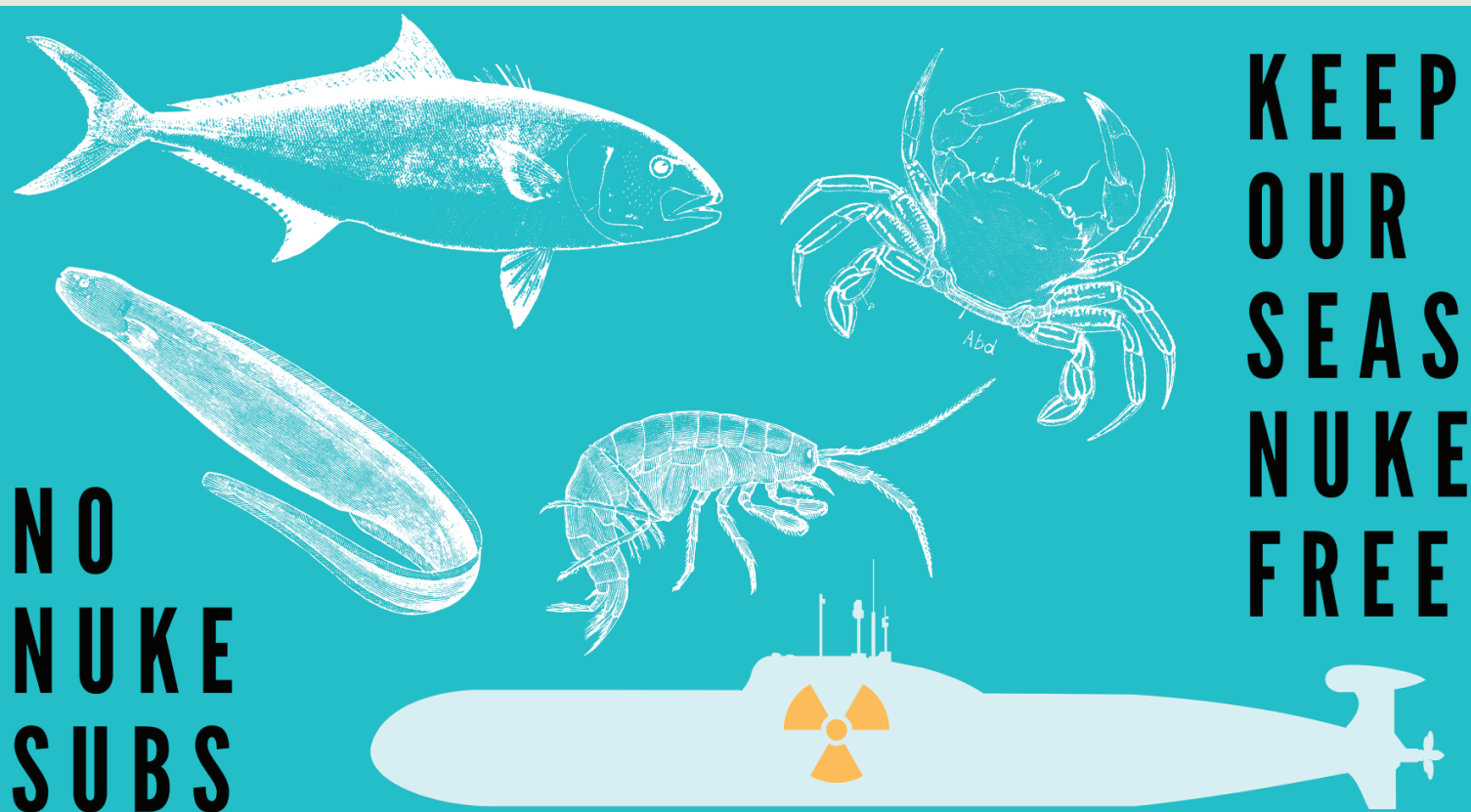


FIRST COMMITTEE MONITOR

NGO Reporting on the United Nations General Assembly
First Committee on Disarmament and International Security
4 October–3 November 2021

VOL.19 NO.2

9 October 2021



IN THIS ISSUE

- 1 Editorial: Full spectrum disarmament
- 5 Nuclear weapons
- 12 Chemical weapons
- 13 Biological weapons
- 14 Autonomous weapon systems
- 15 Explosive weapons
- 17 Landmines
- 19 Cluster munitions

- 20 Small arms and light weapons
- 21 International arms trade
- 22 Outer space
- 23 Cyber peace and security
- 26 Disarmament and development
- 27 Gender and disarmament
- 29 Youth and disarmament education

Image: Dimity Hawkins



Reaching Critical Will



A PROGRAMME OF THE
WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE FOR
PEACE & FREEDOM

EDITORIAL: FULL SPECTRUM DISARMAMENT

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

On the first day of this year's First Committee session, Pakistan warned that it "will do whatever it takes to preserve full spectrum deterrence" against India. There is no better line to exemplify the precise problem with international relations today. This attitude—that more weapons will bring more security; that investments in equipment to commit mass atrocities is the best way to "deter" aggression or violence—is not limited to one or two states. Militarism is an epidemic.

"Increasing polarization and depletion of trust between states has led to levels of deterioration that belong to a bygone era," noted The Maldives. "This is deeply concerning, and negatively affects the global disarmament agenda." Nothing stands in the way of disarmament as much as political and economic investments in militarism. Grounded in patriarchy, which perpetuates norms of **violent "masculinity"** and diminishes the credibility of other approaches to conflict or tension, the global culture of militarism is killing us all. Even those who assert that it protects them or gives them power.

Escalating expenditure and risks

Militarised governments imagine that their capacity for violence provides security for their countries. But weapons do not provide security. Contrary to the dominant narrative, Trinidad and Tobago pointed out, "deterrence breaths escalation". Building up arsenals only exacerbates insecurity and leads to a vicious cycle of military build-up and arms racing.

Housing, education, food, and water; the right to move, to live, to breathe; equality and justice—these are what make humans secure. Yet, as many delegations pointed out last week, governments are wasting resources of weapons and war, including during the COVID-19 pandemic when money and ingenuity have been so desperately needed elsewhere—anywhere else. "While the world continues to prepare for war, an invisible virus has

brought us to our knees," said Costa Rica. World gross domestic product (GDP) fell 4.4 per cent in 2020 due to the pandemic's economic effects, explained Mexico, yet world military spending increased 2.6 per cent in the same period. Further, during this global health crisis, the nuclear-armed states allocated **72.6 billion USD** to their nuclear arsenals in 2020. "These figures cannot be justifiable," Mexico exclaimed. They aren't. But as Egypt pointed out, "The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the irrationality of directing invaluable and scarce resources to nuclear arsenals and arms races over achieving sustainable development."

The catastrophic imbalance between expenditure on militarism vs any possible social good has led to a dire predicament for international security, as well as human and planetary well-being. "The action we are witnessing is diametrically opposed to and undermines the very concept and goal of disarmament," said the Caribbean Community, expressing hope "that reassuring platitudes of responsible conduct on the part of nuclear weapons states will be matched by commitments of bold and decisive action in the right direction."

Platitudes for peace

In this context, many delegations cautiously welcomed the agreement between Russia and the United States to extend the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) and encouraged further dialogue and actions to reduce tensions and nuclear threats. Russia said the initiation of an "integrated dialogue on strategic stability" between the two countries will lay the groundwork for future arms control.

However, Russia also offered a list of "destructive actions" by the United States, made in an attempt to "obtain unilateral advantages in the so-declared 'great powers competition'." The US delegation, meanwhile, said that while it too is optimistic about

its new “era of relentless diplomacy ... focused on building a stable, predictable foundation for the future of arms control,” it is “also cognizant that some nations are pursuing policies to undermine the international rules-based order.” The United States warned that “autocratic regimes” are trying to foster instability and “pose new nuclear dangers that remind us of the importance of preventing nuclear war, avoiding nuclear arms races, and stopping the further spread of nuclear weapons.”

Of course, as many other delegations pointed out, the United States is a lynchpin in proliferating nuclear technology, nuclear risks, and arms races. Several delegations specifically condemned the recent announcement by Australia, the United Kingdom, and United States about their new AUKUS military alliance and sharing of nuclear-powered submarines.

The awful awkwardness of AUKUS

Malaysia noted that this “introduction of a new strategic partnership that includes strategic delivery systems with nuclear technology could trigger further an arms race.” China, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Mexico, Sri Lanka, Venezuela, and the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) also warned that AUKUS could foment an arms race. Venezuela and China said the alliance has a “Cold War mentality” that breeds mistrust, increases tensions, and moves the world further from the goal of nuclear disarmament. AUKUS “raises serious questions about the state of arms race, and commitments to nuclear non-proliferation obligations,” warned Indonesia. “Such alliances would potentially bring us further from our commitment to improve international peace and security, including in our region.” ICAN noted that it “raises the risk of nuclear proliferation, as well as nuclear accidents and radiological contamination.”

Russia noted, “It is already clear that this partnership will not contribute to strengthening the NPT. There is a potential risk that another non-nuclear-weapon State will be used to deploy nuclear-weapon States’ military nuclear infrastructure. This leads

to greater international instability and runs counter to the efforts to reduce nuclear weapon arsenals.” It explained that “the construction of nuclear submarines by a non-nuclear-weapon State party to the NPT could set a very negative precedent for the implementation of IAEA safeguards,” and also noted that the alliance is “questionable in the context of Australia’s participation in the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty (the Treaty of Rarotonga).”

As Sébastien Philippe **explains** in *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, the nuclear submarine aspect of this new alliance is a “fundamental policy reversal for the United States, which has in the past spared no effort to thwart the transfer of naval reactor technology by other countries.” He points out that the UK and US fuel their submarines with 93.5 per cent enriched uranium and have no alternative fuel to offer. Australia has no highly enriched uranium (HEU) or domestic capacity to enrich it. So the material will need to be transferred or it will need to start up a military-grade enrichment programme. Either will be devastating for non-proliferation. Philippe notes that while the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is trying to prevent Iran from acquiring 25 kilograms (0.025 ton) of HEU—the amount necessary to build a nuclear weapon, according to the internationally agreed standard—it will now have to figure out how to monitor and account for 100 to 200 times that amount. “Managing that feat while keeping its credibility intact will be difficult to pull off.” Beyond the blow to the IAEA’s credibility, Philippe argues, “we can now expect the proliferation of very sensitive military nuclear technology in the coming years, with literally tons of new nuclear materials under loose or no international safeguards.”

In addition to the spread of nuclear technology and materials, AUKUS will also further militarise the Asia-Pacific region. As David Vine **points out** in *Responsible Statecraft*, part of the alliance agreement includes plans to establish new facilities for naval, air, and ground forces and the deployment of all types of US military aircraft to Australia. The US already has seven military installations in Australia, and hundreds of bases throughout Asia-Pacific.

Other governments in the region, as well as civil society activists, have spoken out strongly against the new alliance. The Australia Conservation Foundation, Friends of the Earth Australia, ICAN Australia, Independent and Peaceful Australia Network, Medical Association for the Prevention of War, and WILPF Australia have issued statements against AUKUS, highlighting all of the above concerns as well as additional environmental threats and security risks. AUKUS has “no social licence,” **warned** Gem Romuld, Director of ICAN Australia. The people of Australia have not agreed to this. Most countries in the region support a ban on nuclear weapons, joining the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, while the Australian government violates its nuclear non-proliferation obligations. “This is the wrong direction at the wrong time,” notes Romuld.

Ignoring these critiques and concerns, at First Committee Australia delivered a right of reply on behalf of AUKUS, arguing that the alliance based on the three governments’ “enduring commitment to the international rules-based order.” It argued that the alliance will “promote peace and security in the region and an international order governed by rules that work to benefit of the majority and allow free societies to flourish,” will strengthen the three

states’ ability to support its “security and defence interests,” and to “help sustain peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region.” Australia also argued that its procurement of nuclear-powered submarines is possible because of the close cooperation among the three states and Australia’s “unequivocal commitment to nuclear non-proliferation” and its “exemplary non-proliferation credentials”.

The argument thus seems to be, if anyone else wants to violate non-proliferation norms and expand their military footprint across the world, they just need to 1) assert that they have “security interests;” b) find some friends with fancy weapons; and c) claim to be unequivocally committed to non-proliferation agreements. Of course, if anyone that the countries in AUKUS perceive as “enemies” tried to do this, they would be accused of violating international law, subjected to sanctions, and, as we have repeatedly seen, possibly military intervention or attack.

Thus, the AUKUS alliance not only violates non-proliferation norms and rules, spreads militarism, risks facilitating an arms race, and heightens tensions—all at time when the world desperately needs the opposite of all these things—but it also reinforces the impression that the “rules-based order” is nothing but a hypocritical sham, a “do as I say, not as I do” arrangement designed to allow certain states to dominate and control international relations. This puts international law and global norms under extreme pressure. Yet, despite **recent rhetoric** about their commitment to international law and rules, certain countries are doubling down on their pursuit of hegemony. The UK, in addition to its contributions to AUKUS, recently announced a 44 per cent increase to its nuclear arsenal. At First Committee, the UK delegation claimed that this somehow makes it “clear that the UK remains committed to the long-term goal of a world without nuclear weapons,” though as Indonesia noted, it is in fact “a clear case of noncompliance with the legal obligations of Article VI” of the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

This persistent gaslighting by the nuclear-armed states demonstrates a patriarchal relationship



Image: Dimity Hawkins

with the world, in which violence and the threat of violence are used as tools to try to control the behaviour of others, while claiming to be for the good of all. This reinforces of a militarised world order, built by those who profit from war and maintained by assertions that this is just the way the world is, as if they have no responsibility for making the world the way it is.

In this context, the colonial backdrop to AUKUS is also worth noting. Two of the countries involved in the alliance are settler colonies and the third was a prolific coloniser. Weapons and war, as the [joint civil society statement on humanitarian disarmament](#) to First Committee highlighted, are tools of colonial and imperial power. Wading into the Asia-Pacific with nuclear submarines is just the latest extension of the militarised white supremacy inherent to colonialism.

Solidarity for sustainable peace

Opposing this alliance and preventing its implementation is important for peace. Rather than ensuring the security of weapon manufacturers and their political allies, we need to build a world order based on human security and solidarity. Rather than seeking to “constrain” perceived challengers to hegemonic power, we should be working to build a world of equality, peace, and justice for all. “Security and strength are achieved through investing in the well-being of our people, our environment, and our relationships—rather than investing in military arsenals,” said The Maldives. It urged “all countries to forgo spending billions on arsenals that only create a false sense of strength and security.”

Anti-racist action and gender analysis of norms and biases must also be part of the work ahead. Calling for an intentional anti-racist approach to disarmament, dozens of civil society groups addressing First Committee in the joint statement on humanitarian disarmament noted that “a future of peace and security that upholds human dignity and equality demands that we dismantle the systems of oppression and racism that both propel violence and conflict, and are perpetuated by the use of weapons.” The groups signing onto the [joint statement on](#)

[gender](#) encouraged a “more robust reflection of the gendered norms associated with weapons, war, and violence.”

We are not without guideposts and inspiration for this action. The will is there from many participants in disarmament and arms control processes to dismantle patriarchy, racism, and other forms of oppression through demilitarisation and peacebuilding. It is a minority of governments keeping the world in its current death spiral. Thus, most delegations issued impassioned appeals to the nuclear-armed and other heavily militarised governments to change course and join the majority in finding strength in solidarity rather than weapons and war.

“Coexistence in a world without nuclear weapons is possible,” argued Chile. “Maintaining international peace and security without resorting to nuclear deterrence is, in addition to an ethical imperative, achievable and in line with the international system for the protection of human rights.” Egypt, likewise, said that reliance on nuclear “deterrence” and resistance to new disarmament and arms control agreements “can no longer be a morally or politically acceptable norm.” Instead, all governments need to recognise that “violence is not inevitable, but is preventable,” as Costa Rica asserted. “We cannot equate peace with domination nor greed with development.... Our investment must be in sustainable development, disarmament and robust arms control mechanisms, inclusive governance and planetary health.” We have no time to waste. We need full spectrum disarmament now.

FIRST COMMITTEE BRIEFING BOOK

DOWNLOAD FROM
WWW.REACHINGCRITICALWILL.ORG

First Committee
BRIEFING BOOK / 2021

NUCLEAR WEAPONS

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

As every year, all delegations participating in the first week of the First Committee's general debate reaffirmed their commitment to a world free of nuclear weapons. However, stark differences continue to exist between nuclear-armed and nuclear-supportive states, on the one hand, and the rest of the world on the other, as to how and when nuclear disarmament is possible.

A few delegations explicitly called out the nuclear-armed states' argumentation of the need to hold on to nuclear weapons for "deterrence" and security. For example, Costa Rica reiterated that nuclear weapons do not ensure safety or order in the international system; rather, they open the door to multi-dimensional power competitions. Similarly, Timor-Leste noted, "The arms race and use of weapons will never bring peace and justice in the world," while the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) stressed that nuclear-armed states' "continued existence, accumulation and modernisation actually increases the threat level to our collective security." Trinidad and Tobago stressed that "deterrence breeds escalation".

"The argument that nuclear weapons are indispensable for the security of some States, but not for others, lacks credibility," said Lesotho. "It is our view that nuclear weapons create a false sense of security. Their possession breeds mistrust and heightens tensions among states." New Zealand referred to nuclear-armed states' arguments that the current security environment does not allow for nuclear disarmament. It pointed out that "progress on disarmament does not depend on the existence of a positive global environment," but that rather, it "can contribute to its creation."

Nuclear weapon spending

Many delegations continued to criticise the vast amounts of resources spent on militarisation and stressed that these resources could be used

for socioeconomic development, particularly to address repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic. Some participants, including the Arab Group, Costa Rica, Egypt, Mexico, Nigeria, Paraguay, and the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), underscored the proportion of military spending on nuclear weapons modernisation.

Iran reminded that an amount of 72.6 billion USD was wasted on nuclear weapons in 2020, while Mexico stressed that this should have been used to tackle the health crisis. Similarly, Costa Rica highlighted ICAN research showing that nine nuclear-armed states are collectively spending nearly 140,000 USD on nuclear weapons and related infrastructure each minute. Costa Rica said, "Every dollar spent on nuclear weapons is a dollar that is unavailable to meet human security needs." Egypt concluded that the pandemic exposed the irrationality to direct scarce resource to nuclear arsenals and arms races instead of investing in sustainable development.

Nuclear weapon modernisation

High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Izumi Nakamitsu said that longstanding agreements on nuclear weapons are fragile, as trust amongst "major powers" continues to erode. Nakamitsu stressed that the "increasingly hostile relationships between [nuclear-armed] states are driving nuclear risk to unacceptable heights." She further said that "all States possessing nuclear weapons are undertaking efforts to improve their nuclear arsenals and—in some cases—expanding them."

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), CARICOM, Cambodia, Ghana, Ireland, Malaysia, Mexico, Lesotho, Lebanon, Nepal, Trinidad and Tobago, Sri Lanka, San Marino, the Philippines, ICAN, and others, regretted the sustained modernisation of nuclear arsenals. Nepal was clear that the modernisation of nuclear weapons has made disarmament "an elusive hope." CARICOM observed

that “the action we are witnessing is diametrically opposed to and undermines the very concept and goal of [nuclear] disarmament.” The African Group called on nuclear-armed states to cease modernisation, refurbishment, or extension of nuclear weapons facilities. Indonesia also called on them to refrain from any action that would run counter to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)’s objective of total elimination of nuclear weapons and the cessation of the nuclear arms race.

Iceland stressed the need to safeguard and strengthen agreements that have prevented nuclear arms races in the past. Similarly, many participants, including Libya, the Central American Integration System (SICA), and Senegal, stressed the lack of compliance by nuclear-armed states with international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation instruments and expressed grave concern at the continued nuclear weapon modernisation, and implications of this for an arms race. Kyrgyzstan argued that “it is hard to imagine an international climate less hospitable to nuclear arms control.” Sweden also stressed that “the risk of another nuclear arms race, or actual nuclear weapons use, is ever present.”

The United States (US), which is a nuclear-armed state, argued that “autocratic regimes ... pose new nuclear dangers that remind us of the importance of preventing nuclear war, avoiding nuclear arms races, and stopping the further spread of nuclear weapons.” Russia, also a nuclear-armed state, expressed concern at the development of the US global missile defense system and its deployment in various regions of the world combined with the building of the capacity of high-precision non-nuclear weapons.

Nuclear doctrines and geopolitics

A few delegates critiqued the inclusion of nuclear weapons in military doctrines. Colombia, Malaysia, Mexico, and Sri Lanka expressed concern about the new developments of nuclear weapons provided for in the military doctrines of some nuclear-armed states. SICA stressed the need to eliminate the role of nuclear weapon in strategic and political security

doctrines. Nakamitsu expressed concern about the dangerous exchanges on the usability of nuclear weapons. Russia argued it has reduced the role and place of nuclear weapons in its doctrines.

Ukraine expressed concern with Russia’s upgrade of its nuclear capabilities in Crimea, saying this poses a serious threat to the non-proliferation regime. Indonesia pointed out that the United Kingdom’s (UK) nuclear weapons policy as contained in its integrated review has demonstrated a clear case of non-compliance with the legal obligations of Article VI of the NPT. ICAN said the “recent reports of possible substantial nuclear warhead increases by China and the United Kingdom are cause for alarm.”

Various delegations, including China, Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), Mexico, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Indonesia, Russia, Venezuela, and ICAN, referred to the recently announced alliance between Australia, UK, and US (AUKUS), in which the US will share nuclear technology and materials with Australia to build nuclear-powered submarines. Those expressing concern warned that this would lead to greater instability and an arms race (see the editorial in this edition for further details).

Humanitarian and environmental impacts of nuclear weapons

Many participants highlighted the devastating and long-lasting humanitarian impacts of nuclear weapons. Austria, ASEAN, the African Group, Burkina Faso, Colombia, Honduras, Ireland, Iraq, Iran, Libya, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nigeria, Qatar, San Marino, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Trinidad and Tobago, Venezuela, ICAN, the Lawyer’s Committee for Nuclear Policy (LCNP), and the joint civil society statement on youth underscored the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of the use or detonation of nuclear weapons, either by accident or through a deliberate act. Nepal and Mexico reminded that we are continuously living with the threat of over 13,000 nuclear weapons.

Libya stressed the nuclear weapons are one of most abhorrent weapons created by humanity, and that

no other weapon would cause similar suffering. Libya argued also that there is no way to control a nuclear weapon's fallout. Ireland made similar remarks. Paraguay argued that the destructive power of a nuclear weapon does not have limits. LCNP also reminded of the far-reaching human rights implications, endangering not only "the non-negotiable right to life, but they also endanger the rights to health, housing, development, food and the right to be free from discrimination," and recalled the UN Human Rights Committee's General Comment No. 36 to that effect. LNCP further reiterated that nuclear weapon development, modernisation, testing, and waste disposal disproportionately affect people in poor and minority communities.

"We do not require our imaginations to understand the brutality that lies behind—we have terrible and vivid examples within our collective living memory. Even when dormant, they are unthinkable security threats," noted The Maldives. Other delegations highlighted the continued impacts from nuclear weapons testing. Algeria explained that its commitment to nuclear disarmament stems from its "unique experience caused by the devastating nuclear tests conducted on its national territory during the colonial power." Kenya said that the high-level meeting to commemorate and promote the ninth observance of the International Day Against Nuclear Tests on September 2021, is essential in "paying homage to the victims of nuclear tests, and to stand in solidarity with the long-term suffering and continued threat that nuclear tests pose to humanity, international stability and security." Timor-Leste made similar observations. ICAN reminded of the impacts of nuclear weapons testing in the Pacific, causing radiation sickness, cancers, trauma, death, and destruction for generations to come.

ASEAN, Libya, Nigeria, Trinidad and Tobago, and Malaysia also underscored the devastating environmental impacts of nuclear weapon activities. Kyrgyzstan stressed the environmental consequences of uranium mining and associated nuclear fuel cycle activities in the production of nuclear weapons. It highlighted the importance of remediating areas affected by former uranium

extraction plants and recognising the need to devise and promote effective programmes for the responsible and safe management of radioactive and toxic waste in Central Asia.

Nicaragua argued there was no "Plan B" to save the planet if there was a nuclear catastrophe. The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) stressed the importance of enhancing public awareness about the threat posed to humanity by nuclear weapons. It welcomed the UN annual meetings and activities for the observance of 26 September as the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons.

Prohibition of nuclear weapons

In the midst what seems like a dark time for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, many described the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) as a glimmer of hope. ASEAN called the TPNW a "historic agreement". The African Group called the TPNW a watershed to rid the world of nuclear weapons. Brazil described the TPNW "a leap" for the nuclear disarmament regime, embodying the new consensus that nuclear weapons must never be used. Algeria described the TPNW a milestone achieved towards delegitimising nuclear weapons, while Timor-Leste said it is an "international humanitarian norm for our common security, protection of human life, and peace."

The majority of delegations, including ASEAN, Argentina, Algeria, Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, CARICOM, Chile, Costa Rica, Eritrea, Ecuador, Ghana, Honduras, Indonesia, Ireland, Jamaica, Kenya, Lao PDR, Lesotho, Libya, Maldives, Nakamitsu, Nicaragua, Nigeria, New Zealand, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, San Marino, South Africa, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Trinidad and Tobago, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, and ICAN welcomed the entry into force of the TPNW on 22 January 2021; NAM took note of it.

Ecuador, Indonesia, Libya, Maldives, and San Marino called on all to sign and ratify the Treaty. The African Group called on nuclear-armed states and those under their umbrella to join the TPNW and to

pursue the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons. Bangladesh and Jamaica also would like to see full implementation of the Treaty, including by nuclear-armed states. While Jamaica expressed concern at the strong opposition to the Treaty, it said that joining the TPNW would signify the commitment of the nuclear-armed states “to disarmament and non-proliferation efforts and to regional and international peace and security.” Jamaica congratulated Chile for its ratification of the Treaty and on becoming its 56th state party only a few days ago. Nepal, Mongolia, and Timor-Leste said they were committed to ratifying the TPNW as soon as possible.

ASEAN, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Malaysia, and the Philippines stressed that the TPNW complements other existing nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation instruments. Indonesia underscored that it will close a legal gap in the nuclear disarmament architecture and mutually complements the NPT. Ireland specified it is a practical expression of Article VI of the NPT.

While celebrating the TPNW’s entry into force, many delegations expressed the need to now focus on implementation. In that vein, Cambodia, CARICOM, Honduras, Indonesia, Jamaica, Ireland, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Mongolia, Trinidad and Tobago, Thailand, South Africa, and ICAN look forward to the first Meeting of States Parties (MSP) in 2022.

Nuclear arms control

As every year, the vast majority of states called for the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), urging the Annex II states to sign and ratify it. Kazakhstan reminded that the closing of its nuclear test site in 1991 paved the way for the adoption of the CTBT, as well as the designation of 29 August as the International Day against Nuclear Tests by the General Assembly. The US, which has not ratified the Treaty, stressed its commitment to the CTBT, and said that until the CTBT’s entry into force, it continues to observe its zero-yield nuclear explosive testing moratorium. The EU called on states to abide by a moratorium on nuclear test explosion and to refrain from

actions defeating the CTBT’s object and purpose of the Treaty. Italy, Sweden and the US made similar calls. Nigeria said, “We all owe a duty to protect the environment by respecting the moratorium against nuclear testing as we work assiduously in achieving universal adherence to the CTBT.” Kazakhstan stressed that a voluntary moratorium on nuclear testing is not an alternative to the CTBT.

The New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) is one of the few remaining intact nuclear arms control instruments. Many delegations, including Canada, Cameroon, Estonia, EU, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Indonesia, Latvia, the Nordic countries, New Zealand, Norway, Pakistan, Poland, Switzerland, Sri Lanka, Turkey, the UK, and Nakamitsu therefore welcomed the extension of New START between the two largest nuclear weapon possessors, the United States and Russia. Iran said the extension will be futile if not complemented by further tangible actions to destroy nuclear weapons. Nakamitsu and Germany were pleased about a reaffirmation by presidents Biden and Putin that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought. Many, including Nakamitsu, Poland, and Latvia, hoped that negotiations between the US and Russia on a new arms control agreement will start well before expiration of new START in 2026. NAM called for the extension of New START beyond 2026.

The US explained that it is now entering “an era of relentless diplomacy” through its strategic stability dialogue with Russia, which is “focused on building a stable, predictable foundation for the future of arms control.” The UK and Australia welcomed this. Russia proposed a “new “security equation” that would comprise key strategic stability factors and cover all offensive and embrace nuclear and non-nuclear weapons capable of performing strategic tasks.” Russia welcomed the “sober pragmatism shown by the new U.S. administration.”

The Nordic Countries and Poland called on both states to seek further reductions and address a broader range of arms control issues, including non-strategic weapons. Germany, Switzerland, Estonia, and Finland also hoped that strategic talks will lead

to broader arms control agreements in the future. The EU said that the reduction of deployed strategic nuclear arsenals, enhanced by robust verification mechanisms, contributes to the NPT's Article VI through an overall reduction of the nuclear weapons stockpile. Finland argued that inclusive engagement of China in strategic stability and arms control would be beneficial for global security. Australia, Finland, Poland, Estonia, and Latvia made similar remarks.

In contrast to the positive developments regarding New START, Russia argued that the collapse of the Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF) due to US withdrawal has made the threat of the deploying US-made land-based intermediate-range and shorter-range missiles in Europe and the Asia-Pacific real.

Bangladesh, Iceland, India, Latvia, RoK, Ukraine, Ghana, Norway, and The Nordic Countries reaffirmed support for early negotiation and conclusion of a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT).

Non-Proliferation Treaty

The vast majority of participants reaffirmed the centrality of the NPT in the global non-proliferation regime, and expressed their expectations for a successful outcome of the upcoming 10th Review Conference (RevCon), scheduled for January 2022. Nakamitsu said that, while not a cure for all nuclear weapons-related concerns, the RevCon will be an important opportunity to reaffirm commitments to the norm against use, proliferation, and testing of nuclear weapons. CARICOM, Brazil, Malaysia, and Sweden, amongst others, said that the RevCon should not only reaffirm but build on past commitments. NAM states parties to the NPT called for concrete recommendations on achieving nuclear disarmament. The African Group, the Arab Group, Nakamitsu, Nigeria, and Yemen hoped for a balanced outcome. The P5 expressed their continued commitment to the NPT.

A few delegations expressed their discontent with the lack of progress of implementation of the NPT. ASEAN, Algeria, CARICOM, Germany, Iran, Ireland,

Kazakhstan, and New Zealand, amongst others, also called on states to renew their commitments towards the full implementation of the Treaty, particularly Article VI. Ecuador, Paraguay, and Nigeria regretted lack of compliance of nuclear-armed states with the Treaty, while others regretted the lack of implementation of past agreements, including the 1995 resolution to create a nuclear-weapon free zone in the Middle East, as well as the 2000 and 2010 Action Plans.

Various states, including Algeria and Poland, called for universalisation of the NPT. Kazakhstan called on nuclear powers outside the NPT to join without any preconditions and become non-nuclear armed states. The Arab Group, Iran, Syria, and Yemen regretted that Israel refuses to join the NPT as non-nuclear armed state and said it should subject its nuclear facilities to the IAEA safeguards regime. Indonesia stressed that all states parties should not promote any narrative of exceptionalism, which will discredit the NPT by creating double standards. Iraq also called on Israel to join the NPT.

Sweden launched the Stockholm Initiative for Nuclear Disarmament in 2019 together with 15 other non-nuclear armed states from different parts of the world and different security contexts. It aims to build political support for "a pragmatic and results-oriented" disarmament agenda ahead of the NPT RevCon. In 2020, the Initiative adopted a declaration including 22 so-called stepping stones. Iceland, Sweden, Norway, and Germany invited all NPT states parties to align with its proposals. ROK welcomed this approach. Spain said the Stockholm approach "addresses different sensitivities".

Nuclear risk reduction

A few delegates underscored the heightened risk of a nuclear weapon detonation. Nakamitsu and ICAN stressed that advanced cyber capabilities have created an even greater risk of misperception and miscalculation. ICAN noted, "Humanity has had many close calls with nuclear accidents and near-misses already. We cannot count on luck and good decisions by cautious individuals to help us make it through

these situations in the future.” The Maldives likewise pointed out that nuclear weapons “require expensive and constant monitoring and maintenance. They leave no room for human error, in their handling, transportation, and protection.”

Some participants called for risk reduction. Finland said while this is no substitute for nuclear disarmament it can advance it, and welcomed the NPT working paper by the Stockholm Initiative for Nuclear Disarmament and the ongoing effort in the Creating an Environment for Nuclear Disarmament initiative (CEND). ROK welcomed “pragmatic” approaches to nuclear risk reduction such as CEND. The Netherlands also welcomed this approach.

One avenue towards nuclear disarmament, promoted by some states, is nuclear verification. Germany said that nuclear-armed states and non-nuclear armed states can effectively work together, including through nuclear disarmament verification. It announced that Germany and France are preparing the next exercise simulating the dismantlement of a nuclear warhead for 2022 and encouraged broad attendance. The Nordic countries reminded of their commitment through advancing the work on nuclear disarmament verification through initiatives like the Quad Partnership and the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification (IPNDV).

The EU called for further transparency and confidence-building measures and verification activities, laying the ground for more nuclear weapons reduction in the future. It recalled action 5 of the 2015 NPT action plan, calling on nuclear-armed states to enhance transparency and mutual confidence. The US said that as part of its efforts to confidence building, risk reduction, and transparency, released newly declassified information regarding its nuclear weapons stockpile, and encouraged others to do the same.

The permanent five members of the UN Security Council reported on progress on their “roadmap”. This includes the organisation of a side event on doctrines and nuclear policies at the NPT RevCon, continued work on strategic risk reduction, resumed

meetings to advance an FMCT, near finalisation of the second edition of a glossary of key nuclear terms, reaffirmation of support to the Southeast Asian Nuclear-Weapon Free Zone, and the Paris Conference in 2021, ahead of the RevCon.

Regional issues

The fragility of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) continued to be topic of concern for many delegates. Argentina, the EU, France, Greece, Germany, Iceland, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Nordic countries, Nicaragua, Sweden, Turkey, Thailand, and Russia expressed their support for the JCPOA. South Africa stressed that the JCPOA is one of the most important diplomatic achievements. NAM, Bolivia, Thailand, Ireland, Switzerland, and Kazakhstan and Malaysia called for full implementation of the JCPOA by all its participants.

Sweden and Latvia said that Iran’s continuing non-compliance with the JCPOA is a matter of grave concern. Netherlands was concerned about escalatory steps taken by Iran while Australia was concerned by Iran’s failure to address the presence of nuclear material at undeclared locations.

South Africa called on Iran and the US to return to talks. Iceland, Latvia, Netherlands, the Nordic countries, Spain, Sweden, Latvia, Poland, France, and Germany called on Iran to return to negotiations in Vienna. The UAE called on Iran to fulfil its obligations under the JCPOA, the IAEA Safeguards Agreement, and the NPT. The EU, France, Germany, and Norway also urged Iran to fully cooperate with the IAEA. The Nordic countries urged Iran to return to full compliance and to address outstanding safeguards issues without delay.

Another persistent regional issue is the situation on the Korean peninsula. The Nordic countries, Iceland, Italy, EU, Estonia, Latvia, France, UAE, Sweden, and Germany expressed concern at the continued nuclear weapon and ballistic missile programmes of the DPRK. France and Australia expressed support for sanctions on the DPRK.

Australia, the Nordic countries, Iceland, Ireland, Poland, the EU, Norway, Estonia, Latvia, Thailand, and Sweden and Germany urged the DPRK to comply with its commitments, in line with UN Security Council resolutions. Germany further urged the DPRK to positively react to US and South Korean efforts to establish dialogue and negotiations. The EU, Indonesia, and Germany called on ROK to embark on a path towards complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearisation. Sweden and Indonesia called on the DPRK to ratify the CTBT. Indonesia called on the DPRK to return to the NPT as non-nuclear armed state.

ROK explained that the “conundrum” continues to prove frustrating as the Korean Peninsula Peace Process has been stalled for a while. However, it urged not to underestimate the milestone agreements and breakthroughs such as previous inter-Korean and US-DPRK commitments. ROK hoped that the DPRK will return to the negotiating table for dialogue, and reaffirmed its strong commitment to this goal.

Nuclear weapon free zones

As every year, the vast majority of participants emphasised the crucial role of nuclear-weapon free zones (NWFZ) in contributing to global nuclear disarmament. Most focused on the impasse of concluding a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East.

Algeria, Arab Group, NAM, Egypt, Iraq, Oman, and SICA welcomed the convening of the first session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons, while many participants, including Algeria, Arab Group, Iraq, Nakamitsu, South Africa, Egypt, United Arab Emirates, Yemen, Oman, and NAM expressed their hopes for a strong outcome of the second conference session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, under the presidency of Kuwait. Algeria, the Arab Group, and Yemen called on all parties to engage in good faith to negotiate a legally binding treaty to enhance regional and international peace and security.



NUCLEAR WEAPONS ARE ILLEGAL

The UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons enters into force on **January 22, 2021**

#NUCLEARBAN

BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS

Filippa Lentzos | King's College London

The first week of the First Committee saw five groups and 42 individual states refer to biological weapons in their general debate statements. Most remarks emphasised the importance of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC) and expressed support for the Treaty. Many highlighted the need to universalise and effectively implement, including adequately resource, the BWC.

About a dozen states referred to the COVID-19 pandemic, noting that it has highlighted biological threats and the need to strengthen biosecurity, biorisk management, and disease surveillance. Kazakhstan reiterated its proposal to establish an International Agency for Biological Safety, which it first aired at the general debate of the UN General Assembly last year. Finland emphasised the need to improve implementation of the BWC confidence-building measures and proposed consideration of “enhanced transparency measures.”

The upcoming Review Conference of the BWC scheduled for 2022 also provided a focus for states. India spoke about the need for states to “work together, build convergences and achieve tangible outcomes.” In a joint statement, China and Russia urged states to adopt “a constructive approach.” The UK called for “action, ambition and cooperation,” while the United States emphasised the need to “bring the Convention into the 21st century.”

Germany was more concrete and noted that a key deliverable for the Review Conference “should be the establishment of a Scientific and Technological Experts Advisory Forum”—which most states agree with in principle, but diverge on the specifics.

The Non-Aligned Movement and several states, including India, Cuba, Russia, and China, repeated decades-old calls for a legally binding protocol to the BWC to ensure effective verification. The United States announced that it will propose “specific measures” to strengthen BWC implementation and

promote compliance. The UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs suggested “an innovative middle way that is responsive to scientific advances and the needs of developing countries, while rooted in international cooperation.”

Russia and China called on BWC states parties to develop operating standards for a BWC mechanism to investigate allegations of biological weapons use, emphasising that BWC functions “should not be duplicated by other mechanisms.” Russia noted it is submitting a draft resolution to update the principles and procedures of the UN Secretary-General’s Mechanism (SGM) for Investigation of Alleged Use of Chemical and Biological Weapons, and that it is counting on broad support and co-sponsorship. A resolution on the SGM introduced last year by Russia faced **an unprecedented defeat**.

The **joint statement** by China and Russia also expressed “serious concerns” about “the United States’ and its allies’ overseas military biological activities,” alleging that over 200 US biological laboratories are deployed outside its national territory and that they function in an opaque and non-transparent manner. China and Russia share the view that such activities pose serious risks for their national security, and are detrimental to the security of relevant regions. The joint statement further noted that “the United States’ and its allies’ military biological activities on their national territory also cause serious compliance concerns.” No such concerns have been formally raised within the context of the BWC.

It is the first time that Russia and China have released a joint statement on strengthening the BWC, and demonstrates, according to **China’s Foreign Ministry**, “the high level of the China-Russia comprehensive strategic coordination in a new era as well as the two countries’ strong determination and responsible attitude towards safeguarding global biosecurity and defending multilateralism.”

CHEMICAL WEAPONS

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

Recent chemical weapon and nerve agent use is testing the longstanding norm against this weapon of mass destruction. Efforts to address such use are causing friction within other relevant forums, such as the UN Security Council and the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), which is having ripple effects within the First Committee.

During the first week, more than 40 delegations addressed the issue of chemical weapons, with virtually all expressing condemnation for their use. Some, such as the UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Germany, Sweden, Georgia, Bolivia, and Latvia, among others, additionally noted that the use of chemical weapons is a violation of international law (the Convention on Chemical Weapons, or CWC).

Sweden, Norway, the Nordic Countries, Finland, Germany, Estonia, the United Kingdom (UK), and the United States (US) condemned the operation targeting Alexei Navalny in 2020 using a chemical nerve agent of the "Novichok" group. Germany, Italy, Sweden, and the Nordic Countries, among others, called on Russia to fully cooperate with the OPCW to ensure an impartial international investigation. Germany, UK, and Canada also referenced the 2018 use of a similar nerve agent on Sergei Skripal.

The US, UK, Germany, France, Sweden, Norway, Nordic Countries, Finland, Poland, Turkey, Canada, and Australia, among others, called out the use of chemical weapons by Syria. Georgia, France, and Turkey expressed support for the decision taken by the conference of the states parties to the CWC in April 2021 to suspend certain rights and privileges of the Syrian Arab Republic under the Convention, for its continuous possession and use of chemical weapons. France referred to its work in launching the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons, in which Austria acknowledged its membership.

Finland also recalled the decision by CWC states parties and further urged that the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) established by the OPCW for Syria be given the full respect and support, including through resourcing, of states parties for its impartial work. Finland noted, however, "Even then, final responsibility for achieving accountability rests with the UN Security Council. We are yet to see the Council fully shoulder this responsibility."

The recent actions by the OPCW Technical Secretariat have led to accusations of the body becoming politicised. Several delegations commented on issues of impartiality and politicisation, while also condemning use of chemical weapons.

Russia said that the OPCW situation has continued to "deteriorate," arguing that the move by several countries to resort to voting was done "in order to put pressure in favour of decisions that benefit them and contradict the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention. This has led to a division in the OPCW, the loss of its independent status and credibility as a renowned institution in the field of chemical disarmament and non-proliferation."

China shared the view that the CWC is politicised. South Africa expressed concern over polarisation in OPCW policymaking, which it is leading to the adoption of decisions by vote. It urged caution in preserving the integrity of OPCW as an objective and impartial organisation. Venezuela reiterated the technical nature of the OPCW and underlined the need to avoid its politicisation.

Bolivia saluted the comprehensive work of the OPCW and hoped it can continue developing in a depoliticised way, a point echoed by Cuba. Timor-Leste highlighted the effort of the OPCW in regard to effective operation procedures and the implementation of the provisions of the CWC.

Germany said that it rejects all attempts by Russia and Syria to question the professional expertise, objectivity, impartiality, and independence of the OPCW Technical Secretariat. Iceland strongly supports the role of the OPCW and noted its ongoing investigative efforts, are guided by “strong integrity, impartiality, and outstanding expertise.” Nepal noted “with satisfaction” the effectiveness of CWC in its verification regime.

Colombia highlighted the relevance of the CWC; Mexico called on states to reaffirm the prohibition on chemical weapons, alongside other prohibition treaties. Iran said it strongly supports upholding the authority and the “full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation of BWC and CWC.” Chile, Ethiopia, Malaysia, Bangladesh, Ireland, and the Netherlands, among others, also underscored the importance of upholding the CWC.

The Non-Aligned Movement urged the US to take every necessary measure to complete destruction of its chemical weapons stockpiles, a point echoed by Iran. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) welcomed progress made to date in eliminating chemical weapons stockpiles.

Poland referenced the annual First Committee resolution on chemical weapons, which it sponsors (Implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction), describing it as an opportunity for the international community to convey “a strong and unambiguous message of support for the CWC and the OPCW’s leading role.” In recent years this resolution has been subjected to several paragraph votes because it has become more specific over time in naming incidents of chemical weapons use, which some member states deem inappropriate to do in a First Committee resolution. It is always adopted with a high majority of states voting in favour.

Russia announced that it will again submit a draft resolution relating to the UN Secretary-General’s Mechanism for Investigation of Alleged Use of Chemical and Biological Weapons. This resolution was put to a vote and not adopted in 2020. Details about the 2020 resolution and context are outlined in the editions of the *2020 First Committee Monitor*, in the chapters on biological weapons.

AUTONOMOUS WEAPON SYSTEMS

Dr. Catherine Connolly | Campaign to Stop Killer Robots

“The emergence and sophistication of new technologies are placing the capacity to disrupt global stability in the hands of a growing number of actors,” noted UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Izumi Nakamitsu, in her opening statement to the First Committee. In this vein, she observed that deliberations on lethal autonomous weapon systems at the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) are at a critical juncture, emphasising the importance of the work of the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on autonomous weapon systems (AWS), and specifically stating that “human responsibility must be retained in the development and use of weapons since accountability cannot be transferred to machines.”

The necessity of retaining human control over the use of force featured strongly in statements last week. Sweden voiced its conviction that meaningful human control over the use of force must be upheld, and Canada said that the GGE should advance international efforts to ensure these weapons retain adequate human control. A number of states coupled their concerns regarding human responsibility and control over the use of force with calls for a legal framework on AWS, including Austria, New Zealand, Switzerland, and Spain.

Austria stressed that “we cannot allow autonomous weapon systems to select and engage targets without meaningful human control,” and concurred

with the UN Secretary General's assessment of such a situation as "politically unacceptable and morally repugnant."

Arguing that "there is still time to prevent humanity from crossing a very dangerous threshold by adopting legally-binding norms to safeguard human control over autonomous weapon systems," Austria urged the international community not to waste this opportunity. New Zealand noted that engaging actively in the elaboration of an international framework to effectively prohibit and regulate AWS is one of its key priorities, with a legal framework clearly needed given the legal, political, and ethical implications of these systems. Switzerland stated that rules and measures are needed to ensure human control and to avoid systems that cannot be used in accordance with international humanitarian law, while Spain said that agreement must be reached on a regulatory framework on the deployment and use of autonomous weapons that satisfies the demands of human control and other principles of international humanitarian law. Cuba reiterated its call for the adoption of a protocol prohibiting AWS.

The ethical, legal, and moral issues posed by these systems were also acknowledged by Austria, Ireland, San Marino, and Canada, with Ireland describing these dilemmas as "considerable," and Canada noting that these matters require greater understanding.

Many states, including Germany, India, Republic of Korea, Philippines, Finland, Iceland, Poland, and Australia, stated that the CCW remains the appropriate forum for work on AWS, expressed their appreciation for the work of the GGE, or hoped for a substantive outcome from the upcoming sixth CCW Review Conference. In their joint statement, the Nordic countries expressed their desire that work on the 11 guiding principles elaborated by the GGE in 2018 and 2019 be further advanced, especially regarding human-machine interaction. Both the Netherlands and San Marino emphasised the importance of multilateralism in the work on AWS.

The Campaign to Stop Killer Robots believes that the development and proliferation of these systems will result in the further dehumanisation of warfare. A legally binding framework on autonomous weapon systems is an ethical imperative and a legal necessity if we are to achieve a more peaceful world and more secure future. The **statement** on behalf of the coalition of 185 non-governmental organisations in over 65 countries called on all states to work together to create a binding framework that includes both prohibitions on certain types of AWS—including those that would target humans—and regulations to ensure meaningful human control over all weapon systems incorporating autonomy. Noting that there is now clear momentum towards achieving such a framework, the statement warned that "it is urgent that states work together to solve this problem before the use of autonomous weapon systems proliferates, and before the threat that these weapons pose to the safety and security of the world becomes irreversible."



Photo: Ari Beser, Campaign to Stop Killer Robots

EXPLOSIVE WEAPONS IN POPULATED AREAS

Katherine Young | Explosive Weapons Monitor, International Network on Explosive Weapons

In response to an airstrike by United States (US) armed forces in Kabul, Afghanistan, last month that killed an aid worker and his family, US Executive Director of Humanity & Inclusion, Jeff Meer, wrote about the “impossibility of conducting victimless airstrikes in the middle of crowded cities.” As the Taliban re-took control of Afghanistan during the withdrawal of US forces, civilians again bore the brunt of increased violence. This is not surprising. When explosive weapons are used in populated areas, an overwhelming proportion of casualties—more than 90 per cent—are civilian.

The UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs noted that the use of explosive weapons in populated areas (EWIPA) remains “a leading cause for concern” within the disarmament agenda of the UN Secretary-General. She underscored the Secretary-General’s “long-standing position that States and all parties to armed conflict should avoid the use of such weapons in populated areas due to the significant likelihood of indiscriminate effects,” and welcomed the ongoing process to develop a political declaration.

States, international organisations, and civil society groups are currently engaged in negotiations led by Ireland on an international political declaration that can set stronger standards to protect civilians from the use of explosive weapons in towns, cities, and other populated areas. This political declaration offers the chance to increase the protection of civilians living through conflict, but only if it contains commitments that drive genuine change.

A number of states voiced support for this initiative in their statements. Austria, Azerbaijan, Costa Rica, Iceland, Ireland, New Zealand, San Marina, and Switzerland all raised concerns about the use of EWIPA in their national statements, as did the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, the International Network on Explosive Weapons (INEW), and the Conflict and Environment Observatory (on behalf of 14 organisations).

The United Nations High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu, underscored the Secretary-General’s enduring position that states should avoid the use of explosive weapons with wide-area impacts in populated areas due to the significant likelihood of indiscriminate effects. She welcomed the ongoing process to develop a political declaration and looks forward to the resumption of consultations.

Project Ploughshares Executive Director, Cesar Jaramillo, delivered a statement on behalf of INEW. The statement made clear that “victims of explosive weapons are more than abstract statistics.” They are non-combatant individuals that suffer psychological trauma, are forced from their homes, and experience a number of other manifestations of long-term harm. INEW is optimistic that the ongoing multilateral process to address this problem through a politically binding declaration will establish robust commitments by states to avoid the use of explosive weapons with wide area effects in towns, cities, and other populated areas and aid those who have been affected. The humanitarian impacts of explosive weapons “is a problem that cannot be ignored; the ongoing political process to address it is an opportunity that cannot be squandered.”

The Conflict and Environment Observatory (on behalf of 14 organisations), referred to the use of EWIPA in the context of a global pollution crisis. The use of EWIPA “generates millions of tonnes of debris,” as seen in Syria and Yemen where infrastructure damage releases hazardous materials and contaminates soils and groundwater. Rather than considering contamination to be “part of doing business,” governments should start taking action to address these problems.

Austria noted that work in disarmament is guided by two principles: promoting human security and building normative frameworks. It believes this applies to the use of EWIPA and suggested that a

strong political declaration will help ensure states' compliance with international humanitarian law and reduce human suffering.

Azerbaijan referred to the use of explosive weapons in its country, as well their effects in terms of civilian casualties. To address the humanitarian consequences of the use of explosive weapons, Azerbaijan has prioritised reconstruction and the restoration of housing and essential services, along with agreements with other states to build lasting peace.

Costa Rica called on states to support a "strong" political declaration that strengthens the protection of civilians from harm caused by the use of EWIPA, and condemned attacks on critical physical infrastructure that supports civilian lives, particularly health infrastructure.

Iceland welcomed and stated its firm support for the efforts to address the issue of EWIPA as "another positive step in furthering disarmament."

Ireland made clear that addressing the effects of the use of EWIPA is a top priority and, as such, is leading the consultation process on the development of a political declaration. Ireland intends to conclude the process in early 2022.

New Zealand strongly supports the negotiation of a political declaration "to make a meaningful difference to the lives of civilians caught in conflict."

San Marino fully supports the adoption of a political declaration, as it believes "the use of explosive weapons in populated areas has a devastating and indiscriminate impact on civilians." It called on all states to "refrain from the use of these weapons in such areas and to fully comply with international humanitarian law."

Switzerland believes that international law has a key role to play in addressing new conflict realities, including the establishment of new principles and norm development. This also includes new "measures to ensure that international humanitarian law is fully respected when explosive weapons are used in populated areas."

Overall, INEW remains optimistic about the ongoing multilateral process to agree and adopt a politically binding declaration that establishes robust commitments for states to address the humanitarian consequences of the use of EWIPA. With such commitments, the political declaration—likely to be agreed and adopted in the coming months—can set stronger standards to protect civilians and drive genuine change.

LANDMINES

Aaron Lainé | International Campaign to Ban Landmines

The Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Antipersonnel Mines and on their destruction (or the Mine Ban Treaty—MBT), is known as one of the most successful multilateral humanitarian disarmament instruments, thanks to the progress made in stigmatising and destroying antipersonnel landmines and addressing the consequences of their use. During the first week of First Committee this year, 27 delegations addressed the MBT and vocalised support for its humanitarian objectives.

In recent years, mines of an improvised nature have captured the attention of many states, as their use by non-state armed groups result in a high number of casualties, with the majority of victims being civilians. Italy, Norway, and the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) raised concerns over the proliferation of improvised landmines, and condemned their use.

Some states reported progress on landmine clearance and stockpile destruction. Colombia

reported delivering 456 municipalities free of suspicion of landmines; Sri Lanka confirmed the recent destruction of nearly 12,000 stockpiled landmines; and Thailand reported clearance of more than 95% of mine-contaminated areas.

Cambodia, a state heavily affected by the use of landmines, highlighted significant progress made in landmine clearance, supported by international assistance, and reiterated its commitment towards making the country a safer place through the goal of a mine-free Cambodia in 2025.

Colombia, Italy, and Sri Lanka made reference to the goal of a world free of landmines, while the ICBL expressed concern over the failure of many MBT states parties to respect their obligation to clear land “as soon as possible,” threatening the Oslo Action Plan goal of a mine-free world by 2025.

Ecuador, Poland, Tajikistan, and Turkey stressed the importance of effective Treaty implementation. Italy, Spain, and Sri Lanka highlighted the impact of landmine contamination to socioeconomic development, and Colombia, Mexico, Italy, and Sri Lanka, referenced the weapon’s indiscriminate nature.

Italy and Tajikistan stressed the importance of international cooperation in the field of humanitarian mine action.

The ICBL called for redoubling of efforts to ensure inclusive and gender-sensitive victim assistance, with Italy echoing the importance of victim assistance. Poland announced its facilitation of the adoption, on behalf of the European Union, of this year’s draft resolution on assistance in mine action.

Thailand expressed pride in serving as Chair of the Committee on Victim Assistance of the MBT, and Germany highlighted its contribution of almost 50

million euros last year for Mine Action and Victim Assistance.

Some delegations highlighted national and regional initiatives to advance various aspects of mine action. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) described a July 2021 workshop on “Achieving Sustainable and Inclusive Development in Landmine/ ERW Affected Countries,” hosted by the ASEAN Regional Mine Action Centre (ARMAC) in Cambodia.

Iraq described the organisation of its first international donor conference in 2020, and highlighted the essential role of multi-stakeholder mechanisms.

The ICBL noted that despite ongoing challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the mine action community has proved innovative and resolute in its commitment to carrying out life-saving activities, and emphasised the importance of predictable, stable funding to support meeting key Treaty obligations such as land clearance, victim assistance, and risk education.

The Netherlands, as President of the Nineteenth Meeting of States Parties, scheduled to be held next month in The Hague, called on all states not yet party to the Treaty to join. Burkina Faso, Canada, and the ICBL echoed this call for Treaty universalisation.

Azerbaijan took the floor to accuse Armenia of planting landmines on a massive scale during the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, killing 30 Azerbaijani citizens including two journalists and wounding 130, and emphasised that the contamination issue can be solved if Armenia releases maps of landmine placement.

Yemen accused the Houthi militia of planting more than two million landmines, causing death among women and children and “paralyzing Yemenis”.

CLUSTER MUNITIONS

Aaron Lainé | Cluster Munition Coalition

Eleven years have passed since the entry into force of the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM), and its successes should be recognised and celebrated. A strong norm has been established against the use of these indiscriminate and inhumane weapons, with commendable progress made in providing assistance to victims, clearing contaminated areas, and destroying stockpiles. In the opening days of this year's First Committee, 21 delegations voiced their support of the life-saving objectives of the CCM.

Austria, Germany, Ireland, Italy, The Maldives, Mexico, New Zealand, and Spain expressed general support for the CCM, promoting its full implementation and reiterating the need to rid the world of cluster munitions.

Ecuador aligned itself with states that have endorsed the call to end the financing companies that produce cluster munitions, citing their cruel, inhumane, and deleterious effects.

The Cluster Munition Coalition (CMC) raised concern over the slowdown in pace of universalisation, noting that Saint Lucia was the last state to join the Convention in September 2020. Burkina Faso, Canada, and Lebanon joined the call for Treaty universalisation, with Burkina Faso deeming it a necessity given the multiple consequences that flow from their use and Lebanon citing its "painful experience" with such weapons.

One of the most heavily contaminated states, Lao People's Democratic Republic (PDR), described that despite the end of the Indochina War over four decades ago, unexploded ordnance (UXO) continues to threaten civilian lives, especially children, and hinders socioeconomic development. Lao PDR called for continued and enhanced support and cooperation from the international community to help implement their additional national "Sustainable Development Goal 18," entitled "Lives Safe from UXO".

Iraq underlined the economic, environmental, and other negative impacts of UXOs. It reaffirmed that despite challenges posed by COVID-19 it is moving forward with clearance plans, highlighting the essential role of multi-stakeholder mechanisms and international cooperation.

The Netherlands, Norway, the Philippines, and the CMC welcomed the successful conclusion of the CCM Second Review Conference last month, which adopted the Lausanne Political Declaration and Action Plan. The CMC highlighted that the Action Plan and Political Declaration list specific actions that states must undertake to rid the world of cluster munitions and address their deadly legacy. The documents also include actions and decisions that take fully into consideration gender and diversity, as well as environmental impacts, in all aspects of the work under the Convention. The Netherlands and Norway welcomed the clear guidance that the Lausanne Action Plan and Political Declaration provide for our common work to strengthen adherence to and implementation of the convention.

Armenia took the floor to accuse Azerbaijan of using prohibited weapons, including cluster munitions, and of targeting civilian populations and infrastructure during the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, in a "gross violation of international humanitarian law."



Photo: Sean Sutton, MAG, February 2020
Pile of BLU-26 submunitions found just 10 meters away from where people were farming their land in Lao PDR.

SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS

Amelie Namuroy | International Action Network on Small Arms

Despite the fact that small arms and light weapons (SALW) continue to fuel conflict, terrorism, crime, gender-based violence, and other national and international security problems, most member states kept their remarks on these weapons relatively brief during the first week of the First Committee. But Mexico assured that specific issues regarding SALW, such as diversion, will be discussed in more depth during the thematic debates, which begins on 13 October.

States largely lauded the successful adoption of the outcome document of the Seventh Biennial Meeting of States (BMS7) on the UN Programme of Action on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons (UNPoA) held in July 2021, noting that this year marks the 20th anniversary of the UNPoA. Chile, Yemen, Trinidad and Tobago, Lebanon, Ecuador, Kenya, and Burkina Faso were among states that welcomed the progress made during BMS7. Some states also noted the need to maintain the momentum to BMS8 (scheduled for 2022) and beyond. Other delegations, including the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), also affirmed the continued importance of the UNPoA and its essential role in reducing armed violence, while noting regional initiatives and the need for “effective multilateralism” and international cooperation. States such as Sweden, Ghana, Costa Rica, and Ecuador raised the gendered dimension of the armed violence and the illicit use of SALW. The successful conclusion of the Group of Governmental Experts on Ammunition was commended by Germany and Brazil.

Costa Rica noted in its statement that civil society is a vital partner and keeping them out of the UN silences the voices that member states serve. Civil society again does not have access to the UN premises due to COVID-19 mitigation measures and again there will not be meaningful civil society participation and engagement with UN member states during this First Committee session. Civil society participation was limited to the session

dedicated to statements by civil society held on Friday morning. This session is the only official time for civil society organisations to join the meeting.

Despite the short amount of time allocated to civil society in the total programme of work and the time limit imposed on the delivery of their statements, civil society representatives made statements on a range of thematic issues, including SALW. The **IANSAs statement**, delivered by Mayda de Leon from Guatemala, reminded the assembly of the devastating cost of armed violence on civilians: death, injuries, disabilities, psychological trauma, gender-based violence and more. Regardless of topic, most of the civil society statements called for accountability, recognition, and change. Moreover, the diverse representation was a testament to the need to ensure a diverse range of voices: from youth, and survivors to underrepresented groups, be represented in processes on disarmament such as the First Committee.

Ecuador, Mexico, Colombia, and Djibouti responded to the statements by civil society by recognising the important contribution and expertise of civil society noting that it enriches the work of this committee. The continued limited participation of civil society in UN meetings highlights the need to establish more effective participation mechanisms, especially as COVID-19 continues to have global impacts.

South Africa, Colombia, and Japan will introduce the annual resolutions on SALW during the thematic debates next week. In the words of the UN Secretary General, quoted by the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu during **her intervention** on Friday, “we are at an inflection point in history, to choose from the path towards breakdown or breakthrough.” In the next weeks, we will see if states are willing to choose a path that prioritises human lives and addresses the range of negative impacts from illicit SALW.

INTERNATIONAL ARMS TRADE

Paula Soumaya Domit | Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

During the First Committee general debate last week, 17 delegations expressed concerns regarding the international arms trade. Many cited the illicit trade of arms as a significant threat to international peace and security. The Central American Integration System (SICA) and Caribbean Community (CARICOM) both drew attention to the complex web of adverse impacts caused by transfers of conventional weapons. Honduras and Paraguay noted the impact on socioeconomic development and human trafficking respectively, while Jamaica highlighted the financial toll that the illicit weapons trade places on institutions, such as its health sector. Also, Algeria discussed the unique impact of the illicit arms trade on the African continent, which was echoed by Burkina Faso, Lesotho, and Ethiopia.

Most delegations expressing such concerns also voiced their support for the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) and/or 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). Canada, Norway, Italy, Ghana, Lesotho, Iceland, Finland, and Senegal emphatically called for the universalisation of these instruments, urging states to sign and ratify them as a step towards addressing the threats posed by the illicit arms trade. The Nordic Group, CARICOM, Turkey, Thailand, New Zealand, and The Maldives, among many others, emphasised the importance of these instruments and affirmed their national commitments to them. Tajikistan expressed support for the UN to take a leading role in combating the illicit arms trade.

Delegations also discussed the implementation of the ATT and the UNPoA. Many expressed that full and effective implementation is required, but some states vocalised more specific concerns about implementation. Spain and Peru both highlighted the importance of trainings on these instruments, particularly the ATT. The Group of African States cited the need to address the proliferation of conventional weapons on the African continent and

called for the ATT to be implemented in a balanced manner to ensure that it does not merely benefit arms exporting states. Mexico, as a non-permanent member of the Security Council, announced its plans to focus on the substantive consideration of the consequences of illicit transfers, trade diversion, destabilising accumulation, and the use of weapons by unauthorised actors. In this regard, Mexico also recalled that the outcomes of the Seventh Conference of States Parties (CSP) to the ATT contribute to the effective application of the Treaty.

Many delegations highlighted the gendered impacts of the international arms trade, particularly in regard to the ATT. Finland emphasised that national implementation of the ATT is critical because of its value in combatting gender-based violence, a position also shared by the Nordic states and many other delegations. For example, Latvia advocated for an ATT Action Plan on Gender and Gender Based Violence, which was adopted at the Fifth CSP under the leadership of Ambassador Karklins of Latvia. Sweden noted the importance of a holistic approach to the implementation of the ATT and the International Tracing Instrument to address the threats posed by the illicit trade in SALW, including the gendered dimensions of armed violence.

Many states called for a halt to irresponsible arms transfers. Ghana urged arms manufacturing and exporting states to recognise the threats they pose to others and to work to reduce diversion and illicit transfers. Myanmar made an impassioned appeal to countries selling weapons to revisit their decision to export arms to the Burmese military, as doing so would save many innocent lives.

The Non-Aligned Movement defended the sovereign “right” of states to acquire, manufacture, import, export, and retain conventional weapons and ammunition for their security needs. It emphasised that no undue restrictions should be placed on the transfer of such arms.

Ethiopia indicated its belief that control of the illicit weapons trade, which states expressed so much concern over, is within reach, so long as countries are willing to cooperate and redouble their efforts.

During the civil society segment, Control Arms reminded UN member states that they have both the responsibility and the power to ensure that they do not supply arms that could be used to commit or facilitate violations of international human rights and humanitarian law. It urged them “to honor these commitments to disarmament and arms control

initiatives and use them to strengthen international security—not by sending more weapons to areas where civilians are in peril—but by placing controls on arms transfers to ensure that human rights are respected and innocent lives are protected.” Recalling that transparency is critical in ensuring a robust implementation of the Treaty, Control Arms expressed regret that the UN Human Rights Council failed to renew the mandate of the investigative body in Yemen, which made a critical contribution to transparency in the global arms trade and to the effective implementation of the ATT.

OUTER SPACE

Jessica West | Project Ploughshares

Renewed effort to maintain peace and promote arms control in outer space is high on the agenda of the United Nations this year, including through the UN Secretary-General’s (UNSG) report *Our Common Agenda*, which proposes a new agenda for peace that involves multi-stakeholder dialogues on outer space as part of a “Summit of the Future.” As Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, **proclaimed** at the opening of the First Committee general debate this week, “Arms control has always been motivated by the need to keep ahead of the challenges to peace and security raised by new developments in technology.” But when it comes to the maintenance of peace and prevention of an arms race in outer space, we are already behind.

Peaceful use is at the heart of collective governance in outer space. To this end, the First Committee has adopted a resolution on the prevention of an arms race in outer space (PAROS) mandating work on this topic at the Conference on Disarmament since 1982. Support for this resolution remains near unanimous; it was reinforced this week in statements delivered by Bangladesh, Bolivia, Cuba, Ecuador, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Italy, Lebanon, Norway, Philippines, Thailand, Turkey, and Venezuela.

Yet, as the **joint civil society statement** delivered by Project Ploughshares makes clear, threats to outer space are no longer hypothetical. This sentiment is echoed by the Netherlands and other national statements pointing to a broad range of threatening developments including the deployment of antiballistic missile (ABM) defence systems, as raised by the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), the growing range of counterspace threats (Germany), new technology (Bolivia), space junk (Lebanon), strategic rivalry and efforts to “weaponise” space (Iran).

The situation is dangerous. As Project Ploughshares, Cameroon, and Venezuela indicated, it is entwined with the dynamics of nuclear arms racing and stalled disarmament efforts. In the words of Nepal’s Permanent Representative to the United Nations Mr. Amrit Bahadur Rai, the current peace in outer space may be “illusive.”

Indeed, outside of the United Nations the rising rhetoric of outer space as a warfighting domain rings loudly. Yet there is resistance to this development. Mexico asserted this week, “We must continue to ensure that science and technology are destined to exclusively peaceful purposes and for the benefit

of humanity, because neither outer space, nor cyberspace, are considered legitimate environments for war.” Can these views be reconciled?

While support for PAROS is paramount, forty years of effort has failed to build consensus for a new legally binding treaty to this effect. Egypt blamed this interaction on a handful of states. Many continue to favour this approach first and foremost, evidenced in statements this week by India, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Paraguay, and the NAM.

In contrast to this focus on restricting weapons and the use of force in outer space, a new dialogue on norms of responsible behaviour in space was launched last year by the United Kingdom (UK) with a focus on identifying the kind of behaviours or activities that seem threatening, those that are reassuring, and opportunities to avoid slipping into unwanted confrontations through miscommunication, misperception, and other mishaps. Following the submission of views to the UNSG by 30 states plus the European Union and nine non-governmental organisations and international organisations, the UK **announced** this week that it will introduce a resolution to establish an inclusive, Open-Ended Working Group to take this process forward. Several states including Australia, Canada, Finland, France,

Germany, New Zealand, Norway, Switzerland, Turkey, and the Nordic States indicated support for this initiative.

However, the **UNSG report** identified many issues of concern. One area of strong agreement is the threat posed by the creation of space debris. To this end, Canada sees “merit in exploring a possible agreement to end anti-satellite weapons tests that cause space debris;” a sentiment echoed by civil society as well as Lebanon, which would “welcome any treaty preventing space junk.” This is promising. But broad progress through an OEWG will be hard won.

We have not yet heard from either the United States (US), China, or Russia on this topic. In a general statement the US committed itself to leading the way in arms control as part of an era of “relentless diplomacy.” How will this be applied to outer space? Maintaining peace in space certainly requires a constant and consistent effort. And as Kyrgyzstan argued, inclusion and consensus are key. But so are other qualities, such as cooperation and compromise, and the setting aside of strategic rivalry. Outer space is a harsh and inflexible environment, but our diplomacy must not be.

CYBER PEACE AND SECURITY

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

Around half of the statements delivered during the first week of general debate referenced international cyber security, reflecting the rising importance of digital threats to collective peace and well-being. References tended to focus on concern over existing threats or reacting to relevant developments within the UN. Many delegations expressed their support for an open, secure, stable, and accessible information and communications technology (ICT) environment, although delegations used those terms in varying ways.

Threats

Many drew attention to the increased levels of dependence on ICTs throughout the pandemic, while others described operations including disinformation, the repression of human rights, vital infrastructure disruption, and cybercrime. A **joint civil society statement** mentioned the many recent high-profile operations involving supply chains and critical physical and information infrastructure, as well as recent disturbing revelations about human

rights abuses enabled by surveillance technologies. Norway also took note of the increase in the scope, scale, and sophistication of malicious cyber operations.

The UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs noted the UN Secretary-General (UNSG) has drawn specific attention to cyberattacks on healthcare facilities during the pandemic and, through the *Common Agenda*, to the need for measures to deescalate cyber-related risks and tensions. Finland further pointed to the UNSG's *Roadmap for Digital Cooperation*, which calls for steering for the "good use" of the digital domain while curtailing its misuses.

Georgia described the ongoing disinformation and other cyberattacks that it has experienced, including as recently as 2019, through a detailed footnote contained in its *written statement*.

Bangladesh rejected the illegal or malicious use of ICTs as inconsistent with the maintenance of international peace and security. Iran declared that recent attempts by some member states to weaponise cyberspace have caused significant concerns and said that it strongly supports retaining cyberspace as a peaceful domain.

Kenya observed that the role of science and technology in the context of international security and disarmament cannot be underestimated. Mexico reminded that science and technology are used for exclusively peaceful purposes and for the benefit of humanity, and said that cyberspace (alongside outer space) is not a legitimate environment for war.

UN cyber processes and international law

Most delegations that referenced cyber issues welcomed the recent conclusion of work by the UN's sixth Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on responsible state behaviour in cyberspace, and/or the UN's Open-ended Working Group (OEWG) on ICTs. "Converting the recommendations of the reports into action is now a major goal for the international community," Estonia urged.

Brazil, which chaired the sixth GGE, urged that the UN's second OEWG (2021–2025) should build on the existing acquis, while the High Representative trusted that the new OEWG would continue to make progress. Singapore will serve as the Chair of this Group and said that it is honoured to be elected to do so.

The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) expressed support for the work of the new OEWG, which will have its first substantive session in December 2021. India said it hopes that the new OEWG functions as a "democratic, transparent and inclusive platform" for addressing the existing and emerging ICT challenges. Several other delegations expressed their readiness to participate in the next OEWG.

Germany referenced its co-sponsorship of the proposed UN Programme of Action (UNPoA) on advancing responsible state behaviour in cyber space. France, an initiator of the UNPoA proposal, expressed its belief in such an instrument as an effective force for driving multilateralism. Civil society urged the establishment of a permanent forum within the UN for cyber peace matters and suggested that the UNPoA proposal merits "expedited examination". Indonesia acknowledged that the UNPoA is a possible action and said it should be developed in a synergistic manner. Spain called a UNPoA an "important step" and also urged avoiding the fragmentation of cyberspace in "spheres of influence, with incompatible standards and regulations."

Iceland urged building on existing international legal frameworks and norms and bringing together different UN workstreams into a single UNPoA. Estonia expressed its support for establishing a "permanent, inclusive and action-oriented Programme of Action process" while also indicating it would participate constructively in the new OEWG. Poland also noted its support for the UNPoA initiative, which "should create a sustainable platform for achieving concrete results by developing confidence measures, sharing best practices and

addressing the needs of states through supporting capacity building.”

Malaysia said it is of the view that all mechanisms within the UN should continue to be utilised, through which member states could deliberate “various pertinent aspects that include norms-setting, principles, rules as well as legally-binding commitments in cyberspace.”

Ecuador said there is a need for a solid, binding framework but that in the meantime, existing norms must be implemented. Peru highlighted the primacy of the UN Charter and the application of the law, including international humanitarian law, and that it considers it necessary to regulate cyber issues through a legally binding instrument. In contrast, Venezuela “firmly rejected” the “automatic invocation of Article 51 of the UN Charter” in reference to ICTs.

The High Representative, Finland, and the joint civil society statement underscored the need for accountability. Civil society called on states to halt the development and deployment of intentionally harmful cyber capabilities, strategies, and doctrines. Cuba rejected the illegal use of ICTs, including as involved for committed acts of terrorism. It said there is a need for a legally binding instrument to address vacuums in this area. Belarus highlighted a need for universal rules for behaviour in ICTs. Venezuela highlighted the importance of agreeing on an international legal framework for the responsible and peaceful use of ICTs.

Civil society advocated for ensuring the regular and meaningful participation of non-governmental stakeholders in the second OEWG and in any future UN forums. Diverse actors have an established role to play in operationalising and promoting the cyber norms and relevant international law, building capacity and resilience, and in monitoring and responding to cyber incidents.

National or regional initiatives

Specific updates on regional or national work were provided by a few delegations. CARICOM said that

its Implementation Agency for Crime and Security continues to utilise strategies to boost resilience, attain technological resilience, as well as achieving social resilience and “citizen security”. ASEAN has established a cross-sectoral and cross-pillar Cybersecurity Coordinating Committee (ASEAN Cyber-CC), which held its inaugural meeting in November 2020 will develop a regional action plan for implementing the Norms of Responsible State Behaviour in Cyberspace. It also referenced the two capacity-building centres located in the region (in Bangkok and Singapore).

Jamaica is examining its cyber security approach in connection with national security, and is working to ensure that necessary support is provided to its police, intelligence, and other security services. It is also bolstering its vital infrastructure, including through collaboration with the Inter-American Development Bank and with Estonia for the establishment of a Cybersecurity eGovernance Academy.

First Committee resolutions

The United States said it will sponsor the resolution “Advancing responsible State behavior in cyberspace in the context of international security”). This resolution is expected to acknowledge the outputs of the recently concluded sixth GGE, which originated from the US-led **resolution adopted in 2018**.

Russia will also table its “traditional” resolution on international information security. Russia said that its document will “bring an end to the functioning of two parallel negotiating tracks and ensure constructive activities of the new 2021–2025 OEWG on security of and in the use of ICTs, established on Russian initiative and with the support of the overwhelming majority of UN Member States.”

Belarus indicated it would support China’s resolution on global data security, although reportedly this resolution will no longer be tabled. China did not reference it during its statement.

DISARMAMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

Laura Varella | Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

Opening the first week of the First Committee, the UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Izumi Nakamitsu, highlighted in her statement that the total global military expenditure rose to almost two trillion USD despite the onset of a global pandemic, and that a continued rise in global military spending has fed into cycles of insecurity and mistrust. Several member states also condemned rising military expenditure in 2020 despite the urgency to repurpose resources to contain the COVID-19 pandemic and to save people's lives. As stated by Mexico, "In 2020, the GDP was reduced by 4.4 per cent due to the economic impact of the pandemic, but global military spending increased by 2.6 per cent, relative to 2019. In addition ... \$72.6 billion was spent on maintaining nuclear weapons this year." These figures are unjustifiable, especially in the context of the great need for resources to deal with the current global health crisis, as stated by Bangladesh, Nepal, Nigeria, Honduras, Sri Lanka, Nicaragua, San Marino, Peru, Cameroon, and Syria.

Costa Rica mentioned in its statement that the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) has documented that the nine nuclear-armed states are collectively spending nearly \$140,000 on nuclear weapons and related infrastructure each minute. It further stated that, "Every dollar spent on nuclear weapons is a dollar that is unavailable to meet human security needs."

Several member states made it clear that there is a direct relationship between the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and military spending. Eritrea highlighted that disarmament benefits humanity not only because it eliminates threats to peace and security, but also because it helps divert scarce material and financial resources to efforts that could improve humanity's living standards. Eritrea noted that "the Sustainable Development Goals could be achieved by only a fraction of the amount spent on military expenditures by nations big or small."

Kenya pointed out that resources saved during the disarmament process should be strategically and effectively integrated into nationally-owned and nationally-driven programmes that enhance socioeconomic development and foster governance structures, including those contained in the UN 2030 and African Union (AU) 2063 agendas. Sri Lanka acknowledged the link between peace and development and added, "Achieving much of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals requires a substantial financial investment, and redirection of funds from military purposes to crucial economic and social development can make a key contribution." Nepal, Honduras, Burkina Faso, Nicaragua, and Bolivia echoed these concerns.

States highlighted specific SDGs 8, 10, and 16. Both Costa Rica and Timor-Leste mentioned the importance of achieving Goal 16 on promoting peaceful and inclusive societies, access to justice, and building effective institutions. Peru specifically addressed target 16.4 regarding effective arms regulation and management, and violence reduction. Sri Lanka highlighted the same goal, stating that "effective and sustainable international cooperation and assistance remain essential cornerstones of the full and effective implementation of small arms and light weapons control measures and should be undertaken in bilateral, regional and international frameworks." Costa Rica warned that if lethal violence continues at its current pace, the implementation of target 16.1, to "significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere," will not be achieved. It called on all states to join the [Pathfinders "Halving Global Violence By 2030" initiative](#), arguing that a 50 per cent reduction in violence by 2030 "is ambitious but feasible."

Other countries, such as Cameroon, argued that there is a strong link between disarmament and the achievement of SDG 8 on promoting decent work and economic growth. "Reducing military budgets can

mitigate these negative effects [on economic growth] and allow for a shift in public spending towards people-centred programmes to promote social and economic development.” Cameroon explained that these measures will also contribute to the achievement of SDG 10 (on reducing inequality) and SDG 16.

The Lao People’s Democratic Republic (PDR) also mentioned the adoption of a national SDG (SDG 18) on “Lives Safe from Unexploded Ordnance (UXO).” It stated that achieving this goal remains a top priority, as stipulated in Lao PDR’s current 9th National Social and Economic Development Plan 2021–2025.

Several member states also pointed out that the high prevalence of illegal firearms threatens the safety and security of their citizens, upon which sustainable development of the region depends. Jamaica was among the countries that raised the issue of small arms and light weapons (SALW), stating the “illicit trade has not only threatened our peace and security, it has also had a staggering financial impact on our health sector and the physiological wellbeing of families and communities.” Burkina Faso stated that these weapons are a serious concern for the Sahel-Saharan states, because “even if they are not the direct cause of crises and conflicts, they encourage or promote them.” It further argued that in a context of terrorism and transnational organised crime,

SALW foster armed violence and undermine the socioeconomic development of the states.

These concerns were echoed by Eritrea, Honduras, Sri Lanka, Trinidad and Tobago, and Costa Rica. The latter highlighted that the dangers from illicit SALW affect and pertain to all the SDGs and every facet of people’s lives and reminded that large-scale conflict results in the deaths of fewer people than other forms and manifestations of armed violence, particularly urban and domestic violence. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Eritrea, and Honduras also recognised that the growing illicit proliferation of conventional weapons hampers economic and social progress and threatens peace and security.

Finally, the issue of disarmament and development was raised by several organisations at the exchange with the UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs held on 8 October. The [joint civil society statement on gender](#) critiqued rising military spending and the patriarchal approach to weaponised security, while the [joint statement on youth and disarmament](#) argued that global military expenditure is an obstacle to the achievement of sustainable development, as it redirects crucial resources from social and economic agendas, such as health, education and climate action.

GENDER AND DISARMAMENT

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

A growing number of member states continue to address various aspects of gender dimensions within disarmament. This is welcome but, as the [joint civil society statement on gender](#) argued, “a more robust reflection of the gendered norms associated with weapons, war, and violence” is required for gender perspectives to make meaningful contributions to disarmament efforts.

Last year’s anniversaries of various relevant instruments reinforced a focus on gender. As

High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Izumi Nakamitsu reminded, last year saw the 25th anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action and the 20th anniversary of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security (WPS). Relatedly, Finland argued that the WPS agenda remains as relevant as ever—and is increasingly recognised as such also in the arms control sector. Iceland, Latvia, and Norway also underscored the relevance of resolution 1325.

A few delegations recalled recent positive developments on gender and disarmament. Ireland was encouraged by the increasing number of resolutions that incorporate gender at First Committee, while Nakamitsu welcomed the positive integration of gender considerations into recent intergovernmental processes, including the Group of Governmental Experts on ammunition and the Seventh Biennial Meeting of States of the UN Programme of Action (UNPoA) on small arms and light weapons (SALW).

The International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA) said that the UNPoA Biennial Meeting of States Parties (BMS7) final outcome document presented significant progress in several areas, such as the consideration of the intricate link between gender and SALW proliferation and the importance of the full and effective participation of women at all levels of peace and disarmament discussions and processes. Similarly, Costa Rica recalled that 64 member states made clear that SALW are a gender issue, and that gender is a SALW issue at BMS7. IANSA welcomed resolutions integrating gender in SALW control.

Gender perspectives

Various delegations, including Canada, Colombia, Nepal, Norway, and the Philippines underscored the importance of gender perspectives in disarmament. Sweden stressed that a gender equality perspective will strengthen international peace and security. Ireland reminded that gender equality was a long-standing priority.

Participation

Many delegations, including Australia, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), Colombia, the European Union (EU), Honduras, Iceland, Latvia, Nakamitsu, the Nordic countries, Nepal, Paraguay, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) stressed the importance of ensuring women's equal and meaningful participation in disarmament and international security discussions. Paraguay also expressed support for women's leadership in disarmament

and non-proliferation. Colombia stressed women's fundamental role in the construction of peace and security. Similarly, Trinidad and Tobago stressed that the role of women goes well beyond recognising them as victims, acknowledging their actual and potential contribution to disarmament. Latvia announced it will promote women's equal participation as a member of the Peacebuilding Commission in 2022.

While many states reaffirmed their commitment to women's equal participation, there aren't positive developments across all disarmament fora. Australia expressed disappointment that the Conference on Disarmament was unable to reach consensus on a technical amendment in rules of procedure to ensure equality between men and women.

Nakamitsu observed that in 2020, only one-fourth of statements were made by women in last year's First Committee, and that women "are still conspicuous by their absence." She urged states to commit themselves to gender parity in their delegations. Nakamitsu stressed that successful disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control efforts require inclusive and participatory approaches. Costa Rica made similar calls, stressing that "parity is a floor, not a ceiling." The UAE stressed the importance of ensuring that women and youth have access to education on issues related to disarmament.

Gendered impacts

Nakamitsu stressed that recognising the gendered impact of weapons and integrating this reality into the work of the First Committee is essential. Ireland made similar remarks. The Maldives stressed that weapons proliferation makes the world less safe, and impacts the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including SDG 5 on gender equality.

A few delegations raised weapons-specific gendered impacts. The joint humanitarian disarmament statement stressed that the production, transfer, and use of arms facilitates and increases incidences of gender-based violence (GBV). IANSA underscored

that SALW have “played a detrimental role in the surge of sexual and [GBV] during the pandemic.” Control Arms made similar observations. The joint youth statement stressed that young people are at the forefront of arms-related GBV. Because of the gendered impacts of landmines and cluster bombs, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines and Cluster Munition Coalition called for gender-inclusive implementation of both the Mine Ban Treaty and the Convention on Cluster Munitions. The joint statement on cyber peace and security noted that it has been encouraging to see a growing number of states recognising the differentiated impact of cyber operations on marginalised people, women and girls, and people of diverse sexualities and gender expressions.

Gender norms

Only a handful of participants addressed the norms and narratives associated with dominant gender

norms and ideas of militarised masculinities. The joint civil society statement on humanitarian disarmament stressed that “algorithmic bias in autonomous weapons systems risks entrenching historical systems of oppression, exacerbating inequality, and upholding disproportionate structures of power.” In a similar vein, Costa Rica challenged patriarchal norms of security, and stressed that human security should be at the heart of foreign policy thinking, acknowledging that “we cannot equate peace with domination, nor greed with development”. The joint civil society statement on gender underscored that at the heart of our militarised world lies patriarchal militarism and called on states to look at how norms of militarised masculinity are shaping the justifications for autonomous weapons, and driving their development. It called for states to move beyond women’s participation as the only consideration of gender and disarmament.

YOUTH AND DISARMAMENT EDUCATION

Matthew Breay Bolton, Nicki Eichenholtz, Mandi Karpo, and Vanessa Keeley
Pace University International Disarmament Institute

This year’s First Committee will consider a biennial resolution on “Youth, disarmament and non-proliferation,” introduced by Republic of Korea (ROK) and first passed in 2019 ([A/RES/74/64](#)). While the new text is not yet available, statements from delegations, UN officials, and civil society highlighted the importance of including young people in policymaking on peace, disarmament, and nonproliferation.

“More than 40% of the world’s population is under the age of 25, most of whom live in the Global South. We are not just ‘the future,’ young people are also here now,” said Pace University undergraduate student Jeremiah Williams, speaking to First Committee on behalf of 34 global civil society organizations and campaigns, including

two Nobel Peace Prize Laureates. “We have the right to intergenerational equity, with a voice in the international community.”

In her remarks to First Committee, UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Izumi Nakamitsu also stressed the importance of “intergenerational equity and youth participation,” recognising “the role of young people in bringing about change.” She highlighted the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs’ (UNODA) [#Youth4Disarmament](#) programme, launched in 2019. “With the support of our partners, we have offered an array of activities to engage, educate and empower young people and facilitate their meaningful participation in the fields of disarmament and non-proliferation,” said Nakamitsu.

Announcing that it would table the second resolution on “Youth, disarmament and nonproliferation” this session, ROK’s representative said, “I count on the wider membership’s invaluable support,” given “the adoption of this first-of-its-kind resolution by consensus in 2019.” ROK asserted a “firm belief in the young people as the ultimate force for change,” noting that Action 38 of *Securing Our Common Future*, the UN Secretary-General’s Agenda for Disarmament, commits the international community to “Establish a platform for youth engagement.”

In the *joint statement on youth*, Williams urged delegations to support the resolution. He noted the profound impact of armed violence on young people at “the frontlines of human insecurity, affected by armed conflict, mass shootings, and gender-based violence,” as well as “the catastrophic existential threats of climate change and nuclear weapons.”

Cindy Ebbs of Control Arms also highlighted how armed violence “limits access to justice systems, especially for vulnerable groups such as women, youth and LGBTQIA community, forcing them to seek greater security elsewhere.”

ROK directed attention to the *Seoul Youth Declaration for Disarmament and Non-proliferation* adopted by youth representatives from 22 countries in a forum hosted jointly by UNODA and ROK in June 2021. The Declaration stressed “the fundamental importance of youth-led disarmament education” and called for a Youth Empowerment Fund, a youth quota and “incorporating the perspective of youth” in policy discussions.

The joint civil society statement noted that youth are “not homogenous,” struggling in “different circumstances, facing multiple forms of discrimination.” Williams observed, “Many young people get involved in disarmament work through social movements, including those addressing intersecting issues of racism, exploitation, gender-based violence, environmental degradation, disrespect for people with disabilities, disregard for the rights of Indigenous Peoples and disdain for the rights of LGBTQIA+ people.”

Similarly, Laura Varella of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, delivering a joint civil society statement on gender, called for “more robust reflection” on the “gendered norms associated with weapons, war, and violence.” The Seoul Youth Declaration also urged leaders to ensure “equitable, full and effective participation of all genders” and “gender- responsive disarmament education.”

In its statement to First Committee, United Arab Emirates highlighted the importance of ensuring access for “women and youth” to disarmament education, “while seeking to promote their full, equal, and meaningful participation in all relevant decision-making at the local and international levels.” Nepal stated that the “participation of women, youth, civil society, and the private sector help us to devise sustainable solutions to the problems of disarmament architecture.”

The International Action Network on Small Arms urged states to ensure “diverse leadership from survivors, youth, and other traditionally underrepresented groups” in policymaking on small arms and light weapons. Sri Lanka also called for greater steps to address the problem of illicit small arms through “education and awareness.”

Calling for the new resolution to address concerns of “diversity, equity, and inclusion” and make “linkages to other pressing issues such as climate action and addressing the COVID-19 pandemic,” Williams suggested incorporating into the text the recommendations of both the Seoul Youth Declaration and joint civil society statement on youth and disarmament education.

“We have ambition and energy. But youth can only plead so much for our futures while power is held tightly. You must open the door,” said Williams. “Our concerns for our futures are valid. Our input into your decisions is valuable. Youth empowerment can aid in your efforts to ‘save succeeding generations from the scourge of war.’”

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).

Contributors to this edition:

Campaign to Stop Killer Robots, Cluster Munition Coalition, Control Arms, International Action Network on Small Arms, International Campaign to Ban Landmines, International Network on Explosive Weapons, King's College London, Pace University International Disarmament Institute, Project Ploughshares, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom



Reaching Critical Will

www.reachingcriticalwill.org



www.wilpf.org

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

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

FIRST COMMITTEE MONITOR

Vol. 19, No. 2
9 October 2021

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

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