



# SECURING OUR COMMON FUTURE

An Agenda for Disarmament



The cover depicts *Orizuru*, an origami paper crane. The Japanese legend has it that, if anyone folds a thousand paper cranes, his or her wish will be granted by the gods. Sadako Sasaki was two years old when an atomic bomb fell on Hiroshima in 1945. She was caught in black rain and developed leukaemia 10 years later. At her hospital bed, Sadako was folding over a thousand cranes, praying for her recovery. She died at the age of 12, but her story of folding thousands of cranes spread around the world. Origami cranes have become symbols of peace. The paper crane on the cover was attached to a peace tapestry created by students and teachers from Nutley High School in New Jersey, United States of America, who came to the United Nations Headquarters in observance of United Nations Day on 24 October 2017.

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# **SECURING OUR COMMON FUTURE**

## An Agenda for Disarmament

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## Foreword

**W**e are living in dangerous times. Protracted conflicts are causing unspeakable human suffering. Armed groups are proliferating, equipped with a vast array of weapons. Global military spending and competition in arms are increasing, and the tensions of the cold war have returned to a world that has grown more complex. In today's multipolar environment, the mechanisms for contact and dialogue that once helped to defuse tensions between two super-powers have eroded and lost their relevance.

This new reality demands that disarmament and non-proliferation are put at the centre of the work of the United Nations. This is the backdrop for my agenda for disarmament.

Throughout history, countries have pursued disarmament to build a safer, more secure world and to protect people from harm. Since the foundation of the United Nations, disarmament and arms control have played a critical role in preventing and ending crises and armed conflict. Heightened tensions and dangers can only be resolved through serious political dialogue and negotiation—never by more arms. Disarmament and arms control measures can help ensure national and human security in the 21st Century, and must be an integral part of our collective security system.

The existential threat that nuclear weapons pose to humanity must motivate us to accomplish new and decisive action leading to their total elimination. We owe this to the Hibakusha—the survivors of nuclear war—and to our planet.

We must also increase efforts to prevent and reverse the over-accumulation of all other types of arms. We must put people at the centre of our disarmament efforts, and ensure disarmament that saves lives today and tomorrow. We owe this to the millions of people killed, injured and uprooted from their homes, in the Syrian Arab Republic, Yemen, Afghanistan, South Sudan, Somalia, Mali and elsewhere.

We must also work together to make sure that developments in science and technology are used for the good of humankind. Our joint efforts to prevent the weaponization of new technologies will save future generations. We owe this to our children and grandchildren.

My agenda for disarmament aims to be comprehensive, but not exhaustive. It proposes solutions, and it raises questions. It is not intended to replace the responsibilities of Member States, nor is it meant to impose any specific measures on them. My hope is that this agenda will reinvigorate dialogue and negotiations on international disarmament, stimulate new ideas and create new momentum.

My agenda also integrates disarmament into the priorities of the whole United Nations system, laying the foundations for new partnerships and greater collaboration between different parts of our organization and Governments, civil society, the private sector and others. It focuses on practical measures and indicates where I intend personally to engage and support Member States in carrying out their responsibilities.

Many Member States, independent experts and members of civil society have contributed to developing this agenda. I thank them sincerely for their engagement and support.

There are moments in history when individual and collective courage and conscience come together to change the course of events. I hope this disarmament agenda will help set our world on a path towards sustainable peace and security for all.

**António Guterres**

United Nations Secretary-General

24 May 2018

# Executive summary

## THE NEED FOR A NEW DISARMAMENT AGENDA

Cold war tensions have returned, but in a much more complex and dangerous environment. Armed conflicts have become more frequent, longer and more devastating for civilians. Civil wars are interconnected with regional and global rivalries. They involve many actors, such as violent extremists, terrorists, organized militias and criminal elements, equipped with various types of weapons. Governance of the international system has also grown more complex, with a growing multiplicity of interests that are challenging consensus-based disarmament processes.

The costs of the resulting insecurity are enormous, with more than one eighth of the world's gross product spent in 2017 on containing all forms of violence and with global military expenditures at its highest level since the fall of the Berlin Wall. New weapon technologies are increasing risks, including from the ability of non-State actors to carry out attacks across international boundaries. In many recent conflicts, the laws of humanity have been disregarded and prohibited weapons, such as chemical munitions, have returned to the battlefield. Conventional explosives are being used in cities with devastating impacts on civilians and their surroundings.

Many of the disarmament commitments and promises entered into at the end of the cold war have gone unfulfilled, including practical steps to reduce dangers, ease international tensions, and ultimately bring us closer to a safer and more secure world. The pursuit of disarmament is therefore even more essential in a time of heightened international tensions and conflict.

Disarmament is a tool to help prevent armed conflict and to mitigate its impacts when it occurs. Measures for disarmament are pursued for many reasons, including to maintain international peace and security, uphold the principles of humanity, protect civilians, promote sustainable development, and prevent and end armed conflict. Just as the notion of security has evolved to place humans at the centre, the objectives and language of disarmament need to evolve in order to contribute to human, national and collective security in the 21st Century.

This non-paper outlines a set of practical measures across the entire range of disarmament issues, including weapons of mass destruction, conventional arms and future weapon

technologies. It seeks to generate fresh perspectives and to explore areas where serious dialogue is required to bring disarmament back to the heart of our common efforts for peace and security.

## **DISARMAMENT TO SAVE HUMANITY**

The existence of nuclear weapons poses a continuing threat to the world. Their total elimination can only be attained through reinvigorated dialogue and serious negotiations and a return to a common vision leading towards nuclear disarmament. The States that possess nuclear weapons must take steps to reduce all types of nuclear weapons, ensure their non-use, reduce their role in security doctrines, reduce their operational readiness, constrain the development of advanced new types, increase transparency of their programmes and build mutual trust and confidence. All States must work together to achieve concrete and irreversible steps to prepare for a world free of nuclear weapons, including by making the nuclear test ban permanent, developing approaches for nuclear disarmament verification and ending the production of fissile material for use in weapons.

With respect to other weapons of mass destruction, the Security Council must exercise its primary responsibility and act to halt further erosion of the norm against chemical weapons by ending impunity and ensuring accountability for any use. We must continue to strengthen our institutions to prevent any use of biological weapons, including by strengthening the implementation of the Biological Weapons Convention, and to ensure that we can mount an adequate response in case prevention fails. Preventing the emergence of new and destabilizing strategic weapons, including in outer space, also remains vital for the preservation of international stability.

## **DISARMAMENT THAT SAVES LIVES**

As armed conflicts grow more deadly, destructive and complex, we need a new focus on disarmament that saves lives. This includes new efforts to rein in the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, through common standards, the collection of data on collateral harm and the sharing of policy and practice. The United Nations will need to coordinate better in helping Governments deal with the scourge of improvised explosive devices. We must also remain on guard to prevent new technologies, such as armed drones, from tempting any reinterpretation of international law.

International approaches to regulate arms need to be brought in line with the magnitude of these problems and integrated into broader work for prevention and sustainable development. This should start with a new approach for supporting action at the country-level to end the illicit trade in small arms and their ammunition. It must also include a deeper institutional understanding on the impact of the over-accumulation of arms in fuelling and prolonging conflict. We must continue to ensure the security and physical protection of

excessive and poorly maintained stockpiles. And we must foster new cooperation and dialogue, especially at the regional level, to reduce military spending and build confidence.

## **DISARMAMENT FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS**

As advances in science and technology continue to revolutionize human life, we must remain vigilant in our understanding of new and emerging weapon technologies that could imperil the security of future generations. New weapon technologies pose possible challenges to existing legal, humanitarian and ethical norms; non-proliferation; international stability; and peace and security. In the face of the growing automation of weaponry, new measures are necessary to ensure humans always maintain control over the use of force. We must foster a culture of accountability and adherence to norms, rules and principles for responsible behaviour in cyberspace. And we must take greater steps to encourage responsible innovation by industry, engineers and scientists.

## **STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS FOR DISARMAMENT**

Disarmament initiatives have been most successful when they involve effective partnerships between Governments, the expert community and civil society. The existing multilateral disarmament institutions need to be reinvigorated and better utilized, through increased political will and by improving coordination and integration of expertise into their work. The United Nations and regional organizations should work together to strengthen existing platforms for regional dialogue on security and arms control. Greater efforts are needed to achieve equal, full and effective participation of women in all decision-making processes related to disarmament. More education and training opportunities should be established, in order to empower young people to be a force for change and disarmament. Finally, there must be better engagement and integration of experts, industry and civil society representatives into United Nations efforts for disarmament.



Part I

# THE NEED FOR A NEW DISARMAMENT AGENDA

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# Why we need disarmament in the 21st Century

## The deteriorating international security environment

### A NEW COLD WAR

We are on the brink of a new cold war. Unlike the first, which emerged from a world wearied from a devastating global conflict, the second has come during an era of converging global challenges, a more complex international system and diminishing respect for international norms and institutions. At this moment, global military spending and capabilities exceed those seen at any point since the fall of the Berlin Wall.

During the first cold war, major crises directly involving the super-powers centred on episodes of espionage, destabilizing deployments of strategic weapons and shifting spheres of influence. It was an extremely difficult period in our history with many tragic proxy wars and frightening moments. But, in response to near misses, accidents and the spiralling arms race, the powers actively pursued measures to prevent conflict, maintain stability and ease the military burden on their publics. Institutions were established and functioned. Negotiations and lines of communications flourished, even if the processes were often too slow and the results too modest.

The new cold war is increasingly marked by unrestrained arms competition, surreptitious interference in domestic political processes and the increasing

pursuit of malicious and hostile acts just below traditional thresholds for the use of force. Multilateral disarmament negotiations have been deadlocked for more than two decades, and bilateral channels have been allowed to stagnate. Limits on major conventional forces have been left aside. No measures are in place to prevent rapid escalation resulting from strategic threats in new domains, including cyberspace and outer space.

### INCREASING COMPLEXITY OF INTRA-STATE AND REGIONAL CONFLICT

The re-emergence of strategic tension between the major powers is taking place against a resurgence of civil conflict, after more than two decades of decline. Today's armed conflicts are more protracted, more lethal for civilians and more prone to regional rivalries and external intervention, including by major powers. They involve a multitude of actors with various motives and means of violence, including low-level insurgents, extremists and terrorists, criminal organizations, well-trained militias and every possible combination of these. Many situations of conflict thus blur the boundaries between violent organized crime, terrorism, and internal and international armed conflict. In all circumstances, the excessive accumulation of arms and inadequate control over their circulation fuel violence.

What these complex conflicts have in common is their increasingly urban nature, the massive loss of civilian life and the destruction of civilian infrastructure. Humanitarian crises are their inevitable result. Armed conflicts are now deadlier for civilians, and the annual number of civilian casualties attributed to armed conflict is at its highest levels in many decades.

### A MORE COMPLEX WORLD ORDER

Influence within the international system and the institutions devoted to disarmament were dominated by a bipolar world order for many years. This has changed since the end of the last cold war. The new cold war is not just a matter of relations between two countries, or a clash between incompatible ideologies.

The international system is becoming more multipolar. This entails multiple spheres of power and influence, a growing multiplicity of interests, conflicts and asymmetries. The resulting lack of clarity in power relations has led increasingly to greater unpredictability, fragmentation and at times unilateralism. The diffusion of power results in a multiplicity of regional arms races. Added to this is the increase in the range of significant non-State actors, from the private sector to foundations, which exercise more and more influence over decision-making processes.

This new reality challenges multilateral decision-making and consensus-building. Once, agreement between two powers could serve as the basis for a universal agreement. Today, international governance and decision-making have become more complex as the relative influence of other powers has grown. Consensus has become more elusive, leading to

increasing majoritarianism to overcome persistent paralysis. Our disarmament and international security institutions have not kept up with this change, and remain hobbled by archaic rules and practices designed for a simpler time.

### THE HUMAN AND ECONOMIC COST OF MILITARIZATION

Increasing militarization is evident in many parts of the world. Global military spending has more than doubled in inflation-adjusted dollars since the end of the cold war. International transfers of major weapons have steadily climbed since the early 2000s. Unrestrained military modernization, procurement and spending is creating distrust, worsening tensions and making peaceful resolutions to conflict harder to achieve.

The economic costs of insecurity are enormous. A 2017 study found that 12.6 per cent of the gross world product was devoted to containing all forms of violence. More than \$1.7 trillion was spent on militaries and their equipment. This is vastly disproportionate with contemporary sources of national and human insecurity, which include climate change, terrorism, transnational crime, pandemics, involuntary migration and urban crime and violence. Not only is much of this spending economically unproductive, but excessive military spending by one nation also multiplies throughout the international system, prompting excessive spending elsewhere.

### INCREASING RISKS FROM NEW WEAPON TECHNOLOGIES

Scientific and technological advances are diversifying the means and methods of warfare and the ability of non-State

actors to carry out attacks, including across international boundaries. While the impacts of armed conflict continue to be largely due to centuries-old technology—namely, bombs and bullets—novel weapon concepts are rapidly emerging. Scientific and technological developments are also creating new risks relating to old technology, lowering barriers to access and opening new potential domains for conflict.

The accelerating development of new weapon technologies is not bad per se. Greater precision and access to timely data can help mitigate harmful impact and protect lives. However, many new weapon technologies raise concerns across a number of interrelated areas.

Current developments have raised serious questions for the maintenance of international peace and security, the upholding of humanitarian principles, the protection of civilians, and the preservation of human, social, political and economic rights. In some cases, our existing international normative, institutional and policy frameworks are sufficient to address these concerns. In others, stronger cooperation, new approaches and better understanding are required.

### **ERODING RESPECT FOR INTERNATIONAL NORMS AND INSTITUTIONS**

Eroding respect for international norms is weakening our international political, security and economic institutions. Many of the fundamental principles developed over the past century to preserve the peace and to safeguard humanity are under strain.

Morally repugnant weapons, long condemned by the conscience of humankind, have been repeatedly used

on the battlefield and against civilian populations, as evidenced by the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic. Civilians and the infrastructure they rely upon, including schools and hospitals, have been made the object of attack. Principles, such as distinction and proportionality, developed to protect civilians from the same horrors that befell hundreds of cities during the Second World War are neglected or flouted today. Arms control agreements have been abandoned or disrupted.

Increasingly, our multilateral institutions are under threat. Some countries have resorted to the use of force unilaterally, both when it served their interests and when our international institutions have failed to live up to their responsibilities. Some are increasingly sceptical about multilateralism and seem to prefer isolationism and protectionism.

Each of these developments is a challenge to the principles and purposes of the United Nations, and to the system of collective security created after the Second World War. But these challenges also provide clear indications and opportunities of where we need to redouble our efforts to strengthen the implementation of our collective norms.

### **LONG-STANDING COMMITMENTS ARE UNFULFILLED**

Within this deteriorating international security environment, some major military powers appear to be sceptical of the proven value of engagement, dialogue and negotiations as the best pathway to achieve security. The implementation of internationally agreed obligations are now decades overdue. Negotiations on strategic arms control are stalled and existing

instruments are increasingly imperilled. In light of the complexity and rapid development of the new security challenges we face, this is precisely the wrong course.

Progress in disarmament is not an abstract game of numbers. Reductions of inherently dangerous weapons are always important and welcome. But action in disarmament must be understood as a central means for addressing today's sources of insecurity and violence.

Continued stagnation in the disarmament process will only make the international situation more dangerous. It will increase strains on our existing security institutions, non-proliferation architecture and normative frameworks. The United Nations continues to be the only universal platform to promote and ensure peace and security for all, and the fulfilment of commitments by all States is essential in preserving public trust in its ability to deliver.

## Why the United Nations pursues disarmament

Disarmament is at the heart of the system of collective security set out in the United Nations Charter. The purpose of this system was nothing less than the elimination of war as an instrument of foreign policy “to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war”.

This is not a simplistic or utopian vision. The Charter is neither a pacifist document nor an instrument designed to be fully implemented in a world free of conflict and international disputes. Rather, disarmament is a tool to help prevent armed conflict and to mitigate its impacts when it occurs.

### MAINTAINING INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY

Peace and security are the central reasons why the United Nations pursues disarmament. For decades, the critical driving force behind the pursuit of nuclear disarmament has been security. Disarmament is the only guaranteed means to prevent nuclear war and any use of nuclear weapons. Steps to reduce arsenals,

increase transparency, lower alert levels and mitigate risks have built confidence. Measures to curtail the development of advanced new types of nuclear weapons have capped the arms race. The elimination of various arms intended for first strikes has promoted stability in times of crisis. Taken together, these measures have helped to create the conditions for managing and ending conflicts, while paving the way for the elimination of nuclear weapons worldwide.

### UPHOLDING THE PRINCIPLES OF HUMANITY

Humanitarian concerns are among the oldest motivators for disarmament in the modern era. Since the mid-19th Century, the international community has sought to progressively develop the law of armed conflict in parallel with rules to prohibit or restrict specific weapons that cannot be used in conformity with humanitarian principles.

Some of the earliest international disarmament agreements codified universal norms against weapons that cause superfluous injury or unnecessary suffering, or whose use would be repugnant to the conscience of humankind. These included prohibitions in 1899 on bullets that expand or flatten in the human body, in 1907 on poison and poisoned weapons, and in 1925 on asphyxiating, poisonous or other gases and bacteriological methods of warfare. More recent humanitarian disarmament instruments have banned cluster munitions, landmines and certain uses of incendiary weapons.

## PROTECTING CIVILIANS

Since the end of the Second World War, a central disarmament concern has been the protection of civilians from the effects of armed conflict. This has been principally achieved through ensuring that all parties to armed conflict respect and comply at all times with applicable international law, including international humanitarian law.

In order to give greater clarity and expression to the general rules of international law, the international community has also sought to progressively codify and develop rules to prohibit and restrict specific types of weapons, due to their disproportionate, uncontrollable or inhumane effects. These types of humanitarian considerations have been at the heart of a large number of recent international arms control efforts. Instruments for humanitarian disarmament do not seek to erode traditional approaches to security. On the contrary, by placing humans at the centre, they have made real contributions to broader international peace and security objectives.

## PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The Charter reflects an explicit understanding of the link between arms and development. Article 26 recognizes the need to ensure the maintenance of international peace and security with the least diversion of the world's economic and human resources to arms. The last cold war arms race generated substantial global concern about the economic and social sustainability of the unchecked annual growth in military spending. United Nations studies have also shown that excessive military spending can negatively impact inclusive and sustainable growth and capital investment.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development took an important step towards articulating how arms control, peace and security contribute to development. Beyond addressing illicit arms flows, there remains a vast potential to operationally link the implementation of disarmament objectives with many other Sustainable Development Goals, in order to bring the historical relationship between disarmament and development back to the forefront of international consciousness.

## PREVENTING AND ENDING ARMED CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE

Measures for arms control and disarmament also play a critical role at the global and regional levels for the prevention of armed conflict, ensuring stability and ending gender-based violence. At the national and local levels, arms control contributes to preventing armed violence more broadly.

Figure 1  
The Sustainable Development Goals and Disarmament



The international community has developed a wide range of tools that connect arms control with prevention. These range across the entire lifespan of conflict, from preventive diplomacy and mediation, to temporary restrictive measures like arms embargoes and cooperation in post-conflict settings. United Nations entities play a

leading role in many of these efforts. There is considerable scope for strengthening the linkages between the broader prevention agenda and measures of arms control and disarmament. As the protracted nature of contemporary armed conflict increases the salience of prevention, this linkage is of particular importance.

## Demilitarizing security in the 21st Century

### WHY DISARMAMENT IS MORE ESSENTIAL IN A DETERIORATED SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

In our current times of heightened international tensions and conflict, many have resorted to the fallacy that security can be found only through the strength of arms and not through the wisdom of dialogue and cooperation. This perspective is not only deeply dangerous, but also fundamentally ahistorical.

During the height of the last cold war, measures for arms control and disarmament played a crucial role in conflict prevention, risk mitigation and reduction, de-escalation and in reducing tensions. The Partial Test Ban Treaty came into force in 1963, only a year after the Cuban Missile Crisis, and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons opened for signature in 1968. For an unbroken period of 55 years, verifiable and legally binding measures for arms control have helped to prevent war and ease the burden of excessive military expenditures on societies.

Agreements, communication channels and hotlines helped to prevent minor incidents and misunderstanding from escalating into

full-scale crises and armed conflict. Agreed limitations and reductions ended the costly and non-productive arms race. The elimination of risky and destabilizing arms gave decision makers more time to respond rationally in a crisis and lowered public anxiety.

World leaders during the first cold war were fluent in the language and logic of disarmament and arms control because these concepts were understood as integral to security. The safe transition from that period to our increasingly multipolar and globalized world was due in no small part to the gains of past arms control and disarmament efforts. This outcome was dependent on constant communication, dialogue and negotiations, and, above all, a critical wariness of over-reliance on exclusive military means for security.

Today, each of these factors appears to be missing from political discourse at the highest level. In order to realize an improvement in the international security environment, it will be necessary for the international community not only to work to devalue the role of military options in seeking security, but also to revalue the role of political dialogue and negotiations

for disarmament and arms control as the safer, smarter and more effective means for achieving the same ends.

## THE DIVERSE DISARMAMENT TOOLBOX

Disarmament is not a naïve and monolithic discipline, despite the popular misconception that falsely equates the removal of arms with insecurity and defencelessness. It rather offers policymakers with a strategic set of tools that can be applied in the widest variety of situations and contexts. These include the following:

- Measures for **elimination** and **destruction**—terms most directly synonymous with “disarmament”—have been employed at all levels, from weapons of mass destruction to landmines. They are pursued to accomplish many objectives, including to maintain stability, restore international peace and security, reduce the cost of military expenditures, uphold humanitarian principles and prevent armed conflict.
- Measures for **prohibitions** and **restrictions** are pursued most often for humanitarian reasons, when the specification of limits on the use of certain types of weapons is deemed necessary to protect civilians, uphold the principles of humanity or abide by the dictates of public conscience.
- Measures for **non-proliferation** aim to prevent the dissemination of problematic or risky items. As such they are most often used in connection with weapons of mass destruction, their means of delivery and related materials, including dual-use items.
- Measures for **regulation** include a diverse range of tools, including trade controls, physical security and stockpile management. In addition to traditional disarmament concerns, they can also be pursued to enhance public safety, prevent theft and diversion, combat crime and facilitate the implementation of broader security objectives.
- Measures for **reduction** and **limitation** are often pursued through binding or non-binding arms control agreements in the interest of maintaining stability, ending or preventing arms competition, and reducing the threat of major war. They have been applied most often to strategic weapons and other major conventional-weapon systems.
- Measures for **transparency** and **confidence-building** are often pursued as voluntary means for sharing information with the aim of creating mutual understanding and trust, reducing misperceptions and miscalculations, enhancing clarity of intentions, and ultimately reducing the risk of armed conflict. They can serve as a baseline for the pursuit of legally binding measures.
- Measures for **remediation** cover a range of activities, including

explosive ordnance destruction and demining, the repair of the natural environment and assistance to victims and survivors. They have become an increasingly common feature of humanitarian disarmament instruments.

### **THE NEED TO ESTABLISH A CLEAR AND CREDIBLE VISION FOR SUSTAINABLE SECURITY**

The notion of security has always evolved with changes in the state of the world. The concept of national security, based upon the political independence and territorial integrity of sovereign States, remains central to the international system today. The system of collective security was an innovation that emphasized the benefit of cooperative arrangements through international institutions, to better ensure this concept of national security.

The changing nature of armed conflict in the past few decades and the unspeakable

human suffering it has caused gave rise to the concept of placing human beings at the centre of security. Today, it is well understood that our concept of security must ensure the protection not only of the State, but of its human population as well. In the 21st Century, mutually reinforcing notions of human and national security guide our efforts to further develop multilateral and collective security institutions, based on the rule of law and the norms that the international community has developed over centuries.

The objectives and language of disarmament need to evolve together with our conceptions of security. “General and complete disarmament”, a term coined nearly a century ago, remains the ultimate objective of the United Nations in the field of disarmament. It is now critical for the international community to reconceptualize this fundamental goal so that disarmament actions, making use of all the measures available in the tool box, clearly contribute to human, national and collective security in the 21st Century.

Part II

# DISARMAMENT TO SAVE HUMANITY



# Weapons of mass destruction and other strategic weapons

## Towards the elimination of nuclear weapons

Since its founding, the United Nations has sought the global elimination of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction. This was the objective of the first resolution adopted by the General Assembly in 1946. Throughout the atomic era, nuclear weapons have been universally understood to pose a unique and existential threat to humanity due to their unparalleled destructive power. At the end of the Second World War, two atomic bombs—considered to be low yield by today's standards—utterly devastated the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, directly resulting in an estimated 300,000 deaths. Today, approximately 15,000 nuclear weapons remain in the stockpiles of nine countries, and hundreds remain on high alert, ready to be launched within minutes.

During the difficult period of the cold war, the major powers accomplished landmark agreements on effective measures relating to halting the arms race and to nuclear disarmament, including the limitation and cessation of nuclear tests in order to protect the environment and to constrain the development of advanced new types of nuclear weapons; the enactment of transparency and confidence-building measures to reduce risks through the opening of communication channels; and the granting of assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States against the threat or use of nuclear weapons.

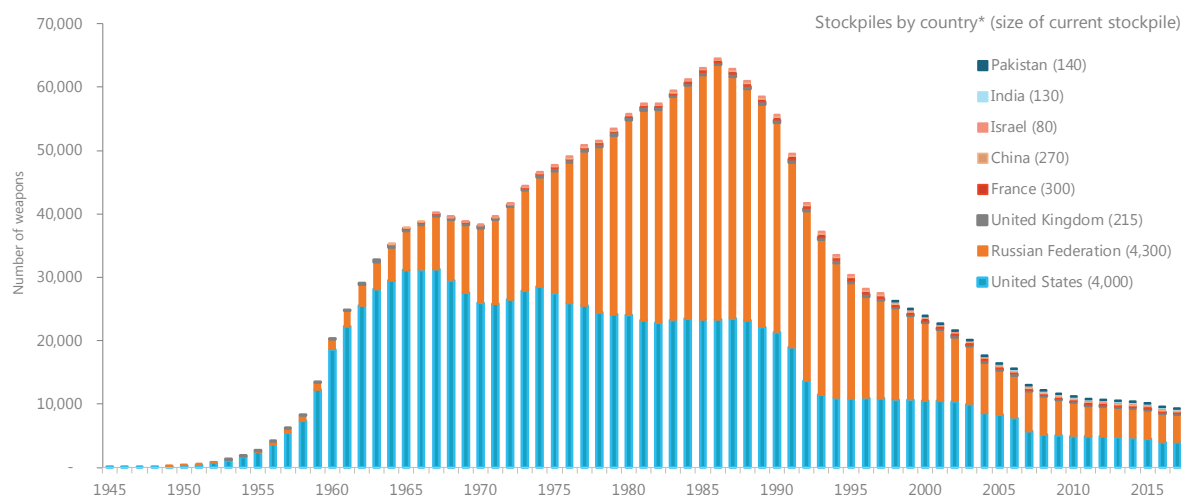
These efforts continued and intensified after the end of the cold war. The Russian Federation and the United States led these progressive and systematic efforts, which first limited the scale of their nuclear tests and the total size of their arsenals, and subsequently reduced their holdings of strategic weapons and eliminated entire categories of ballistic missiles. Three ex-Soviet States—Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine—repatriated nuclear weapons in their possession. One State, South Africa, unilaterally dismantled its arsenal of nuclear weapons. Other States, including France and the United Kingdom, have taken unilateral steps to minimize their arsenals. China maintains a declaratory policy based on the non-first use of nuclear weapons. Many regions, including all territory in the Southern Hemisphere, on the seabed and in outer space, have been declared to be permanently free of nuclear weapons. Important efforts continue, but remain unsuccessful as of yet, to establish such zones in regions where increased trust and confidence in the military sphere are badly needed, especially in the Middle East.

Diplomacy and dialogue have prevented possible proliferation crises from escalating into armed conflict. The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action between the E3/EU+3 and the Islamic Republic of Iran was a historic accomplishment. Despite recent developments that have jeopardized

its long-term viability, it can and should continue to serve as the best possible means for obtaining assurances of the exclusively peaceful nature of the nuclear programme of the Islamic Republic of Iran while providing tangible economic benefits for the Iranian people. The recent developments

on the Korean Peninsula also demonstrate the value of dialogue, and have opened doors to the greatest opportunity in more than a decade to realize the objectives of verified denuclearization and sustainable peace on the Korean Peninsula.

**Figure 2**  
Global stockpiles of nuclear weapons



Source: Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists

\* The Democratic People's Republic of Korea has tested six nuclear explosive devices since 2006, however the status of its stockpile is unknown.

Recently, growing awareness of the catastrophic humanitarian consequences that would result from even a limited use of nuclear weapons, coupled with frustration over the perceived lack of progress in disarmament, prompted new actions aimed at facilitating their prohibition and elimination. Consequently, the General Assembly adopted in 2017 the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. This historic instrument, for which the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear

Weapons was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, will form an important component of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime when it enters into force, and enable States that so choose to subscribe to some of the highest available multilateral norms against nuclear weapons.

Notwithstanding these important advances, there is a widespread perception that progress towards nuclear disarmament has stalled and there are troubling signs that

the nuclear agenda is now moving in the wrong direction. International consensus over a common path for the elimination of nuclear weapons has been strained by decades of paralysis in multilateral negotiating bodies. At the bilateral level, there are no negotiations under way for further strategic nuclear arms reductions beyond the expiration in 2021 of the most recent round of verified Russian-United States reductions. Strategic dialogue between the nuclear-weapon States has remained limited. Alleged violations of arms control instruments are contributing to the deterioration of the international security environment, while threatening prospects for further reductions or other arms control initiatives. States that possess nuclear weapons continue to modernize their nuclear arsenals, including in ways that may give them new military capacities and lower the threshold for their battlefield use.

The current nuclear risks we face are unacceptable, and they are growing. They are exacerbated by the recent tendency of major military powers to turn away from disarmament and arms control as a means for reducing international tensions and improving the security environment. Other technological developments are also contributing to increased risks, including the potential vulnerability to cyberattacks of nuclear-weapon systems, their command and control and their early warning

networks. In other domains, the continued development of missile systems with anti-satellite capabilities and orbital platforms with possible space weapon applications pose yet another dimension of challenges.

For these reasons, the total elimination of nuclear weapons remains the highest disarmament priority of the United Nations. But our efforts towards this end remain in a state of severe crisis. Reversing the further deterioration of the international security environment requires a return to the mindset where the pursuit of nuclear disarmament is understood as the best means for preserving peace, preventing major inter-State war and maintaining stability in times of turbulence.

The Secretary-General remains fully committed to working for the total elimination of nuclear weapons and he calls on Member States to revitalize their pursuit of this goal without delay. The Secretary-General will redouble his efforts to re-energize nuclear disarmament discussions and will seek progress, together with Member States, in the following three areas: resuming dialogue and negotiations for nuclear arms control and disarmament; extending the norms against nuclear weapons and their proliferation; and preparing for a world free of nuclear weapons. These are further discussed below.

## The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons of 1968 was initially pursued as an interim measure, intended to halt the further dissemination of nuclear weapons pending their total elimination. Having achieved near universal status, it has come to be regarded as a key pillar of the international security architecture. Whereas John F. Kennedy, as a United States presidential candidate, once predicted the emergence of 20 to 30 nuclear powers, owing to the security benefits ensured by the treaty and its system of safeguards on civilian nuclear activities, many States ultimately gave up their pursuit of the nuclear option and today less than ten countries are known to possess nuclear weapons. Crucially, the treaty includes the only treaty-based, legally binding commitment for all States to accomplish nuclear disarmament.

## RESUMING DIALOGUE AND NEGOTIATIONS FOR NUCLEAR ARMS CONTROL AND DISARMAMENT

Through its five-year review process, States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons have negotiated and agreed on practical steps and a plan of action, which if implemented would lead to the total elimination of nuclear weapons. Over past decades, the five nuclear-weapon States have accomplished real reductions and limitations pursuant to the Treaty's legally binding disarmament obligation and their

unequivocal undertaking to achieve the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals.

However, recently, negotiations on bilateral reductions have remained stalled and the process of direct engagement among the five nuclear-weapon States has slowed. Strong international consensus remains on areas where these States can make progress through deepened and higher-level dialogue. These areas include reductions in overall stockpiles of all types of nuclear weapons; ensuring the non-use of nuclear weapons; reduction of the role and significance of nuclear weapons in military concepts, doctrines and policies; reductions in the operational readiness of nuclear-weapon systems; constraints on the development of advanced new types of nuclear weapons; increased transparency in nuclear-weapon programmes; and measures to build confidence and mutual trust.

Regrettably, serious divisions now exist over the best approach to reduce and eliminate nuclear weapons. Some characterize these divisions as a competition between humanitarian and security concerns. This is a false dichotomy. In reality, humanitarian and security considerations are not mutually exclusive and they both underpin and lend urgency to all the efforts of the international community. In order to bring the international community back to a common vision and path towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons, sincere, substantive and results-oriented dialogue must resume. The restoration of trust and confidence among Member States, which can be accomplished through such dialogue, will help to break the present stalemate.

All Member States should acknowledge and respect each other's legitimate security interests—human, national and collective—and find a way to ensure security for all. Despite the differences over the Prohibition Treaty, the frustrations and concerns that underlie it must be acknowledged and addressed. A new political commitment to accelerate the implementation of past commitments, including through the specification of concrete benchmarks and timelines, will also contribute to the rebuilding of confidence, and contribute

to creating conditions for a common path forward.

In this connection, the Secretary-General will increase his efforts to facilitate critical dialogue among Member States. This includes a possible creation of new informal platforms or the use of existing forums to generate new ideas, as well as through his own quiet good offices, to explore new approaches and build mutual confidence.

## ACTION

*The **Secretary-General** and the **High Representative for Disarmament Affairs** will increase their efforts to facilitate dialogue between Member States, through engagement in formal and informal settings, in order to help Member States to return to a common vision and path leading to the total elimination of nuclear weapons.*

## The Nuclear-Weapon Prohibition Treaty

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons was pursued as a contribution towards the achievement of a nuclear-weapon-free world. Its general obligations will prohibit its parties from engaging or assisting in a range of nuclear weapon-related activities. It includes positive obligations relating to assistance for victims of the use or testing of nuclear weapons, and the remediation of the environment. It also includes provisions to enable a State that possesses nuclear weapons to join the Treaty and to subsequently eliminate its nuclear arsenal. The Treaty opened for signature on 20 September 2017 and will enter into force 90 days after the deposit of the fiftieth instrument of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession.

## EXTENDING THE NORMS AGAINST NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND THEIR PROLIFERATION

The existing norms for the disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons are mutually reinforcing and inextricably linked. Non-proliferation is central to the maintenance of international peace and security, and also remains essential for preserving an international environment that is conducive to disarmament. Disarmament remains essential for sustaining non-proliferation. The two objectives are two sides of the same coin. Together, they constitute an interlocking set of reciprocal legal arrangements between the nuclear and

non-nuclear States. Backward movement on one side will inevitably lead to backward movement on the other.

That is why future progress towards the elimination of nuclear weapons requires the preservation and safeguarding of existing norms against such weapons and their proliferation. Of these, many can be considered to constitute customary rules of international law by virtue of their near-universal acceptance in legally binding instruments, widespread support within the General Assembly and the practice of States. Others are well on their way towards achieving this status. Current developments, however, are straining many of these norms, the most vital of which include the norms against use and testing.

**The norm against use.** Towards the end of the cold war, the leaders of the two nuclear super-powers, President Ronald Reagan and General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev, agreed that “a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought”. This maxim remains an inviolable truth today. Despite this, some States that possess nuclear weapons are pursuing nuclear weapons and doctrines that allow for battlefield use. Any effort to expand the possible range of situations in which nuclear weapons are designed to be used could be destabilizing and jeopardizes the 72-year practice of non-use.

The preservation of the norm against use is clearly in the interest of both humanitarian and security objectives, especially in the States that possess nuclear weapons, which would likely suffer first should nuclear weapons ever be used again. Recent research has shown that even a limited use

of nuclear weapons would have devastating humanitarian consequences. Women and girls would be uniquely impacted by the effects of ionizing radiation. No State or international body could address the immediate humanitarian emergency caused by a nuclear-weapon detonation or provide adequate assistance to victims. At the same time, promoting measures to ensure the non-use of nuclear weapons can provide important security assurances that strengthen non-proliferation.

Pending the total elimination of nuclear weapons, the States that possess nuclear weapons should pursue policies to prevent the use of nuclear weapons, lessen the danger of nuclear war and contribute to the non-proliferation and disarmament of nuclear weapons. They all should reaffirm that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought. In the meantime, all members of the international community, through their policies and actions, should work to ensure that the 72-year practice of non-use of nuclear weapons continues indefinitely and that this practice is universally understood to constitute an

inviolable norm. The Secretary-General adds his voice in support of this objective.

**The norm against testing.** The norm against testing is another example of a measure that serves both disarmament and non-proliferation objectives. By constraining the development of advanced new types of nuclear weapons, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty put a brake on the arms race. It also serves as a powerful normative barrier against potential States that might seek to develop, manufacture and subsequently acquire nuclear weapons in violation of their non-proliferation commitments.

With one exception in recent years, all States have respected the norm created by the Treaty and upheld moratoriums on nuclear explosive tests. In testament to the strength of the norm, the international community responded to each violation of it since the Treaty opened for signature in 1996. The Security Council adopted a resolution specifically in support of the Treaty. And the norm against testing has been further reinforced by the provisions

## ACTION

*The **Secretary-General** supports the principle of the non-use of nuclear weapons and appeals to all States to affirm that it is in the interest of national, collective and human security, as well as the survival of humanity, that nuclear weapons are never used again under any circumstances.*

*The **Secretary-General** also appeals to all States that possess nuclear weapons to affirm that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought.*

of treaties establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones and on the prohibition of nuclear weapons.

While the norm against nuclear tests remains strong, the institutions meant to uphold the Treaty have only been partially brought online. The International Monitoring System has proven its ability to verify the nuclear test ban. Yet, activation of the other components of the Treaty's verification system still await ratification by the eight remaining States listed in its annex 2 and the Treaty's entry into force. Every effort needs to be made to ensure the entry into force of the Treaty and to preserve its place in the international architecture. In order to overcome any uncertainty regarding the future of this vital institution, the international community should continue exploring ways to bring its regime into full operation at the earliest possible date as a means for safeguarding and ensuring its permanence. The States whose ratifications

are required for the Treaty to enter into force have a special responsibility to lead, without waiting for any other State.

## PREPARING FOR A WORLD FREE OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS

For many decades, there was consensus within the international community that the total elimination of nuclear weapons could be achieved through a systematic and progressive process of individual steps. The notion that nuclear disarmament could be best achieved through a gradual step-by-step approach first emerged in the 1950s, as a response to the gradual breakdown of negotiations on general post-war disarmament. Many of the steps conceived at that time were considered essential for easing tensions, ending the arms race and enabling further disarmament measures.

Under this approach, the international community was able to make progress,

### ACTION

*The Secretary-General appeals to **all remaining States whose ratifications are required** for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty to enter into force to commit to sign the Treaty at an early date if they have not already done so, and to accelerate the completion of their ratification processes.*

completing many landmark instruments and other arrangements that have come to be known as “partial measures for disarmament”. These included the treaties on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, the partial nuclear test ban, the non-militarization of Antarctica and the seabed, the nuclear-weapon-free zones, and bilateral military communication channels and limitations in strategic nuclear delivery systems and missile defences. A great number of other measures have been

discussed over the years, some of which still have considerable potential to assist the international community in preparing for a world free of nuclear weapons.

In our current time of heightened tensions and global anxiety, risk-reduction measures should be pursued with a new sense of urgency, pending the total elimination of nuclear weapons. These could include transparency in nuclear-weapon programmes, further reductions in all types

## ACTION

*The **Secretary-General** and the **High Representative for Disarmament Affairs** will work with Member States to strengthen and consolidate nuclear-weapon-free zones, including by facilitating enhanced cooperation and consultation between existing zones, encouraging nuclear-weapon States to adhere to the relevant protocols to the treaties establishing such zones, and supporting the further establishment of such zones, including in the Middle East.*

*The **Office for Disarmament Affairs**, together with the **United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research**, will support the urgent pursuit and implementation of measures to reduce the risk of any use of nuclear weapons, and to build mutual confidence.*

*The **Office for Disarmament Affairs** will support the commencement of and early conclusion of negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices.*

*The **Office for Disarmament Affairs** will support the development of nuclear disarmament verification standards, techniques and capacities, starting with expert-level discussions in 2018, as mandated by the General Assembly.*

of nuclear weapons, commitments not to introduce new and destabilizing types of nuclear weapons, including cruise missiles, reciprocal commitments for the non-use of nuclear weapons and reduction of the role of nuclear weapons in security doctrines. The aim of such measures should be to enhance stability and increase security for all.

Ending the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons remains one of the oldest outstanding priorities on the nuclear disarmament agenda, having first been put forward in the 1950s. A treaty on fissile materials will be most effective if it is multilateral, non-discriminatory and verifiable; accomplishes both non-proliferation and disarmament objectives; and can be regarded as an irreversible

step towards the elimination of nuclear weapons.

Finally, as numbers of deployed nuclear weapons continue to decline, the international community will need to learn how to reliably verify the dismantlement of nuclear warheads. While limits and the verified destruction of nuclear weapon-capable delivery vehicles remain vital and important, to date, not a single nuclear warhead has been verifiably destroyed pursuant to an international commitment. Over recent years, the international community has undertaken pioneering efforts in the area of nuclear disarmament verification, and these projects will form the technical basis for the disarmament arrangements of the future.

## Ensuring respect for norms against chemical and biological weapons

The international taboo against biological and chemical weapons grew out of the horrors of the First World War. Their use has long been established as contrary to the laws of humanity and the dictates of public conscience. Long-sought efforts to globally eliminate these weapons of mass destruction finally came to fruition with the conclusion in 1971 of the Biological Weapons Convention and in 1992 of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

With respect to chemical weapons, 96 per cent of the world's declared stockpiles of chemical weapons have now been destroyed under international verification. Yet, a number of States, including those with suspected chemical-weapon programmes,

remain outside the Chemical Weapons Convention. More seriously, the norms against the weapons have been challenged in recent years by their repeated use—so far with impunity—in the context of the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic, as well as in assassination efforts in Malaysia and the United Kingdom.

With respect to biological weapons, the very idea of the deliberate use of disease as a weapon is universally seen as repugnant and illegitimate. No country professes publicly to possess biological weapons or to require them for national security. However, non-State actors continue to seek them and advances in science and technology have eroded the technical barriers to

their acquisition and development. The Biological Weapons Convention remains the primary international framework for responding to these challenges. But it is institutionally weak when compared to similar regimes, national implementation is uneven and it contains no operational capacity to respond to biological attacks or provisions to verify compliance with the Convention.

Ensuring respect for norms against chemical and biological weapons concerns the interests of all humanity. Unfortunately, political differences have frustrated efforts to achieve accountability for violations of the norm against chemical weapons and to strengthen our shared institutions. Unless these trends are checked, we risk falling back to a moral dark age where the use of chemical, and potentially biological, weapons becomes tragically normalized. To prevent this from occurring, the members of the Security Council must demonstrate new leadership and unity to end impunity and support mechanisms that can work independently to facilitate accountability in the Syrian Arab Republic.

## ENSURING ACCOUNTABILITY AND ENDING IMPUNITY

Each and every use of a chemical weapon is an international crime. The many heinous chemical attacks during the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic, starting with the incidents in 2013 in Aleppo, Ghouta and other places, have already been condemned as grave violations of the law of armed conflict. Since then, international inspectors have examined 83 incidents involving the alleged use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic. The Syrian Government and Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant have been found responsible for the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic. The use of such weapons has become so common and widespread in this conflict that it can be said to constitute a crime against humanity.

The Security Council has failed to live up to its responsibilities. As so many of the Council's recent efforts have descended into a tragic form of political theatre, the people of the Syrian Arab Republic continue to fall victim to the use of abhorrent weapons

### ACTION

*The **Secretary-General** will work with the members of the Security Council in order to build new leadership and unity in restoring respect for the global norm against chemical weapons, including through the creation of a new and impartial mechanism to identify those responsible for the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic.*

in addition to the unspeakable suffering caused by the misuse of conventional weapons and the wholesale destructions of their cities, towns and neighbourhoods. This situation must be brought to an urgent conclusion by restoring shared ownership of and respect for the global norm against chemical weapons through the use of all available political means. Success is also important because, as long as the Security Council fails to live up to its trust in this area, there will be grave doubts about its ability to do so in a world free of nuclear weapons.

The Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons has the mandate and capability to investigate any credible allegation in order to establish whether chemical weapons were used on the territory of its parties or in violation of the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention. The United Nations, and especially the Security Council, needs to play their part to enable impartial investigations to identify those responsible for any use of chemical weapons in the

Syrian Arab Republic and ultimately to hold them responsible.

### INCREASING CAPACITY TO UPHOLD THE NORM AGAINST CHEMICAL AND BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS

In 2013, the Secretary-General was called upon to exercise his independent authority to investigate allegations of the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic. The United Nations was able to rapidly assemble a team to send to the field, owing in no small part to its standing arrangements with the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. As the Chemical Weapons Convention approaches universality, it should become the single standing body with responsibility to carry out investigations with the aim of determining whether or not chemical weapons have been used in violation of the Convention. The Secretary-General will support efforts to strengthen the Chemical Weapons Convention and its institutional capacity, to ensure the full implementation of this landmark disarmament treaty.

## ACTION

*The **Secretary-General** and the **High Representative for Disarmament Affairs** will work with Member States, including through the General Assembly, to establish a core standing coordinating capacity to conduct independent investigations of the alleged use of biological weapons, in accordance with his authority under resolution 42/37 C.*

*The **Office for Disarmament Affairs** will work with all relevant United Nations entities to contribute to developing a framework that ensures a coordinated international response to the use of biological weapons.*

The situation is very different when it comes to the prospective use of biological weapons. The Biological Weapons Convention has no organization or inspectorate. As such, the Secretary-General will retain the only independent authority and capacity to investigate credible allegations of use. Following the lessons learned from the 2013 chemical weapons investigation, the Office for Disarmament Affairs improved its preparedness to rapidly field an investigation team by enhancing its training of rostered experts and operational planning capabilities, with a focus on responding to allegations of use of biological weapons.

In the meantime, concerns regarding the increasing risk of biological weapons have continued to grow as developments in science and technology lower barriers for their acquisition, access and use, including by non-State actors. There is therefore a need to strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention, which acts as a forum for consideration of preventative measures, such as strong national health systems, robust response capacities and effective counter-measures. The first step is to ensure more effective implementation of the Convention. This should be done by improving linkages with other relevant activities—for example in the domain of global health security—and oversight of dual-use research of concern, including in the context of Sustainable Development Goal 3 on health and well-being.

Natural pandemics, such as the Ebola outbreak in West Africa, have shown the damage that infectious diseases can inflict. A deliberately released disease could be many times more devastating and the world remains largely unprepared. A stronger

### Investigating the use of chemical or biological weapons

In 1987, by its resolution 42/37 C, the General Assembly gave the Secretary-General standing authority to conduct investigations of alleged use of chemical, biological or toxin weapons in response to reports by Member States. The Security Council endorsed this authority in its resolution 620 (1988). The aim of investigations carried out under the “Secretary-General’s Mechanism” is to ascertain the facts of the matter and to report the results promptly to Member States. For investigations of the use of chemical weapons in a State that is not party to the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, through a standing arrangement, has agreed to place its resources at the disposal of the Secretary-General. The Office for Disarmament Affairs maintains the operational readiness of the Mechanism by facilitating specialized training courses for qualified experts who are rostered to participate in any investigation.

international capacity to investigate any alleged use of biological weapons and to ensure that any illegal acts will be quickly detected would act to deter their use. In order to be adequately prepared to respond to any credible allegation of use, the United Nations must have in place a dedicated institutional capacity. The Secretary-General therefore intends to work with Member States to establish an interim

standing capacity to conduct investigations of the alleged use of biological weapons while seeking support from the General Assembly for a longer-term solution. Beyond preventing any use of biological weapons through timely detection, there is also a need to focus on strengthening the Convention in order to ensure an adequate response to a biological attack.

## Preventing the emergence of new domains of strategic competition and conflict

In the 1950s, the development of longer-range ballistic missiles simultaneously opened up outer space as a realm for peaceful exploration and use, and escalated the arms race to the brink of nuclear war. Since that time, a major objective of disarmament efforts has been the control of existing domains of strategic competition and conflict, while preventing their emergence elsewhere. The international community achieved important early milestones by prohibiting the placement of weapons of mass destruction in outer space and by ensuring the demilitarization of celestial bodies. In contrast, efforts to effectively control missiles have been limited and non-universal, and recent challenges in this area are directly contributing to renewed strategic arms competition.

Advances in space technologies are contributing immensely to all spheres of human life and economic activity. However, in the absence of new restraint and cooperation, increasing civil and military dependence on outer space is rapidly translating into serious new risks

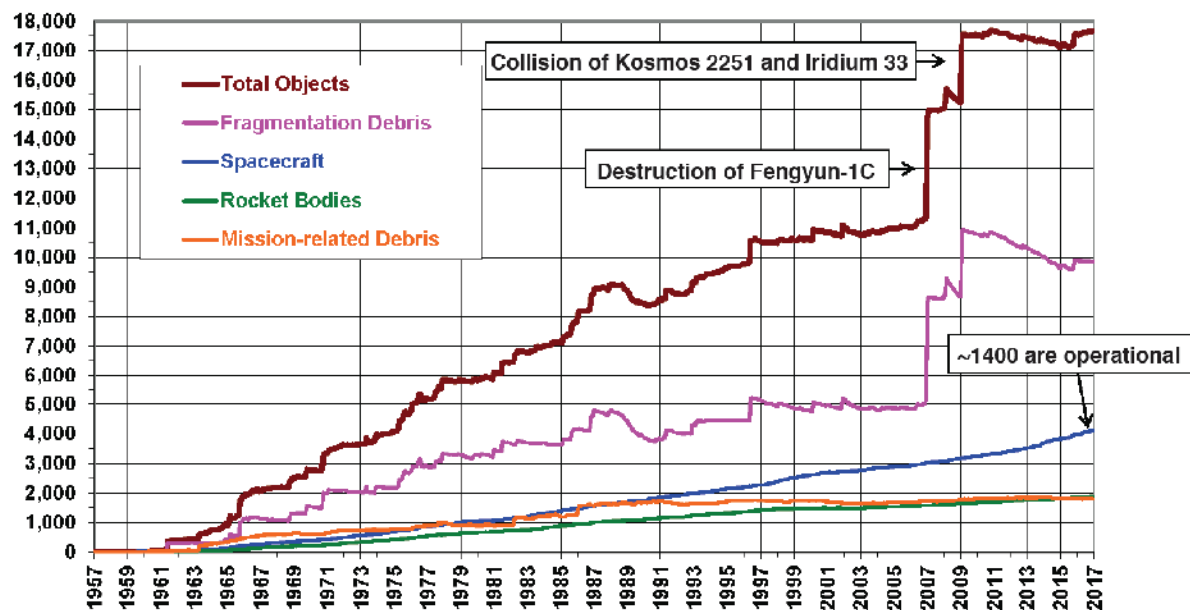
and vulnerabilities. In particular, the widespread military use of outer space—for communications, command and control, navigation, intelligence-gathering and early warning—is also creating pressure for armed forces to open up outer space as a potential realm for war-fighting.

Any use of force in the fragile outer space environment would likely bring lasting and devastating impacts. Due to the close connection between outer space and nuclear forces, armed conflict in outer space could also result in grave terrestrial consequences as well. It therefore remains in the common interest of humankind that we work urgently to preserve outer space as a realm for peace.

## ENSURING THE SECURITY AND SUSTAINABILITY OF OUTER SPACE ACTIVITIES

For decades, the United Nations has worked to ensure the security and sustainability of outer space activities by preventing an arms race in outer space. While we have yet to witness any arms competition in

**Figure 3**  
The population of objects in outer space



Source: Project Ploughshares, Space Security Index 2017

outer space, the relevant technological capabilities have existed for decades. Many concepts for the deployment of various types of disruptive and destructive counter-space capabilities have been studied, developed and tested. Anti-ballistic missile systems deployed by a growing number of countries could function as anti-satellite weapons.

The international community has worked to develop many tools to address this situation, even as it has not yet been able to commence negotiations on legally binding measures for arms control in outer space. These have included, among others, the development of non-binding transparency and confidence-building measures, norms of responsible behaviour, voluntary

## ACTION

*The **Office for Disarmament Affairs**, the **Office for Outer Space Affairs** and the **United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research** will deepen their engagement with Member States on the practical implementation of transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities and on the elaboration of effective measures for the prevention of an arms race in outer space.*

guidelines for debris mitigation and the long-term sustainability of outer space activities, and political commitments not to place weapons in outer space.

To date, despite geopolitical and strategic tensions, there continues to be common ground among major spacefaring nations and other space actors on ways to make progress in a number of these areas. The United Nations remains uniquely placed to facilitate international cooperation and mutual restraint as the only sustainable solution to ensuring peace and security in outer space.

### REINING IN NEW TYPES OF DESTABILIZING STRATEGIC WEAPONS

Missiles pose a variety of distinct concerns for international peace and security. In particular, they pose challenges for stability, crisis management, the protection of civilians and the achievement of broader disarmament objectives. Conventionally armed ballistic missiles have become prevalent in the arsenals of many States and some non-State actors, where they function as area bombardment weapons aimed generally at cities. Some States are developing higher-precision ballistic missiles, designed for use in a greater number of situations. Cruise missiles are

now widely available and advances in technology are enabling the development of faster and stealthy systems. Certain types of missile defence systems can function as anti-satellite weapons.

For decades, strategic missiles have been a central concern for the nuclear disarmament process, and they have been the focus of bilaterally agreed limitations and reductions. Recent developments have become stumbling blocks for further progress, including unresolved disputes over missile defences and land-based cruise missiles. The development of advanced types of long-range strike weapons, including manoeuvrable re-entry vehicles and hypersonic glide vehicles have considerable potential to further complicate strategic relations, encourage new arms competition and endanger stability.

There are currently no universal legally binding arrangements governing missiles. Current voluntary arrangements and codes of conduct, while important, have not provided a comprehensive response to the security concerns raised by missiles. The international community needs to re-engage and give higher priority to addressing issues related to missiles, especially in the context of the disarmament process.

## ACTION

*The **Office for Disarmament Affairs** and the **United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research** will carry out a study, in consultation with governmental experts and civil society, on peace and security implications of long-range conventional weapons, including those using hypersonic technologies.*

Part III

# DISARMAMENT THAT SAVES LIVES

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# Conventional weapons

As we approach almost two decades into the 21st Century, armed violence remains disturbingly prevalent in many parts of the world, and the world remains grossly over-armed. Military industries have continued high levels of production and found new markets. Massive conventional arms build-ups are continuing unabated in other parts of the world, especially in certain conflict-prone regions.

While we have seen stagnation in conventional arms control at the global level, the absence of disarmament and arms control at the regional, national and local levels has been disastrous. Owing in no small part to the widespread and increasing availability of military-grade and improvised weapons, armed conflicts have become protracted, more complex, more disruptive and more difficult to recover from. Non-State actors are increasingly well equipped, owing to poorly secured stockpiles or to transfers from the illicit market or from States.

The growing complexity of contemporary conflict, when mixed with lax control on the means of lethal force, is a growing source of human insecurity. For instance, while most of the armed conflicts the world has seen over the past two decades have been internal, armed forces continue to fight them with major conventional weapons designed for use against competing armies

on traditional battlefields. Many of these weapons are inherently indiscriminate when used in populated areas. As armed conflict has moved from open fields and into villages, towns and cities, the humanitarian impact has been devastating.

Conventional disarmament and arms control have served many purposes. They have helped to end conflicts, secure the peace and prevent the easy resumption of hostilities. They have promoted transparency, confidence and stability at the regional level, reducing the military burden on societies. They have ensured respect for the principles of humanity. And they have prevented diversion to malicious or unauthorized users.

Despite these proven benefits, disarmament is not well integrated in the work of the United Nations in conflict mediation and prevention. And its toolset needs to be brought up to date, especially in the collection and use of data. Consciousness of the impact of arms in facilitating and prolonging armed conflict is missing from analyses on risk and prevention. Aside from achieving a reduction in direct combat deaths, there is not yet a general understanding on the many areas where the successful achievement of disarmament objectives would benefit the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

These are the reasons why we need more focus on disarmament that saves lives. This entails effective action in protecting civilians from the growing urbanization of armed conflict, the ubiquitous use of improvised explosive devices and the deleterious impact of new technologies on

humanitarian principles. It also requires a more general effort to reintegrate disarmament into the peace and security pillar of the Organization, build effective partnerships and better deliver as one United Nations.

## Mitigating the humanitarian impact of conventional arms

### PROTECTING CIVILIANS AGAINST THE URBANIZATION OF ARMED CONFLICT

Civilians continue to bear the brunt of armed conflict around the globe. The humanitarian crises that have invariably followed from recent conflicts are a result of a combination of deliberate attacks on the civilian population and civilian objects, indiscriminate attacks, the inappropriate selection of weapons and a failure by parties to conflict to take constant care to spare civilians and civilian objects from the impacts of warfare.

The urbanization of armed conflict has resulted in devastating and well-documented impacts on civilians. A leading concern is the use in populated areas of explosive weapons with wide-area impacts. These include weapon systems, munitions and tactics used by States and non-State actors, which can be expected to result in a high proportion of incidental civilian harm if employed in areas where there is a concentration of civilians. Problematic types of weapons include indirect fire weapons, such as artillery, rockets and mortars, weapons that fire in salvos, such as multi-launch rocket systems, large air-dropped bombs and surface-to-surface ballistic missiles. Such systems variously involve munitions with a large destructive radius,



#### SDG Target 16.1

Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere

weapons with inaccurate delivery systems or weapon systems that deliver multiple munitions over a wide area.

Humanitarian concerns have been driven in particular by the immediate and, importantly, long-term patterns of harm to civilians and civilian objects in recent and ongoing conflicts, including in, inter alia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Sri Lanka, the State of Palestine, the Syrian Arab Republic, Ukraine and Yemen. According to one non-governmental report based on English-language media sources, in 2017, 92 per cent of those harmed by the use of explosive weapons in populated areas were civilians.

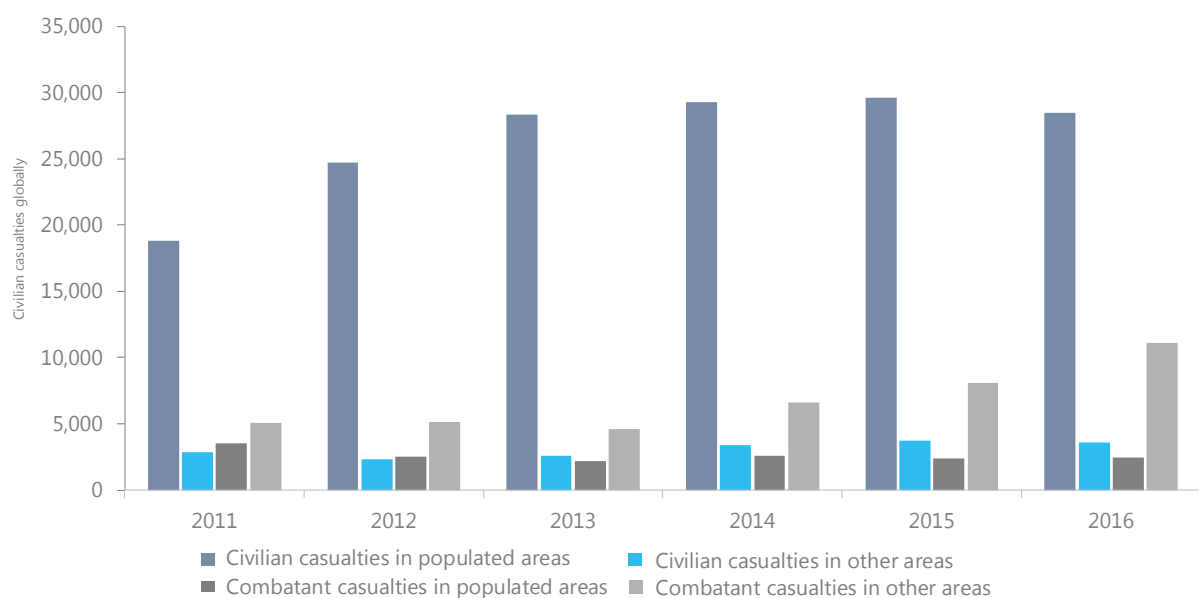
The collection of data on civilian casualties is an important practical step that the United Nations, parties to conflict, humanitarian entities and other interested actors should take to effectively address concerns raised by the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. Disaggregated data on

the category of arms used can contribute to evidence-based dialogue to support the development of practice, policies and norms at the global, regional and national levels aimed at protecting civilians. It can also assist States in implementing Security Council-mandated arms embargoes, as well as in undertaking risk assessments applicable to transfers of conventional weapons pursuant to national export regulations and to international treaties to which they are party. It can also be used by the United Nations in its application of the Human Rights Due Diligence Policy in support of State security forces. This data can also be used to facilitate evidence-based dialogue in support of the implementation of SDG Target 16.1 and its objective to “significantly

reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere”.

The sharing of policies and practice is another important measure that armed forces and peace operations can take. Drawing on the tactical directives developed by the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan and the indirect fire policy of the African Union Mission in Somalia, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs published last year a compilation of military policy and practice on explosive weapons in populated areas. This compilation demonstrated how responsible and well-trained military actors have strengthened the protection of civilians by limiting the use of explosive weapons in certain circumstances.

**Figure 4**  
**Casualties resulting from the use of explosive weapons (2011-2016)**



Note: Data based on English-language media sources.

Source: Action on Armed Violence | Explosive Violence Monitor 2011-2016

At the global level, all States should support the development of measures designed to ensure respect for international humanitarian and human rights law, and to strengthen their implementation, building on all existing efforts.

#### STRENGTHENING COORDINATION ON IMPROVISED EXPLOSIVE DEVICES

The use of improvised explosive devices has escalated significantly in recent years, with particularly devastating impacts on civilians. In the context of armed conflict, improvised explosive devices are now a leading cause of deaths and injuries. They are used by

#### ACTION

*The **Secretary-General** will support the efforts of Member States to develop a political declaration, as well as appropriate limitations, common standards and operational policies in conformity with international humanitarian law relating to the use of explosive weapons in populated areas.*

*The **Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs**, the **International Committee of the Red Cross** and **all interested entities** will continue to raise awareness on the impact of explosive weapons in populated areas and facilitate the sharing of practice and policies among States.*

*The human rights components of **United Nations peace operations and other human rights missions**, with the support of **all interested United Nations entities**, should introduce casualty-recording mechanisms as appropriate, including reporting on the type of arms used, and should engage and support parties to conflict in their efforts to reduce civilian casualties.*

***United Nations-supported forces and Member States' forces involved in a conflict** should introduce civilian harm mitigation cells within the military structure to track, investigate and take appropriate measures to address, mitigate and remedy harm to civilians. **United Nations entities** should include information on the types of weapons and their use on the battlefield as part of risk assessments in implementing the United Nations Human Rights Due Diligence Policy.*

non-State armed groups and terrorists, as well as transnational criminal organizations and some State armed forces. In 2017, they affected nearly 50 countries and territories, particularly Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, the Syrian Arab Republic, Somalia and Pakistan. The non-governmental organization Action on Armed Violence recorded more than 14,700 deaths and injuries attributable to improvised explosive devices in 2017.

Improvised explosive devices come in many forms and levels of sophistication and are broadly categorized as “victim-operated”, “command-initiated” and “time-initiated”. They can be hand-placed, vehicle-based or delivered by boat, aircraft or projectile. Their components can be sourced from poorly secured or abandoned munitions, explosive remnants of war or from common commercial goods acquired from trade. While their use is most often associated with attacks that intentionally target civilian populations, these devices are also used against national police and military personnel, as well as humanitarian workers and United Nations uniformed and civilian staff.

The impact of improvised explosive devices cuts across many United Nations priorities and agendas. Their use can exacerbate economic loss, displace civilian populations, cripple critical infrastructure and result in environmental contamination, ultimately impeding achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

The United Nations carries out a variety of activities to prevent and mitigate the threat posed by improvised explosive devices. This includes technical and advisory assistance to national authorities in the areas of

### Casualty recording by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan

Since 2007, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) has monitored and reported on civilian casualties through its human rights component, in support of activities aimed at minimizing the impact of armed conflict on civilians. The methodology developed and implemented by UNAMA constitutes the highest available United Nations standard for casualty recording. UNAMA conducts on-site investigations to verify reports on civilian casualties, wherever possible, by consulting a broad range of sources, and reports only on those casualties verified through at least three different types of credible sources. Through consultations with the parties to the conflict, data produced by UNAMA has informed the further development of policies and tactics as well as the more appropriate selection of arms in various circumstances, leading to documented reductions in civilian casualties. Several other human rights components have established civilian casualty recording mechanisms, including the United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq, the United Nations Support Mission in Libya and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia, as well as country offices in the State of Palestine, Ukraine and Yemen.

survey, risk education, clearance, including disposal, and training; border and customs control; monitoring of dual-use materials; stockpile management; monitoring and surveillance of casualties; and the elaboration of international, regional and national regulatory frameworks, policies, and standards. Mine action has played a particularly important role in threat mitigation, enabling humanitarian access, sustaining peace, socioeconomic development and operational effectiveness of peace operations.

drones, especially by non-State actors, to deliver weapons of mass destruction. More recent concerns, however, have focused on problems associated with the growing use of armed drones to conduct targeted strikes, especially in areas outside of traditional battlefields.

Armed drones have unique characteristics that make them particularly susceptible to misuse in comparison to other technologies. These include their low costs, which can aid their rapid proliferation; their small

## ACTION

*United Nations entities, under the leadership of the **United Nations Mine Action Service**, in cooperation with the **Office for Disarmament Affairs and other relevant United Nations entities**, will promote a strengthened and coherent United Nations inter-agency coordination on improvised explosive devices to ensure a whole-of-system approach.*

### INCREASING ACCOUNTABILITY, TRANSPARENCY AND OVERSIGHT WITH REGARD TO ARMED DRONES

A number of new and rapidly proliferating weapon technologies pose well-known and documented implications for humanitarian and human rights principles, as well as for the maintenance of international peace and security. One such weapon of concern is the unmanned aerial vehicle, popularly known as a drone. For decades, the international community has been concerned by the possible use of armed

size and precision, which can tempt covert armed forces and non-State actors to use them secretly and without appropriate transparency, oversight and accountability; and the minimal risk to their operators, which can lower thresholds for the use of force.

Increasing transparency and accountability on the use of armed drones could increase confidence in adherence to international law, promote common standards to reduce the potential for unlawful acts, protect civilians, promote international peace and

## Addressing the gendered impact of arms

Gender-responsive disarmament and arms control has a recognized role to play in reducing violence against women and girls in both public and private spheres. Concerns relating to arms have clear gender dimensions. The ownership and use of arms is closely linked to specific expressions of masculinity related to control, power, domination and strength. Correspondingly, men constitute a massive majority of the owners of small arms and young men constitute the vast majority of perpetrators of armed violence.



### SDG Target 5.2

**Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls** in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation

Weapons also have differentiated impacts on women and men, girls and boys. In 2016, men and boys accounted for 84 per cent of violent deaths, including homicides and armed conflict. Women, however, are more frequently the victims of gender-based violence facilitated by small arms, including domestic violence and sexual violence. Women can also bear indirect impacts of armed violence, including psychological and economic burdens. In many situations, when men are killed or injured, women must take on new or additional roles as income providers, often leading to impoverishment, exploitation and discrimination.

- As a contribution to Sustainable Development Goal 5 (Target 5.2), all States should refrain from authorizing any export of arms and ammunition, including their parts and components, if there is an overriding risk that these items will be used to commit or facilitate serious acts of gender-based violence or serious acts of violence against women and children.
- All States should also incorporate gender perspectives in the development of national legislation and policies on disarmament and arms control, including consideration of the gendered aspects of ownership, use and misuse of arms; the differentiated impacts of weapons on women and men; and the ways in which gender roles can shape arms control and disarmament policies and practices.

security, promote the democratic legitimacy of counter-terrorism operations, assist in the investigation of human rights violations, and facilitate implementation of export controls. Increasing transparency and accountability

on holdings and on the transfer of armed drones could facilitate implementation of export controls and other international arrangements, and help combat illicit transfers.

## ACTION

*The **United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research**, together with the **Office for Disarmament Affairs**, will support Member States in exploring common standards for the transfer, holdings and use of armed unmanned aerial vehicles in order to ensure accountability, transparency and oversight for their use.*

## Addressing the excessive accumulation and illicit trade in conventional arms

### SUPPORTING COUNTRY-LEVEL APPROACHES ON SMALL ARMS

On average, every 15 minutes, the use of a firearm results in a violent death somewhere around the world. The widespread availability of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition is a key enabler of armed violence and conflict. High levels of arms and ammunition in circulation contribute to insecurity, cause harm to civilians, facilitate human rights violations and impede humanitarian access. Armed violence committed with small arms tears apart communities, burdens the affordable provision of healthcare and inhibits economic investment. They are used to challenge local authority, including police activities and electoral processes. They are a leading type of weapon implicated in acts of gender-based and sexual violence.



### SDG Target 16.4

By 2030, significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets and combat all forms of organized crime

Efforts by the United Nations to address the problems posed by illicit small arms have been fragmented and limited. This issue has been addressed from the perspectives of peace and security, gender and equality, transnational crime, humanitarian action, counter-terrorism and trade regulation. More recent recognition of the implications of small arms on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals has opened a new opportunity to pursue

a whole-of-system approach through a single integrative lens. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development importantly affirms that combatting the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons is necessary for the achievement of many goals, including those relating to peace, justice and strong institutions, poverty reduction, economic growth, health, gender equality, and safe cities and communities.

The current paradigm of short-term and compartmentalized projects to address small arms control is not keeping up with the seriousness and magnitude of the problem. Within the United Nations, more than 20 entities deal with the problems posed by the proliferation of illicit small arms in a variety of contexts, including arms regulation, human rights, counter-terrorism, peacekeeping, humanitarian aid, aviation safety, economic development, refugees, organized crime, gender and children's rights. However, in the most affected countries, this issue needs sustained, integrated funding, providing all stakeholders—Governments, donors and implementers—with more opportunities, more coherence and more return on investment.

There is a clear need for the United Nations to pursue a new model for sustained and coherent funding for international assistance

for the control of small arms and light weapons. To meet this need, the Secretary-General will establish a multi-partner trust facility through the Peacebuilding Fund to provide a more sustainable solution with a strong development focus. The country-level approaches will be developed in collaboration with the affected States and with the support of United Nations country teams.

This new facility will be designed to support inclusive, integrated and participatory approaches to small arms control at the country level and, in some situations, at the subregional level. It will serve as a single platform for addressing all dimensions of illicit small arms, including, inter alia, weapons collection and destruction, development of legal and policy frameworks, establishment of institutional arrangements, stockpile management, safer humanitarian space, peace education, law enforcement, capacity-building for weapons marking, record-keeping and tracing, and data and evidence collection and analysis.

It is hoped that grounding the work of the United Nations on small arms within the development assistance frameworks will facilitate a more effective and holistic approach to preventing armed violence and sustaining peace.

## ACTION

*The **Secretary-General** will establish a dedicated facility within his Peacebuilding Fund to support government action to tackle small arms and light weapons as part of a comprehensive approach to addressing armed violence and the diversion of weapons, and as a contribution to SDG Target 16.4.*

## INTEGRATING ARMS INTO PREVENTION THINKING AND ACTIONS

United Nations bodies have clearly recognized the direct correlation between the over-accumulation of arms and armed violence. However, there has been limited engagement within the system on how issues relating to arms, including arms trafficking, and how measures within the disarmament toolkit can be utilized for conflict prevention, management and resolution.

Disarmament is not well integrated in the peace and security pillar of the Organization's work. There are benefits to be gained from examining how understandings of the impact of arms, especially excessive and destabilizing accumulations, can be incorporated into analyses of risk. It will be useful to examine how measures for disarmament and arms control, including frameworks for weapons and arms management, can contribute to processes for conflict prevention, management and resolution.

### ACTION

*The **Office for Disarmament Affairs**, the **United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research** and all other relevant entities will explore how to better integrate an understanding of the impact of arms into assessments, risk analyses and conflict prevention activities carried out by the **Department of Political Affairs** and other relevant entities.*

**Table 1**  
Reported exports and imports of major conventional weapon systems, 2017

<i>Category (I-VII)</i>	<i>Exports (number of items)</i>	<i>Imports (number of items)</i>
I. Battle tanks	271	141
II. Armoured combat vehicles	2,583	568
III. Large-calibre artillery systems	2,710	1,701
IV. Combat aircraft	154	25
V. Attack helicopters	105	0
VI. Warships	8	5
VII. (a) Missiles and missile launchers	29,399	5,692
(b) Man-portable air-defence systems	1,113	120

Source: United Nations Register of Conventional Arms | Summary of reports received from Governments | Report of the Secretary-General (A/72/331)

**Table 2**  
Reported exports and imports of small arms and light weapons, 2017

<i>Category (I-VII)</i>	<i>Exports (number of items)</i>	<i>Imports (number of items)</i>
<b>Small arms</b>		
1. Revolvers and self-loading pistols	163,266	424,782
2. Rifles and carbines	161,622	31,250
3. Sub-machine guns	39,661	17,541
4. Assault rifles	166,201	6,774
5. Light machine guns	13,192	11,825
6. Others	4,657	968
<b>Light weapons</b>		
1. Heavy machine guns	4,313	2,714
2. Hand-held under-barrel and mounted grenade launchers	17,324	2,937
3. Portable anti-tank guns	2,408	67
4. Recoilless rifles	1,593	911
5. Portable anti-tank missile launchers and rocket systems	6,903	2,865
6. Mortars of calibres less than 75 mm	2,571	594
7. Others	68	10

Source: United Nations Register of Conventional Arms | Summary of reports received from Governments | Report of the Secretary-General (A/72/331)

## Promoting transparency in military expenditures and arms transfers



### SDG Target 16.6

Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels

Transparency in military activities, such as reporting on military spending and on arms imports and exports, promotes democratic accountability and responsible governance. The exchange of information on how States translate their stated national security requirements into military postures can also create mutual understanding and trust, reduce misperceptions and miscalculations and thereby help both to prevent military confrontation and to foster regional and global stability.

- As a contribution to Sustainable Development Goal 16 (Indicator 16.6.1), all States should submit data on their military spending on an annual basis for inclusion in the United Nations Report on Military Expenditures.

## MANAGING POORLY MAINTAINED STOCKPILES

Beyond the need for greater efforts to reduce the excessive accumulation of arms, it remains essential that States ensure effective physical security and management of their stockpiles. Inadequately maintained stockpiles constitute serious humanitarian hazards and negatively impact peace and security, and can thereby jeopardize the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

In many countries, arms depots are located in populated areas. Unplanned explosions at munition sites can have devastating consequences for local communities and result in high levels of casualties, injuries, displacement and environmental damage.

More than half of Member States have experienced an unplanned explosion at a munition site over recent decades. The safe and secure management of stockpiles can help to prevent such incidents from occurring in the first place, or prevent unplanned events from becoming catastrophes.

Inadequate physical security can also result in diversion of arms to illicit markets, including to non-State armed groups, terrorists and transnational criminal organizations. The loss of arms and ammunition from storage sites, and their onward proliferation, can be a catalyst for armed violence, conflict and insecurity. Fragile States are particularly susceptible to problems posed by improper stockpile management practices.

While destruction of unstable and surplus arms and ammunition is the preferred and most economical long-term solution, proper stockpile management can also mitigate the risk of unintended explosion and diversion. Physical security and stockpile management has also become vital in post-conflict environments, including through disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes. It is therefore essential that States regularly assess their stockpiles and identify obsolete, surplus and unstable weapons and ammunition. Such weaponry must be perceived as a liability rather than an asset.

The United Nations plays a key role in supporting States to maintain safe and secure stockpiles, including through the development and dissemination of standards, guidelines and good practices. The International Small Arms Control Standards and the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines are prime examples of these efforts. Both sets of voluntary guidance provide States with a solid point of departure for improving the physical security and stockpile management of their weapons and



### SDG Target 11.5

By 2030, significantly reduce the number of deaths and the number of people affected and substantially decrease the direct economic losses relative to global gross domestic product caused by disasters, including water-related disasters, with a focus on protecting the poor and people in vulnerable situations

ammunition, respectively, thus preventing the dual hazards of illicit proliferation and accidental explosion. These guidelines also complement the International Mine Action Standards, and greater efforts should be pursued to increase the synergies among them and all other available guidelines and standards. The United Nations stands ready to continue its cooperation with national authorities in these areas.

## ACTION

*The United Nations, through its coordinating mechanism on small arms under the leadership of the **Office for Disarmament Affairs**, will promote more effective State and regional action on excessive and poorly maintained stockpiles in all available forums and through its regional centres, as well as through new and existing partnerships.*

## RETHINKING UNCONSTRAINED MILITARY SPENDING

In recent decades, disarmament has largely slipped off the development agenda, despite the clear connection between disarmament and development in the United Nations Charter. Read another way, Article 26 of the Charter puts forward a global expectation for all States to minimize their military spending to a level necessary for non-offensive self-defence and for the protection of their populations.

Unfortunately, the global trend in military spending is moving in the wrong direction. There is at present no concerted effort within the United Nations disarmament organs to rein in excessive military expenditures. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development takes one step towards addressing this by including a target on significantly reducing the flow of illicit



### SDG Target 8.1

Sustain per capita **economic growth** in accordance with national circumstances and, in particular, at least 7 per cent gross domestic product growth per annum in the least developed countries

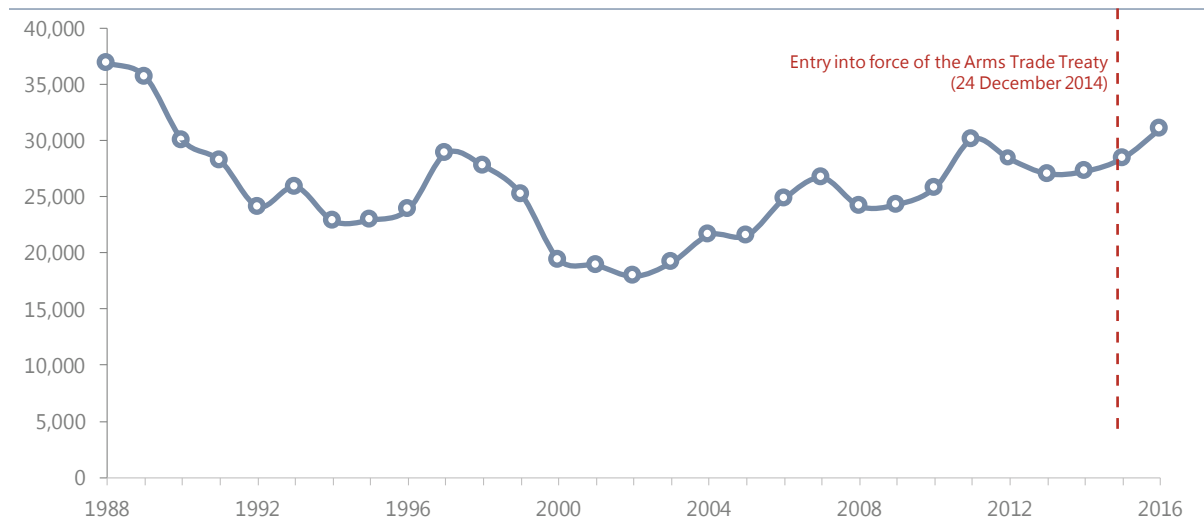
arms. Yet, the trade in illicit arms is only a tiny fraction of global military spending.

Effectively responding to contemporary security challenges requires a shift in approach. In regions of conflict and tension, transparency and confidence-building mechanisms designed to prevent arms competition remain underutilized and underdeveloped, and strategic security dialogue is generally absent.

## ACTION

*The **Office for Disarmament Affairs**, in partnership with relevant entities, including regional organizations, will explore opportunities for regional dialogue on building confidence on military matters. Such dialogue will aim at, inter alia, encouraging mutual restraint in military expenditures and arms acquisitions, holdings and transfers, including through enhancing participation in United Nations transparency and confidence-building instruments.*

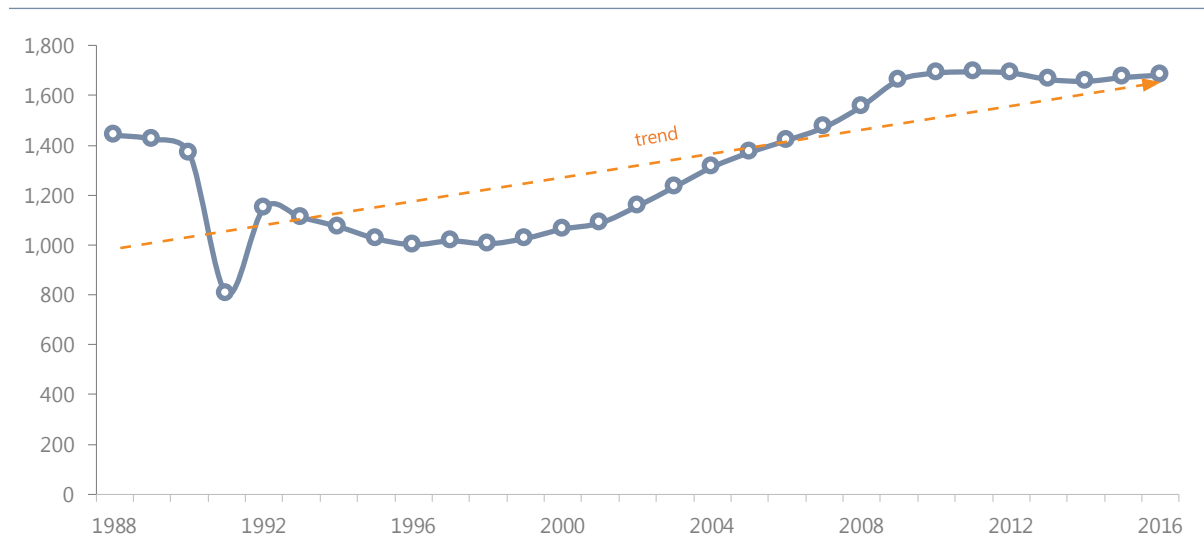
**Figure 5**  
**The value of global arms exports**  
 (in millions of USD)



Note: Figures are Stockholm International Peace Research Institute Trend Indicator Values expressed in millions of USD. Figures may not add up due to the conventions of rounding.

Source: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute | Arms Transfers Database

**Figure 6**  
**Global military expenditure**  
 (in constant billions of USD)



Note: World total excludes Iraq. Figures are in billions of USD, at constant 2015 prices and exchange rates, except for the last figure. Figures may not add up due to the conventions of rounding.

Source: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute



Part IV

# DISARMAMENT FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

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# Emerging means and methods of warfare

Advances in science and technology are revolutionizing all aspects of our social and economic life. Technological progress has increased global wealth, trade and prosperity, improving living conditions in many parts of the world. In accordance with the Secretary-General's strategy on new technologies, the United Nations system will support the use of these technologies to accelerate the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to help ensure their alignment with the values enshrined in the Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international law.

Many developments, however, are also enabling, at an accelerating pace, the design and acquisition of new weapon technologies with unclear or potential dangerous applications. Some of the foreseeable risks and challenges include grave implications for the maintenance of international peace and security, ensuring respect for international humanitarian and human rights law and the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure.

The combined effect of various risks could also pose unforeseen or unintended challenges to stability at the global and regional levels. This could lead to problems such as unclear attribution, resulting in unwarranted armed responses and escalation. Many technological advances, especially those resulting in

greater autonomy and remote operation of weapon systems, could create perceptions of casualty-free warfare, lowering the threshold for the use of force. The pervasive nature of digital technologies may exacerbate these risks, including by non-State actors.

While many new weapon technologies are actively being examined within United Nations disarmament bodies, the pace of technological development and dissemination is challenging governmental regulatory frameworks and multilateral processes. On some issues, multilateral dialogue is entirely absent or defunct. While all existing multilateral efforts should be accelerated, the United Nations can play a central role in promoting greater understanding of implications posed by developments in science and technology, encouraging responsible innovation and offering mediation in response to incidents of transnational cyberattacks. New science and technologies can have a game-changing impact on our future security, but our joint efforts in this area now will also have a game-changing preventive impact.

## UNDERSTANDING THE IMPLICATIONS POSED BY DEVELOPMENTS IN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Arms control has always been motivated by the need to keep ahead of the challenges to peace and security raised by

developments in science and technology. While, so far, truly game-changing weapon technology seemed to emerge no more than once per generation, the accelerating pace of technological change shows no sign of slowing today. And there is now a general perception that contemporary developments are quickly outpacing the ability of our normative and regulatory frameworks to keep up.

New weapon technologies and concepts are posing a variety of distinct and interconnected challenges. From a legal perspective, there are concerns that some new weapons could challenge existing norms, including international humanitarian law. For example, lethal autonomous weapon systems raise questions regarding human accountability for the use of force. The novel capabilities of remotely piloted vehicles can provide incentive for users to reinterpret international law applying to the use of force.

From a non-proliferation perspective, there are concerns regarding the ability of new technologies to ease barriers to the access and use of prohibited weapons, such as may be the case with synthetic biology and genome editing. A related concern is the ability of new technology to assist in the undesirable or undetected dissemination of controlled or sensitive items, such as may be the case with additive manufacturing (3D printing) or other developments in materials science.

From a peace and security perspective, there are concerns about the ability of new

weapons to destabilize security relations, for example hypersonic weapons. There are also related concerns over the potential for new technologies to be used to commit hostile acts, including the use of force, in circumstances that fall short of traditional thresholds for use of armed force in self-defence, for example cyberattacks.

Finally, from a moral and ethical perspective, there are concerns regarding the use of new types of weapons or technologies that are repugnant to public conscience or that challenge social norms, as may be the case with many of the above-mentioned technologies.

All States have an individual responsibility to determine whether or not the use of new weapons they study, develop, acquire or adopt would be prohibited under international law, in some or all circumstances. This responsibility is codified in article 36 of Additional Protocol I to the 1949 Geneva Conventions. Such reviews are necessary for States to ensure that weapons they acquire can be used legally. Increased transparency in these reviews would help to build confidence in how States fulfil this responsibility, ensuring predictability with respect to the potential introduction of destabilizing new technologies and promoting common understanding regarding the application of international law. United Nations disarmament bodies, including the First Committee of the General Assembly, should explore how they can facilitate the exchange of information on new weapon reviews.

## ACTION

*The **Secretary-General** will raise greater awareness on the implications raised by new weapon technologies, including through his report in 2018 to the General Assembly on current developments in science and technology and their potential impact on international security and disarmament matters.*

*The **Office for Disarmament Affairs** will organize, in cooperation with the **United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research**, an informal process with a view to facilitating the exchange of information and experiences between States on the reviews of new weapons they are required to perform in accordance with international humanitarian law.*

*The **United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research**, together with partnering entities, will support the deliberation of States on new weapon technologies through impartial and accessible studies.*

*The **United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research** will convene dialogue among Member States, researchers, academics, civil society and the private sector on examining the implications raised by various technologies.*

### ENCOURAGING RESPONSIBLE INNOVATION AND APPLICATION OF NEW TECHNOLOGIES

Soon after the general public first learned of the discovery of atomic energy through news of the destruction of Hiroshima, scientists and engineers came together to seek ways in which they could help to avert the dangers to humanity posed by developments in science and technology. The 1955 appeal by Bertrand Russell and Albert Einstein sparked a movement of scientists and scholars, including former members of the Manhattan Project, to devote their intellects

to fostering international dialogue for the global elimination of nuclear weapons. At the dawn of the era of artificial intelligence, their appeal to “remember your humanity” remains startlingly prescient.

Scientists, engineers and doctors have since played important roles in the service of international peace and disarmament. Their contributions have included raising public awareness about the nuclear winter that would result from a major nuclear war, and more recently about the devastating humanitarian consequences that would result from a more limited use of nuclear

weapons. They have worked to develop approaches and techniques to safeguard and verify the non-diversion of peaceful nuclear and chemical activities to use in weapons. And they have served on the front lines to investigate allegations of the use of prohibited weapons and to ensure compliance with disarmament and arms control obligations.

More recently, scientists, engineers, roboticists and entrepreneurs have been raising their voices against the potential dangers posed by the weaponization of artificial intelligence and autonomous systems. In addition, several companies have made statements of principle with regard to their conviction that the technology they employ and host should be used only for peaceful purposes. The Secretary-General supports these efforts and a more inclusive role for industry and academia in policymaking processes related to ensuring the peaceful use of technology.

Governments have raised alarms over the implications posed by the development of lethal autonomous weapon systems. While definitions for such systems remain unsettled, autonomous weapons are generally considered to be systems that are capable of selecting and attacking a target without human intervention. While the technology exists today to deploy weapons with such capabilities, there are very real doubts about whether they could be used in any circumstance in conformity with international humanitarian law. Beyond the legal aspects, concerns have also been raised over the moral and ethical issues raised by endowing machines with the discretion and power to end human life.

Automation is not a new concept for weapon systems. From the V-1 flying bombs of the Second World War to anti-personnel landmines, many weapons that are capable of carrying out various functions without the intervention of an operator—including

## ACTION

*The **Secretary-General** will engage and work with scientists, engineers and industry to encourage responsible innovation of science and technology, to ensure its application for peaceful purposes, as well as the responsible dissemination of knowledge, in conformity with the principles and objectives of the United Nations.*

### KEEPING HUMANS IN CONTROL OF WEAPONS AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Roboticists, technology entrepreneurs, humanitarian actors, civil society and many

navigation, arming and activation—have been created, deployed and used. However, the use of each of these systems is well understood to be constrained by international law, including by international treaties applicable to specific weapons.

Moreover, the actions of such systems are reliably predictable. This may not be the case with autonomous weapons, which may perform unanticipated or unexplainable actions.

Developments in artificial intelligence are one of the drivers of growing military interest in autonomous weapons. Approaches to artificial intelligence, like machine learning, have been able to surpass human intellect in some narrow applications like board games and pattern recognition. Advances in peripheral and enabling technologies, such as sensors, can give machines certain advantages over human perception.

But while technological advances may indeed even be able to improve the accuracy of some weapons and reduce collateral harm, we still remain far from the point where a machine can reliably make sufficiently human-like decisions necessary to make the judgments required to comply with legal principles like distinction, proportionality and precaution. It has also been argued that no weapon system can ever be capable of performing such judgments in conformity with humanitarian principles, as the application of international humanitarian law is predicated on human judgment and accountability.

A growing number of States, including some with advanced military capabilities, have called for a preventative prohibition on lethal autonomous weapon systems. Others believe that the application of existing international humanitarian law is sufficient to address the risks. All sides appear to be in agreement that, at a minimum, human oversight over the use of force is necessary.

At present, it remains essential for these issues to continue to be considered within the framework of the United Nations. States, with the support and active participation of humanitarian actors, civil society and the private sector, should work to quickly reach common understanding on characteristics, as well as on agreed limitations, that should be applied to autonomy in weapons. There also needs to be broader consideration of the impacts of introducing autonomy and artificial intelligence into other military systems, and how effective governance and risk mitigation can be achieved.

In the meantime, it seems prudent for States to exercise restraint in the development and acquisition of weapon systems for which there exists doubt or uncertainty over whether it could be used in conformity with international law. The sharing of experience with respect to legal reviews of new

## ACTION

*The **Secretary-General** will support the efforts of Member States to elaborate new measures, including though political or legally binding arrangements, to ensure that humans remain at all times in control over the use of force.*

weapons is especially vital in such cases and should be pursued in the interest of peace and stability.

## ENSURING PEACE AND STABILITY IN CYBERSPACE

Recent threats emanating from the use of digital technologies span a wide spectrum, including the manipulation of information with malicious intent and cyberattacks on critical infrastructure, such as hospitals and electrical grids, which can result in human casualties. Growth in global interconnectivity means that the frequency and impact of such attacks could be increasingly widespread, affecting an exponential number of systems or networks at the same time. In this context, malicious acts in cyberspace are contributing to diminishing trust among States.

Over the past decade, the General Assembly has sought at expert level to elaborate measures on the use of information and communications technologies. These efforts have made overall progress by elaborating on how international law applies to the use of information and communications

technologies by States, as well as on norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviour of States, confidence-building measures and capacity-building. The General Assembly has supported a number of recommendations, including that States should not conduct or knowingly support cyberactivity that intentionally damages or otherwise impairs the use and operation of critical infrastructure, and that they should not knowingly allow their territory to be used for internationally wrongful acts using such technology.

Determining attribution and responsibility for cyberattacks raises distinct challenges for peace, security and international stability. Malicious actors, for instance, may surreptitiously use proxy infrastructure, including in a third-party State, thereby obscuring the origin of the attack and the identity of the perpetrator. In such situations, misattribution is a real possibility and can carry serious consequences for international relations, peace and security.

United Nations disarmament bodies must find ways to contribute to security and stability in cyberspace and to its peaceful

## ACTION

*The **Secretary-General** will make available his good offices to contribute to the prevention and peaceful settlement of conflict stemming from malicious activity in cyberspace.*

*The **Secretary-General** will engage with Member States to help foster a culture of accountability and adherence to emerging norms, rules and principles on responsible behaviour in cyberspace.*

use. To this end, States should implement the recommendations elaborated under the auspices of the General Assembly, which aim at building international confidence and greater responsibility in the use of cyberspace. They should also seek ways to support States with limited resources and capacity.

As with any conflict situation, the good offices of the Secretary-General can play

a role in helping to mitigate, prevent and manage conflict stemming from malicious cyberactivity committed within or across national boundaries. Timely action could contribute to building mutual confidence and trust, while facilitating cooperation to reduce the risk of conflict and encouraging the peaceful settlement of disputes. The Secretary-General will also continue to advocate for measures to prevent the misuse of digital technologies.



Part V

# STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS FOR DISARMAMENT

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# Strengthening partnerships for disarmament

Disarmament initiatives have been most successful when they involved effective partnerships between all the relevant stakeholders—Governments, the expert community and civil society organizations—as well as strong interest and support from the general public and well-functioning international negotiation forums.

As the objectives of the United Nations in the field of disarmament grow more diverse, there is a corresponding need to reinforce the partnerships among these various stakeholders while simultaneously drawing in new or marginalized constituencies. Strengthening partnerships for disarmament must occur at all levels, from the primary multilateral institutions and forums to the individual concerned citizens.

At the level of international organizations, existing disarmament institutions require serious reinvigoration in order to adapt to the new international realities. At the level of civil society, there is a need for conscious efforts to ensure full and equal participation from underrepresented communities, more effectively draw upon expertise and the private sector, and empower the next generation. Today, effective implementation of an agenda for disarmament will require the mobilization of public interest at the global level.

## RETOOLING MULTILATERAL DISARMAMENT PROCESSES AND INSTITUTIONS

The primary United Nations disarmament bodies were established in 1978, at a time when the international community had achieved new consensus of a plan of action for disarmament. There was reason for some optimism at the time. The Biological Weapons Convention had just come into force. Work continued on a comprehensive nuclear test ban and on the elimination of chemical weapons. The Soviet Union and the United States had successfully negotiated legally binding arrangements designed to promote strategic stability and to start bringing a halt to the nuclear arms race. These efforts all reached fruition in various forms in the 1990s, bringing a second wave of optimism over the future course for the United Nations in the field of disarmament.

Since the turn of the 21st Century, multilateral disarmament institutions have been in a state of stagnation. These organs have not seemed to function as a key part of what should be an integrated international peace and security architecture. There was a period when disarmament negotiations at the Conference on Disarmament were central to international peace and security discussions, and the Disarmament Commission worked progressively to

## The United Nations disarmament organs

In 1978, the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament revitalized and established the forums that constitute the United Nations disarmament machinery:

- ▶ The General Assembly, through its **First Committee**, has remained the main deliberative organ on matters of disarmament and related international security questions—it has pursued its function through a variety of ad hoc bodies, including governmental expert groups, open-ended working groups and conferences.
- ▶ The **Disarmament Commission** was re-established, as a successor to the Commission created in 1952, as a deliberative body and subsidiary organ of the General Assembly with the function to consider and make recommendations on various problems in the field of disarmament.
- ▶ The **Conference on Disarmament**, building upon the various negotiating bodies that had functioned since 1962, was recognized as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum, of limited size and taking its decisions by consensus.
- ▶ The Secretary-General was requested to establish the **Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters**, which has a current mandate to advise on matters within the area of arms limitations and disarmament, including on studies and research within the United Nations system.
- ▶ The General Assembly subsequently established the **United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research** as an autonomous institution for the purpose of undertaking independent research on disarmament and related problems, particularly international security issues.

elaborate important principles and mechanisms in support of more specific objectives. But these institutions have not lived up to their promise for quite some time.

The Conference on Disarmament has recently taken important steps forward by pursuing substantive discussions. Building on this, stronger efforts are needed to bring it back to its function as a standing body for negotiations. By necessity, the

General Assembly has recently taken on the leading role in all aspects of the disarmament process. It has initiated studies on new topics, convened expert groups to deliberate and elaborate measures on specific issues, and conducted negotiations on treaties in both the areas of conventional and nuclear weapons.

Ultimately, a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament would be the appropriate forum to take

decisions on the status and functions of the United Nations disarmament organs. Pending the convening of a fourth special session, there is still plenty of scope to explore the full potential for how majority-initiated disarmament processes through the General Assembly can be a solution, while still preserving the means for States to protect their national security. For instance, an expanded establishment of working groups by the First Committee might better facilitate, in a more cost-effective way, the type of mandates increasingly assigned to governmental expert groups. There is also a need to improve coordination and synergy among the principal disarmament organs, reduce redundancy in their deliberations, better utilize available expertise and achieve more equitable representation.

On the matter of institutional support, the tendency of the United Nations has been towards greater diversification of structures. Major conventions and treaties, especially those with strict provisions for implementation and verification, are primarily supported by the independent organizations they establish. For other instruments, including many non-legally binding arrangements, the Office for Disarmament Affairs provides substantive and technical support. A hybrid arrangement also exists for some instruments, which are supported by self-standing units administered by the United Nations. In many cases, each of these arrangements has

optimally served the interests of States and the needs of the issue. In other cases, there have been serious questions of institutional and financial sustainability and concerns regarding fragmentation and competition among the various parts of the system.

There is scope to consider how existing institutions could be utilized more regularly and effectively in support of multilateral deliberative processes and negotiations. The United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research regularly provides advisory services to expert groups established by the General Assembly, and on a number of occasions, the General Assembly has directly commissioned it to prepare studies. However, the Institute's statute does enable it to play a greater strategic role, including in the convening and facilitation of multilateral engagement, and the General Assembly should further explore opportunities for this. In a similar vein, the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters, through its mandate to recommend studies, could be more closely integrated into deliberative processes and negotiations. Finally, the Office for Disarmament Affairs should remain the provider of advice, substantive expertise and assistance within the United Nations system in the area of disarmament and related security matters. It should strengthen its capacity for supporting States to reach their security and disarmament objectives, including through its regional centres.

## ACTION

*The **Office for Disarmament Affairs** and the **United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research** will study ways to better coordinate and integrate the work and expertise among the various disarmament bodies, including as a contribution to a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament.*

*The **Secretary-General** will strengthen the strategic role of the **Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters** and the **United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research** in all disarmament processes and deliberations.*

*The **Office for Disarmament Affairs** will work with States parties to develop concrete options for ensuring the financial sustainability and institutional viability of the mechanisms that support the implementation of disarmament treaties and conventions.*

### Increasing the participation of developing countries in disarmament meetings



#### SDG Target 16.8

Broaden and strengthen the participation of developing countries in the institutions of global governance

The active engagement of all States, especially developing countries, in policy discussions facilitates more effective and sustainable outcomes in all areas of peace and security. However, developing countries continue to be seriously underrepresented in disarmament

meetings held within the framework of the United Nations, where they are less likely to attend, speak or hold formal roles. Voluntary capacity-building and sponsorship programmes have been important measures to enable developing countries to participate more effectively in such meetings.

- ▶ As a contribution to Sustainable Development Goal 16 (Target 16.8), Member States should, on a voluntary basis, ensure the availability of sponsorship programmes for international disarmament meetings, especially those that address issues with a connection to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

## ENGAGING REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Engagement at the regional and subregional levels has long been an integral component of the United Nations disarmament toolkit, as well as a standing priority for the Organization. Regional arrangements can reinforce general norms and principles, complement multilateral treaties and regimes and tailor approaches in disarmament to local contexts. In this connection, the Office for Disarmament Affairs successfully worked with the Central Asian States on the creation of the first nuclear-weapon-free zone located entirely within the Northern Hemisphere, and through the Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa on the elaboration of the Central African Convention on small arms and light weapons.

The United Nations regularly engages with a number of regional and subregional organizations through regular policy dialogues, long-term projects and exchanges. However, collaboration with many regional organizations on disarmament remains ad

hoc, even with those that regularly engage in disarmament matters. This includes, inter alia, the African Union, the Caribbean Community, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and the Pacific Islands Forum.

In many States, expertise in security and arms control policy is often concentrated in their capitals. Opportunities for dialogue on such matters between leading experts and policymakers may therefore arise most often around multilateral meetings focused on narrow objectives, like the review of a legal instrument. In order to facilitate strategic security dialogue at the regional level, United Nations activities should evolve beyond the organization of workshops, seminars, outreach and capacity. In partnership with the relevant regional organizations and partners, the Office for Disarmament Affairs will therefore seek to revitalize existing forums, or establish new ones, in order to facilitate sustained security dialogue and brainstorming aimed at developing common regional approaches to global problems.

### ACTION

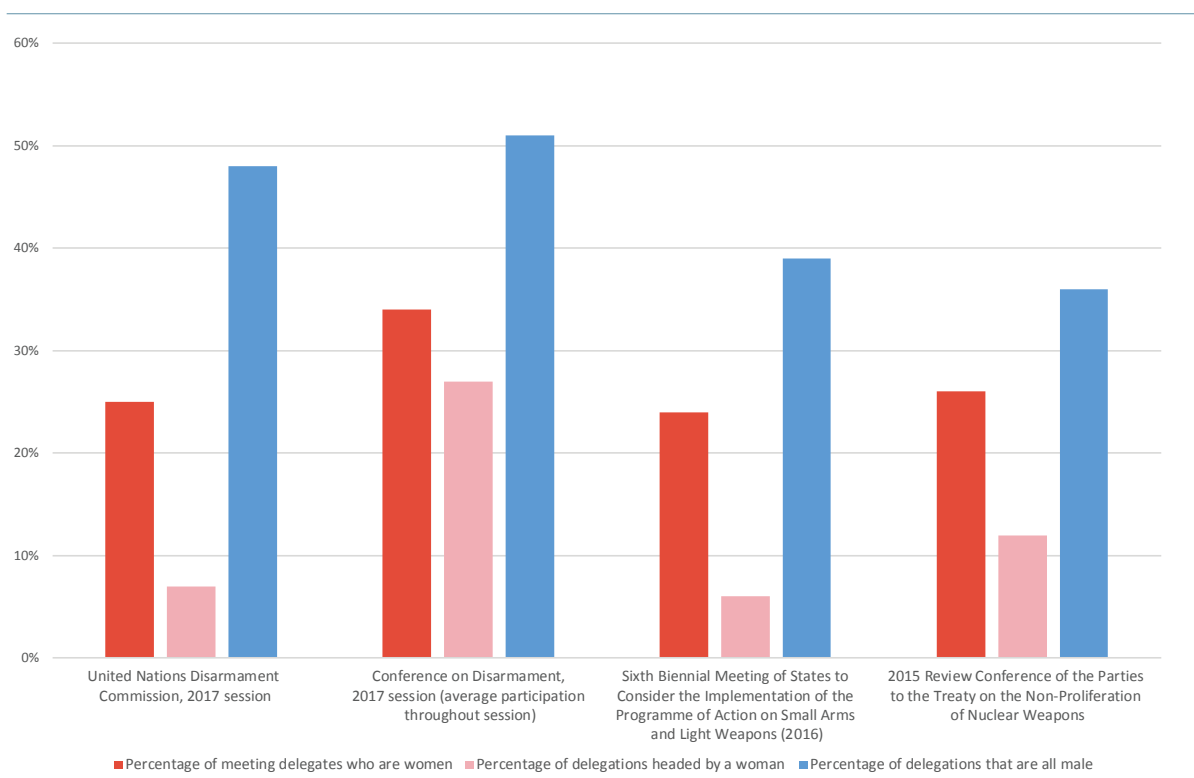
*The **Office for Disarmament Affairs**, together with the **Department of Political Affairs**, will increase its engagement with regional organizations to explore new opportunities and strengthen existing platforms for regional dialogue on security and arms control.*

## ENSURING THE EQUAL, FULL AND EFFECTIVE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN

The equal, full and effective participation of women in all decision-making processes related to disarmament is essential for the promotion and attainment of sustainable peace and security. The Secretary-General has prioritized gender parity as “a moral duty and an operational necessity”. He further recognized that “the meaningful inclusion of women in decision-making increases effectiveness and productivity, brings new perspectives and solutions to the table, unlocks greater resources, and strengthens efforts across all the three pillars of our work”.

Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), on women, peace and security, and subsequent research on its implementation reinforce the critical role of women in preventing conflict and brokering and sustaining peace. In the field of disarmament, women have been particularly powerful agents for peace and progress. The oldest non-governmental organizational active in United Nations disarmament forums—the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom—was formed in 1915 as a response to the horrors of the First World War, predating the United Nations and outliving the League of Nations. Two women have been individually awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for their work in

**Figure 7**  
Participation of women in multilateral disarmament meetings at the United Nations



disarmament. Swedish diplomat Alva Myrdal was co-awarded the prize in 1982, together with Mexican diplomat Alfonso García Robles—the same year that another woman, Randall Forsberg, led the nuclear freeze movement that brought 1 million people into Central Park in one of the largest political demonstrations in United States history. Activist Jody Williams was co-awarded the prize in 1997, together with the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, for her work leading to the adoption of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. The Nobel Women’s Initiative continues to be vocal on disarmament priorities at the United Nations.

A recent UNIDIR study shows how women remain seriously underrepresented at United Nations disarmament meetings, including as members of national delegations. The First Committee of the General Assembly has had only a single female chair in 72 sessions. At any given intergovernmental meeting on disarmament, only one quarter of the participants are likely to be women and close to half of all delegations are likely to include no women at all. The continued marginalization of women in these

discussions is a loss for all. Involving more women will help revitalize disarmament discussions and advance our collective effort to create a safer and more secure future.

### EMPOWERING THE YOUNG GENERATION—THE ULTIMATE FORCE FOR CHANGE

Young people have tremendous force to bring about change in the world. Young people today are more cosmopolitan, more internationalist and more open. They are more likely to reject the xenophobia, intolerance and racism that are reappearing in many of our societies and giving popular support to fear-based military and security policies. Whereas the high politics of international security tends to be dominated by global elites, patriarchal structures and the powerful, youth movements have often been more inclusive of various perspectives, including from victims and affected communities, indigenous peoples and underrepresented populations such as women.

Young people have responded by finding new ways to interact and organize,

## ACTION

*The **Secretary-General** calls for the full and equal participation of women in all decision-making processes related to disarmament and international security.*

*The **Secretary-General** will work to achieve gender parity on all panels, boards, expert groups and other bodies established under his auspices in the field of disarmament.*

advancing bolder solutions when the present generation has lagged behind. And they have proved their power time and again in support of the cause of disarmament. Young campaigners have worked at the forefront of successful international campaigns to ban landmines, cluster munitions and nuclear weapons. Every member of the staff of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons was under the age of 35 when it was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2017.

Despite the advantages of growing up in a time of global connectedness and economic growth, economic inequality prevents many young people from entering highly specialized fields, such as disarmament, making it difficult to sustain their interest in disarmament work in the longer-term. Regional disparities in wealth and consequent inequalities can translate into insurmountable barriers for engagement by young peoples, especially from the Global South, in international

disarmament meetings, training and networking opportunities. Most importantly, we look to young people to be the ultimate force for change, at the local, national and international levels, to make the world safer and more secure for all.

More education and training opportunities should be established in order to create a platform for the sustainable entry of young people from all parts of the world into the field of disarmament. This would aim to impart knowledge and skills to young people to empower them to make their contribution, as national and world citizens. The platform would also aim to facilitate access to tools, training and networks useful for addressing local problems where measures for disarmament, demilitarization and the prevention of armed violence can make a difference. It should build upon existing efforts and collaboration in support of disarmament and non-proliferation education.

## ACTION

*The **Office for Disarmament Affairs**, in partnership with all interested entities, will further invest in disarmament education, including through the establishment of a platform for youth engagement.*

## Disarmament education

Disarmament education contributes to the creation of a culture of peace and non-violence. The overall objective of disarmament education and training is to impart knowledge and skills to individuals to empower them to make their contribution, as national and world citizens, to the achievement of concrete disarmament measures.

Disarmament education focuses on the process of disarmament itself, the steps to achieve it and the positive effects that disarmament has on socioeconomic development. It promotes a deeper understanding of the multiple factors, from the local to global levels, that can either foster or undermine peace. It emphasizes approaches to reducing and eliminating violent conflicts of all kinds, as well as reducing and eliminating all forms of armaments and warfare. Member States, international organizations, academics and non-governmental organizations are all essential partners in this long-term effort.

- As a contribution to Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Indicator 4.7.1), disarmament education should be mainstreamed at all levels in national education, policies, curriculums, teacher education and student assessment.



### SDG Target 4.7

By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to

promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, **promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence**, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development

## ENHANCING PARTICIPATION BY CIVIL SOCIETY AND ENGAGEMENT BY THE PRIVATE SECTOR

Civil society plays an indispensable role in all aspects of disarmament. Associations of lawyers, physicians, scientists and engineers have contributed basic research and have served as sources for technical knowledge. Humanitarian organizations have brought experiences and data collected from the field and have served as conduits for bringing the voices and experiences of affected communities directly into deliberative processes. In the face of perpetual gender imbalance in policymaking

processes, women's networks have ensured that the voices and perspectives of the entire human population are represented. And behind nearly every successful major new initiative over the past 20 years, there has been a campaign or network led by advocacy organizations and concerned global citizens. As disarmament expertise in many delegations is often ephemeral, civil society has been the community's collective repository for knowledge, institutional memory and perspective.

Yet, despite these vital functions and roles, access and engagement by non-governmental organizations is uneven

across United Nations disarmament bodies and forums. There is no single model applicable across the field, including in various conferences of States parties to treaties, governmental expert groups and other subsidiary organs, deliberative bodies or negotiations. In some instances, the prevailing ad hoc approach has resulted in greater inclusion and integration, and participating States have been able to tailor civil society engagement to the needs of the process. In others, inertia has simply locked in inflexible and archaic practices and working methods, often to the detriment of deliberations. There also needs to be more efforts to include other actors with a stake in the disarmament processes, including from private sector and industry, in the work of the United Nations.

While there may not be a one-size-fits-all solution to civil society engagement, there is clear room for improvement and continued innovation in a number of areas. First, States should consider moving towards formalizing access and participation by non-governmental organizations in forums where it is currently absent, especially in the primary disarmament organs—the Conference on Disarmament and the Disarmament Commission. In particular,

participation by non-Governments in public meetings devoted to the general exchange of views should be a norm in all forums. Second, States should consider the scope for more regularly integrating qualified experts into their work, including through inclusion in panel discussions held in both formal and informal settings.

Civil society also has a role to play in facilitating greater direct public engagement on matters of security priorities, especially in relation to military spending. Every citizen and financial entity has the power to ensure that their investments do not assist, encourage or induce any action that would be contrary to customary rules of international law, the principles and objectives of the United Nations, and the provisions of international treaties to which their States are party. Societal engagement can positively impact a range of United Nations disarmament priorities, as we have witnessed in the successful efforts to mobilize public engagement on landmines and cluster munitions. The Secretary-General will seek to engage civil society in all phases of the disarmament process, including in helping to carry out in their daily lives the principles and objectives of the United Nations.

## ACTION

*The **Secretary-General** will engage **entrepreneurs and business leaders** to build further momentum for societal engagement in advancing the shared norms of humanity.*

*The **Office for Disarmament Affairs** works in support of Member States to achieve the greater integration of experts, industry and civil society representatives into the meetings of all United Nations disarmament bodies.*



# THE WAY FORWARD




## The way forward

Disarmament must be brought back to the centre of our common efforts for peace and security. We must understand the role of disarmament measures in preventing major war and armed conflict and violence, contributing to sustainable development, upholding humanitarian principles and protecting civilians. Reinvigorating disarmament processes will contribute to these objectives. The Secretary-General hopes that his agenda for disarmament will serve as a catalyst for new ideas and new ways for working together.

In order to achieve this, the United Nations system is committed to taking the practical actions outlined in this non-paper. There will be an implementation plan and progress will be monitored. Some actions will integrate disarmament perspectives in various parts of the work of the Organization, bringing together all relevant

entities to deliver as one. Other actions are intended to serve as a basis for generating new ideas and new approaches, especially in areas where multilateral processes have stalled. The Secretary-General will work closely with Member States, and redouble his support for their efforts to break the long stalemate and to bridge the deep divisions.

Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld viewed disarmament as a dynamic process that was continually evolving in response to events and the interaction among States. He once said, “in this field, as we well know, a standstill does not exist; if you do not go forward, you do go backward”. In this spirit, we appeal to all to use every opportunity to carry forward momentum for disarmament where it exists, and to generate new impetus where it is needed, in order to achieve a safer and more secure world for all.

The background features a light blue geometric design with large triangles and a faint, blurred image of a city skyline in the upper right corner.

“International security is at risk.  
Cold war tensions have returned.  
Global military spending is at its  
highest since the fall of the Berlin  
Wall. This is why I am launching  
my disarmament agenda, based  
on concrete, practical actions.”

**António Guterres**

United Nations Secretary-General

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