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EDITORIAL: THE UNSUSTAINABILITY OF HYPOCRISY

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

As the electoral politics of the UN Headquarters' host country played out this past week, the First Committee reconvened to begin taking actions on the more than 70 draft resolutions on its docket. To some this may have felt like a distraction, welcome or unwelcome, but the work of the First Committee is intimately tied to the domestic politics of all its member states, as much as it is to the relations between them. And the theatrics within the First Committee give us an indication—often times quite worrying—of what governments are doing, or are willing to do, at home as well as abroad.

The action over the resolutions related to chemical weapons this past week is (unfortunately) a good example of this. Over the past few years, divisions around the use of chemical weapons have deepened. While virtually every delegation condemns, in the abstract, the use of these weapons, there is a sharp divide between those who are willing to condemn specific uses and those who argue that singling out and stigmatising users is “political”. This has led to a breakdown in consensus on the standard chemical weapons-related resolution, which until recently was adopted without a vote. But more importantly, it has led to a breakdown in support for the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and other UN offices and mechanisms that are meant to investigate alleged chemical weapon use. It has also meant that while in certain cases investigations have been carried out and attribution for these crimes has been applied, the findings have been rejected by certain governments and the perpetrators have not been held accountable.

The idea that the use of chemical weapons—*chemical weapons!*—could be politicised should give us all pause. That the functioning of treaties, international organisations, and agreed mechanisms could be disputed and disparaged at the time when they are needed most requires us to take a look at our systems and structures. Institutions are being tested right now. The institutions of individual states and of

international relations are all under pressure, from more or less the same forces: from governments that do not respect the rule of law and that put their own profit and privilege above those of human beings; and from a manipulation or disregard of facts in favour of opinions or positions that suit political interests.

When the institutions that are meant to protect us from weapons of mass destruction, from crimes against humanity, war crimes, and human rights violations are being undermined, we need to be worried. We also need to pay attention to the ways governments are talking about these weapons—the subtle nuances in condemnations, or the outright defence of their possession and possible use.

Which brings us to nuclear weapons. While the number of countries joining the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) rises, the handful of states that possess these genocidal bombs are clinging ever more tightly to their arsenals. All nine nuclear-armed states voted **against** the First Committee **resolution** on the TPNW; collectively or individually they delivered explanations of vote that asserted the Treaty is useless, harmful, or both. At the same time, they argued that their possession of these weapons is necessary and “responsible”. But this is where they begin to tear each other apart.

The United States, along with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, voted **against** the First Committee **resolution** on the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). The US delegation said that it could not support the resolution's call for the CTBT to enter into force because this would constrain US actions while allowing other nuclear-armed states like Russia and China to test their weapons in secret. This is, of course, false, as all states bound by the Treaty are subject to the same constraints. Instead, this statement is further signalling a possible intent to restart explosive

nuclear testing, which the current US government has **previously suggested** it might do.

In keeping with this, the United States also successfully incited Japan to further water down its already tasteless **resolution** on nuclear weapons, including in relation to the CTBT's entry into force. The resolution has turned signing and ratifying the CTBT into one item in a list of options aimed at preventing nuclear weapon testing. This language was condemned even by other nuclear-armed states, such as France, which argued that the entry into force of the CTBT is not optional but essential.

The Japan-led resolution also vigorously backtracks from agreed outcomes of past Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conferences. The nuclear-armed and nuclear-supportive states posit that the NPT is the only relevant nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation instrument, yet most seem comfortable either encouraging or going along with this brazen attempt to undermine, discard, rewrite, condition, or ignore legally-binding obligations and political commitments they have agreed to over the past fifty years.

Some of the states supporting Japan's resolution suggest it is "pragmatic" in the current context, asserting that it reflects "the international security environment". But since when is destroying international law pragmatic? Especially when many of these very same countries are demanding that international law be respected and upheld when it comes to chemical weapons? Egypt called out this hypocrisy during the action on resolutions this week, as Palestine and others did during the general debate.

Hypocrisy is a hallmark of failure. While those who perform it seem to think they will be able to get away with it forever, such actions are likely to become part of their undoing. The Japanese resolution, which used to be adopted by consensus, is now eviscerated each year, its paragraphs pulled out one by one for separate votes. This year it met with fifteen paragraph votes. While each secured enough votes to be retained, the vexation of many states with this

resolution was made clear through this process and their explanations of vote. They will not sit by and let decades of progress and commitments be ravaged because certain governments no longer feel like being bound by earlier agreements.

Actions that stand up to hypocrisy and violations of international law are imperative to not just hold the line, but also to advance us further towards our goals: in this case, the elimination of nuclear weapons. As stigmatisation of these heinous weapons of mass destruction increases through the TPNW and associated processes and actions, the nuclear weapon possessors try to proclaim their legitimacy and their responsibility more loudly than ever. Just like an aspiring tyrant faced with downfall, the nuclear-armed states try to hold onto their perceived power by cajoling, threatening, and demanding. But as others rise to contest their position and speak together in solidarity and courage, the tides are fated to shift.



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NUCLEAR WEAPONS

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In the fourth week of the First Committee, participants heard briefings by regional groups and chairpersons of different Groups of Governmental Experts (GGEs). One of these was the Chairperson of the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters who reported that the UN Secretary-General (UNSG) asked the Board to explore possible alternative approaches for nuclear disarmament and arms control. She explained that the Board therefore focused on key challenges to nuclear disarmament and will make formal recommendations to the UNSG at the 76th session of the UN General Assembly. She argued that an approach to nuclear disarmament needs to be rooted in a shared vision for a world free of nuclear weapons, and based on nuclear disarmament that is verifiable, irreversible, and transparent, advancing human security. She asserted that to work towards a cooperative security regime, there is a need for a diverse and modern “diplomatic tool kit” to address tensions, promote dialogue, enhance transparency, and reduce strategic competition amongst nuclear-armed states. She further underscored that the work of nuclear disarmament and arms control as response to COVID-19 is a global project in which each “shares its deepest stake”.

In his briefing to First Committee, the Secretary-General (SG) of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and Caribbean (OPANAL) underscored the “political capital” represented by the existing nuclear weapon free zones (NWFZs) in the world. He expressed deep concern at the erosion of treaty-based disarmament and of bilateral instruments contributing to arms control of the two countries possessing over 90 per cent of the global nuclear weapons arsenals. The SG further expressed worry at the negative implications if New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) isn't extended, triggering a quantitative and qualitative arms race. He argued that if New START isn't extended, it would also be a clear message from the USA and Russia to non-nuclear-armed states that

they don't take their commitments on arms control and advancing on the NPT's Article VI seriously. The SG also criticised that the nuclear-armed states made interpretative declarations to their ratifications of the Additional Protocol to the Treaty of Tlatelolco that reserve the right to withdraw and to use nuclear weapons against states parties of the Treaty. On a more positive note, the SG welcomed the TPNW and its imminent entry into force, complementing the NPT.

Resolutions

In the fifth week of First Committee, member states took action on all nuclear-related resolutions. An overview of voting results and explanations of vote is below. Please note that most resolutions were presented in the last edition. Below, resolutions are presented that weren't available at the time of writing for the last edition. This section also reports on voting results on all nuclear-related resolutions and on explanations of vote (EOV). Please note that reporting on EOVs is not necessarily comprehensive.

L.1, “Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East,” which was introduced in the previous edition of the Monitor, was traditionally always adopted without a vote. However, since 2018, a vote has been requested. The resolution was adopted this year with a vote of 169-2-1. The United States and Israel voted against, and Cameroon abstained.

Iran explained its vote in favour of the resolution, saying that the substance of the resolution hasn't changed. But since consensus on the resolution was broken, Iran argued that other parts could also be changed, and called for the deletion of preambular paragraph (PP) 9 and operative paragraph (OP) 4 referring to “peace negotiations” in the Middle East because it argued that they don't exist. Iran further stressed that the resolution should address the refusal of the US and Israel to participate in

negotiations on a NWFZ in the Middle East, and that the resolution should also acknowledge Israel's refusal to join the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Syria also expressed its support for the resolution.

L.2, "The risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East," which was introduced in the previous edition of the Monitor, was adopted with a vote of 147-6-23. Canada, Israel, Micronesia, Palau, the Marshall Islands, and the United States voted against. Separate votes were held on PP5 and PP6, which were retained by 161-4-3 and 159-4-3, respectively. The paragraphs recall decisions of the 1995 and 2000 NPT Review Conferences. Israel, Pakistan, the US, and India voted against both PPs, and Panama, Bhutan, and France abstained from the PPs.

Pakistan explained that because it is not party to the NPT, and therefore not bound by its conclusions and recommendations, it voted against PP5 and PP6 but voted in favour of the resolution as a whole. Iran expressed its support, particularly to OPs 5 and 6 that call on Israel to accede to the NPT, to renounce its nuclear capabilities, and to place all of its nuclear facilities under the IAEA safeguards. Syria expressed its support for the resolution. Switzerland voted in favour but said it regrets that the resolution only refers to one dimension of proliferation risk and that it singles out one state.

India said that L.2 should be limited to the region it intends and reiterated that it is not bound by the NPT, and therefore abstained from the resolution as a whole and from PPs 5 and 6, as indicated above.

L.5, "Humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons," introduced in the previous edition of the Monitor, was adopted with a vote of 138-13-27. Venezuela expressed its support for the resolution, noting that it highlights that the world cannot efficiently deal with the impacts of a nuclear detonation. Pakistan explained its abstention, arguing that while it shares the sentiment of the resolution, a discourse on nuclear weapons cannot be "solely reduced to the humanitarian and ethical dimensions."

L.6, "Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons," was introduced in the last edition of the Monitor but had an oral update. OP3 now reads: "Welcomes that the Treaty will enter into force on 22 January 2021 and welcomes that already 84 States had signed the Treaty and 50 States had ratified or acceded to it as at 24 October 2020." The resolution was adopted with a vote of 118-43-13. Separate votes were held on OP5 and OP6 that were retained by 114-41-10 and 121-26-20, respectively.

OP5 calls on states "to promote adherence to the Treaty through bilateral, subregional, regional and multilateral contacts, outreach," and OP6 requests the UNSG to "report to the General Assembly at its seventy-sixth session on the status of signature and ratification, acceptance, approval or accession of the Treaty."

Venezuela expressed its support, welcoming the TPNW as the first instrument expressly prohibiting nuclear weapons. Cuba also registered its vote in favour and said that at the 75th anniversary of the UN, it is historic to achieve the 50th ratification of the TPNW. Cuba encouraged all states to sign and ratify the Treaty as soon as possible. Iran also expressed support for the resolution. It noted that the TPNW complements the NPT and that the entry into force of the Treaty will defeat the "bullying" and anti-disarmament policies of the US.

Argentina abstained because it hasn't yet signed the TPNW. It reminded that it participated in its negotiations and is continuing its analysis of the Treaty. It said that the TPNW should strengthen the NPT and CTBT, and should not introduce "parallel regimes". Switzerland abstained and referred to last year's EOV where it noted that 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.

The permanent five members of the UN Security Council (P5) delivered a joint EOV to express their

opposition to the Treaty and reiterate their position that the best way to achieve a nuclear-free world is a process that reflects international security concerns. The P5 further argued that the TPNW goes against the NPT, does not address regional or international challenges, and will not “eliminate a single nuclear weapon.”

Pakistan explained its voting against L.6, arguing that the process for the adoption of the TPNW didn’t fulfill “essential conditions in terms of process and substance.” Pakistan emphasised that it will not be bound by the Treaty’s obligations, asserting that the Treaty does not contribute to international customary law. India, China, Israel, and the P5 made similar remarks in explaining their vote against the resolution. Similarly, Russia said that it respects the views of those in favour of the Treaty but argued that the Treaty didn’t take into account nuclear-armed states’ views, creates frictions, and that discussions on humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons ignores the “oppressing” security issues, including the destructive behavior of the USA.

L.10, “African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty,” introduced in the last edition of the Monitor, was adopted without a vote. Spain reiterated its position that it will not join protocol III of the Treaty as requested by the resolution because it does not contain any measure that Spain, as a denuclearised country, hasn’t already adopted.

L.13, “Mongolia’s international security and nuclear-weapon-free status,” introduced in the last edition of the Monitor, was adopted without a vote.

L.17, “Follow-up to the 2013 high-level meeting of the General Assembly on nuclear disarmament,” was introduced in the previous edition of the Monitor. It was adopted with a vote of 133-34-9 as a whole. Switzerland abstained and referred to last year’s EO, where it 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 welcomed the resolution and said that the resolution has made it possible to celebrate 26 September as the day for the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

A separate vote was held on PP14, retained by 112-36-15. The PP expresses concern about continued nuclear weapon modernisation and reliance on nuclear weapons in military and security doctrines, which is a violation of nuclear-armed states’ legal obligations.

L.22, “Conclusion of effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon states against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons,” introduced in the previous edition of the Monitor, was adopted with a vote of 119-0-60.

L.30, “Treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices,” introduced in the previous edition of the Monitor, was adopted with a vote of 173-1-4. The Democratic People’s Republic (DPRK), Israel, Syria, and Iran abstained, while Pakistan voted against the resolution. The P5 expressed their support for negotiations of a non-discriminatory treaty on the basis of consensus. Pakistan reiterated its concerns about the discriminatory nature of the proposed fissile material cut-off treaty, and therefore voted against the resolution.

L.34, “Reducing nuclear danger,” introduced in the previous edition of the Monitor, was adopted with a vote of 116-49-12. Pakistan said that since last year, it has abstained on India’s resolution. It argued that while it supports many of the provisions, the sponsor speaks about reducing nuclear risk while modernising its nuclear arsenal, which makes it “difficult” to support the resolution.

L.36, “Convention on the Prohibition of the Use of Nuclear Weapons,” was introduced in the previous edition of the Monitor. It was adopted with a vote of 112-50-13. Pakistan said that since 2019, it has abstained from this resolution as the actions of India, one of the sponsors, have confirmed that its policy declarations are not credible and mislead the international community; due to the “wide gap between practices and declarations,” Pakistan can’t support this resolution. Ecuador voted in favour and emphasised PP7 that acknowledges the contribution of a legally binding prohibition on nuclear for a

nuclear-free world. It stressed however that the “real path forward” towards this goal is through the universalisation of the TPNW which will soon enter into force.

L.39, “The Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation,” was adopted with a vote of 165-1-10. Iran explained its vote against the resolution, arguing that the Hague Code of Conduct (HCOC) is discriminatory and was negotiated and adopted outside of an agreed framework. It warned the HCOC is silent about threats by certain states and deliberately fails to distinguish between particular programmes. Brazil said that it has not adhered to Hague Code of Conduct but voted in favour of L.39 because it respects that many states have subscribed to it as a significant step towards preventing the proliferation of ballistic missiles, and expects that the Code could evolve to a legal instrument.

L.46, “Nuclear disarmament verification,” was introduced in the previous edition of the Monitor. It was adopted with a vote of 174-2-2. Iran and Syria abstained, while Zimbabwe and Russia voted no.

L.50, “Nuclear disarmament,” was introduced in the previous edition of the Monitor. It was adopted as a whole with a vote of 112-42-21. Pakistan said it supports elements of the resolution but as non-party to the NPT, can’t subscribe to the action plans, and therefore abstained. India explained that while it shares the main objective of the resolution, it abstained because of its references to the NPT and the TPNW.

Calls for votes were also made for PP32, OP12 and OP16. PP32, retained by 110-38-13, welcomes the TPNW. OP12, retained by 144-4-17, reiterates commitments by nuclear-armed states under the 2000 NPT Review Conference final document. OP16, retained by 156-1-8, calls for negotiations on a fissile-material cut-off treaty. Pakistan explained why it voted against this OP, saying that it was “ironic” that a resolution on nuclear disarmament focuses on nuclear non-proliferation.

L.54, “Towards a nuclear-weapon-free world accelerating the implementation of nuclear disarmament commitments,” focuses on calls for the nuclear-armed states to implement their nuclear disarmament obligations, and contains a few technical updates, which, inter alia, reflect the postponement of the 2020 NPT Review Conference (RevCon), as well as a few substantive changes:

- It has three new PPs (PPs 3-5) that recall the 75th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the creation of the United Nations, as well as the 50th anniversary of the entry into force of the NPT.
- PP16 is slightly differently worded than in 2019, and this year’s PP does not refer to “transparency, verifiability and irreversibility” as “cardinal principles” for nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation but only reaffirms that nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation are “mutually reinforcing processes requiring urgent irreversible progress on both fronts.”
- PP24, referring to a zone free of nuclear weapons in the Middle East, now includes a small addition that acknowledges the first conference held on the establishment of such a zone.
- PP26, expressing regret at the lack of a substantive outcome of the 2015 NPT RevCon, has merged with the next PP from last year’s version that goes into detail why the lack of a substantive outcome at the 2015 RevCon was a missed opportunity.
- PP28, emphasising the importance for a substantive outcome of the next NPT RevCon, is also updated to reflect the postponement of the 10th RevCon due to COVID-19, and also has merged two PPs from last year’s resolution into this single PP.
- The resolution has a new OP26 that calls upon states to “reflect on the vast amount of resources dedicated to the maintenance, development and modernization of nuclear arsenals and to consider whether these resources could be better utilized in pursuit of

a better future as envisaged in the Sustainable Development Goals.”

The resolution was adopted as a whole by 128-34-15. Iran expressed its support for the resolution but said that it shared observations on some paragraphs with the sponsors and hoped that these would be taken into account next year. Switzerland welcomed the resolution and voted in favour. The DPRK abstained, described the resolution as “unbalanced” and said it was deeply concerned by the blackmailing and military pressure that continues unabated. Pakistan said it was “dismayed” by the “unrealistic calls” to accede to the NPT as a non-nuclear armed state, and can’t subscribe to the NPT’s decisions and conclusions, and therefore abstained.

A vote was also called for on various PPs and OPs.

- PP6, welcoming the UNSG’s disarmament agenda, was retained by 135-1-31. The United States voted against this PP.
- PP14 was retained by 111-36-14. The PP welcomes the TPNW.
- PP28, its contents described above, was retained by 151-4-10. The US, Pakistan, Israel, and India voted against this PP.
- OP15, calling for the NPT’s universalisation, was retained by 150-4-11. The US, India, Israel, and Pakistan voted against this PP.
- OP24, welcoming the TPNW, was retained by 110-38-12.

L.55, “Follow-up to the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons,” introduced in the previous Monitor, was adopted with a vote as a whole by 130-33-14. Cuba and Venezuela welcomed this resolution.

PP9, PP17 and OP2 were voted on separately. PP9, retained by 137-1-29, and which the United States voted against, refers to the UNSG’s disarmament agenda. PP17, welcoming the TPNW, was retained by 111-38-11. OP2 was retained by 113-36-12. It refers

to the International Court of Justice’s conclusion for the obligation for negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament.

L.56, “Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia,” introduced in the previous edition of the Monitor, was adopted without a vote.

L.58, “Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban-Treaty,” contains a few substantive updates as well as technical updates.

- PP8 is slightly different this year, welcoming the message issued by the Friends of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty on 1 October 2020, while last year’s PP recalled the Joint Ministerial Statement on the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, adopted in September 2018.
- PP12 is new, commending the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organisation for its continued work during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- OP5, addressing the situation on the Korean peninsula, this year deleted positive references to the statement of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) concerning a moratorium on nuclear tests and efforts towards the dismantlement of the Punggye-ri nuclear test site.
- OP7 from last year, welcoming Zimbabwe’s ratification of the Treaty, was removed this year.

The resolution was adopted with a vote as whole by 173-2-3. The United States and the DPRK voted against this resolution, while Syria, Mauritius, and India abstained.

Russia and Pakistan expressed their support for the resolution.

Syria explained its abstention, arguing that the CTBT should take into consideration the concerns of non-nuclear armed states and that the Treaty doesn’t provide assurances the against use or threat of use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear armed

states. The DPRK explained its vote against the resolution, arguing that the resolution “distorts” the nature of the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula. Iran expressed its support for this resolution. The US explained its vote as it cannot support L.58’s call for the entry into force of the CTBT because the Treaty would constrain US actions while others could violate it by secretly conducting tests.

A separate vote was called for PP7 that was retained by 165-1-4. The PP recalls the conclusions and recommendations from the 2010 NPT Review Conference, and Pakistan reiterated it isn’t bound by them.

L.70, “Missiles,” was adopted with a vote of 159-3-9. The US, Palau, and Israel voted against the resolution. The US explained its vote against, arguing that for Iran to take leadership on this resolution is “the height of hypocrisy”. It further noted that it’s disappointing that any country makes common calls with Iran, and “takes note” of those that decided to do so.

L.71/Rev.1, “Joint courses of action and future-oriented dialogue towards a world without nuclear weapons,” was tabled for the second year by Japan in replace of its usual resolution, “United action with renewed determination towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons.” Since 2016, Japan has increasingly watered-down the “United action” text in order to appeal to the US government’s diminishing commitment to nuclear disarmament. The change in title in 2019 indicates a further weakening of the resolution, and the contents prove this to be the case.

- The resolution does not reference the TPNW at all (it also did not in 2018 and 2019). It weakens its references to the 2010 NPT action plan outcomes, selectively choosing actions to be carried forward at the 10th RevCon.
- It does not mention or express concern at the erosion of international arms control or multilateralism, nor does it refer to the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces Treaty or the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. However, as opposed to last year’s version, it

does mention the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) this year

- PP3, recalling the 75th anniversary of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings, and the 50th anniversary of the entry into force of the NPT, reaffirms the importance of a successful outcome of the next RevCon and now notes its postponement.
- PP8, referring to the importance of the early conclusion of a treaty banning the production of fissile material, now also expresses support to “voluntarily ceasing such production pending the entry into force of such a treaty.”
- PP11, recalling the role of nuclear disarmament verification, and welcoming the work of the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) and its reports, now welcomes the establishment of a new group of governmental experts.
- PP23 is new, and recognises the importance of the New START Treaty as well as the ongoing dialogue among parties “on the potential extension” of the Treaty.
- PP28, referring to the situation in the Korean peninsula, has a new addition, recalling relevant UN Security Council resolutions, and calls upon the DPRK to abandon all nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programmes. The PP continues to welcome diplomatic efforts through “meetings between the President of the United States of America and the Chairman of the Workers’ Party of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea”.
- PP32 is new, reaffirming the equal, full and effective participation of both women and men as an essential factor for the promotion and attainment of sustainable peace and security.
- OP2 calls on states parties to the NPT to put commitments into practice towards “and beyond” the RevCon, as an addition to last year’s OP.
- OP3 (b) details this year what nuclear-armed states should do to reduce risks of nuclear weapons detonation, namely through

“transparency and dialogue on nuclear doctrines and postures, military-to-military dialogues, hotlines or information and data exchanges.”

- OP3 (d) sees also some changes this year. It refers to the CTBT, and includes language which calls on the eight remaining annex 2 states to make every effort to “achieve the cessation of all nuclear-weapon test explosions and all other nuclear explosions as called for in the Treaty,” and calls for not only maintaining moratoria but to also “adopt” moratoria on nuclear-weapon test explosions. New language also calls on states to provide transparency in “activities related to nuclear-weapon testing, which may run counter to such moratoriums,” and also calls on states to sign and ratify the Treaty “without delay”.
- OP5, addressing the situation on the Korean peninsula, does not include references to the DPRK’s ballistic missiles programme as opposed to last year.

The resolution as a whole was adopted by 139-5-33. Syria, Zimbabwe, the DPRK, China, and Russia voted against the resolution as a whole.

Colombia voted in favour of the resolution because it understands the motivation behind it: to achieve general and complete nuclear disarmament. It stressed however that the resolution cannot be interpreted at the expense of legal obligations established by the NPT or commitments agreed during NPT RevCons. Kazakhstan also voted in favour but said that several of its proposals aren’t reflected in the NPT. It said that it would carry more impact if nuclear disarmament was emphasised more and that the devastating impacts of nuclear testing should be better reflected in the resolution.

Egypt abstained from the resolution as a whole as it undermines disarmament obligations and the special responsibility of the nuclear-armed states. It further explained that nuclear disarmament obligations are linked to an “ambiguous” set of preconditions in this resolution. Brazil argued that language suggests that the achievement of a nuclear-free world is

contingent upon the easing of international tensions, and voted abstention. South Africa made similar remarks and therefore also abstained.

Egypt was further alarmed that under the pretext of pragmatism the NPT could be destroyed. Ireland made similar remarks. Egypt further opposed the calls on states who have not yet joined the NPT to mere risk reduction measures instead of acceding to the NPT, and regretted that the resolution does not refer to the Middle East NWFZ. Indonesia made similar remarks. Saudi Arabia also abstained because of its lack of reference to a NWFZ in the Middle East.

Malaysia expressed multiple concerns about the resolution, including in regards to the ways it undermines the CTBT and the NPT, and therefore abstained. Australia, Mexico, South Africa, Ireland, and Canada on behalf of Belgium, Canada, Chile, Germany, Netherlands, and Norway also expressed concern about the weak language related to the CTBT. France said that it voted in favour of Japan’s resolution last year but abstained this year as it argued the entry into force of CTBT is not optional but essential.

Mexico explained its abstention as it was concerned that language in the resolution reinterprets, weakens or ignores previous agreements reached by NPT states parties, especially with respect to implementation of Article VI. Indonesia made similar remarks in its EO, abstained from the resolution as a whole and voted against many individual PPs.

Austria also explained why it abstained, expressing worry about attempts to replace established consensus language or add new conditions on nuclear disarmament. Austria expressed concern about the negative impacts of this resolution on the NPT and the 10th Review Conference.

Canada on behalf of Belgium, Canada, Chile, Germany, Netherlands, and Norway said that while they appreciate that the resolution identifies a number of important areas where progress on nuclear disarmament can be made, they are unable

to support the resolution has it doesn't reflect well agreed principles to achieve the goals of the NPT.

Similarly, New Zealand explained why it abstained from the resolution, regretting that it maintains a divisive approach on nuclear disarmament, devaluing legally binding commitments of the NPT or CTBT. Ecuador and Brazil made similar observations in their EOVs. New Zealand further criticised the resolution's "low level of ambition," which won't lead to nuclear disarmament. Ecuador also said that the absence of reference to the TPNW makes the resolution not very ambitious.

India explained that it shared L.71's aspirations for nuclear disarmament but that the text has fallen short of this objective, and therefore abstained. Iran said that while it sees the "good will" of the resolution's main sponsor, the past 50 years have proven that conciliatory solutions to nuclear disarmament only helps nuclear-armed states, and abstained.

The Republic of Korea, abstaining, said that the resolution should take into account all atomic bomb survivors regardless of nationality and also regretted that it fails to mention inter-Korean summits as part of efforts for denuclearisation and peace regime.

Pakistan argued that the resolution relies on "divisive approaches," and therefore abstained. China argued the description of the FMCT in L.71 is "not practical." It argued that a moratorium cannot be verified and lacks value, and criticised that the renewal of New START is based on conditions in this resolution. Moreover, it noted that some of the paragraphs on the Korean peninsula went beyond language in UN Security Council resolutions. The DPRK argued that the resolution "distorts" the nature of the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula, and voted against.

Fifteen separate paragraph votes were called:

- PP2 was retained by 150-2-15. The PP calls for, inter alia, the universalisation of the NPT. Pakistan and India voted against this PP. Malaysia, abstaining, said that the universal

understanding of the NPT as the cornerstone of the nuclear non-proliferation regime should have been better reflected in this PP.

- PP4 was retained by 124-12-31. It reaffirms "the importance of the agreed steps" of the 1995, 2000, and 2010 NPT outcome documents. New Zealand expressed its disquiet about backtracking from previously agreed language and therefore voted against this PP. Malaysia, abstaining, also said that it was concerned about the deletion of the term "implementing," backtracking from past commitments. Austria offered similar explanations for its vote against this PP, and Brazil for its abstention.
- PP8, described above, was retained by 154-3-10. Zambia, Pakistan, and China voted against. India explained its abstention. While it supports the commencement of negotiations on an FMCT in the CD, the "question of a moratorium on fissile material does not arise."
- PP9, stressing the importance to prevent nuclear testing, was retained by 121-4-42. South Africa, Spain, Austria, and Ireland voted no for this PP. Malaysia, abstaining, said it was unfortunate that the PP does not place emphasis on the urgent need for the CTBT's entry into force. Austria and Australia expressed similar concerns.
- PP12, retained by 136-1-30, recognises the importance of New START and emphasises the special responsibility of nuclear-armed states "to initiate arms control dialogues". China voted against it. Austria abstained and explained that the PP follows a narrative that nuclear disarmament is only possible once trust and confidence-building has been achieved. France also abstained, arguing that while it supports the extension of New START, the resolution doesn't reflect that US and Russia's nuclear arsenals are bigger than everyone else's.
- PP17, referring to the nuclear situation on the Korean peninsula, was retained by 143-3-19. Russia, the DPRK, and China voted no. France said that language should have been stronger in condemning the DPRK's ongoing ballistic missile programmes, and therefore abstained.

- PP19, recognising the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons, was retained by 146-1-19. France voted against this PP. Austria expressed its support for this fundamental issue reflected in this resolution.
- PP20 was retained by 155-2-8. Russia and China voted against this PP. The PP welcomes the visits of leaders, youth, and others to Hiroshima and Nagasaki.
- OP1 was retained by 141-9-18. The OP reaffirms “that all States parties to the [NPT] are committed to the ultimate goal of eliminating nuclear weapons” and mentions various measures how to do so. New Zealand explained its vote against this OP as it is a backtracking from previous language, and has weakened language on nuclear testing, even to the point of envisioning a return to nuclear weapon testing.
- OP3(b), described above, was retained by 131-1-36. New Zealand said that the OP fails to take account of the history of accidents, and that the OP only includes a limited set of risk reduction measures, and therefore abstained. Austria explained its abstention with a similar line of reasoning. Malaysia abstained from this PP and explained that there are only two categories of states under the NPT and opposes the term “states possessing nuclear weapons” used in the context of the NPT.
- OP3(c), addressing fissile material, was retained by 148-2-17. China and Pakistan voted no. France abstained, arguing that all negotiations for an FMCT should be based on the Conference of Disarmament’s mandate on this issue.
- OP3(d) was retained by 111-7-48. New Zealand explained its vote against this OP as it is a backtracking from previous language, and has weakened language on nuclear testing, even to the point of envisioning a return to nuclear weapon testing. Malaysia, abstaining, said it was unfortunate that the PP does not place emphasis on the urgent need for the CTBT’s entry into force. Austria voted against the PP for similar reasons as New Zealand and Malaysia. Australia and Brazil also abstained due to weak

language on the CTBT. As well, India said that it voted against this OP in light of its views on the CTBT.

- OP3(e) was retained by 146-2-19. The PP refers to disarmament verification measures. Russia and China voted no. New Zealand abstained as it opposes efforts to constrain the avenues in which progress can be achieved.
- OP3(f) was retained by 157-2-7. It stresses the importance of disarmament education. Russia and China voted against this PP.
- OP5, referring to the situation on the Korean peninsula and related UN Security Council resolutions, was retained by 138-3-24. Russia, the DPRK, and China voted against this PP.

L.72, “Decreasing operational readiness of nuclear weapon systems,” was last adopted in 2018, and contains a few technical and one substantive update. PP10 takes note of references to operational readiness in nuclear-armed states’ reports during the last review cycle of the NPT. It has now an addition, noting that it looks forward to “further information on [operational readiness] being provided in national reports to the tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty.”

The resolution was adopted with a vote of 166-5-4. The DPRK, Micronesia, ROK, and Israel abstained. France, Russia, United States, the UK, and Zimbabwe voted against. A separate vote was called for PP8, retained by 164-3-7. The US, Zimbabwe, and Russia voted against this paragraph. The PP recalls the 2010 NPT Review Conference conclusions and recommendations that, inter alia, call for the reduction of the operational status of nuclear weapon systems.

L.73, “Ethical imperatives for a nuclear-weapon-free world,” contains only technical updates from last year. It calls upon all states to acknowledge the humanitarian impacts and risks of a nuclear weapon detonation and makes a series of declarations about the inherent immorality of nuclear weapons underlying the need for their elimination. South Africa, by way of introducing the resolution, stressed

that it's an "anomaly" that more than 14,000 nuclear weapons still exist as we celebrate 75 years of the UN and 50 years of the NPT. It further noted that it was impossible to imagine a scenario where the use of nuclear weapons could be justified.

The resolution was adopted with a vote as whole by 126-37-13. A separate vote was called for PP11 that was retained by 112-34-13. The PP recalls the adoption of the TPNW. India, abstaining from the resolution as a whole, and the PP, said that

it agrees with principles of this resolution and supports the global elimination of nuclear weapons through progressive steps. It added that until then, "immorality" is a sovereignty question.



Photo: Ari Beser, ICAN

CHEMICAL WEAPONS

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

The annual First Committee resolution on the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) once again elicited several paragraph votes as well as strongly worded statements and explanations of vote (EOVs) from UN member states.

Draft resolution **L.29, “Implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction,”** was adopted on 4 November by a vote of 146-8-26. It contains several substantive updates from the 2019 version that, taken together, give the resolution greater specificity and relevance by including references to specific incidents of use and relevant decisions or reports from other international fora.

Preambular paragraph (PP) 5 welcomes decisions C-24/DEC.4 and C-24/DEC.5, which were adopted by CWC states parties in November 2019 as technical changes to Schedule 1 of the Annex on Chemicals to the CWC.

There is also a small update in PP6 noting UN Security Council resolution 2319, which was adopted in 2016 to renew the mandate of the Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) that investigated chemical weapons use in Syria. The separate paragraph vote on PP6 saw it retained by a vote of 132-7-26.

New operative paragraph (OP) 2 condemns “the use of a toxic chemical as a weapon against Alexei Navalny in the Russian Federation, and notes with grave concern the note by the Technical Secretariat of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons of 6 October 2020.” OP2 was voted on separately and retained by a vote of 95-15-55.

OP3(c) takes into account the April 2020 report of the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT), which concludes that there were reasonable grounds to believe that the Syrian Arab Air Force used chemical

weapons in Ltamenah on 24, 25, and 30 March 2017. OP3 was also voted on separately and passed with a vote of 114-12-34.

OP4 contained no changes except for new citations, but was also subject to a paragraph vote, which passed 115-11-34.

The revision made to OP5 includes a new reference to the adoption of decision EC-94/DEC.2 by the Executive Council of the Organisation for Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) as well as an October 2020 report of the OPCW Director General on the implementation of this decision. The result of the paragraph vote on OP5 was 114-16-31.

An addition to OP6 recalls decisions taken at the Third Review Conference of the CWC.

OP17 did not have any amendments but was voted on separately, passing with a result of 111-12-38.

An addition to OP19 stresses the importance of “full, effective, and non-discriminatory” implementation of CWC article VII.

In recent years, the addition of this kind of detail into the resolution has caused certain states to pull away from the it, either by voting against or abstaining on all of it or certain paragraphs. These delegations have argued that the First Committee is not the appropriate forum to address specific instances of chemical weapons use, actual or alleged. Some raise concerns about politicisation, while others argue the necessity of the resolution sending a strong message to protect the norm and law against chemical weapons.

These dynamics continued to be prominent within general statements and explanation of votes delivered at the 2020 session in connection with L.29.

As its lead sponsor, Poland introduced the resolution and stressed that the continuous confirmed use of chemical weapons means that the bedrock provided by the CWC is being fundamentally challenged, including its credibility. Poland explained that the resolution seeks to reinforce a key message to all perpetrators: that there is no tolerance for chemical weapons use, and that there will be accountability. Poland further explained that it sought to reach a balanced document despite it being challenging to build common understanding amongst states, but that it held a transparent and inclusive consultation process.

In EOVs delivered before voting, Cuba explained that while it shares the general objectives set out in L.29 and is fully committed to the CWC, it would abstain on the resolution as a whole and PP6 and vote against OPs 2, 3, 4, 5, and 17. It said it feels that it is unacceptable to single out a state in the way that OP2 and OP3 do, and has concerns about including references to debates being held in other fora like the OPCW and UNSC.

Cuba and Iran warned against the politicising nature of L.29. Iran argued that the resolution deepens division among states instead of moving toward consensus. Egypt said it also would not support L.29, cautioning that it is not in a position to take an informed decision and support certain paragraphs relating to country specific incidents and investigations of the OPCW.

Egypt also highlighted the double standards implicit in nuclear-armed states condemning the use of other forms of weapons of mass destruction, despite their own reliance on nuclear “deterrence” and resistance to disarmament. Egypt noted that serious efforts to implement the 1995 resolutions on a nuclear and weapons of mass destruction free zone in the Middle East could have saved the region, and the world, from chemical weapons use.

Syria spoke against L.29. In its statement, it outlined the steps it has taken to comply with the OPCW and other investigative bodies and that it has never used, and will never use chemical weapons, and does not

possess them. It said that the resolution is politicised and not genuine. India reaffirmed its support for L.29, but also hoped that consensus could be restored on this resolution in future.

Other states gave EOVs after voting took place. Malaysia said it voted in favour of the resolution as a whole but abstained on some paragraph votes. Malaysia reaffirmed its support to the OPCW and urged states to cooperate with it, but also highlighted the need to protect the OPCW from extraneous influences. The United States (US) delivered a statement on behalf of more than ten other, mostly Western, countries that spoke in strong favour of L.29, including because the resolution reflects the goals of the CWC. The US delegation noted that the states associating with this explanation of vote are committed to holding to account those who use chemical weapons. The US-delivered explanation called on the Syrian government to cease its use of chemical weapons and eliminate its programme; and also called on Russia to disclose information relevant to the Navalny poisoning.

Turkey’s explanation highlighted several dimensions of L.29 that it particularly supports, such as those in reference to the IIT report and the OPCW Executive Council’s decisions, among other points. It said it would have liked stronger wording in the resolution.

Ecuador noted it voted in favour of L.29 as a whole but would prefer that the resolution doesn’t anticipate the way in which such issues are dealt with.

Russia voted against L.29, explaining that it is unacceptable to demonise certain states and in particular took issue with the reference to the Navalny incident. Russia also outlined its issues with certain of the decisions and report identified within the resolution.

Chemical weapons are also referred in the context of **L.65, “United Nations Secretary General’s Mechanism for Investigation of Alleged Use of Chemical and Biological Weapons,”** which is being covered in the article on biological weapons.

BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS

Filippa Lentzos | Kings College London

Resolution L.65/Rev.1 on the “**UN Secretary-General’s Mechanism (SGM) for Investigation of Alleged Use of Chemical and Biological Weapons**” was overwhelmingly rejected on 4 November 2020, with only 31 votes in favour, 63 votes against, and 67 abstentions. Five individual paragraphs were also voted on, all of them rejected by similar margins.

Introducing the resolution before the vote, Russia said it sought to “reaffirm the foundational nature of the CWC and the BWC in investigating the alleged use of chemical and biological weapons.” The resolution also sought to revise the technical guidelines and procedures agreed in 1990 that operationalise the SGM, which Russia finds to be “clearly outdated and falling behind current realities from both a political and diplomatic standpoint.”

Explanations of vote before the vote were made by the United States (US), the European Union (by Germany), Switzerland/Australia/United Kingdom, Canada, and New Zealand. Their statements all urged states to vote against the resolution. They considered the resolution to be politically motivated with the intent to undermine the SGM, and that it was part of wider attempts to weaken disarmament and arms control instruments in recent years. The European Union said “At the Meeting of States Parties of the BTWC in December 2019, the Russian Federation strongly criticized any further development and strengthening of the SGM, claiming it was an attempt to create a poor substitute for a legally binding verification protocol within the BTWC. Against this background, it seems unlikely that the motive behind this resolution is to strengthen the SGM.” The US said Russia is using the resolution “to place the UNSGM under the authority of the UN Security Council where Moscow could veto any investigation” and that Russia is “casting doubt on its guidelines and procedures by pushing an un-needed, wasteful review process that would cease responsibilities long-assigned to the Secretary-General and place them in an overtly political framework designed to end in gridlock.”

Canada noted the SGM’s guidelines and procedures had in fact been reviewed in 2006 and updated in 2007.

The statements also emphasised that the resolution misrepresented the SGM, placing undue emphasis on the link with the BWC and the authority of the UN Security Council, when in fact the SGM is completely autonomous and the Secretary-General does not require UN Security Council approval to initiate the mechanism. The European Union said “This independence of the mechanism should not be called into question, not even indirectly.” The joint statement by Switzerland, Australia, and the United Kingdom stressed the SGM “has proven its value, for example in the context of the ‘Sellström’ mission in Syria in 2013.” The joint statement further highlighted that the mechanism has been designed to be “technical and non-political in nature” and that the resolution risks calling this into question. There was acknowledgement in the statements that Russia had made concessions, and that many of the “damaging elements” in the resolution had been removed or rendered ineffective, but that the resolution still remained “deeply flawed.”

India, Mexico, Iran, Algeria, Argentina, Singapore, and Guatemala provided explanations of their votes after the vote.

Also considered on 4 November 2020 was annual resolution **L.52 on the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC)**. It was adopted without a vote.

Changes from last year’s version were minimal. In broad strokes, the resolution notes there has been no increase in ratifications of, and accessions to, the BWC, and underscores the continuing need to achieve universalisation. BWC membership currently stands at 183 states parties, with 14 states still to join. The resolution reaffirms the importance of national implementing measures, 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 reaffirms the importance of reviewing relevant scientific and technological developments. The resolution reiterates decisions of the previous BWC Review Conference, notes ongoing intersessional activities, and encourages preparations for the next Review Conference in 2021. The improvement of the BWC's finances is welcomed, but the resolution stresses the need for continued monitoring of the financial situation.

LANDMINES

Diana Carolina Prado Mosquera | International Campaign to Ban Landmines

Draft resolution **L.26, “Implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and their Destruction,”** was adopted with a vote of 163-0-17, similar to previous years. The increase of two votes in favour compared to last year (161-0-19) is due to the fact that non-state parties to the Mine Ban Treaty—Uzbekistan and Venezuela—changed their voting from an abstention to a yes. Additionally—and though it did not reduce the number of votes in favour—states that would have often supported this resolution did not vote this year. This includes Benin, Democratic Republic of Congo, Madagascar, Niger, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Serbia, Seychelles, Turkmenistan, and Vanuatu. This might be to the fact of the current pandemic and the different challenges that it has posed to multilateralism, including delegates not being able to attend in-person meetings.

There are still 33 states outside the Mine Ban Treaty and half of them (17) voted in favour of the resolution: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, China, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lao PDR, Lebanon, Libya, Micronesia, Mongolia, Morocco, Singapore, Tonga, United Arab Emirates, and Uzbekistan. Seven of the 17 abstaining states explained their votes (Cuba, Pakistan, India, Egypt, Republic of Korea, Iran and the Russian Federation). Most of them reiterated their vision of a mine free world and shared in which

Finally, the biennial resolution **L.18, “Measures to uphold the 1925 Geneva Protocol,”** was agreed by 179 states. There were three abstentions, from Israel and the United States, who usually abstain on this resolution, and from the Central African Republic. No one voted against. The Geneva Protocol prohibits the use of chemical and biological weapons, and the resolution renews its previous call to all states “to observe strictly the principles and objectives of the Protocol.” The resolution also calls upon states that continue to maintain reservations to the Geneva Protocol to withdraw these reservations.

ways they abide to the key provisions of the Treaty. They emphasised their belief that antipersonnel mines serve a legitimate military purpose. The International Campaign to Ban Landmines calls on all states not party to the Mine Ban Treaty to talk to states parties and see how they have overcome any reticence and were able to join the Treaty, despite any regional or local security concerns.

This 2020 First Committee session heard from states about the importance of the full implementation of the Oslo Action Plan adopted in 2019, in order to ensure that states finish the job and achieve a mine free world by 2025. Member states also shared their concerns related to the use of improvised mines; the importance of ensuring compliance with victim assistance obligations; and the relevance of continued cooperation and assistance to achieve the goal of the Treaty.

The 18th Meeting of States Parties (18MSP) to the Mine Ban Treaty will be held from 16-20 November 2020. Though its initial format was meant to be hybrid, it will now be conducted in a virtual format owing to a rise in COVID-19 cases. This meeting will be an opportunity to hear about progress on mine clearance, assistance to victims, and destruction of stockpiled mines, and share progress on the Oslo Action Plan. The 18MSP will also establish the baseline of work for the upcoming five years.

CLUSTER MUNITIONS

Diana Carolina Prado Mosquera | Cluster Munition Coalition

The Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) has now 110 states parties and 13 additional countries who committed ten years ago to be bound by its core obligations through their signature. There is still a lot to do, to ensure that the remaining countries join this Convention, to save lives and to safeguard that none of them use cluster munitions. The universal adherence and respect for the norm were raised throughout the First Committee meetings in 2020.

Resolution **L.43, “Implementation of the Convention on Cluster Munitions”**, was adopted with a recorded vote of 137 in favour, none against, and 39 abstentions, which means a small decrease from last year’s 138 votes in favour. This can be attributed to two main reasons: the fact that some states—including those that would normally vote in favour of it—were absent during the voting session and that Venezuela, a state that is not party to the Convention on Cluster Munitions, changed its vote from last year to an abstention. The resolution’s preambulatory paragraph (PP)14 had a separate paragraph vote. The PP takes note of the UN Secretary-General’s disarmament agenda and was retained with 144 votes in favour, none against, and 16 abstentions.

It is noteworthy that this year the resolution did not receive any vote against it, and that the Russian Federation abstained. Oddly, two states that have actually signed the Convention abstained. This includes Cyprus, which has consistently abstained since the resolution was introduced in 2015, and Haiti, which didn’t explain its change of vote pattern.

No less than 32 states not party to the Convention—one more than in 2019—supported the resolution. This included Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Lesotho, Rwanda and Tonga. Armenia changed its vote from 2019 and voted this year in favour of the resolution. Armenia explained its vote by saying “the resolution sends an important message of deploring the recent cases of use of

cluster munitions and related casualties and the critical importance to put an end to the suffering and casualties caused by cluster munitions”.

The states that abstained from voting, including Brazil, Pakistan, Egypt, and Iran, explained that they didn’t want to lend their support to an instrument concluded outside the UN disarmament machinery. Argentina claimed that the resolution text is not sufficiently ambitious. Cyprus said that due to its current security situation it cannot ratify yet. The Republic of Korea acknowledged the humanitarian impact of cluster munitions. The Philippines also explained its vote and expressed its concern for the continued use of cluster munitions.

The Cluster Munition Coalition reiterates to those states that believe that the CCM’s article 21 contravenes the spirit of the Convention, to join this instrument and defend its interpretation as other state parties have done so far. In this way the norm against the use of cluster munitions under any circumstances will be reinforced. The CMC also reiterates that the Convention on Cluster Munitions is the only international instrument dedicated to ending the suffering that these nefarious weapon cause.

The Second Review Conference of the Convention on Cluster Munitions is proposed to have two parts: one part that will be done through a virtual meeting (25-27 November) and the other part in February with a two-day hybrid meeting, in which the substantial issues will be discussed. This proposal has been put out to CCM states parties for agreement under silence procedure. This first part will allow stakeholders to continue discussions around the Convention on Cluster Munitions specifically on extension requests on stockpile, destruction, and clearance and other financial and administrative issues.

INTERNATIONAL ARMS TRADE

Raluca Muresan | Control Arms Coalition

This week, the First Committee took action on resolution **L.53, “The Arms Trade Treaty (ATT)”**. Introduced by Sierra Leone, the President-designate of the Seventh Conference of States Parties (CSP7) to take place in 2021, L.53 was adopted with 150 votes in favour, 28 abstentions, and one vote against. The sole “no” vote was from the United States which voted against the ATT resolution for the second year in a row.

The ATT resolution was co-sponsored by 87 member states, with Cape Verde, Equatorial Guinea, and The Gambia having co-sponsored the resolution for the first time. Colombia, Guinea, Lesotho, Namibia, Panama, Sierra Leone, and Zambia co-sponsored L.53 after not having done so last year.

Disappointingly, 29 ATT states parties did not co-sponsor the resolution this year, although 27 of them voted in favour of it. In terms of voting patterns, Fiji reversed its position from an abstention last year to a vote in favour of the ATT resolution.

Several states that have been consistently sceptical about the ATT (Ecuador, Egypt, Armenia, Iran, and Cuba, Russia) took the floor to explain abstentions. In their explanation of vote, Cuba and Armenia argued that the ATT is unbalanced and hampers the right of states to acquire weapons while Cuba and Ecuador claimed the ATT permits transfers to those who commit acts of aggression. Russia maintained that common international standards included in the ATT’s provisions are weaker than those of its national export control legislation. It also emphasised that with the United States no longer bound to the ATT, the Treaty lacks viability.

India, affirming that it subscribes to the object and purpose of the ATT, noted that while the ATT is under review at the national level it planned to abstain from voting on L.53. Ecuador clarified that it due to concerns of bias in the Treaty’s text. However, Ecuador shared that it continues to study whether

in implementing the ATT states parties are able to overcome these shortcomings in the ATT text. For that reason, Ecuador expressed its support for preambular paragraph (PP) 15, a new paragraph which notes with concern “the devastating global effect of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, including on the full and effective implementation of the ATT”.

Two paragraph votes were also requested for L.53. Both of these paragraphs were also put forward for a vote in 2018 and 2019. PP9, which takes note of the UN Secretary-General’s disarmament agenda, was retained by a vote of 153-0-17. Operational paragraph (OP) 10 acknowledges outcomes from the Third Review Conference (RevCon3) of the UN Programme of Action (UNPoA) on small arms and light weapons (UNPoA) as well as synergies between the UNPoA and the ATT. This paragraph was retained by a vote of 130-2-31.

In explaining why it abstained on OP10, Brazil expressed concerns about establishing artificial synergies between the ATT and the UNPoA. Brazil emphasised that the two instruments are different both in terms of their legal status and their scope.

Seven other resolutions adopted at the First Committee include references to the ATT. The biennial resolution **L.21, “Women, disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation”** tabled by Trinidad and Tobago includes in OP13 a strong reference to the gender-based violence (GBV) criteria in the ATT and to the adoption of the action-oriented decision on gender and gender-based violence at CSP5. Similar to previous years, both, **L.32, “Assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons and collecting them,”** and **L.44, “The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects,”** welcomed the inclusion of small arms and light weapons in the scope of the ATT in their preambular paragraphs and the inclusion of international assistance in the ATT.

SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS

Amelie Namuroy | International Action Network on Small Arms

Throughout this year's First Committee, states reiterated their concerns about the threats posed by small arms and light weapons (SALW) to security and development. During the course of the general debate, many states recognised how vital the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (UNPoA) and its International Tracing Instrument (ITI) are, and reiterated the importance of international cooperation to implement these multilateral instruments.

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have heightened the importance of international cooperation. As the Chairperson of the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters, Ms. Selma Ashipala-Musavyi, noted, the challenges are multiple and interconnected and have profound implications for arms control. She noted that the pandemic is a stark reminder that global risks can emerge with little warning, and that arms control as a response to COVID-19 is a global project in which each state has a deep stake.

Resolutions

States took action on several resolutions related to SALW during this past week.

Japan presented omnibus resolution **L.44, "The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects."** Colombia reminded states that the illicit trade of SALW and its ammunition represents a threat to peace, security, and sustainable development, and that the adoption of L.44 is crucial to continued strengthening of international cooperation and assistance. Colombia reiterated the importance of the full implementation of the UNPoA and its ITI.

L.44 was adopted as a whole without a vote. However, states voted on one of its paragraphs,

preambular paragraph (PP) 7, which welcomes the successful conclusion of the Third Review Conference on the UNPoA that took place in 2018. 167 states voted in favor of PP7, two voted against, and one abstained. As in previous years, the United States and Israel voted against PP7. During explanations of vote, Mexico stated that the language contained in the draft resolution should not be seen as a substitute for language from previous multilateral commitments to combat SALW trafficking and the outcomes of the Third Review Conference. On the other hand, the United States reminded states that it voted against the inclusion of ammunition in the outcome document of the Third Review Conference, noting that for the last 19 years the issue of ammunition has been kept outside of the UNPoA's scope. The United States emphasised that it could not accept the language used to formulate PP7 and noted that the modified version of the paragraph that it submitted was not accepted.

On behalf of states of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Mali presented annual resolution **L.32, "Assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons and collecting them."** Mali explained that the member states of ECOWAS sought to strengthen cooperation and increase efforts to reduce SALW trafficking in the West African region to improve regional security. Mali underlined that the draft resolution reflected the will of numerous states to curb the illicit proliferation of SALW, and invited the international community to provide financial and technical support to civil society organizations. 148 states voted in favour of PP16 and 18 states abstained. PP16 welcomes the inclusion of SALW in the scope of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), as well as the Treaty's international assistance provisions. The resolution as a whole was adopted without a vote, fulfilling ECOWAS countries' desire to continue the consensus on the resolution this year.

L.67, “Problems arising from the accumulation of conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus,”

was adopted without a vote. Pakistan expressed its support for L.67, which encourages all interested states to voluntarily assess—in conformity with their legitimate security needs—whether parts of their stockpiles of conventional ammunition can be considered to be surplus. The resolution also recognises 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.

OUTER SPACE

Jessica West | Project Ploughshares

It is not without irony that member states wielded their power to force votes on points of order and portions of resolutions like a weapon this week. A total of 13 votes were held across five resolutions on outer space including an unprecedented effort to block one resolution from the floor. Foreshadowed by China’s insistence in its advance explanation of vote that the United States (US) will be the first to place weapons into space, and that the US will push back against all of China’s space-related initiatives, voting patterns this year reflected two different visions of threats in space, amplified by geopolitics on earth.

Near unanimity for resolution **L.3, “Prevention of an arms race in outer space,”** (PAROS) held again this year with 174 states voting in favour, and the US and Israel the only states against. As the core resolution on outer space, PAROS calls on the Conference on Disarmament (CD), “as the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating forum,” to establish a working group on this topic. But despite almost 40 years of political commitment, almost no practical progress has been made. Some initiatives have been proposed over the years, most recently the draft treaty on the Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space, the Threat or Use of Force Against Space Objects (PPWT) proposed by Russia and China, last updated in 2014. This week Russia

Pakistan noted the imbalance of armaments and military forces worldwide, and stated that the main military powers who hold stockpiles of conventional weapons and ammunition should take the lead in assessing their surpluses and in setting out general guidelines on how to dispose of them.

The draft resolutions on the UN regional centres also address SALW issues. Action will be taken on these resolutions in forthcoming meetings of the First Committee

laid blame for the stalled process on a lack of desire and political will by the US and others “to begin substantive work on the document.”

In 2018–2019, a Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on PAROS was held to advance potential legal measures for arms control in outer space. Although the Group failed to reach consensus, indicated by Cuba as due to a single negative vote, Russia emphasised the value of the conversations held. The path forward on this process is unclear. Draft decision **L.63 “Further practical measures on the prevention of an arms race in outer space,”** simply states that the topic will remain on the agenda of the UN General Assembly. It was adopted with a vote of 139 in favour, two against (US and Israel), and 33 abstentions from a mixed group of states.

Unfortunate but not unsurprising is the fate of resolution **L.66 “Transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities”** (TCBMs). Once a source of consensus, support faltered again this year. Originally linked to the recommendations of a 2013 GGE on TCBMs, it was later expanded to include support for discussions on practical implementation at the Disarmament Commission. Consensus first broke in 2019 over reference to the PPWT and support for political statements in support of no first placement of

weapons in outer space (NFP), (see below). This year, preambular paragraph (PP) 9, which expressed regret for the inability of the Disarmament Commission to conduct its work was put to a vote, resulting in a 131-5-26 split. The resolution as a whole received support from 169 states, with Israel and the US voting against, and a smattering of states including Australia, Djibouti, Georgia, Palau, Ukraine, and the United Kingdom (UK) abstaining.

The greatest contention concerned resolutions **L.62 “No first placement of weapons in outer space,”** (NFP) championed by Russia and newcomer resolution **L.45/Rev.1 “Reducing space threats through norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours”** led by the UK. Both were put through multiple paragraph votes.

L.62 is a long-standing resolution that calls on states to make political commitments to not be the first to place weapons in outer space as an interim approach toward the negotiation of a treaty at the CD. Although positioned as a TCBM measure, dissenting states have persistently raised concerns that it may instead enhance mistrust by leaving open the definition of a “weapon,” which Canada described as a “promise without verification.” Other concerns include the resolution’s focus on space-based weapons at a time when the development of ground-based anti-satellite weapons is accelerated, noted in general statements and explanations of vote delivered by the European Union (EU), the US on behalf of the UK and France, and Canada.

Openness to the resolution eroded further, however, based on what some states described as advancing counterspace capabilities in outer space proper, including by Switzerland, which abstained. Germany, speaking on behalf of a large group of European states, explained their shift from abstaining to casting negative votes by asserting that the resolution cannot be reconciled with the fact that Russia also possesses what may be considered a weapons capability in space; the statement specifically mentioned the activities of Russian satellite Cosmos 2543, which released a suspicious object in June of this year. The group also indicated

regret that dialogue and consideration of states’ concerns about the resolution have not emerged.

Put to a vote, resolution L.62 was adopted with the support of 121 states, 32 against, and 21 abstentions. However, three PPs were put to separate votes. PP5, which used the expression “a common effort towards a community of shared future for humankind,” was adopted (114-47-7). This is only the second year that the phrase, which emerged domestically within China as a vision for global governance, has been put to a vote, although it has been included in some outer space resolutions since 2017. Calling it an inappropriate reference to “ideology,” India voted no on this paragraph, as did many predominantly western states. PP9, which references the PPWT in the context of the work of the CD, was adopted with a vote of 144 in favour, 44 against, and 7 abstentions. PP11, which references the NFP political statements, was likewise adopted following a vote of 115-31-21.

Presented as a new way to move forward on space security discussions, L.45 seeks to “reach a common understanding of how best to act to reduce threats to space systems in order to maintain outer space as a peaceful, safe, stable and sustainable environment, free from an arms race and conflict, for the benefit of all, and consider establishing channels of direct communication for the management of perceptions of threat.” It calls on states to study and characterise activities “that could be considered responsible, irresponsible or threatening” and to share ideas to further develop norms of responsible behaviour. Noting that the process may contribute to “further consideration of legally binding instruments in this area.”

Even before reaching the floor, L.45 was challenged by a point of order from Russia. In an unprecedented move, Russia argued that the Committee is not competent to address the resolution’s content, and that PAROS is instead a matter for the Fourth Committee and the UN Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UN COPUOS). Several states agreed, including Venezuela, Nicaragua, and Iran. In response, the UK noted that to the contrary, the development of norms is an urgent component

of PAROS, and that the resolution includes consideration of both Earth and space-based elements that may not otherwise be acknowledged as weapons.

Specific parameters of PAROS have never been set. While some states remain focused on the potential for space-based strike weapons to be placed into space, others are concerned by ongoing developments of anti-satellite technologies including those based on Earth. This resolution appears open for comments from both perspectives. On the other hand, COPUOS is explicitly restricted to discussing the peaceful uses of outer space. Granted it has successfully developed an initial set of voluntary rules to promote safety and sustainability in outer space, which is also mentioned in resolution L. 66 on TCBMs. However, this process has excluded consideration of behaviours deemed to be security or military in nature.

Russia's point of order to prevent voting on L.45 was defeated with a vote of 15-102-33. Many statements of support for L.45 were registered, particularly among Western states that have long been concerned with terrestrial threats to space and emerging counterspace capabilities and have favoured an approach to security focused first on TCBMs and voluntary measures. Indonesia described the development of norms as a step toward a legally binding instrument.

Nonetheless, L.45 faced additional hurdles along the way. The resolution explicitly expands the scope of the conversation at First Committee to include the use of "all potential technologies" that threaten space systems, whether on Earth or in space, with PP12 asserting that "such threats already exist in outer space and on Earth." Put to a vote, this paragraph was adopted by a vote of 137-11-7.

PP14, which mentioned the difficulty of "effectively verifying the capabilities of space objects" that can have dual applications, raised concerns by some including Egypt and Cuba that conceding this point could have implications for a negotiated arms control treaty later. Egypt however abstained and the

paragraph was included following a vote of 135-17-10.

Operational paragraph 5, the core of the resolution calling for states to identify and characterise different types of activities in space, was also put to a separate vote. Voting against this clause but abstaining on the resolution as a whole, India pointed to what is considered subjective language such as "responsible and irresponsible" behaviours and "perception" of threats, echoed by Venezuela. It was adopted following a vote of 140-13-5.

Other concerns include items not present, such as mention of the PPWT treaty, although a separate process (Nicaragua), and the importance of technology and knowledge transfers to developing countries (Cuba, Iran). Although supportive, Costa Rica and the Philippines stressed that the resolution must not be used to legitimise weapons or the use of force in space. Process was also raised: while Egypt called the UK's approach constructive, China and Nicaragua indicated that despite an effort to engage, the leaders of the resolution have not taken its concerns adequately into account.

Despite reservations and a persistent desire on the part of many states to focus on the negotiation of a legally binding arms control instrument for outer space, many states cast favourable votes as a sign of good faith, such as Ecuador, which indicated a "need to ensure that all states work together to reduce threats." Rather than pitching different approaches against one another, Mexico and Malaysia hoped that states can advance them in a complimentary way. The final vote on the resolution as a whole passed with a vote of 150-12-8. Whether the adoption of resolutions on outer space proves productive at moving the agenda for space security forward remains to be seen.

Process to advance a legal approach appears stalled, at least momentarily. Action on resolution L.45 holds the promise at least of renewed dialogue, but only if it is accompanied by broad, good faith participation and willingness to listen. Meanwhile, facts on the ground and in orbit continue to change rapidly.

GENDER

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

In the fourth week of the First Committee, a few references to gender were made in the briefings by regional groups and chairpersons of different Groups of Governmental Experts (GGEs). The Chief of the Regional Disarmament, Information and Outreach Branch said that the Regional Centre for Asia and the Pacific is on track in their efforts to mainstream gender perspectives in small arms and light weapons (SALW) control. In addition, the Director of the UN Regional Centre in Latin America and the Caribbean informed about a delivered training course on firearms control with a gender perspective. The Chairperson of the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters acknowledged the increase of research and publications on women and disarmament, while the Director of the UN Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) gave an overview of its work, including its work on a "gender and disarmament hub".

In terms of gender diversity, the Chair of the GGE on problems arising from the accumulation of conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus informed that the Group is gender balanced. With respect to cyber peace, Canada, in the interactive dialogue with the Chairs of the GGE and the Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG) on cyber issues, expressed hope that the OEWG would agree on a report that reflects novel discussions on the gendered dimensions of cyber security. The Chair of the OEWG affirmed that the Group was gender diverse and agreed that both women and men should participate equally. He also emphasised the concerted efforts that enabled women diplomats with technical expertise to participate in the OEWG.

The following resolutions include gender references, though where action has been taken, they are reported on in other reports in this Monitor as are the other non-gender related aspects of these resolutions.

L.11, "United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa," has kept the same language relating to women's role in disarmament, non-proliferation, and arms control from the 2018 resolution and welcomes in OP6 efforts by the Regional Centre to promote the role and representation of women in disarmament activities.

L.12, "United Nations disarmament fellowship, training and advisory services," last tabled in 2018, retains language that recognises "the need for Member States to take into account gender equality when nominating candidates to the programme."

L.21, "Women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control," is a biennial resolution. It is the only First Committee resolution exclusively dealing with women's participation in disarmament processes. It also addresses the correlation between the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW) and gender-based violence (GBV). It celebrates its tenth anniversary this year and has some additions compared to 2018 that make this resolution the strongest yet:

- In a new PP4, the resolution recognises 2020 as a year of anniversaries, with the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace, and security.
- PP5 is also new, taking note of action 36 of the UN Secretary-General's disarmament agenda, on the full and equal participation of women in decision-making processes, and action 37, on gender parity on disarmament bodies established by the Secretariat.
- An additional PP further underscores that "women should not only be perceived as victims of gender-based armed violence but are also

essential in preventing and reducing armed violence and are active and key players in advocating arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation.”

- Another new PP underscores the positive contribution of young people to sustainable peace and security, referencing in this regard resolution 74/64 of 12 December 2019.
- The PP on the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) is also more extensive this year. As in previous years, it encourages states to fully implement the Treaty, including its provision on GBV. It goes further this year by encouraging states to ensure the full and equal participation of women and men, and notes the adoption of the action-oriented decision on gender and GBV at the Fifth Conference of States Parties (CSP5) to the ATT.
- The final PP is also new, and reflects upon the negative impacts of COVID-19 on gender equality and multilateral disarmament and arms control. It acknowledges that the pandemic has “further exacerbated the socioeconomic conditions of vulnerable groups across the world,” resulting in an alarming increase in cases of domestic and gender-based armed violence.
- OP6 is also more comprehensive, calling on states to “empower women” not only through “capacity-building efforts,” as noted last year, but also through “mentoring, networking, and knowledge sharing” in the realm of disarmament.
- OP8 sees deletion of “and children” after “women” in its call on states to develop national risk assessment criteria for the prevention of the use of arms to commit violence against women.

L.24, “Conventional arms control at the regional and subregional levels,” recognises for the third time in its PPs the “importance of equitable representation of women in arms control discussions and negotiations.”

L.26, “Implementation of the Convention on the prohibition of the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel mines and their destruction,” reaffirms its determination to put an end to these weapons killing or injuring women and girls. It has retained the same language from last year that calls for the inclusion of gender aspects in mine action.

L.38, “Countering the threat posed by improvised explosive devices,” keeps the same language as when it was last tabled in 2018, recognising the importance of women’s full and equal participation in countering improvised explosive devices (IEDs), underlining the gendered impacts of IEDs, and urging all states to address the threat of IEDs from a gender perspective.

L.40, “United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific,” welcomes in PP6, as in previous years, efforts by the Regional Centre to promote the role and representation of women in disarmament, non-proliferation, and arms control activities. This year, it has new language in PP5, welcoming work by the Centre “in support of the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals 5 ... in particular target 5.2 to eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls, target 5.5 to ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership.” As last year, it expresses its appreciation to the Centre for its work in its project “for States of South and South-East Asia on gun violence and illicit small arms trafficking from a gender perspective” in PP3.

L.43, “Implementation of the Convention on Cluster Munitions,” previously addressed the impact of cluster munitions on women. Since 2018, it includes stronger language, recognising the gendered impact of cluster munitions and calling for “adequate, gender- and age-sensitive assistance to victims of cluster munitions.” PP19, as in previous years, further recognises the importance of “full involvement and equal opportunities for the meaningful participation of women and men” in processes related to the Convention.

L.44, “The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons,” has kept the same language from last year, recognising the need for strengthened participation of women in decision-making processes relating to the UN Programme of Action on SALW and the International Training Instrument, and reaffirms the need to mainstream gender dimensions in their implementation.

L.45/Rev.1, “Reducing space threats through norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours,” is a new resolution, and recognises the importance of women’s full and equal participation in discussions on reducing space threats, and “the need to assess the possible differentiated impacts of such threats.”

L.52, “Convention on the prohibition of the development, production and stockpiling of bacteriological (biological) and toxin weapons and on their destruction,” includes for the second time language in PP9 that encourages “equitable participation of women and men in the framework of the Convention.”

L.53, “Arms Trade Treaty,” recalls the adoption of action-oriented decisions on gender and GBV by the CSP5 in OP13. It also reminds that states parties agreed to review progress on these two aspects on an ongoing basis and encourages states to ensure the full and equal participation of women and men to advance within the scope of the Treaty. The resolution has also kept language taking into account the negative impact of conventional arms and related ammunition on women and girls and calls upon states “to address the link between conventional arms transfers and the risk of serious acts of gender-based violence and serious acts of violence against women and children.”

L.54, “Towards a nuclear-weapon-free world: accelerating the implementation of nuclear disarmament commitments,” notes, as in 2018 and 2019, the “strongly disproportionate and gendered impact of exposure to ionizing radiation for women and girls.”

L.57, “United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean,” has kept the same language from last year, recognising the Regional Centre’s important role in promoting women’s participation in the implementation of the nexus between sustainable development and disarmament. It also welcomes the Centre’s activities to promote the “equal representation of women in all decision-making processes” in disarmament.

L.61, “Convention on prohibitions or restrictions on the use of certain conventional weapons which may be deemed to be excessively injurious or to have indiscriminate effects,” emphasises as in previous years the importance of including perspectives of women, men, boys, and girls in considering issues related to the Convention and its Protocols.

L.69, “Regional confidence-building measures: activities of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa,” contains the same language from 2019. It urges member states of the Standing Advisory Committee to strengthen the gender component and women’s representation in its meetings. It calls on states to ensure that disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration programmes take into consideration the needs of women.

L.71, “Joint courses of action and future-oriented dialogue towards a world without nuclear weapons,” is an update to Japan’s annual “United action...” resolution. It notes, as last year, that “disarmament and non-proliferation education encompassing different generations, areas and genders underscores efforts and creates momentum towards achieving a world without nuclear weapons.” In 2019, it had deleted language from 2018 that recognised “the importance of ensuring the equitable representation and participation of both women and men in disarmament discussions to enable a truly comprehensive approach to nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament.” This year, the resolution brings again language in on women’s equal participation, reaffirming that “the equal, full and effective participation of both women and men

is one of the essential factors for the promotion and attainment of sustainable peace and security.” In their explanations of vote (EOVs) Ireland, as well as Canada on behalf of Belgium, Canada, Chile, Germany, Netherlands, and Norway welcomed the reference to women’s equal participation.

YOUTH AND DISARMAMENT EDUCATION

Matthew Bolton | Pace University

The 50th ratification of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) by Honduras on 24 October 2020 was a major milestone for disarmament education. The TPNW, which will now enter into force on 22 January 2021, is the first international treaty to recognise “the importance of peace and disarmament education in all its aspects.” The TPNW expresses states parties commitment to “raising awareness of the risks and consequences of nuclear weapons for current and future generations” as well as “dissemination of the principles and norms” of the TPNW. Article 12 obligates states parties to engage in efforts to achieve “universal adherence” to the Treaty.

In late October, Mexico and 37 co-sponsors submitted to the First Committee a [draft resolution](#) on Disarmament and non-proliferation education (L.42). The text of the biennial resolution, which has not yet been brought to a vote, has changes from previous years, most of which align it with last year’s resolution on “Youth, disarmament and non-proliferation” (A/RES/74/64). A new operative paragraph (OP2) encourages the international community “to continue considering developing and implementing policies and educational programs for young people to increase and facilitate their constructive engagement in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation.”

The UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) and the NGO Peace Boat held a virtual side event on 3 November launching *Navigating Disarmament Education: The Peace Boat Model*, a new publication in UNODA’s civil society and disarmament series. The booklet “introduces Peace Boat’s methodology

L.73, “[Ethical imperatives for a nuclear-weapon-free world](#),” has kept the same language from last year, declaring that “greater attention must be given to the impact of a nuclear weapon detonation on women and the importance of their participation in discussions, decisions and actions on nuclear weapons.”

for disarmament education,” highlighting “the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons” through the stories of hibakusha (nuclear weapons survivors) and empowering youth “to lead the change.” The booklet is available [online](#).

In briefings to the First Committee, several international organisations commented on the importance of disarmament education. The UN Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters emphasised the UN Institute for Disarmament Research’s (UNIDIR) role in engaging women and youth on disarmament matters. The UN Regional Centres for Peace and Disarmament in both Africa and Asia and in the Pacific reported on their disarmament education efforts, including on small arms and light weapons, weapons of mass destruction, and on inclusion of women and youth. Ambassador Flávio Roberto Bonzanini, Secretary-General of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL), stressed the importance of educating younger generations about the threat of nuclear weapons. He also highlighted OPANAL’s courses on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, taken by 150 government officials from across the region in the last three years.

The First Committee is still considering other related resolutions, including L.12 on the UN disarmament fellowship and L.37 on UNIDIR. L.41 on the UN Disarmament Information Programme calls on the UN to “continue to inform, educate and generate public understanding of the importance of multilateral action ... in the field of arms control and disarmament.”

“STAR-CROSSED RESOLUTIONS”: WHAT IS THE “VALUE-ADDED” OF L.45 FOR PAROS?

Paul Meyer | Simon Fraser University and Canadian Pugwash Group

It seems to be a tendency of both humans and states that when faced with an intractable problem, one sometimes opts for a step that gives the appearance of progress rather than its achievement. To this observer, the new resolution introduced at this session **L.45/Rev.1, “Reducing Space Threats through norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours”** has something of this nature. Undoubtedly well-intentioned as it is and certainly an indication that the deteriorating security situation in outer space has captured the attention of some capitals, we have to question its “value-added” when compared with the long-standing **resolution on preventing an arms race in outer space** (PAROS) (L.3) that has enjoyed near universal support in the General Assembly for decades. The First Committee, ever ready it seems to increase the number if not the significance of the resolutions it considers, has adopted L.45/Rev.1 (115-12-8) alongside L.3 (174-2-0).

Resolution L.45/Rev.1 in taking up the language of “norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviour” utilised in a series of UN Groups of Governmental Experts (GGEs) and the current open-ended working group (OEWG) on international cyber security is suggesting a future direction for multilateral work. Reducing space threats through adoption of such norms sounds like a desirable goal, although it is arguably less specific than the goals set out in L.3. That resolution has already been calling for “further measures” with the specific aim of “prevent[ing] an arms race in outer space, including the weaponization of outer space”. This language has a more operational tone and greater clarity as to what specific threats are to be avoided (namely an arms race in space and its weaponisation). A quick review of the operative paragraphs (OP) of L.45/Rev.1 reinforces the first impression that little in the way of novelty or innovation is contained in this text.

OP1—affirms that space activity should be done in conformity with international law including the UN Charter (one would hope for as much without having to affirm it).

OP2—encourages states to adhere to the existing UN space treaties. These two initial paragraphs reflect concepts already expressed in the preamble of L.3 although they are now situated in the operative segment.

OP3—desires that states reach a “common understanding on how best to reduce threats to space systems”. Common understandings are helpful but even more useful would be action that reduces threats. L.3 contains in its Op para 4 more robust language that calls on states “to contribute actively to the objective of PAROS and to refrain from any action contrary to that objective”.

OP4—encourages states to inform the Conference on Disarmament (CD) and the Disarmament Commission of their national space policies, strategies, and doctrines. Despite the fact that both of these forums are currently non-productive, information exchange is desirable and L.3 already promotes “greater transparency and better information” as well as keeping the CD informed.

OP5—encourages states to “study existing and potential threats”, to “characterize actions that could be considered responsible, irresponsible or threatening” and to “share their ideas” on risk reduction. The study of threats has its utility, but arguably it is not an ignorance of threats to space security that is the key obstacle (see the excellent **compilation** on “counter-space” capabilities that the Secure World Foundation has produced), but rather an unwillingness to cooperate on tangible action to mitigate or eliminate them.

OP6—would have the UN Secretary-General solicit views of member states on the issue of threats and prepare a compilation of these views for next year's session. One wonders whether this is the best use of limited resources in the current context.

Oddly, given the success of the 2013 GGE on Transparency and Confidence Building measures, L.45 fails to refer to these recommendations or acknowledge, as L.3 does, the benefits of confidence building measures.

If space security is to get serious attention at First Committee as it should, it would seem best to focus on developing “concrete results” (in the words of L.3) that would reduce the risk of armed conflict in space. Initiating a negotiation for a ban on testing debris-causing anti-satellite weapons (ASAT) as [Canada](#) has suggested, would be a far more productive action that prescribing for further “study” or ruminations over possible “norms” of state behaviour. As I have elaborated in a [recent article](#) on possibilities for space arms control, it is time for states to turn their perennial talk about preventing an arms race in outer space into relevant and real action to this end.

SIDE EVENT REPORT: THE TPNW—A GAME CHANGER IN NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

Alicia Sanders-Zakre | International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons

A 23 October First Committee side event co-hosted by the Permanent Missions of Austria, Brazil, Costa Rica, Indonesia, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, Nigeria, South Africa, Thailand, and the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) welcomed recent ratifications of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) and celebrated the treaty's proximity to entry into force.

Representatives from Jamaica and Nauru, which ratified the treaty that day, stated that they were proud to announce their ratifications and encouraged other states to join the treaty. Representatives from Malaysia, Malta, Lesotho, Tuvalu, Kazakhstan, Mexico, Thailand, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and ICAN also spoke.

Malaysia ratified the TPNW on 30 September 2020, Malta on 21 September 2020, Lesotho on 6 June 2020, and Tuvalu on 12 October 2020. Thailand, Mexico, and Kazakhstan ratified in 2017, 2018, and 2019, respectively.

The representative from Malaysia called the TPNW “a game changer” for nuclear disarmament, adding that it is convinced of the political and legal impact of the Treaty's entry into force. The representative

from Malta observed that the TPNW offers hope of renewed momentum for the disarmament field.

Lesotho referenced its commitment to the Pelindaba Treaty and said that the elimination of nuclear weapons is the only viable solution against use of nuclear weapons. Tuvalu explained that it joined the TPNW due to the Pacific's history, experiencing firsthand the consequences of nuclear testing that shook the region for more than half a century, harming lives and livelihoods of Pacific peoples, and the ocean that Pacific nations depend on.

In moving remarks, Hiroshima survivor Setsuko stated: “The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons has opened a new door, wide. Passing through it we begin a new chapter in our struggle—with a mighty embrace of gratitude from those we have lost, and a heartfelt welcome from those who are yet to come. The beginning of the end of nuclear weapons has arrived! Let us step through the doorway now!”

Honduras ratified the TPNW the next day, on 24 October, bringing the TPNW to 50 ratifying states and securing its entry into force for ninety days later on 22 January 2021.

SIDE EVENT REPORT: NEW HORIZONS FOR VICTIM ASSISTANCE AND ENVIRONMENTAL REMEDIATION—THE TPNW'S POSITIVE OBLIGATIONS

Christian N. Ciobanu | Nuclear Age Peace Foundation

On 13 October 2020, the Permanent Mission of Kiribati, Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, Harvard Law School's International Human Rights Clinic, the Center for International Security and Policy, and ICAN France sponsored a timely discussion entitled "New Horizons for Victim Assistance and Environmental Remediation: The TPNW's Positive Obligations."

H.E. Ambassador Teburoro Tito of Kiribati chaired the event and Christian N. Ciobanu of Nuclear Age Peace Foundation moderated it. Speakers included John Lax, Secretary, British Nuclear Test Veterans Association (BNTVA); Ron Watson, Treasurer, British Nuclear Test Veterans Association (BNTVA); Zhangeldy Syrymbet, Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Kazakhstan; Veronique Christory, Senior Arms Control Adviser, ICRC; Bonnie Docherty, Associate Director of Armed Conflict and Civilian Protection and Lecturer at Harvard Law School's International Human Rights Clinic; Alimzhan Akhmetov, Director, Center for International Security and Policy (CISP); Jean-Marie Collin, Director, ICAN France; and Dr. Ivana Nikolic Hughes, Director, Columbia K=1 Project, Center for Nuclear Studies.

Setting the tone of the event, Ambassador Tito explained how Pacific states worked in solidarity with one another to free the people and Pacific Ocean from nuclear tests. Likewise, now with the imminent entry into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), the Pacific states must work together to save the planet from the scourge of nuclear weapons.

Building upon Ambassador Tito's remarks, witnesses and experts addressed the legacy of nuclear testing in Kiribati and the Marshall Islands. First, Ron Watson and John Lax of the BNTVA provided their perspectives on the series of nuclear tests on Kiritimati (Christmas) Island. Second, Dr. Ivana

Hughes of K=1 Project discussed the impact of nuclear testing in the Marshall Islands. She explained that the concentration of nuclear isotopes on some of the atolls are significantly higher than those found near Chernobyl and Fukushima.

Regarding the impact of nuclear tests in other regions of the world, Zhangeldy Syrymbet of the Mission of Kazakhstan and Alimzhan Akhmetov of CISP explained the legacy of nuclear testing in Kazakhstan. Jean-Marie Collins of ICAN France focused on the legacy of nuclear tests in Algeria.

Following their remarks, the conference turned its attention to the significance of the TPNW. Veronique Christory of the ICRC highlighted that the TPNW is the first treaty that comprehensively prohibits nuclear weapons and addresses the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons on indigenous people and the environment. She further affirmed the ICRC's readiness to help states with implementing the TPNW's positive obligations.

Addressing the positive obligations of the TPNW (Article 6 and Article 7), Bonnie Docherty of Harvard's International Law Clinic explained that the language of article 6 follows the precedent of previous humanitarian disarmament treaties, including the Mine Ban Treaty and the Convention on Cluster Munitions. Docherty also mentioned that the provisions in TPNW article 6 must be read in conjunction with its article 7 on international cooperation and assistance. Moreover, she noted that the provisions do not allow the user-state off the hook as the final paragraph of article 7 pertains to the user-state's responsibilities.

Ultimately, as underscored by several speakers, the affected states parties must work together to ensure that the first Meeting of States Parties to the

TPNW addresses the positive obligations. It is crucial that the the states parties respond to the suffering caused by past use and testing as elaborated by Docherty in her recent article entitled “From Obligation to Action: Advancing Victim Assistance and Environmental Remediation at the First Meeting of States Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.”



Photo: International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons

SIDE EVENT REPORT: TRANSPARENCY AND REPORTING IN THE ARMS TRADE TREATY—TRENDS AND CHALLENGES IN THE AGE OF COVID-19

Katherine Young | ATT Monitor, Control Arms Coalition

With support of the governments of Australia and the Netherlands, the [ATT Monitor](#), an independent project of Control Arms and the Stimson Center’s [ATT-Baseline Assessment Project](#) (ATT-BAP) hosted a side event discussing transparency and reporting in the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). Carina Solmirano and Katherine Young of the ATT Monitor presented key findings of its [2020 ATT Monitor Annual Report](#). Rachel Stohl, of Stimson’s ATT-BAP, launched a new report, [Reporting During a Pandemic: Reflections on the Arms Trade Treaty 2019 Annual Reports](#).

Ambassador Robbert Gabriëlse of the Netherlands and Diwaka Prakash of Australia began the event with remarks about the important role of ATT reporting in advancing the Treaty’s objectives of transparency and confidence-building in the global arms trade. While commending and highlighting the important work of civil society in monitoring and supporting implementation of the ATT, Ambassador Gabriëlse also described how fundamental both transparency and information exchange are as tools to effectively implement the Treaty.

Diwaka Prakash also highlighted the important role of civil society and industry in raising awareness about the object and purpose of the ATT.

All ATT stakeholders have a role to play in promoting cooperation, transparency and responsible action in the global arms trade,” he affirmed.

Carina Solmirano began the presentation of the 2020 ATT Monitor Annual Report with an overview of its chapter on the role of transparency and information sharing in tackling diversion. The chapter seeks to fill gaps in understandings around the key terminology and Treaty provisions, as well as identify specific diversion prevention and mitigation measures. It presents three examples of actual cases of diversion. These three case studies, noted Prakash, are a valuable insight into the detection of diversion problems as they arise, as well as potential mitigation measures. This ultimately contributes to transparency and confidence-building in the arms trade.

The remainder of the event focused on compliance with ATT reporting obligations and transparency commitments, as they both have important roles to play in advancing the Treaty’s objective of transparency and confidence-building in the global arms trade.

Katherine Young presented key findings from the 2020 ATT Monitor Annual Report, highlighting the

importance of reporting practice in submitting comprehensive and transparent annual reports. In this regard, she provided examples of good practice, including providing comments and descriptions on reported arms transfers.

Both Young and Stohl drew attention to challenges to reporting that threaten to undermine the ATT's core objectives. The ATT-BAP new publication identifies three challenges: decreasing compliance with ATT's annual reporting requirements, increasing rates of private reporting, and increased exclusion and withholding of sensitive information.

Private reporting, for example, reached 21 per cent of all reports submitted for 2019.

Important to addressing these challenges is the continued action by all ATT stakeholders to support states parties in submitting comprehensive, accurate, and timely reports. This includes providing direct assistance to states in understanding reporting obligations and the importance of providing more than the bare minimum of information requested of them in annual reports.

SIDE EVENT REPORT: ATT UPDATE—REPORT FROM CSP6 AND PROSPECTS FOR CSP7

Raluca Muresan | Control Arms Coalition

This side event, held annually at the First Committee, provided an opportunity to look back at the achievements made in advance of and during the Sixth Conference of States Parties (CSP6) to the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), presided over by Argentina, and to discuss expectations and aspirations for the Seventh Conference of States Parties (CSP7), under the leadership of Sierra Leone.

Ambassador Pildegovičs of Latvia opened the event by reiterating the importance of the ATT as an effective instrument to eradicate the illicit arms trade and prevent diversion. Recalling the progress made during the Latvian Presidency of CSP5, he urged ATT states parties to continue to work towards implementing the decisions on gender and gender-based violence adopted in 2019. Amb. Pildegovičs also expressed concern over the decreasing compliance with ATT reporting requirements and cautioned that it represents a threat to the Treaty's objective of transparency and confidence-building in the global arms trade.

Ambassador Federico Villegas of Argentina and President of CSP6, expressed satisfaction with the progress made this year, despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. He clarified that

the procedures implemented at CSP6—written statements and a silence procedure for decision-making—are not intended to set precedence for future CSPs. However, recalling this successful shift to virtual working methods, Ambassador Villegas offered these procedures as a model for future intercessional work. Speaking about the key outcomes from CSP6, Ambassador Villegas welcomed the establishment of the Diversion Information Exchange Forum (DIEF), a closed process reserved only for states parties and signatories to exchange information to improve the prevention and detection of diversion of arms transfers.

Outlining his work plan and thematic focus for the coming year, CSP7 President Ambassador Lansana Gberie of Sierra Leone noted that both are guided by his “commitment to strengthening efforts to eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and ensure efficient stockpile management.” The Ambassador will seek to develop a holistic approach to addressing the challenge posed by illicit transfers and diversion from official stockpiles, particularly small arms and light weapons. He also stressed his commitment to finding a viable solution that will allow him to take forward work towards the implementation of

the ATT, particularly as it relates to the six draft decisions not adopted at CSP6. Three of these six draft decisions included the work plans for 2021 and beyond for the ATT Working Group on Effective Treaty Implementation, and its sub-working groups on articles 6 (Prohibitions) and 7 (Export and Export Assessment); article 9 (Transit and Transshipment); and article 11 (Diversion). Throughout his presentation, he highlighted the importance of consultations with all stakeholders, including civil society, and issued an open invitation for input and feedback going forward.

The role of the ATT Secretariat is to support, both administratively and substantively, the ATT CSP Presidents and the ATT Bureau and to contribute to the development of the programme of work for the ATT process, explained the Head of the ATT Secretariat Dumisani Dladla. Dladla also stressed that the ATT Secretariat plays an important role in supporting the CSP presidencies in adapting the CSP working methods and ensuring the ATT process continues despite the unprecedented challenges experienced this year.

Mr. Dladla too referenced the establishment of the DIF and noted the ATT Secretariat's commitment to ensuring the operationalisation of this subsidiary body. Speaking on available international assistance, Mr. Dladla informed participants that a call for

applications to the **Voluntary Trust Fund (VTF)** will be published in the coming weeks and invited interested states to apply. The VTF is the multilateral fund available to states to support national implementation of the ATT.

Cindy Ebbs, Acting Co-Director of Control Arms welcomed Amb. Villegas' decision not to postpone the CSP6 but rather that he identified solutions that allowed ATT stakeholders to continue this important work. However, she cautioned that the new working measures implemented for CSP6 impeded open discussions and debate at the CSP and contributed to the marginalisation of civil society in the ATT process. In particular, she raised concerns about DIF which was established without consultations with all ATT stakeholders, a decision that can set on dangerous precedent, namely "normalizing the regular exclusion of observer states, international organizations, UN agencies, civil society from participating in the substantive implementation work of the CSP". Ebbs concluded with a set of recommendations for CSP7, including establishing under ATT Rule of Procedure 42 a special public committee open to all ATT stakeholders on CSP Working Methods to develop and debate new ideas on working methods that take into account progress and transparency—given the continuing pandemic restrictions.



Photo: Raluca Muresan/Control Arms Coalition

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 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.

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