations to participate in meetings. Ecuador said it is against holding UN General Assembly meetings outside of UN Headquarters. Malaysia expressed concern that simply moving First Committee to another venue does not address the underlying problem of the denial of visas, which would continue to affect other fora.

Belarus on the other hand argued that issues with the host country should not be "concealed or hidden" in another committee because it is a far-reaching problem that affects all UN bodies and delegations. Iran pointed out that there is a direct connection between the US impeding government representatives' access to the UN, and the work of First Committee. It noted that arms control and disarmament treaties make an essential contribution to peace, security, and multilateral relations, and we are witnessing an erosion of multilateralism by various US administrations. Iran said that hampering delegations' participation in UN meetings and violating the UN host country agreement is only one aspect of this; the US has also abrogated and walked away from other multilateral agreements.

Algeria, Belarus, Venezuela, Zimbabwe, Cuba, China, Nicaragua, Syria, Burundi, and Russia delivered a joint statement expressing regret that L.57/Rev.1

was not adopted. They said they had no choice but to table this decision because no country has the right to violate the host country agreement and discriminate against other UN member states.

Russia reiterated these points when speaking to its decision to join consensus on the adoption of the provisional programme of work and timetable for First Committee's 2020 session. It said this put Russia and others in a difficult position because there is no guarantee their delegates will even be able to participate in next year's work, but wanted to demonstrate its constructive position. However, if the visa issue is not resolved, Russia warned it will revisit the possibility of moving the work of First Committee.

The visa issue also impacted action on draft decision **L.52/Rev.1, "2020 session of the Disarmament Commission"**. The decision notes that the UN Disarmament Commission (UNDC) was unable to hold its substantive session in 2019 due to organisational matters and decides that the UNDC will hold a substantive session from 6–24 April 2020 to continue consideration of recommendations for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation and preparation of recommendations to promote transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space. Russia tabled amendments in draft resolution L.62 to add language to PP8 of L.52/Rev.1 "welcoming the report of the Committee on Relations with the Host Country" as contained in A/74/26 and to change OP(a) to indicate that the 2020 session will be held "if the issues raised in paragraphs 165 (j) and (p) of the report of the Committee on Relations with the Host Country have been resolved by that time."

The US said it was inappropriate for Russia to introduce these "hostile amendments" to a decision on the UNDC, which does not have a mandate to deal with host country issues. It said that the patience shown at the UNDC in April has only resulted in more "hostage taking" at First Committee, which is a "sobering lesson" that "if aggression is acquiesced to it only begets more aggression." The US argued that this obstructionism has profound implications for the disarmament machinery and is affecting the

institutional integrity of the UN itself. The US said if the hostile amendments are tolerated and subsidiary bodies of the UN can be blocked by one or more delegations, it "will spell the beginning of the end of the United Nations".

L.62 was not adopted, with a vote of 21 in favour, 66 against, and 59 abstentions. Russia called for votes on two paragraphs of L.52/Rev.1. Operative paragraph (a) was retained with a vote of 133-1-14, while operative paragraph (b) was retained with a vote of 133-1-15. L.52/Rev.1 was adopted as a whole without a vote.

Malaysia voted in favour of L.52/Rev.1 and hopes the UNDC can resume substantive work in 2020. It voted against L.62 because while it welcomes efforts to resolve the host country issues, it is cautious about tying the work of the UNDC with issues being discussed in the host nation committee. Mexico expressed solidarity with affected delegations but said the solution is the remit of another committee. India abstained on L.62 but said it is regrettable that the visa issues have not yet been resolved.

Iran explained that it supported L.62 because the right of delegations to participate in the UNDC was distorted by the US and the proposed amendments were based on the report of the host country committee. Syria argued that L.62 is meant to support the disarmament machinery. Both countries warned that the denial of visas could start to affect more countries over time.

ENVIRONMENT

Doug Weir | The Conflict and Environment Observatory

Over the past two weeks, nearly 50 states have debated the environmental dimensions of armed conflicts at the United Nations in New York. Some spoke in detail about the responsibility of “belligerents” for minimising environmental harm during conflicts, or about the role that human rights or environmental law should play in plugging the gaps in international humanitarian law. Many had direct experience of environmental damage in conflicts, and with its consequences for human health, livelihoods, and ecosystems.

Only a few floors separate the General Assembly’s Sixth and First Committees, but at times it felt like they were on different planets. The Sixth Committee has been considering the International Law Commission’s project to develop legal principles protecting the environment in relation to armed conflicts for some time.¹ At a time where the urgency of the multiple environmental crises that humanity faces has been more visible than ever before, it seemed reasonable to hope that “environment” would feature more at the 2019 First Committee than has hitherto been the case.

Unfortunately, this did not occur. The annual Non-Aligned Movement’s resolution on norms in disarmament agreements has come to represent First Committee’s collective failure of imagination on the environment. **L. 29, “Observance of environmental norms in the drafting and implementation of agreements on disarmament and arms control,”** contributes next to nothing to efforts to identify and address the environmental consequences of weapons and militarism. Worse than that, it perhaps comforts delegations that they are doing “something” on the environment. It was adopted without a vote. The United States, as well as the United Kingdom and France jointly, issued explanations of vote, indicating that they are not convinced of the links between environmental norms and arms control treaties.

Besides the resolution, there were the few usual mentions of the environment in the context of the thematic debates on nuclear and chemical weapons, but these were typically simplistic linkages that bring little new to the table. Niger and Sudan took a more welcome approach, articulating the relationship between instability, small arms and light weapons, and societal and environmental stress.

It is this articulation that is key. The majority of the topics on First Committee’s agenda have an environmental dimension. Sometimes these relationships may be complicated: what is the connection between the arms trade, illicit financial flows, and the biodiversity crisis? In other cases, they are obvious but ignored: what is the environmental impact of conventional weapons? Perhaps the failure to articulate these relationships wouldn’t matter so much if First Committee existed in a vacuum, but it doesn’t. In Sixth Committee, the nuclear-armed states were busy objecting to a draft principle proposing that attacks against the natural environment by way of reprisals are prohibited. Wouldn’t it have been interesting to hear states in First Committee exploring this aspect of deterrence policy, in the context of environmental norms and sustainable development?

We are one of many organisations that would be delighted to work with states on a resolution whose purpose is to explore, articulate, and address the environmental dimensions of the topics on First Committee’s agenda. All sectors of society have an obligation to respond to the crises facing our common environment—the same should also hold true for the General Assembly’s committees.

Note

1. For the text of the draft principles, see ILC, ‘Report of the International Law Commission on the Work of its 71st Session’ (29 April–7 June and 8 July–9 August 2019) UN Doc. A/74/10, Chapter VI ‘Protection of the environment in relation to armed conflicts’, Section C: Text of the draft principles on protection of the environment in relation to armed conflicts, adopted by the Commission on first reading, 211–15, <https://undocs.org/en/A/74/10>.

DEVELOPMENT

Danielle Samler | Lawyers Committee on Nuclear Policy

The final two weeks of First Committee included many references to the relationship between disarmament and development. Many, including the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Netherlands, Indonesia, China, Colombia, and Myanmar, among others, recognised the intrinsic links between disarmament, military expenditure, conventional weapons use, weapons of mass destruction, and socioeconomic development. CARICOM noted there can be no sustainable development without security, good governance, and peace. It further stated that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) must be pursued simultaneously with disarmament. Ireland noted that the UN Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament provides an opportunity to break the stalemate and achieve the SDGs.

While there were references to the negative impacts on sustainable development caused by the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons (SALW), notably by Colombia, many references to development were expressed in terms of regional security, emerging science and technology, and outer space developments. States also expressed concern about the hindrance to sustainable development caused by the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. Ambassador Steffen Kongstad, in his report from the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters, stated that in order to achieve the SDGs, it is essential to mitigate civilian harm in urban warfare. Discussions on regional disarmament measures highlighted the important role that regional centres can play in achieving the SDGs. The Chief of the Regional Disarmament, Information and Outreach Branch in the UN Office of Disarmament Affairs brought attention to their engagement to conduct surveys about SDG 16, which seeks to promote peace and justice. The UN Regional Centre for Disarmament in Latin America and the Caribbean, which is based in Peru, was particularly commended for harmonising its activities to bring them in line with the SDGs, especially SDG 16.

Bangladesh, South Africa, and Pakistan highlighted the relationship between development and the emergence of new science and technology. Bangladesh stated its goal to become a digitally advanced country by 2021, which it said will be important for implementation of the 2030 Agenda. South Africa highlighted the important role of technology and science, stating that both serve as key drivers for sustainable development on the continent. Pakistan noted that the development of technology and science can aid in overcoming the challenges of climate change, food security, and disease. The Director of the UN Office for Outer Space Affairs said that any action to meet space security and sustainability concerns must incorporate fundamental development needs and affirmed that the 2030 Sustainable Development agenda provides a unique opportunity to reflect on how space aspiration should be further manifested as indispensable to address global challenges for humanity.

Resolution **L.35, "Relationship between disarmament and development,"** was adopted without a vote. However, the United Kingdom (UK) and France, speaking jointly, and the United States (US), put on the record that they have doubts about the symbiotic relationship between disarmament and development. The UK and France, while recognising a relationship between disarmament and development, also took the position that the growing military expenditure of some countries does not necessarily directly impact the achievement of sustainable development. They insisted that the relationship between development and military expenditure is complex and in some instances, investment in military and defense mechanisms can facilitate and aid development efforts. The US further added that disarmament and development are two distinct issues. **L.51, "Objective information on military matters, including transparency of military expenditures,"** was adopted with 176 in favor, 0 against, and 2 abstentions.

That there is a clear relationship between disarmament and development was reinforced time and again throughout the First Committee by the majority of states. It is important that states are acknowledging the catastrophic humanitarian consequences that SALW, landmines, cluster munitions, and weapons of mass destruction have on populations through forced displacement, loss of life, loss of critical infrastructure, and negative environmental impacts. It is disheartening that

even while acknowledging those impacts, military expenditure has reached \$1.78 trillion USD and that the potential resources available for sustainable development are instead being used to cause massive destruction and death of fellow human beings. As Nepal stated early on in the 2019 session of the First Committee, the only way to fully realise the 2030 Agenda and achieve the SDGs by 2030 is to foster “disenchantment with the Faustian bargain that is plaguing humanity.”

GENDER

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

This year’s First Committee concludes with similar promising developments on gender that were celebrated last year. In 2019, 17 of the adopted resolutions include gender references, placing gender perspectives firmly in peace and security discussions in First Committee and beyond. L.1, L.20, L.21, L.23, L.25, L.26, L.38, L.42, L.43, L.44, L.45, L.46, L.47, L.48, L.53, L.54, and L.61 call for women’s equal participation; stress the gendered impacts of weapon systems and armed violence; and/or underscore the need for gender considerations in disarmament machinery. An unprecedented 28 per cent of all adopted 2019 resolutions therefore include gender aspects.

In 2018, 17 resolutions with gender references were adopted, amounting to 25 per cent of all 2018 First Committee resolutions—a then unparalleled number. For comparison, in 2017, 15 per cent of resolutions made gender references. This figure was 13 per cent in 2016 and 12 per cent in 2015. 2018 was also turning point as six resolutions included gender language for the first time ever, while three resolutions had made their language on gender stronger.

This year, many of those resolutions contained new or stronger language from 2018. In addition, there are four 2019 resolutions that include language on gender for the first time ever: L.44 on the Biological

Weapons Convention includes language that encourages the “equitable participation of women and men in the framework of the Convention.” L.48, a new resolution on youth and L.53 on conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus call for women’s and men’s equal participation. L.26/Rev.1 calls for the first time for an equitable representation of women and men in the composition of the group of governmental experts (GGE) on nuclear disarmament verification.

As reported earlier, L.46 on the Convention of Cluster Munitions has strengthened its gender language since its last adoption in 2017, while L.47 on “future-oriented dialogue” for nuclear disarmament, tabled by Japan, has weakened its language compared to last year.

This year, there was another welcome uptick of support to this topic. The joint statement on gender, delivered under the cluster of “disarmament machinery” mobilised 79 states to put on record their support for gender considerations in disarmament and arms control processes. This is almost 20 more states than last year, where 60 states supported a similar statement.

The joint statement recalled some of the positive developments that have advanced gender considerations in the broader disarmament

machinery in 2019. These include the adopted decisions on gender and gender-based violence at the Fifth Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty, the focus on gender considerations for the upcoming Review Conference of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, and efforts to achieve gender parity in the selection of GGE experts.

While this year's statement is strong in outlining the gendered impacts of armed violence, as well as the need for women's equal participation, it is a slight backtrack to last year's statement as it does not recognise the role of dominant gender norms as obstacles to disarmament efforts. The 2018 statement observed that a gender perspective "allows a deeper examination of underlying assumptions about how gender shapes our own work and the dynamics of joint disarmament efforts." It cited the 2006 Blix Commission's recognition that

"expectations about gender also shape how the machinery considers and addresses disarmament and international security."

While it is welcome that an increasing number of states are calling for gender perspectives in peace and security processes, we must not forget what this means. Albeit indispensable, it does not only mean calls for women's equal participation, or increased understandings of gendered impacts of war and armed violence. Applying a gender perspective also means that we collectively question gendered stereotypes of what is considered "feminine" and "masculine," and how those are associated with violence, war and militarism. A gender analysis necessitates an exploration how gendered discourse hampers disarmament efforts. It also requires the inclusion of diverse actors, moving beyond the binary calls for equitable participation of women and men.

YOUTH

Christian N. Ciobanu | Nuclear Age Peace Foundation

Recognising both the importance of disarmament education and young people's innovative perspectives, the Republic of Korea formally introduced resolution L.48, "Youth, disarmament and non-proliferation" to the First Committee on 6 November. Eighty states co-sponsored the resolution.

A vote was called on preambular paragraph (PP) 8 of the resolution, which touches upon Action 38 of the UN Secretary-General's Disarmament Agenda. Russia and Syria abstained on this paragraph. The resolution as a whole was adopted without a vote.

It is a good sign that a broad cross-regional group of states recognise the need to reverse the current educational deficit on nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation education. This educational deficit is a major problem, as mentioned in recent publications by leading scholars. For example, in their joint article, "American students aren't taught nuclear weapons in schools. Here's how to fix that problem," Erin Connolly and Kate Hewitt, two young arms

control experts, explain that "students in colleges and high schools near Manhattan Project sites lacked a foundational knowledge of nuclear weapons, their history, and current issues." Additionally, they noted that less than one per cent of those who they surveyed knew which states possess nuclear weapons. Further, Sarah Bidgood of CNS expressed concerns about the lack of American university courses on weapons of mass destruction.

As we continue to face the greatest existential threat to humanity, we need to educate young people through a humanitarian-based lens and empower them. Their views can help us find creative solutions to addressing humanity's greatest threat. Positively, we see that many young activists led in the movement towards the creation of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

It is hoped that this resolution will reinvigorate discussions on both education and bring youth to the policy arena.

FIRST COMMITTEE MONITOR

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

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Reaching Critical Will

www.reachingcriticalwill.org



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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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