

FACT SHEET

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

The Conference on Disarmament (CD) was set up in accordance with paragraph 120 of the Final Document of the Tenth Special Session¹ of the General Assembly as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum of the international community.²

“120. The General Assembly is conscious of the work that has been done by the international negotiating body that has been meeting since 14 March 1962 as well as the considerable and urgent work that remains to be accomplished in the field of disarmament. The Assembly is deeply aware of the continuing requirement for a single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum of limited size taking decisions on the basis of consensus.”

The Conference on Disarmament is hosted in the Council Chamber of the United Nations Office at Geneva.



Council Chamber with murals by José Maria Sert

Mandate and membership

The terms of reference of the CD include almost all multilateral arms control and disarmament issues. Its current agenda includes: cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament; prevention of nuclear war, including all related matters; prevention of an arms race in outer space; effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons; new types of weapons of mass destruction and new systems of such weapons including radiological weapons; comprehensive programme of disarmament and transparency in armaments.

Following membership expansions in 1996 and 1999, the Conference is now comprised of the five NPT nuclear-weapon States and 60 other States, including States of key military significance.³ In addition, every year some 40 non-member States participate, upon their request, in its work.

¹ The Tenth Special Session of the General Assembly from 23 May - 30 June 1978 is also referred to as the First Special Session on Disarmament (SSOD-1).

² There were several predecessors to the CD, which had been dealing with disarmament issues for almost 20 years: the Ten-Nation Committee on Disarmament (1960-1961); the Eighteen-Nation Committee on Disarmament (1962-1968); and the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament (1969-1978). The work of these bodies aimed at providing “effective international control” and covered “all types of armaments and armed forces.”

Relationship with the United Nations

The CD is not a United Nations body as such, but it has developed a close working relationship with the Organization. The General Assembly stipulated that the Conference adopts its own agenda, taking into account the recommendations made to it by the General Assembly and the proposals presented by the members of the Conference, and submits a report to the General Assembly annually, or more frequently, as appropriate.

The budget of the CD is included in the regular budget of the United Nations and the Secretary-General of the United Nations provides staff as well as assistance and services needed by the Conference, and any subsidiary bodies that it might establish.

Schedule and working methods

The Conference on Disarmament divides its 24-week annual session into three parts of ten weeks, seven weeks and seven weeks respectively, and if necessary, continues negotiations on priority issues between sessions. The CD has its own rules of procedure and conducts its work by consensus.

Presidency and the Secretary-General of the Conference

The presidency of the CD rotates every four weeks in English alphabetical order of the names of its Member States. When the General Assembly established the Conference in 1978, it requested the United Nations Secretary-General to appoint his Personal Representative who would assist the rotating presidency. The Personal Representative serves as the Secretary-General of the Conference. Currently, that role is assumed by Mr. Michael Møller who is also the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva.

The role of the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs

The Secretariat of the Conference consists of officers of the Geneva Branch of the Office for Disarmament Affairs.

Accomplishments of the Conference on Disarmament

- The CD successfully concluded negotiations of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction (1992) and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (1996).
- Before the CD acquired its current format (prior to 1978 – see footnote 1) the Eighteen-Nation Committee on Disarmament concluded negotiations on the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (1968), and the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament successfully negotiated the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on their Destruction (1972).
- In spite of the many multilateral treaties successfully negotiated by the CD and its predecessors, the sixty-five member body has been stalemated for two decades with no new agreements negotiated since the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

For more information: www.unog.ch/cd

³ The current membership of the CD: Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ecuador, Egypt, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Malaysia, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Myanmar, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Peru, Poland, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, Senegal, Slovakia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States of America, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Zimbabwe.