



Statement to the First Committee of the General Assembly

*Follow-up of resolutions and decisions
adopted by the First Committee at its past session
Presentation of reports*

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on behalf of

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Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, I welcome this opportunity to address the First Committee on the implementation of resolutions requesting reports by the Secretary-General.

This segment has covered the same topic ever since the General Assembly, in resolution 58/316, decided that all Main Committees should introduce the practice of “question time” to enable a dynamic and candid exchange with heads of departments and offices, representatives of the Secretary-General and special rapporteurs.

Over the past twelve years, this exchange has largely served for the presentation of statistical information on responses to resolutions that request information and views from Member States. In continuing with that tradition, you can find such information annexed to the written version of this statement, which will be uploaded to the website of the Office for Disarmament Affairs.

The Secretary-General issued a total of 36 reports to the present session of the First Committee in follow-up to resolutions. They variously involve a combination of five general functions. They serve as repositories of (1) information and (2) views supplied by Member States, United Nations and other entities at the request of the General Assembly. (3) They include substantive assessments by the Secretariat on the implementation of resolutions. (4) They contain the reports of subsidiary bodies, conferences and expert groups. (5) They contain reports on various programme activities.

I will focus my remarks on the first three types of reporting, as the latter two types will be covered in the various dedicated panels and presentations of the Committee.

(1) Reports containing information supplied by Member States

Transparency and national reporting on the arms trade and on military expenditures have great potential to serve to gauge progress toward the common aspiration for security with the least diversion of economic resources.

In this regard, the General Assembly acknowledged the direct relevance of national reporting to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development last year when it affirmed that national reports in the context of the Programme of Action support data collection for indicators relating to the Sustainable Development Goals.

¹ Since 2004, in accordance resolution A/RES/58/316 of 13 July 2004, the Chair of the First Committee has invited the head of the Office for Disarmament Affairs to participate in an exchange with the Committee on follow-up of resolutions and decisions adopted at the previous session and on presentation of the reports of the Secretary-General.

Despite this positive recognition on the importance of transparency, the Register of Conventional Arms² and the report on military expenditures³ remain underutilized. Under these two instruments, we respectively received a total of 41 and 38 replies. On the arms trade, it is notable that exports continue to be reported at a comparatively higher rate than imports.

There is no dispute on the relevance of strong national reporting. The two reporting mechanisms can provide a building block for confidence-building actions, such as in facilitating discussions between neighbouring countries on cooperative measure to prevent any destabilizing accumulation of arms. In post-conflict situations, these mechanisms can serve as a tool for security sector reform and peace building. In various situations of conflict, the Security Council and its subsidiary bodies have variously made use of these mechanisms⁴ and recommended that States do so.⁵

(2) Reports containing the views of Member States

Historically, compilations of views by Member States have played an important role in advancing processes leading to the elaboration of new instruments, principles, norms and measures in the field of disarmament. In this regard, they have served as a dynamic means for governments to formulate their views on new issues, take stock of continuing processes, reflect on the outcome of expert groups and inform the future work of disarmament bodies. The rates of participation in reports speak to how they are respectively valued by the membership.

Key reports issued this year follow up on the work of the group of governmental experts on fissile materials, the study on improvised explosive devices, the fourth group of governmental experts on cyber security, the resolution on women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control and the follow-up the 2013 high-level meeting on nuclear disarmament.

Most other reports containing the views of Member States are prepared in response to “traditional” resolutions.

(3) Assessments by the Secretariat on the implementation of resolutions

Assessments by the Secretariat typically serve to chronicle key developments over the past year. I will briefly touch upon the main highlights from three of these.

² Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms (A/71/138 and Add.1)

³ Report of the Secretary-General on objective information on military matters, including transparency of military expenditures (A/71/115 and Add.1)

⁴ See S/2016/73

⁵ See S/2006/204

In the field of *nuclear disarmament*,⁶ despite some progress in implementing nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation agreements, growing impatience with the slow pace of progress has persisted. There remain deep divisions among States concerning the pathway forward. The frustration over the situation in the Conference on Disarmament and the political momentum generated over the past several years by the humanitarian movement has led to expectations that the General Assembly should take forward the next steps leading to nuclear disarmament.

With respect to the *establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction*,⁷ all States of region continue to share this objective. The co-sponsors of the 1995 NPT resolution on the Middle East and the United Nations have continued to explore means of bringing these States back together to seek a common way forward. However, there continues to be both common and diverging views among the States of the region on certain modalities relating to the convening of a conference on the zone. Thus far, it has not been possible to hold direct consultations on a basis acceptable to all the States of the region. The Secretary-General and the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs remain ready to support efforts to promote and sustain the inclusive regional dialogue necessary to achieve the establishment of the zone.

On the matter of specific developments in the area of providing *assistance to States in combatting illicit small arms and light weapons*,⁸ during the current reporting period, the United Nations Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation funded 11 projects with a total combined budget of US\$1.7 million. These projects addressed thematic issues such as legislation, end use/user control, national points of contact, reporting, weapons destruction, stockpile management, border control, gender and children, public awareness, and South-South cooperation.

Thank you for your attention and I look forward to responding to any comments or questions you might have.

⁶ Report of the Secretary-General on Nuclear disarmament; follow-up to the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons; reducing nuclear danger (A/71/126)

⁷ Report of the Secretary-General on Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East (A/71/135 (Part I))

⁸ Report of the Secretary-General on Consolidation of peace through practical disarmament measures; and assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons and collecting them (A/71/151)