

Reduce the human cost of weapons through banning uranium weapons

The New Agenda for Peace rightly and predominantly addresses the linkages between climate, peace and security as well as the need to reduce the human cost of weapons. Just in between these two action areas ranges the subject of environmental destruction through war, in particular by using certain weapons such as (depleted) uranium, or DU ammunition. The International Law Commission has outlined the normative background to the subject in terms of Draft Principles on protection of the environment in relation to armed conflicts (2022).

Within the UN General Assembly a series of resolutions has been adopted on “Effects on the use of armaments and ammunitions containing depleted uranium” (lastly A/RES/77/49). In substance, the resolutions are underlying such important principles as the precautionary approach, transparency and assistance – but have not yet led to discussing an international instrument on the ban of this clearly inhumane and indiscriminate weapon. Based on the existing illegality of the use of Du weapons (deriving from International Humanitarian Law, Human Rights and Environmental Law) ICBUW has presented a “[Draft Convention on the prohibition of development, production, stockpiling, transfer and use of uranium weapons and on their destruction](#)” being supported by a [Global Action Call to Ban Uranium Weapons](#) just released. One of the main aspects of both documents are victim assistance and environmental remediation, which are also a crucial, practically important parts of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW).

Addressing the issue of depleted uranium weapons is not only a matter of disarmament but also an essential aspect of promoting peace, stability, and sustainable development in post-conflict regions. Member States can take proactive steps within the multilateral system to advocate for and implement a ban on these weapons, thereby contributing to the broader goals of peacebuilding and sustaining peace as we approach the Summit of the Future and the 2025 Peacebuilding Architecture Review.

As the Ukraine war demonstrates, the issue of DU munitions and the consequences of their use is high on the political agenda. On the other hand, the issue marks a missing point, or link, within the Agenda for Peace and the concept of human-centered disarmament involved. Simply here, Member States could easily find a common cause – as being all (potentially) affected, and, at the same time, further develop the setting of both the Agenda and the Summit by focusing on the protection of the environment in times of war, i.e. by banning uranium weapons.