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General Assembly First Committee Background Guide 2022

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Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the 2022 National Model United Nations New York Conference (NMUN•NY)! We are pleased to introduce you to our committee, the General Assembly First Committee (GA 1). This year's staff are: Directors Danielle Erica Curtis BL (Conference A) and Adam Wolf (Conference B), and Assistant Directors Maryam Sarhan (Conference A) and Joli McSherry (Conference B). Danielle is a Barrister from Ireland, practicing in the area of human rights and public interest law who currently leads an access to justice project entitled "The Public Interest Law Alliance." She holds a Masters in Law and a primary degree in Politics and International Relations. Adam currently works in Washington, D.C., as a Communications Officer for The HALO Trust, the world largest humanitarian landmine clearance NGO. Maryam has a Masters in Diplomacy and International Studies from the University of London (SOAS). Joli holds a Masters Degree in Global Communication from The George Washington University and in strategic communications in Washington, D.C.

The topics under discussion for General Assembly First Committee are:

1. Countering the Threat Posed by Improvised Explosive Devices
2. Reducing Nuclear Danger

The General Assembly First Committee is one of the six Main Committees of the UN General Assembly. As a primary organ of the United Nations, the General Assembly serves as the main deliberative, policymaking, and representative body of the organization. The role of the First Committee is to foster high-level dialogue and negotiations to create solutions under its mandate of addressing questions relating to disarmament and international security. Utilizing multilateral negotiations, discussion forums, and recommendations, the General Assembly First Committee holds a unique role as a norm setter within the UN system. As such, delegates simulating the committee will have the opportunity to work towards consensus and draft resolutions on critical issues concerning international peace and security.

This Background Guide serves as an introduction to the topics for this committee. However, it is not intended to replace individual research. We encourage you to explore your Member State's policies in depth and use the Annotated Bibliography and Bibliography to further your knowledge on these topics. In preparation for the Conference, each delegation will submit a Position Paper by 11:59 p.m. (Eastern) on 1 March 2022 in accordance with the guidelines in the [Position Paper Guide](#) and the [NMUN•NY Position Papers](#) website.

Two resources, available to download from the [NMUN website](#), serve as essential instruments in preparing for the Conference and as a reference during committee sessions:

1. [NMUN Delegate Preparation Guide](#) - explains each step in the delegate process, from pre-Conference research to the committee debate and resolution drafting processes. Please take note of the information on plagiarism, and the prohibition on pre-written working papers and resolutions. Delegates should not start discussion on the topics with other members of their committee until the first committee session.
2. [NMUN Rules of Procedure](#) - include the long and short form of the rules, as well as an explanatory narrative and example script of the flow of procedure.

In addition, please review the mandatory [NMUN Conduct Expectations](#) on the NMUN website. They include the Conference dress code and other expectations of all attendees. We want to emphasize that any instances of sexual harassment or discrimination based on race, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, age, or disability will not be tolerated. If you have any questions concerning your preparation for the committee or the Conference itself, please contact the Under-Secretaries-General for the General Assembly (GA), Tobias Dietrich (Conference A) and Maxwell Lacey (Conference B), at usg.ga@nmun.org.

We wish you all the best in your preparations and look forward to seeing you at the Conference!

Sincerely,

Conference A

Danielle Erica Curtis BL, Director
Maryam Sarhan, Assistant Director

Conference B

Adam Wolf, Director
Joli McSherry, Assistant Director

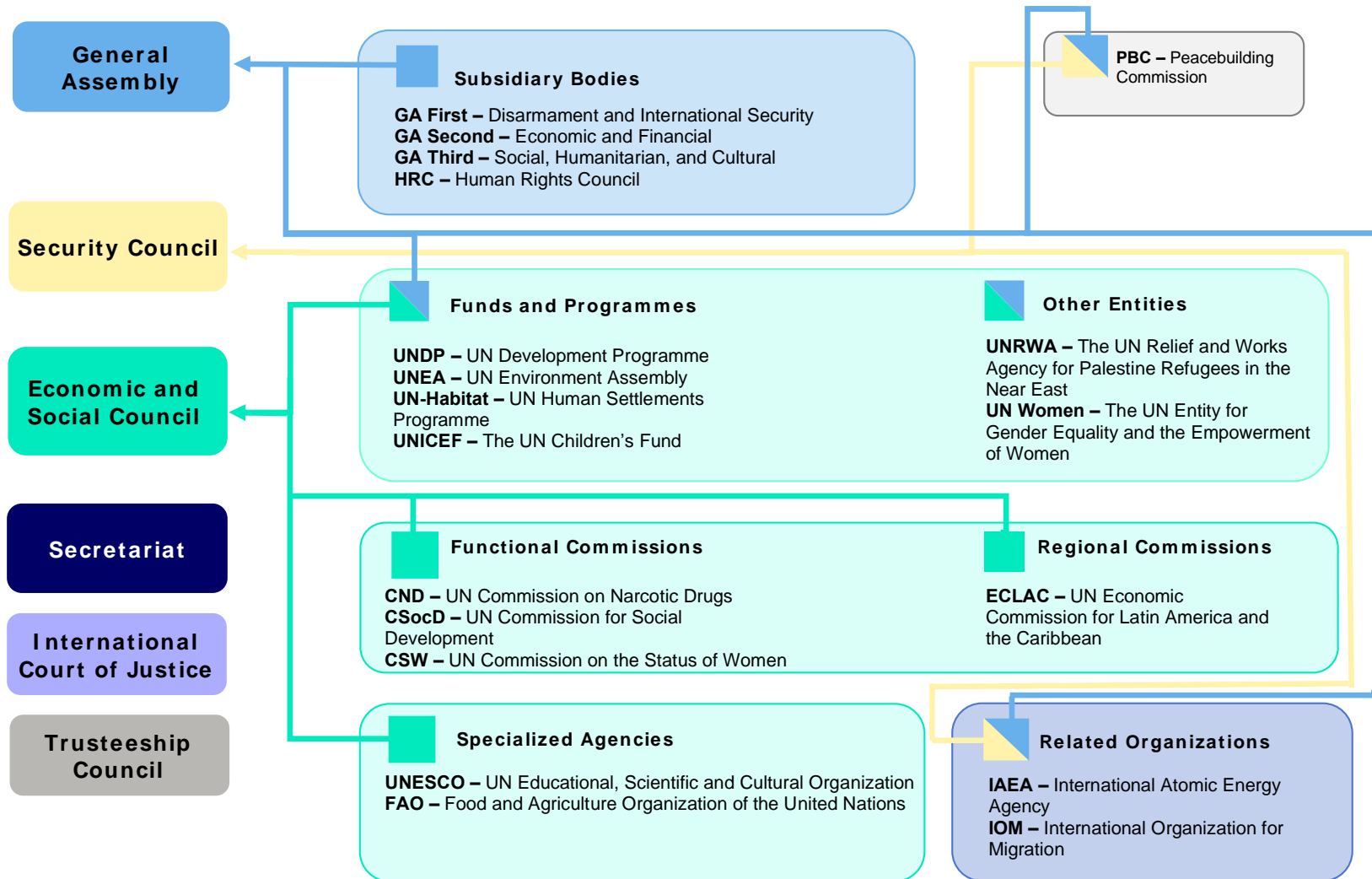


Table of Contents

United Nations System at NMUN•NY.....	2
Committee Overview.....	3
Introduction	3
Governance, Structure, and Membership.....	4
Mandate, Function, and Powers.....	5
Recent Sessions and Current Priorities.....	6
Conclusion	8
Annotated Bibliography.....	9
Bibliography	9
1. Countering the Threat Posed by Improvised Explosive Devices	13
Introduction	13
International and Regional Framework.....	14
Role of the International System	15
Illicit Diversion of Ammunition.....	18
Conclusion	19
Further Research.....	19
Annotated Bibliography.....	20
Bibliography	21
2. Reducing Nuclear Danger	24
Introduction	24
International and Regional Framework.....	25
Role of the International System	25
Combatting Nuclear Terrorism	27
Disarmament of Nuclear Weapons States	28
Case Study: Success of the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone	29
Conclusion	30
Further Research.....	31
Annotated Bibliography.....	31
Bibliography	32

United Nations System at NMUN•NY

This diagram illustrates the UN system simulated at NMUN•NY and demonstrates the reportage and relationships between entities. Examine the diagram alongside the Committee Overview to gain a clear picture of the committee's position, purpose, and powers within the UN system.



Committee Overview

“We cannot create a safer world through uncoordinated action. Disarmament works best when we work together: governments, experts, civil society and individuals.”¹

Introduction

With universal membership, the General Assembly is the main deliberative and policy-making body of the United Nations (UN) and one of the six principal organs established by the *Charter of the United Nations* (1945).² The work of the General Assembly is undertaken in subsidiary committees, each of which debate and adopt draft resolutions on their particular topics and allocated agenda items.³ The General Assembly First Committee considers matters related to disarmament and international peace and security, as outlined in the *Charter*.⁴

Along with nuclear disarmament, the First Committee discusses all issue areas connected to international peace and security.⁵ Agenda items addressing other types of weapons, as well as disarmament in outer space, are also part of the First Committee’s work area.⁶ Additionally, agenda items such as state behavior in cyberspace, developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security, and the illicit trade and curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons are considered.⁷

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the proceedings and work of the committee.⁸ Notwithstanding this challenge, the Committee adopted a record number of draft resolutions at the 75th session which took place from 5 October to 5 November 2020.⁹ Since the beginning of the pandemic, the General Assembly has adapted its workflow by using a silent procedure, adopted under General Assembly decision 75/544 (2020), to consider decisions and draft resolutions.¹⁰ Among other events, the Seventh Biennial meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in all Its Aspects, took place at the later date of July 2021 and the scheduled session of the Disarmament Commission remains postponed due to the pandemic.¹¹ Several resolutions of the General Assembly have addressed the COVID-19 pandemic and highlighted the need for international cooperation to mitigate and end the pandemic, as it poses a threat to international peace and security.¹² The 76th session of the First Committee is due to take place from 4 October – 4 November 2021, convened under UN Headquarters’ COVID-19 related restrictions.¹³

¹ UN Office of the Secretary-General, *Remarks at the University of Geneva on the Launch of the Disarmament Agenda*, 2018.

² *Charter of the United Nations*, 1945.

³ Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the UN, *The GA Handbook: A Practical Guide to the United Nations General Assembly*, 2017, p. 68.

⁴ *Charter of the United Nations*, 1945, Chapter IV, Article 11.

⁵ Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the UN, *The GA Handbook: A Practical Guide to the United Nations General Assembly*, 2017, pp. 4-5.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

⁷ UN General Assembly, *Allocation of Agenda Items to the First Committee (A/C.1/75/1)*, 2020.

⁸ Reaching Critical Will, *First Committee Briefing Book 2021*, 2021, p. 4.

⁹ UN DGC, *Concluding Session, First Committee Approves 15 Drafts on Regional Security, Disarmament Machinery, Agrees on 2021 Work Programme (GA/DIS/3660)*, 2020.

¹⁰ UN DGC, *Amid COVID-19 Pandemic, General Assembly, in Silence Procedure, Adopts 7 Resolutions, 13 Decisions between 27 March and 14 May (GA/12244)*, 2020.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 2020.

¹² UN DGC, *Amid COVID-19 Pandemic, General Assembly, in Silence Procedure, Adopts 7 Resolutions, 13 Decisions between 27 March and 14 May (GA/12244)*, 2020; UN General Assembly, *Global Solidarity to Fight the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) (A/RES/74/270)*, 2020; UN General Assembly, *International Cooperation to Ensure Global Access to Medicines, Vaccines and Medical Equipment to Face COVID-19 (A/RES/74/274)*, 2020.

¹³ Reaching Critical Will, *UN General Assembly First Committee 2021*, 2021.

Governance, Structure, and Membership

The General Assembly is comprised of all 193 UN Member States.¹⁴ Observer status can be granted to intergovernmental organizations and states without full UN membership.¹⁵ During the 75th session of the General Assembly, 107 intergovernmental organizations, and two non-Member States, the Holy See and the State of Palestine, were granted observer status.¹⁶

In the General Assembly, each Member State has one equal vote.¹⁷ Decisions on important matters require a two-thirds majority vote.¹⁸ Such matters include the maintenance of international peace and security and budgetary questions, as well as the admission, suspension, and expulsion of Member States.¹⁹ All other matters require a simple majority.²⁰ It is important to note that a vast majority of resolutions adopted by the General Assembly are adopted by consensus without a recorded vote.²¹ In 2020, around 85% of resolutions were adopted without a vote, illustrating the consensus-based nature of the General Assembly.²² Resolutions from the First Committee are non-binding.²³ Despite this, they are typically adopted by the General Assembly following the recommendation of the committee, and are often adopted as customary international law to serve as international policy norms.²⁴

Each session of the First Committee has a Bureau comprised of one Chairperson, three Vice-Chairs, and one Rapporteur.²⁵ For the 75th session in 2020, Augustin Santos Maraver from Spain served as the Chairperson, with Ariel Penaranda from the Philippines and Corrina-Cristina Lefter from Romania as Vice-Chairs, and Maria del Rosario Estrada Giron from Guatemala as Rapporteur.²⁶ H.E. Omar Hilale, Permanent Representative of Morocco to the United Nations will serve as Chair of the 76th session.²⁷

The First Committee receives substantive and organizational support from three entities: the General Committee, the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), and the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management (DGACM).²⁸ The General Committee is comprised of the President of the General Assembly, the 21 Vice-Presidents, and the Chairpersons of all six General Assembly Main Committees.²⁹ All positions are elected each session on a non-renewable basis.³⁰ The General Committee's main duty is to determine the agenda of the General Assembly Plenary and the six main committees, and make recommendations on organizational issues.³¹ The president of the General Assembly is selected based on geographic rotation and elected by the General Assembly Plenary.³² Abdulla Shahid, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Maldives, was elected on 7 June 2021 to serve as the President of the 76th session of the General Assembly.³³

¹⁴ *Charter of the United Nations*, 1945, Ch. IV.

¹⁵ UN DGC, *About Permanent Observers*; UN DGC, *Non-Member States*.

¹⁶ UN General Assembly, *List of non-Member States, Entities and Organizations Having Received a Standing Invitation to Participate as Observers in the Sessions and Work of the General Assembly: Note by the Secretariat (A/INF/75/3)*, 2020.

¹⁷ *Charter of the United Nations*, 1945, Ch. IV, Art. 18.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

²² UN Digital Library, *Resolutions of the 75th Session*.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 68, 13.

²⁵ UN General Assembly, *Bureau of the 75th Session*.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Reaching Critical Will, *UN General Assembly First Committee 2021*, 2021.

²⁸ UN General Assembly, *Disarmament and International Security (First Committee)*.

²⁹ Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the UN, *The GA Handbook: A Practical Guide to the United Nations General Assembly*, 2017.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16.

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 17-18.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16.

³³ UN General Assembly, *Election of the 76th President of the General Assembly*, 2021.

Within the Secretariat, UNODA provides “objective, impartial and up-to-date information on multilateral disarmament issues,” substantive and organizational support, and promotes the implementation of measures for a general and complete disarmament, especially in post-conflict settings.³⁴ While nuclear weapons remain a primary focus, disarmament and non-proliferation of conventional weapons also are addressed by UNODA.³⁵ It further encourages norm-setting across the General Assembly, the Conference on Disarmament (CD), and the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC).³⁶

The First Committee works in close cooperation with the CD and UNDC.³⁷ The CD is an independent entity with a crucial role in addressing disarmament issues, as it is the only recognized “multilateral disarmament negotiating forum of the international community.”³⁸ Unlike the CD, UNDC is a subsidiary organ of the First Committee and is composed of all 193 Member States.³⁹ It is mandated to provide recommendations on disarmament issues to the First Committee and to follow-up on the implementation of decisions.⁴⁰ Both CD and UNDC report at least annually, though sometimes more frequently, to the First Committee.⁴¹ Several other disarmament-related entities and organizations also report to the General Assembly through the First Committee, such as the regional centers on disarmament and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO).⁴²

In addition, the General Assembly and its First Committee can make recommendations to Member States and the Security Council regarding cooperation in the maintenance of international peace and security and bring the Security Council’s attention to situations which endanger peace and security.⁴³ It further discusses questions of international peace and security brought forward by the Security Council.⁴⁴

Civil society organizations have an important relationship with the General Assembly First Committee, as they provide alternative research and perspectives on disarmament issues.⁴⁵ They are often invited to participate in committee sessions through granting them observer status.⁴⁶

Mandate, Function, and Powers

Article 11 of the *Charter of the United Nations* states that the General Assembly may consider matters relating to international peace and security, including disarmament, and this forms the basis for the First Committee’s mandate.⁴⁷ The First Committee is mandated to act as a forum for dialogue and cooperation to provide recommendations and norms to guide the international community when addressing disarmament issues and other threats to international peace and security.⁴⁸ It focuses on general policy recommendations, and does not carry out operative tasks.⁴⁹ The implementation of General Assembly

³⁴ UNODA, *About Us*; UN General Assembly, *General and Complete Disarmament (A/RES/1378 (XIV))*, 1959.

³⁵ UNODA, *About Us*.

³⁶ UNODA, *About Us*.

³⁷ UN General Assembly, *Disarmament and International Security (First Committee)*.

³⁸ UNODA, *Conference on Disarmament*.

³⁹ UNODA, *United Nations Disarmament Commission*.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ UN General Assembly, *Disarmament and International Security (First Committee)*.

⁴² Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the UN, *The GA Handbook: A Practical Guide to the United Nations General Assembly*, 2017, p. 63.

⁴³ *Charter of the United Nations* 1945, Chapter IV, Article 11.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, Chapter IV, Article 11.

⁴⁵ Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the UN, *The GA Handbook: A Practical Guide to the United Nations General Assembly*, 2017.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

⁴⁷ *Charter of the United Nations*, 1945, Chapter IV, Article 11.

⁴⁸ Nuclear Threat Initiative, *United Nations First Committee*, 2020.

⁴⁹ Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the UN, *The GA Handbook: A Practical Guide to the United Nations General Assembly*, 2017.

decisions is instead conducted by Member States, the UN Secretariat, and its subsidiary bodies.⁵⁰ In addition, the General Assembly and its subsidiary committees are not permitted to make decisions on current situations and conflicts under consideration by the Security Council.⁵¹

At the outset of the UN, the First Committee addressed more traditional questions on disarmament and international peace and security.⁵² Currently, disarmament is organized into seven clusters: nuclear weapons, other weapons of mass destruction, disarmament aspects in outer space, conventional weapons, regional disarmament and security, the disarmament machinery, and other disarmament measures and security.⁵³ The First Committee has only recently begun addressing thematic areas like outer space and cybersecurity, as was the case during the 75th session, in which the prevention of an arms race in outer space was an agenda item.⁵⁴

Matters under consideration by the First Committee not only include disarmament and international security in the scope of the Charter, but also the development of norms and principles in disarmament and arms control, measures for increased stability with low-level SALW armament, and the promotion of cooperation in international peace and security.⁵⁵ Alongside agenda items on disarmament and the maintenance of international peace and security, the First Committee also addresses efforts in regard to the ongoing reform agenda of the General Assembly.⁵⁶ The aim is to arrange the agenda items so that organizational aspects and workflows in the UN system are improved.⁵⁷

The customary workflow for each item of the First Committee consists of a General Debate.⁵⁸ The debate is followed by an interactive dialogue between experts, UN organizations, and Member States assisting by submitting reports and answering questions.⁵⁹ An example of such an expert is the Director General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), or the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs.⁶⁰ Based on the input given by experts and other UN entities, draft resolutions are developed and later voted upon; the First Committee adopts on average 50 to 70 resolutions and decisions per session.⁶¹ Once adopted, they are presented to the General Assembly Plenary.⁶² The implementation of decisions is conducted by other organs, programs, and entities.⁶³

Recent Sessions and Current Priorities

Prior to the commencement of the 75th session, the chair of the First Committee highlighted concerns of a new arms race and emerging bioterror threats which were unfolding as the world continued to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic.⁶⁴ High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu, reflected this sentiment in addressing the Committee, noting the importance of the work of the First Committee, even

⁵⁰ Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the UN, *The GA Handbook: A Practical Guide to the United Nations General Assembly*, 2017, p. 52.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 13-63.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

⁵⁴ UN General Assembly, *Allocation of Agenda items to the First Committee (A/C.1/75/1)*, 2020.

⁵⁵ UN General Assembly, *Disarmament and International Security (First Committee)*.

⁵⁶ UN General Assembly, *Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly (A/C.1/74/INF/4)*.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the UN, *The GA Handbook: A Practical Guide to the United Nations General Assembly*, 2017, p. 69.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 69-71.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 68.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 2017.

⁶⁴ UN DGC, *Opening General Debate, First Committee Warns of New Arms Race, Emerging Bioterror Threats on Security Horizon, Imploring Nuclear Weapon Nations to Cut Arsenals (GA/DIS/3647)*, 2020.

more so in light of the pandemic, and urged Member States to adopt a forward-looking approach.⁶⁵ Ms. Nakamitsu called upon the Committee to reaffirm their commitment made at the high-level event held on 21 September 2020 to mark the UN's 75th anniversary to uphold international arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament agreements and their architecture.⁶⁶

The agenda for the 75th session of the General Assembly First Committee included topics on the maintenance of international peace and security, such as by the Security Council and the Peacebuilding Commission, the situation in the Middle East, the elimination of unilateral extraterritorial coercive economic measures as a means of political and economic compulsion, developments in the field of information and telecommunication, the establishment of nuclear-weapon free zones in the Middle East and Central Asia, and measures to tackle illicit arms trade.⁶⁷ Reports by the CD and UNDC were presented.⁶⁸ At the conclusion of the 75th session, the First Committee adopted 72 draft resolutions, of which 68 were adopted by the General Assembly Plenary in December 2020.⁶⁹ Among the 68 resolutions, General Assembly resolution 75/84 was adopted on *The risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East*, as well as four on the prevention of the arms race in outer space, and General Assembly resolution 75/39 on *Humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons*.⁷⁰

While all thematic priorities were discussed during the 75th session, the General Assembly adopted 21 resolutions on nuclear issues, one of them a resolution on the report of the First Committee on the *Convention on the Prohibition of the Use of Nuclear Weapons* (2017).⁷¹ It noted that a legally binding prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons is not contrary to but would contribute to international efforts of a nuclear free world.⁷² Furthermore, the resolution called upon the Conference on Disarmament to commence negotiations in order to reach an agreement on an international convention.⁷³

Disarmament was further debated by the First Committee in regard to arms control and its relationship to development during the 75th session, as can be seen in General Assembly resolution 75/43 on the *Relationship between disarmament and development*.⁷⁴ Additionally, the General Assembly adopted further resolutions addressing women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control.⁷⁵ On 13 October 2020, the First Committee welcomed civil society presentations on a variety of topics such as small arms and light weapons, nuclear weapons, autonomous weapon systems, gender and disarmament, and the environment and armed conflict.⁷⁶

⁶⁵ Reaching Critical Will, *Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu High Representative for Disarmament Affairs: Opening Statement to the First Committee of the General Assembly at its 75th Session*, 2020.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ UN General Assembly, *Organization of the Seventy-fifth Regular Session of the General Assembly, Adoption of the Agenda and Allocation of Items (A/BUR/75/1)*, 2020.

⁶⁸ UN General Assembly, *Allocation of Agenda items to the First Committee (A/C.1/75/1)*, 2020.

⁶⁹ UN General Assembly, *List of Draft Proposals for the 75th Session (as of 11 November 2020)*, 2020.

⁷⁰ UN General Assembly, *The Risk of Nuclear Proliferation in the Middle East (A/RES/75/84)*, 2020; UN General Assembly, *Continuity of the Work of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and its Subsidiary Bodies (A/RES/75/92)*, 2020; UN General Assembly, *Transparency and Confidence-building Measures in Outer Space Activities (A/RES/75/69)*, 2020; UN General Assembly, *No First Placement of Weapons in Outer Space (A/RES/75/37)*, 2020; UN General Assembly, *Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space (A/RES/75/35)*, 2020; UN General Assembly, *Humanitarian Consequences of Nuclear Weapons (A/RES/75/39)*, 2020.

⁷¹ UN General Assembly, *Convention on the Prohibition of the Use of Nuclear Weapons (A/RES/75/75)*, 2020.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ UN General Assembly, *Relationship Between Disarmament and Development (A/RES/75/43)*, 2020.

⁷⁵ UN General Assembly, *Women, Disarmament, Non-Proliferation and Arms Control (A/RES/75/48)*, 2020.

⁷⁶ Reaching Critical Will, *Statements from First Committee 2020*, 2020.

The work of the 75th session was characterized by the unparalleled modalities used to accommodate for continuing restrictions in place due to COVID-19.⁷⁷ The pandemic remained an ongoing theme throughout the debate with delegates agreeing that the pandemic has reshaped the international peace and security landscape.⁷⁸ In concluding remarks, delegates warned of emerging arms races across the globe and reiterated the Secretary-General's call on 23 March 2020 for an international ceasefire.⁷⁹ Despite the complications arising from the pandemic, a total of 16 in-person meetings and three virtual gatherings were held, with 143 delegates making statements during the general debate and the approval of 72 draft resolutions and decisions.⁸⁰ First Committee Chair Agustin Santos Marever noted that members managed to approve a higher number of drafts than usual which "showed that it is possible to rationally move forward towards a world free of war."⁸¹

The 76th session of the General Assembly First Committee is scheduled for October to November 2021.⁸² The draft provisional program of work and timetable for the 76th session of the First Committee notes that the session will include an exchange with the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, including a follow-up on resolutions and decisions adopted by the Committee at the 75th session.⁸³ The 76th session will also allow for panel discussions and exchanges with high-level officials encompassing regional groups and independent experts.⁸⁴ The Chair of the 76th session is H.E. Omar Hilale, Permanent Representative of Morocco to the United Nations.⁸⁵ As of June 2021, the elected vice-chairs include Amir Hamzah Mohd Nasir of Malaysia and Saša Milanović of Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁸⁶ It is hoped that the 76th session will be convened in full at UN Headquarters subject to COVID-19 related restrictions.⁸⁷

Conclusion

Since the establishment of the UN, the First Committee has acted as a global forum to foster dialogue and cooperation to achieve disarmament.⁸⁸ The issues of regional nuclear disarmament in the Middle East, advancing responsible state behavior in cyberspace, and addressing the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects are areas in which the First Committee acts as a universal forum promoting cooperation between Member States and providing recommendations to the entire UN system.⁸⁹ It is imperative that these issues are addressed with the objective of achieving consensus on how to promote global cooperation.⁹⁰ Therefore, the First Committee will continue to play an important role in settings standards and norms, as well as promoting treaties to advance disarmament and maintain international peace and security.⁹¹

⁷⁷ UN DGC, *First Committee Delegates Highlight Urgent Need to Simmer Geopolitical Tensions, End Terrorist Groups' Foray into Cybercrime, as General Debate Concludes (GA/DIS/3653)*, 2020.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ UN DGC, *Concluding Session, First Committee Approves 15 Drafts on Regional Security, Disarmament Machinery, Agrees on 2021 Work Programme (GA/DIS/3660)*, 2020.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Reaching Critical Will, *UN General Assembly First Committee 2021*, 2021; UN General Assembly, *Opening Dates of Forthcoming Regular Sessions of the General Assembly and of the General Debate (A/INF/76/1)*, 2021.

⁸³ UN General Assembly, *Draft Provisional Programme of Work and Timetable of the First Committee for 2021*, 2020.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Reaching Critical Will, *UN General Assembly First Committee 2021*, 2021.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ *Charter of the United Nations*, 1945.

⁸⁹ UN General Assembly, *Allocation of agenda items to the First Committee (A/C.1/75/1)*, 2020.

⁹⁰ Reaching Critical Will, *UN General Assembly First Committee 2021*, 2021.

⁹¹ Ibid.

Annotated Bibliography

Nuclear Threat Initiative. (2020). *United Nations First Committee*. Retrieved 28 June 2021 from: <https://www.nti.org/learn/treaties-and-regimes/un-first-committee/>

The Nuclear Threat Initiative presents a very detailed overview of the developments in the General Assembly First Committee over the last few years. In this resource, one can find more information on the different topics that are addressed by the First Committee, such as outer space and disarmament, conventional weapons, and regional disarmament and security. Delegates will find this source very helpful to gaining a first impression on the thematic areas of the First Committee, how they are understood, and how the committee has addressed them.

Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations. (2017). *The GA Handbook: A Practical Guide to the United Nations General Assembly*. Retrieved 28 June 2021 from:

https://www.eda.admin.ch/dam/mission-new-york/en/documents/UN_GA_Final.pdf

This handbook was published by the Permanent Mission to the United Nations of Switzerland. It is a very good introduction to the General Assembly and its First Committee, including its processes, and structure. This source will support delegates in better understanding the General Assembly in its entirety as well as gaining more information on existing rules of procedure, the structure of resolutions, and the workflow of the General Assembly as they begin their research.

Reaching Critical Will. (2021). *First Committee Briefing Book 2021*. Retrieved 18 September 2021 from:

<https://reachingcriticalwill.org/images/documents/Disarmament-fora/1com/1com21/briefingbook/FCBB-2021.pdf>

This briefing book will provide delegates with a useful overview of the positions of Member States on a myriad of topics such as nuclear weapons, small arms and light weapons, cyber security, and peace. It provides a useful summary of relevant information on the General Assembly's current priorities and will assist delegates in forming their Member States position on Committee topic. Additionally, each substantive topic includes a useful "recommendations" section, which highlights the recommendations from civil society and IGOs on the recommended action that Member States should take during the upcoming sessions, which will prove useful as delegates begin drafting their own solutions to the issues at-hand.

United Nations, Department of Global Communications. (2021). *Meetings Coverage and Press Releases: First Committee*. Retrieved 28 June 2021 from: <https://www.un.org/press/en/content/first-committee>

This website includes the latest meetings coverage and press releases from the General Assembly First Committee. It is easy to navigate and includes useful information on the latest developments regarding the different General Assembly committees. This is a useful source for delegates looking for the most up-to-date coverage on General Assembly meetings and progress, or for press releases concerning specific substantive topics.

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https://www.eda.admin.ch/dam/mission-new-york/en/documents/UN_GA_Final.pdf



Reaching Critical Will. (2020). *Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu High Representative for Disarmament Affairs: Opening Statement to the First Committee of the General Assembly at its 75th Session*. Retrieved 6 August 2021 from: <https://estatements.unmeetings.org/estatements/11.0010/20201009/yBOH3dYWEM2T/Pq5RHLUIa4Wh.en.pdf>

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1. Countering the Threat Posed by Improvised Explosive Devices

Introduction

Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) represent a significant threat to peace and security.⁹² IEDs are nonstandard explosive devices that are constructed outside of military or commercial production channels and are generally used by individuals or groups outside of formal military forces.⁹³ The components of IEDs can include easily obtainable commercial goods, such as fertilizer, peroxide or other commercial chemicals, although they can also use repurposed military components.⁹⁴ IEDs' relatively low barrier for access allows militants and insurgents lacking formal training to easily use them on a widespread scale, as noted by Action on Armed Violence, which identified that IEDs were exclusively used by non-state armed groups (NSAGs) in 2020.⁹⁵ Furthermore, IEDs are often designed to be indiscriminate, causing more civilian deaths than any other explosive weapon type over the last decade.⁹⁶ Between October 2010 and September 2020, 11,971 reported IED incidents resulted in 357,619 casualties worldwide.⁹⁷

There is no universal definition as to what constitutes an IED.⁹⁸ Due to their non-formalized methods of construction and deployment, there is great variety to the categories of device that may be considered one.⁹⁹ Although many may be categorized as landmines or unexploded ordnance (UXO), they can also take the form of car bombs, suicide vests, roadside bombs, 'booby traps', and many more.¹⁰⁰ IEDs are often devised from UXO and Explosive Remnants of War (ERW), which contain the requisite chemicals to construct these devices.¹⁰¹ Typically intended to be undetectable, IEDs can be intentionally detonated remotely or as a suicide attack, but can also be placed as a stationary device to be accidentally activated by a victim.¹⁰²

Due to their existence outside of formal production channels, as well as the difficulty in outlining a universal definition, there is also currently no single dedicated international standard or framework designed to monitor and counter their production and deployment.¹⁰³ Whilst some IEDs may fall under the definition of landmines, and therefore fall under the remit of landmine frameworks such as the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS), this is not universal nor all-encompassing.¹⁰⁴ Unlike small and light weapons (SALW), or landmines produced by military channels, IEDs are ad-hoc in design and are manufactured out of the scope of government oversight.¹⁰⁵ An effective response requires a whole-of-government approach: national governments must limit the proliferation of knowledge on how they are constructed, commercial enterprises and armed forces must oversee explosive material supply chains and storage, whilst international actors must then counter the transport and deployment of any materials or devices themselves.¹⁰⁶

⁹² UNODA, *Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) Publication*.

⁹³ UNODA, *Production and delivery*; UN General Assembly, *Countering the threat posed by improvised explosive devices (A/RES/75/59)*, 2020.

⁹⁴ UN General Assembly, *Countering the threat posed by improvised explosive devices (A/RES/75/59)*, 2020.

⁹⁵ Action on Armed Violence, *Explosive Violence Monitor 2020*, 2020, p. 27.

⁹⁶ UNODA, *Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) Publication*; Overton, *A decade of global IED harm reviewed*, 2020.

⁹⁷ Overton, *A decade of global IED harm reviewed*, 2020.

⁹⁸ Van Rij et al., *Defining the device: The need for international humanitarian standards for improvised explosive device disposal*, 2017, p. 2.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 10-11.

¹⁰¹ UNMAS, *Landmines, Explosive Remnants of War and IED Safety Handbook*, 2015.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ Van Rij et al., *Defining the device: The need for international humanitarian standards for improvised explosive device disposal*, 2017, pp. 5-8.

¹⁰⁴ IMAS, *Glossary of mine action terms, definitions and abbreviations*, 2019, p. 19.

¹⁰⁵ UNODA, *Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) Publication*.

¹⁰⁶ UNODA, *Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) Publication*; Van Rij et al., *Defining the device: The need for international humanitarian standards for improvised explosive device disposal*, 2017, pp. 11-12.

The increased use and growing sophistication of IEDs as well as the growing humanitarian impact of their attacks has underscored the need to address their use in order to ensure that all people are afforded peace, security, and full access to their human rights.¹⁰⁷

International and Regional Framework

Due to the lack of a single definition for what constitutes an IED, there is currently no universal international legal instrument, standard or framework designed to counter their proliferation.¹⁰⁸ Nonetheless, despite the lack of a universal definition, some IEDs can fall under the definitions, and therefore the corresponding standards, of other explosive devices.¹⁰⁹

The *Geneva Conventions*, negotiated in the aftermath of World War II in 1949, serves as the basis of international humanitarian law regulating and limiting the effects of armed conflict on combatants and civilians.¹¹⁰ The *Fourth Geneva Convention* (1949) specifically focuses on the protection of civilians during armed conflict, and prohibits all attacks intended to harm noncombatants.¹¹¹ In 1980, *The Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons* (CCW) was adopted by the States parties to the Conventions, known as the High Contracting Parties, to restrict the use of conventional weapons that cause unjustifiable suffering or indiscriminately affect civilians.¹¹² At its inception, the CCW applied to incendiary weapons, landmines, booby traps, and any device designed to injure through very small fragments.¹¹³ The treaty's unique structure provides for flexibility when addressing new developments in weapon technologies and armed conflicts.¹¹⁴

The 1996 *Protocol on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Mines, Booby-Traps and Other Devices* (Amended Protocol II) is currently the only international treaty to refer specifically to IEDs, categorizing them among 'Other Devices' as applicable to the CCW.¹¹⁵ The CCW has also been expanded to address ERW by establishing systems to define responsibility for UXO.¹¹⁶ The CCW's *Protocol on Explosive Remnants of War* (Amended Protocol V) was adopted in 2003 and holds States parties responsible for removing UXO in their territory after engaging in conflict.¹¹⁷

Despite the lack of a universal definition, many IEDs can be categorized as landmines and, as such, fall partly under the remit of the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS).¹¹⁸ IMAS, first adopted in 2001, are the primary standards for all UN operations involving landmines, including their control, monitoring and disposal.¹¹⁹ Nonetheless, IMAS currently only encompasses IEDs where they "meet the definition of mines, booby-traps or other devices [that] fall under the scope of mine action" and are cleared in areas where active hostilities have ceased.¹²⁰ IMAS can trace its roots from the 1997 *Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction* (Ottawa Treaty), which was the first international treaty to focus specifically on anti-personnel mines and calls for States parties to ban the use, development, and acquisition of anti-personnel

¹⁰⁷ UN General Assembly, *Countering the threat posed by improvised explosive devices (A/RES/75/59)*, 2020.

¹⁰⁸ Van Rij et al., *Defining the device: The need for international humanitarian standards for improvised explosive device disposal*, 2017, p. 9.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

¹¹⁰ ICRC, *The Geneva Conventions and their Commentaries*.

¹¹¹ *Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War (2nd part)*, 1949.

¹¹² UNODA, *The Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons*, 2001.

¹¹³ Arms Control Association, *Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) At a Glance*, 2017.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ Zhou & Raab, *IEDs and the Mine Ban Convention: a minefield of definitions?*, 2019.

¹¹⁶ Arms Control Association, *Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) At a Glance*, 2017.

¹¹⁷ UNODA, *CCW Protocol V On Explosive Remnants of War*, 2003.

¹¹⁸ Van Rij et al., *Defining the device: The need for international humanitarian standards for improvised explosive device disposal*, 2017, p. 11.

¹¹⁹ IMAS, *International Mine Action Standards*.

¹²⁰ IMAS, *Guide for the application and development of International Mine Action Standards (IMAS)*, 2021, p. 2.

mines.¹²¹ While it does not specifically address IEDs, the treaty's definition of anti-personnel landmine makes no distinction between legally manufactured devices and those that are improvised.¹²² Certain IEDs would be considered anti-personnel landmines covered by the treaty in the event that they are designed to be placed on a surface area and be activated by the presence or contact of a person.¹²³ To date, the Ottawa Treaty has helped develop international norms that discourage the use of anti-personnel landmines, and many non-signatories maintain compliance with the treaty through their own refusal to use landmines and voluntary destruction of stockpiles.¹²⁴

IEDs are almost exclusively used by NSAGs and predominantly impact civilians; as such, their usage can be viewed through the lens of terrorist operations.¹²⁵ The 1997 *International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings* produced a definition of terrorist bombings to be applied to international criminal law, criminalizing the intentional use of an explosive in public with the intention to kill or cause unjustifiable damage.¹²⁶ The 2020 General Assembly First Committee resolution 75/59 on *Countering the threat posed by improvised explosive devices* notes that IEDs are increasingly being used by terrorist or illegal armed groups, and it underlines the need for Member States to prevent NSAGs from obtaining and utilizing materials that contribute to IEDs.¹²⁷

The harm caused by IEDs has the potential to destabilize global progress toward development.¹²⁸ As the overarching framework for the UN's current work, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have significant overlap in efforts to combat IEDs.¹²⁹ SDG 16 ("peace, justice and strong institutions") emphasizes that peaceful societies should all aim to significantly reduce all forms of violence by promoting the rule of law and human rights, as well as combating the flow of illicit arms.¹³⁰ Because of their indiscriminate effects on civilians and infrastructure, IED use also threatens a number of other SDGs, including SDGs 3 ("good health and well-being"), 5 ("gender equality"), 9 ("industry, innovation and infrastructure"), and 11 ("sustainable cities and communities").¹³¹

Role of the International System

As the primary UN body for issues pertaining to disarmament and international security, the General Assembly First Committee is the primary forum for setting norms and global standards on explosive devices, including IEDs and their related categories.¹³² As with other General Assembly committees, the nature of the First Committee's work is not operational and instead, it is the body through which the principles of cooperation in aid of international security can be agreed upon, as well as the principles through which arms are monitored and regulated.¹³³ The operationalization of its work is generally delegated to the many bodies, groups, and other UN organs it cooperates with on the topic of disarmament.¹³⁴

¹²¹ UNODA, *Anti-Personnel Landmines Convention*.

¹²² Zhou & Raab, *IEDs and the Mine Ban Convention: a minefield of definitions?*, 2019.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Arms Control Association, *The Ottawa Convention at a Glance*, 2018.

¹²⁵ Van Rij et al., *Defining the device: The need for international humanitarian standards for improvised explosive device disposal*, 2017, p. 19.

¹²⁶ UN General Assembly, *International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings (A/RES/52/164)*, 1998.

¹²⁷ UN General Assembly, *Countering the threat posed by improvised explosive devices (A/RES/75/59)*, 2020.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ UNDP, *Sustainable Development Goals*, 2021.

¹³⁰ UN DESA, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*.

¹³¹ UN DESA, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*.

¹³² Reaching Critical Will, *UN General Assembly First Committee*; Reaching Critical Will, *The use of explosives in populated areas*.

¹³³ UN General Assembly, *Disarmament and International Security (First Committee)*.

¹³⁴ UN General Assembly, *Countering the threat posed by improvised explosive devices: Report of the Secretary-General (A/75/175)*, 2020.

The First Committee has adopted five resolutions on the topic of “countering the threat posed by improvised explosive devices” in the last decade, most recently in 2020 with the adoption of resolution 75/59.¹³⁵ This resolution includes recognition of the increasingly sophisticated design and usage of IEDs by NSAGs and acknowledges that existing multilateral arms frameworks do not sufficiently address the use of IEDs.¹³⁶ It encourages Member States to improve local management of national ammunition stockpiles and commercial supply lines, while also highlighting the ability of international and regional organizations to provide technical, financial, and material assistance in countering IEDs.¹³⁷ In 2020, the First Committee also received the report “Countering the threat posed by improvised explosive devices: Report of the Secretary-General” (A/75/175), which provides an updated analysis of the proliferation of IEDs in an increasing number of conflict zones, most prominently in Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, and Libya, among others.¹³⁸ It highlights the need for a “whole-of-system approach” from the UN in countering the threat of IEDs.¹³⁹ Specifically, it tasks the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) with maintaining a toolbox that facilitates inter-organizational cooperation, enhanced synergies, the sharing of data and expertise, and the coordination of information.¹⁴⁰ This whole-of-system approach encompasses the many organizations that work with the First Committee on IEDs, including the Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), UNMAS, and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).¹⁴¹

UNODA reports to the First Committee and is responsible for providing substantive and operational support towards the goal of general and complete disarmament, which includes the cessation of IED use.¹⁴² UNODA oversees the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (PoA SALW), which monitors commitments from Member States on the improvement of weapon import and export controls, and stockpile management, both of which are essential in countering the proliferation of IED components.¹⁴³ Member States are required to submit national reports that provide localized information on the implementation of the PoA.¹⁴⁴ UNODA is also a signatory to the UN Counter-Terrorism Compact, a group of 40 UN entities and three observer organizations: International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), the World Customs Organization (WCO), and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU).¹⁴⁵

UNMAS has been designated by the General Assembly as the primary coordinator for mine action within the UN system.¹⁴⁶ Although the UN places the primary responsibility for landmine clearance on national governments, UNMAS works to coordinate national responses, provide technical and financial assistance, and improve public awareness on the risk of landmines.¹⁴⁷ Although IEDs cannot be considered universally synonymous to landmines, much of UNMAS’ activities have cross-cutting impacts towards countering the proliferation of IEDs.¹⁴⁸ For example, in 2018, UNMAS produced the *United Nations Improvised Explosive Device Disposal Standards* (IEDSS), which provides detailed technical

¹³⁵ UN General Assembly, *Countering the threat posed by improvised explosive devices (A/RES/75/59)*, 2020.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ UN General Assembly, *Countering the threat posed by improvised explosive devices (A/RES/75/59)*, 2020, pp. 4-5.

¹³⁸ UN General Assembly, *Countering the threat posed by improvised explosive devices: Report of the Secretary-General (A/75/175)*, 2020, pp. 2-3.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

¹⁴⁰ UN General Assembly, *Countering the threat posed by improvised explosive devices: Report of the Secretary-General (A/75/175)*, 2020, p. 8.

¹⁴¹ UNMAS, *The United Nations Mine Action Strategy 2019-2023*, 2018.

¹⁴² UNODA, *About Us*.

¹⁴³ UNODA, *Programme of Action on small arms and its International Tracing Instrument*.

¹⁴⁴ UN PoA, *National reports*, 2020.

¹⁴⁵ UN Department of Global Communications, *UN Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact*.

¹⁴⁶ UNMAS, *Improvised Explosive Device Threat Mitigation*.

¹⁴⁷ UNMAS, *The United Nations Mine Action Strategy 2019-2023*, 2018, pp. 6-7.

¹⁴⁸ Van Rij et al., *Defining the device: The need for international humanitarian standards for improvised explosive device disposal*, 2017, p. 17.

guidance on IED disposal for IED disposal operators.¹⁴⁹ These standards emphasize preparing to respond to IED threats before well-defined humanitarian consequences emerge, as IEDs are continuously altered to increasing complexity.¹⁵⁰ UNMAS also facilitated the adoption of the *United Nations Mine Action Strategy 2019-2023* (2018), which serves as the UN's primary framework for investment and delivery in mine action and response.¹⁵¹

Given the nature of its work, the Security Council also plays a fundamental role in monitoring and regulating the proliferation and use of explosive devices, including IEDs, in conflict zones.¹⁵² In its country-specific work, it may include bans on components that can contribute to the construction of IEDs as part of international sanctions.¹⁵³ For example, in response to increasing IED attacks by the NSAG Al-Shabaab in Somalia, the Security Council instated a ban on the direct or indirect sale or supply of components that may be used to manufacture IEDs, including certain chemicals and detonators.¹⁵⁴

INTERPOL plays a key role in identifying and tracking those who manufacture the components of explosive devices, including IEDs.¹⁵⁵ Project Watchmaker is an INTERPOL initiative providing a database of records to help Member States track individuals suspected to be involved in the manufacture or use of explosives.¹⁵⁶ By working with national governments, law enforcement, and chemical industry partners, INTERPOL helps identify and reduce the risk posed by precursor chemicals that can be used to construct devices like IEDs.¹⁵⁷ The Global Shield Programme, a collaboration between INTERPOL and the WCO, monitors the licit trade and movement of the most common chemicals and other materials that could be used to produce IEDs in order to combat their illicit trafficking.¹⁵⁸ In addition to combating the diversion of materials used to manufacture IEDs, the Global Shield Programme also helps raise global awareness of the threats posed by dual-use materials and chemicals that can be used in the construction of IEDs, as well as collaborating with the private sector to establish best practices to avoid such illicit diversion in trade.¹⁵⁹

Civil society organizations play a significant role in supporting global commitments to mine action programs and reducing armed violence at large.¹⁶⁰ They help provide monitoring and information sharing related to the causes of weapons-based violence; for example, Action on Armed Violence (AOAV) is a nongovernmental organization with a mission to disseminate information and evidence of explosive violence to national parliaments and other relevant stakeholders in order to help reduce the impact of armed violence.¹⁶¹ AOAV operates the Explosive Violence Monitor, a monitoring project using English-language media reports as a way to capture information on incidents of explosive violence.¹⁶² Similarly, the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) is an organization dedicated to collecting and analyzing data on all political violence and protests across Africa, the Middle East, Latin America and the Caribbean, East Asia, South Asia, Southeast Asia, Central Asia and the Caucasus, Europe, and the

¹⁴⁹ UNMAS, *United Nations Improvised Explosive Device Disposal Standards*, 2018.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ UNMAS, *The United Nations Mine Action Strategy 2019-2023*, 2018, pp. 1-2.

¹⁵² UN General Assembly, *Countering the threat posed by improvised explosive devices: Report of the Secretary-General (A/75/175)*, 2020, pp. 14-15.

¹⁵³ Ibid., pp. 14-15.

¹⁵⁴ UN Security Council, *Extension of exemptions for the arms embargo and enforcement authorizations for the ban on illicit trade and on extension of the mandate of the Panel of Experts on Somalia until 15 Dec. 2020 (S/RES/2498)*, 2019.

¹⁵⁵ INTERPOL, *Project Watchmaker*.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ INTERPOL, *Project Crimp*.

¹⁵⁸ World Customs Organization, *Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) Programme Global Shield*.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Brookings Institute, *Want to reduce global fragility? Empower civil society*, 2020.

¹⁶¹ Action on Armed Violence, *Explosive Violence Monitor 2020*, 2020.

¹⁶² Ibid.

United States.¹⁶³ Data aggregated and mapped by ACLED is accessed by practitioners, researchers, and governments to develop more efficient solutions to armed violence worldwide.¹⁶⁴

There are also a large number of humanitarian and civil society organizations, such as The HALO Trust and Mines Advisory Group, that manually remove IEDs in conflict-affected countries like Iraq and Afghanistan, through funding from Member States and private entities.¹⁶⁵ These types of organizations are considered crucial partners in not only removing IEDs themselves, but also in piloting new technologies to destroy them more quickly and safely.¹⁶⁶ They also help Member States better improve the security stockpiles of precursor items for IEDs, such as ammunition and explosives.¹⁶⁷

Illicit Diversion of Ammunition

As highlighted by UNODA, accurate information and data on global ammunition flows is a challenge to maintain, as more than 80% of ammunition trade lies outside of verifiable export data.¹⁶⁸ Ammunition diverted into illicit markets is a key enabler in IED manufacturing.¹⁶⁹ Although IEDs can be constructed from non-military components, the manufacturing process is significantly easier if military ammunition or explosives can be repurposed.¹⁷⁰

How this ammunition is diverted from official supply chains varies in sophistication, ranging from individual soldiers to complex forms of diversion and sale at higher levels of the command chain.¹⁷¹ This is generally enabled through a systemic lack of ammunition accountability and poor maintenance of government ammunition stockpiles.¹⁷² For example, the Security Council has noted that individuals within the national military of the Democratic Republic of the Congo have engaged in the sale of ammunition and weapons to NSAGs in contravention of the arms embargo that has been in place in the country since 2003.¹⁷³

Poorly managed ammunition tracking is also linked to an increase in conflict and crime overall, even in cases where IEDs are not present.¹⁷⁴ The popularity of certain types of explosives among non-state actors seems to correspond to its availability, meaning that legitimate military forces may find themselves undersupplied and under-armed due to the diversion of supplies to the black market, and existing weapons may be rendered useless.¹⁷⁵ As military-grade weapons and supplies also have higher manufacturing and processing standards than civilian supplies, these materials can be significantly more dangerous in the wrong hands, but may also provide increased opportunities for tracking due to military markings and headstamps.¹⁷⁶ This is particularly true in the case of bullet cartridges, which contain explosive chemicals and are therefore desirable to black market traders, but are also more likely to be batch-stamped than other supplies, leading to easier tracing with appropriate forethought, planning, and tracking.¹⁷⁷

¹⁶³ Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project, *About ACLED*.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ The HALO Trust, *Clearing Landmines and Explosives*, 2021; Mines Advisory Group, *Clearing Landmines and Cluster Bombs*, 2021.

¹⁶⁶ The HALO Trust, *Iraq*, 2021; Mines Advisory Group, *Iraq*, 2021.

¹⁶⁷ The HALO Trust, *Managing Weapons and Ammunition*, 2021.

¹⁶⁸ UNODA, *Poorly managed ammunition – a key driver of conflict and crime*.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Goh, How to keep ammunition out of the hands of terrorists, *NATO Review*, 2011.

¹⁷¹ UNODA, *Poorly managed ammunition – a key driver of conflict and crime*.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ UN Security Council, *Final report of the Group of Experts on the DRC, submitted in accordance with paragraph 6 of Security Council resolution 1896 (2009) (S/2010/596)*, 2010, p. 22.

¹⁷⁴ UNODA, *Poorly managed ammunition – a key driver of conflict and crime*.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

Additionally, in more than 103 countries over the past 50 years, poorly stored ammunition stockpiles have exploded accidentally, resulting in thousands of deaths and the disruption of already fragile communities.¹⁷⁸ These cases of explosions due to poor management have also resulted in a diversion of pilfered supplies to illegal markets, in which case the supplies might be poorly stored, unstable, or inappropriately packaged, increasing risks to transporters and handlers who may be unaware of what materials are contained within.¹⁷⁹

The First Committee has recognized the risks associated with Member States possessing surplus ammunition stockpiles and has called upon governments to reduce excess ammunition stock.¹⁸⁰ These risks are exacerbated when ammunition stockpiles are poorly managed or in disrepair.¹⁸¹ At the request of the First Committee, UNODA established the SaferGuard programme in 2011 and adopted the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines (IATG).¹⁸² The IATG provides extensive guidance for Member States on responsible ammunition accounting, storage, security, transport and destruction.¹⁸³ Although the IATG can assist Member States in the development of operational standards of practice, their implementation will generally fall to the national governments of the Member States themselves.¹⁸⁴ Naturally, in areas of conflict where government control may be unstable, or where national borders are poorly secured, it can be difficult for these operational standards to be maintained, thereby exacerbating the risk of diversion or theft of ammunition.¹⁸⁵

Conclusion

IEDs are becoming more commonplace, available, and sophisticated and serve to exacerbate existing conflict, inequalities, and crisis.¹⁸⁶ Given the nature of their production and usage, they exist outside of official government oversight and are disproportionately used to target non-combatants, such as civilians.¹⁸⁷ At the broadest level, the international community has been unable to adopt a universal definition of IEDs and, as such, their place within international standards and controls remains ambiguous when compared with other SALW or anti-personnel landmines.¹⁸⁸ At an operational level, the UN and national governments must endeavour to foster the “whole-of-system approach” called for by the Secretary-General, an approach that requires multi-faceted responses to complex challenges including the proliferation of ammunition, the transport of precursor chemicals, and the monitoring of NSAGs in areas of conflict.¹⁸⁹

Further Research

When researching this topic, delegates should consider the following questions: How might the international community develop a definition of IEDs? How would this interface with existing frameworks, such as the IATG and UNMAS? How can national governments avoid the illicit diversion of ammunition or precursor chemicals? How can the sharing of guidance on the construction of IEDs be avoided? How do

¹⁷⁸ UNODA, *Poorly Managed Ammunition – A key driver of conflict and crime*.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ UN General Assembly, *Problems arising from the accumulation of conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus (A/RES/72/55)*, 2017.

¹⁸¹ UN SaferGuard, *Safe and secure management of ammunition through the UN SaferGuard Programme*.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ UN SaferGuard, *Guide to the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines (IATG)*, 2021.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 2.

¹⁸⁵ UN SaferGuard, *Utilizing the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines in conflict-affected and low-capacity environments*, 2019, pp. 23-24.

¹⁸⁶ UN General Assembly, *Countering the threat posed by improvised explosive devices: Report of the Secretary-General (A/75/175)*, 2020.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Van Rij et al., *Defining the device: The need for international humanitarian standards for improvised explosive device disposal*, 2017.

¹⁸⁹ UN General Assembly, *Countering the threat posed by improvised explosive devices: Report of the Secretary-General (A/75/175)*, 2020.

IEDs influence the effectiveness of peacekeeping missions, and how can the General Assembly and Security Council collaborate to mitigate this impact?

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The latest edition of this annual report from the Action on Armed Violence organization provides a summary of the latest statistics on explosives in conflict zones across a wide variety of categories. It provides a succinct overview of how IEDs have been used in recent conflicts, as well as the latest statistics on their proliferation. Delegates can use this source to gain a broad understanding of the manufacture and usage of IEDs, as well as how they interact with other categories of explosives.

United Nations, General Assembly, Seventy-fifth session. (2020). *Countering the threat posed by improvised explosive devices (A/RES/75/59)*. Adopted on the report of the First Committee (A/75/399, para. 96). Retrieved 10 October 2021: <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/75/59>

This resolution, adopted on the report of the First Committee in 2020, is the most recent General Assembly resolution on the topic of IEDs. It provides high-level summaries of the current issues and proposed responses on the subject area, including the management of ammunition stockpiles, the sharing of information, and the monitoring the transport of precursor chemicals. Delegates will gain an understanding of the current discussions around IEDs and the nature and scope of the First Committee's role in addressing the topic.

United Nations, General Assembly, Seventy-fifth session. (2020, July 17). *Countering the threat posed by improvised explosive devices: Report of the Secretary-General (A/75/175)*. Retrieved 6 November 2021 from: <https://undocs.org/a/75/175>

This report of the Secretary-General was received by the First Committee in 2020 and was designed to provide a summary of ongoing trends in IEDs. The report provides a detailed account of the regions where IEDs are most prevalent, as well as the cross-cutting nature of the responses required to counter them. Delegates should read this report in order to gain detailed and valuable background context on the challenges posed by IEDs, as well as the many organizations involved in countering their proliferation.

United Nations Mine Action Service. (2018). *United Nations Mine Action Strategy 2019-2023*. Retrieved 6 November 2021 from: https://www.mineaction.org/sites/default/files/documents/un_mine_action_strategy_2019-2023_-_final_for_online_0.pdf

Although they cannot be considered as entirely synonymous with mines, mines do account for a large proportion of IEDs. As such, there are areas in which the existing controls over anti-personnel landmines, such as UNMAS' Mine Action Strategy 2019-2023, will have relevance to efforts in countering IEDs. This strategy is the overarching framework for mine action in the UN and contains detailed context and proposals for future actions. Delegates will gain an understanding on the existing international controls on mines, the role of national governments in their safe disposal, and how the international system can support the implementation of consistent mine standards.

Van Rij, A., et al. (2017). *Defining the device: The need for international humanitarian standards for improvised explosive device disposal*. Kings College London. Retrieved 6 November 2021 from: <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/policy-institute/assets/defining-the-device.pdf>

This academic report outlines the difficulties in finding an accurate and universal definition of IEDs, as well as the operational implications of this. It provides excellent insight into how the myriad categories of IEDs have led to its relatively ambiguous position in the network of international arms control treaties and standards. Delegates should read this report in order to gain an understanding of how definitions can inform on-

the-ground operations, as well as how IEDs are both similar and separate from other explosive devices.

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2. Reducing Nuclear Danger

Introduction

As established in Article 1.1 of the *Charter of the United Nations* (UN), the General Assembly First Committee deals with disarmament and international security issues.¹⁹⁰ Resolution III *Establishment of a commission to Deal with the Problems Raised by the Discovery of Atomic Energy* (1946) first established the topic of reducing nuclear danger, and has been central to the General Assembly First Committee's mandate since the committee's conception.¹⁹¹ The 1970 *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons* (NPT) remains the cornerstone of the international nuclear disarmament and development agenda, with 2020 marking its 50th anniversary since entering into force.¹⁹² It is the only binding commitment in a multilateral treaty with the goal of disarmament by all nuclear-weapon states (NWS).¹⁹³ The articles of NPT range from disarmament, verification, to foundations for peaceful applications.¹⁹⁴ It has paved the way for how Member States conduct themselves in all matters dealing with nuclear materials and capabilities.¹⁹⁵

Over the last 50 years, the world has worked to develop a comprehensive international disarmament agenda.¹⁹⁶ General Assembly resolution 53/77 on *General and Complete Disarmament* reaffirmed the commitment to nuclear disarmament and the cessation of nuclear testing with the objective of complete nuclear disarmament.¹⁹⁷ In 2018, the Secretary-General with the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) published *Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament*, which addressed all of the disarmament and non-proliferation commitments that have entered into force post-Cold War that have not yet been achieved.¹⁹⁸ In 2018, Secretary-General António Guterres stated that “the mechanisms for contact and dialogue that once helped to defuse tensions between two superpowers have eroded and lost their relevance.”¹⁹⁹ Promoting a new disarmament agenda, Guterres further references that Cold War tensions have returned and are on the rise in an increasingly dangerous environment in which conflicts are more frequent, long, and devastating for combatants and civilians alike.²⁰⁰ The COVID-19 pandemic has further heightened the concerns about nuclear proliferation as states continue to increase their arms capabilities.²⁰¹ With many non-state actors and groups involved in these discussions, there is a need to reduce nuclear danger through recommitting to past international agreements and forging new international agendas to promote nuclear disarmament.²⁰² This will ensure that UN Member States can uphold international peace and security, as well as promote sustainable development.²⁰³

¹⁹⁰ UN General Assembly, *Disarmament and International Security (First Committee)*, 2021.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² UN General Assembly, *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons*, 1968.

¹⁹³ UNODA, *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons*.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ UN General Assembly, *Disarmament and International Security (First Committee)*, 2021.

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¹⁹⁸ UNODA, *Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament*, 2018.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Lüdeking, *Nuclear Disarmament and Nonproliferation in Times of the Coronavirus Pandemic*, Arms Control Association, 2020.

²⁰² UNODA, *Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament*, 2018.

²⁰³ Ibid.

International and Regional Framework

2015 marked the end of the fifth NPT Review Conference, the first review which did not end with the adoption of a comprehensive outcome document agreed upon by all States Parties.²⁰⁴ As Member States worked together to review the NPT and assess upcoming threats of nuclear practices to international peace and security, reaching consensus was halted by negotiations over the establishment of a *Nuclear Weapon Free Zone* (NWFZ) in the Middle East.²⁰⁵ Some States parties advocated for the outcome document to have a deadline on the convening of a conference to establish this NWFZ, leading to tensions amongst other Member States.²⁰⁶ With no established outcome document, Member States expressed concern in agreeing on other documents relating to the cornerstone NPT such as the proposed *Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty*, the *Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Materials* (1979), the acceptance of International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) comprehensive safeguard agreements and additional protocols, the *Partial Test Ban Treaty* (1963), and the *Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty* (1996).²⁰⁷

Following the lack of consensus, some Member States through First Committee sessions in 2016 discussed general and complete nuclear disarmament as part of the agenda item “Taking Forward Multilateral Nuclear Disarmament Negotiation” and eventually adopted General Assembly resolution 71/258 on the issue, deciding to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons and lead towards general and complete nuclear disarmament.²⁰⁸ Since the inception of the subsequent *Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons* (2017), only 54 Member States have ratified it, while 32 more have signed but not yet ratified.²⁰⁹ Due to the lack of consensus between Member States regarding nuclear principals and guidelines, the rescheduled 2020 NPT Review Conference which will take place no later than February of 2022 will be an integral forum for Member States to realign priorities relating to general and complete nuclear disarmament.²¹⁰ In the midst of global concern relating to nuclear danger, the Secretary-General in 2018 with UNODA published *Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament* with UNODA.²¹¹ This critical agenda addresses the fact that many disarmament commitments that have entered into force since the end of the Cold War have not been achieved, including steps to reduce danger and promote a safer and more peaceful world.²¹² Additionally, General Assembly resolution 75/57 of 2020 on *Reducing Nuclear Danger* reflects this concern through five main areas of focus: nuclear weapons use, nuclear accidents, nuclear non-proliferation, disarmament negotiations, and nuclear disarmament.²¹³

Role of the International System

Many organizations exist amongst the UN system to aid in reducing nuclear danger.²¹⁴ The General Assembly First Committee specifically addresses disarmament and threats to international security.²¹⁵ The First Committee also considers the principles that govern disarmament, the regulation of armaments,

²⁰⁴ Wan, *Why the 2015 NPT Review Conference Fell Apart*, United Nations University Centre for Policy and Research, 2015.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ UNODA, *Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons*; UN General Assembly, *Taking Forward Multilateral Nuclear Disarmament Negotiations (A/RES/71/258)*, 2016.

²⁰⁹ Nuclear Weapons Ban Monitor, *The Status of the TPNW*, 2021.

²¹⁰ UN Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, *Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)*.

²¹¹ UNODA, *Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament*, 2018.

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ UN General Assembly, *Reducing Nuclear Danger (A/RES/75/57)*, 2020.

²¹⁴ UN Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, *Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)*.

²¹⁵ UN General Assembly, *Disarmament and International Security (First Committee)*, 2021.

and strengthening measures to increase stability through decreased levels of armaments.²¹⁶ UNODA, established in 1998, works closely with the First Committee to support the ultimate goal of general and complete disarmament.²¹⁷ UNODA reports to the First Committee, and prioritizes reducing nuclear danger.²¹⁸ Through its work, UNODA works to support multilateral efforts to achieve the goals of the General Assembly First Committee, the Disarmament Commission, and the Conference on Disarmament, as well as many other relevant forums and organizations.²¹⁹ UNODA acts as a core part of the UN disarmament system by providing up-to-date, impartial information on disarmament issues and activities to Member States, the UN system, research and educational institutions, civil society, NGOs, the media, and general public.²²⁰ Through UNODA's Disarmament Education Dashboard, resources are available to Member States such as training courses and online events relating to regional strategies and national action plans to reduce nuclear danger in a variety of sectors.²²¹ The most recent General Assembly resolution 75/57 on *Reducing Nuclear Danger* (2020) reaffirmed a strong commitment to disarmament, complete elimination of nuclear weapons, and preventing nuclear proliferation, all with the goal of reducing nuclear danger.²²² The General Assembly then adopted resolution 75/138 on *Status of the Protocols Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and Relating to the Protection of Victims of Armed Conflict* (2020) in which it addressed the necessity of protecting victims of armed conflict through implementing and respecting humanitarian law and all "relevant international instruments."²²³

The UN Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) also works to research disarmament issues which affect international security.²²⁴ Their research has led to landmark publications and resources for Member States to address nuclear danger and risk such as the 2019 report, *Nuclear Risk Reduction: A Framework for Analysis*, which examines scenarios in the event of nuclear weapons use in this current environment, including scenarios linked to crisis conditions, and acquisition and use by non-state actors.²²⁵ The IAEA was established in 1957 as Member States became increasingly concerned with potential threats of developments in nuclear technology.²²⁶ The IAEA is the primary intergovernmental organization tasked to oversee scientific and technical cooperation relating to nuclear technology as well as spearhead verification measures.²²⁷ With three main departments: nuclear technology and applications; nuclear safety and security; and safeguards and verification, the IAEA has employed many programs and protocols to help mitigate nuclear danger and risk.²²⁸ As established through Article III of the NPT, all non-nuclear Weapons States are required to implement a comprehensive safeguards agreement with the IAEA, while Nuclear Weapons States can conclude safeguard agreements with the IAEA on a voluntary basis.²²⁹ Through these agreements, the IAEA can verify that a Member State is adhering to its international commitments and strictly utilizing nuclear materials for peaceful purposes.²³⁰ This process functions as a confidence-building measure and an early warning mechanism in the event of misuse.²³¹ Safeguards include on-site inspections relating to routine inspections, special inspections, ad hoc inspections and safeguards visits.²³² In addition to a Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement, the *Additional Protocol* (1997) is a legal document that Member States can choose to adopt which grants

²¹⁶ UN General Assembly, *Disarmament and International Security (First Committee)*, 2021.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ UNODA, *About Us*.

²¹⁹ UNODA, *Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament*, 2018.

²²⁰ UNODA, *About Us*.

²²¹ UNODA, *Disarmament Education Dashboard*, 2021.

²²² UN General Assembly, *Reducing Nuclear Danger (A/RES/75/57)*, 2020.

²²³ UN General Assembly, *Status of the Protocols Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and Relating to the Protection of Victims of Armed Conflicts (A/RES/75/138)*, 2020.

²²⁴ UNIDIR, *About Us*, 2019.

²²⁵ UNIDIR, *Nuclear Risk-Reduction: A Framework for Analysis*, 2019.

²²⁶ IAEA, *Overview*, 2021.

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ IAEA, *IAEA Safeguards Overview: Comprehensive Safeguards Agreements and Additional Protocols*, 2021.

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² Ibid.

further inspection access to IAEA safeguards.²³³ Currently 170 of the 193 Member States of the UN engage in these comprehensive safeguards agreements.²³⁴

Combatting Nuclear Terrorism

The 2018 UNODA publication, *Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament*, highlights the complexities of rising intra-state and regional conflicts.²³⁵ The Secretary-General has expressed that with increased conflict, the world is experiencing an increase in terrorism, violent crime, and armed conflict which fuels the arms race worldwide.²³⁶ With continuously inadequate security measures, the world may face a growing threats over its security.²³⁷ Many international guidelines have been developed relating to the physical security of nuclear material, with the main international legal instrument being the 1987 *Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material* and its 2016 Amendment.²³⁸ This convention outlines legal obligations for all State parties including the criminalization of trafficking, sabotage, and theft of nuclear material or facilities.²³⁹ Furthermore, it expands international cooperation as it relates to sharing information and providing assistance in the event of nuclear theft and sabotage.²⁴⁰ Additionally, the *International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism* entered into force in 2007.²⁴¹ The Convention elaborates on offences pertaining to any unauthorized theft and use of radioactive materials or devices, as well as the damage to nuclear facilities.²⁴² It additionally works to assist Member States in increasing cooperation through the exchange of information and assistance as it relates to extraditions and investigations.²⁴³

The Security Council has also established two key resolutions relating to the threat of nuclear terrorism.²⁴⁴ Security Council resolution 1373 (2001) on *Threats to International Peace and Security caused by Terrorist Acts* establishes the relationship between the unlawful trafficking of nuclear materials and that of international terrorism.²⁴⁵ Building on this, Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) on *Non-proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction* states concern over the threat of terrorism and the risk of non-state actors acquiring, developing and trafficking nuclear materials and weapons and their means of delivery.²⁴⁶ The General Assembly has further called for Member States to enact national legislation in accordance with international frameworks on the physical protection of nuclear materials in relation to threats of nuclear terrorism at its latest session through General Assembly resolution 75/145 of 2020.²⁴⁷

To assist Member States at the national level, the IAEA has offered training on nuclear security since the 1970s.²⁴⁸ With increased requests for training in recent years, offset by the 2016 Amendment to the *Convention on the Physical protection of Nuclear Material* as well as the increased engagement of Member States embarking on peaceful nuclear applications such as the development of nuclear energy and research reactors, the IAEA has announced the development of the Nuclear Security Training and

²³³ IAEA, *IAEA Safeguards Overview: Comprehensive Safeguards Agreements and Additional Protocols*, 2021.

²³⁴ IAEA, *Safeguards Agreements*, 2021.

²³⁵ UNODA, *Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament*, 2018.

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ IAEA, *Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material and its Amendment*, 2021.

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ UN General Assembly, *International Convention on the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism (A/RES/59/290)*, 2005; IAEA, *Nuclear Security Conventions*, 2021.

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ IAEA, *Nuclear Security Conventions*, 2021.

²⁴⁵ UN Security Council, *Threats to International Peace and Security Caused by Terrorist Acts (S/RES/1373 (2001))*, 2001.

²⁴⁶ UN Security Council, *Non-Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (S/RES/1540 (2004))*, 2004.

²⁴⁷ UN General Assembly, *Measures to Eliminate International Terrorism (A/RES/75/145)*, 2020.

²⁴⁸ IAEA, *IAEA Breaks Ground on Training Centre to Counter Nuclear Terrorism*, 2021.

Demonstration Centre to be open in 2023.²⁴⁹ This new facility will provide training for virtual reality environments simulating the security systems utilized at research reactors, nuclear power plants and border crossings.²⁵⁰ These simulations will allow Member States to develop expertise in procedures on access and alarm controls, inspections of physical protection systems, better understanding of security risks, and knowledge on how to sweep an area for radioactive material during major public events, among other activities.²⁵¹

Disarmament of Nuclear Weapons States

The NPT lays out the international expectations of conduct regarding general and complete disarmament by non-nuclear weapon states and NWS alike.²⁵² While NWS are allowed to hold onto their existing nuclear weapons, Article VI of the NPT establishes that signatories must follow measures that effectively lead to the prevention of nuclear arms proliferation and to nuclear disarmament.²⁵³ With these ambitions to completely eliminate nuclear weapons at the start of the NPT, currently the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons estimates that there are 13,080 nuclear warheads worldwide as of 2021.²⁵⁴ Out of this number, it is estimated that the Russian Federation and the United States of America possess about 90% of these capabilities.²⁵⁵ In the *Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament* report (2018), António Guterres acknowledged the conflicts of the Cold War which directly involved Russia and the United States, known as the “superpowers.”²⁵⁶ He states that while negotiations post-Cold War to engage in disarmament flourished, the process was often too slow and the results too modest.²⁵⁷

Efforts for bilateral arms control amongst the superpowers started in 1969 with the development of the *Strategic Arms Limitation Talks* (SALT) known as SALT I.²⁵⁸ While the development of SALT I showed progress in the disarmament regime, the international community was concerned as it ignored significant nuclear capabilities such as strategic bombers not addressing warhead numbers and allowing for further potential nuclear developments.²⁵⁹ To build upon SALT I, in 1972 parties sparked negotiations to develop SALT II which ultimately was never entered into force.²⁶⁰ Concrete efforts by the superpowers were halted due to the collapse of the Soviet Union, meaning that it was not until 1991 when the next bilateral treaty was established.²⁶¹ The *Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty* (START) of 1991, also known as START I, focused on delivery vehicles and their warhead capacities.²⁶² With the expiration of START I in 2009, negotiations to develop START II were ultimately ended as a result of disagreement amongst the superpowers regarding the *Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty* (1972-2002).²⁶³ The *Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty* represented an agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union that prohibited both Member States from deploying defenses in relation to strategic ballistic missiles and was withdrawn from by the United States in 2002.²⁶⁴ Both Member States agreed to limit anti-missile systems in the hopes that the nuclear arms race would be curbed.²⁶⁵ As START II negotiations came to a halt, the already established

²⁴⁹ IAEA, *IAEA Breaks Ground on Training Centre to Counter Nuclear Terrorism*, 2021.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*

²⁵² UNODA, *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons*.

²⁵³ UNODA, *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons*; United Nations Platform for Nuclear Weapon Free Zones, *Home*.

²⁵⁴ International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, *The World's Nuclear Weapons*, 2021.

²⁵⁵ International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, *How Many Countries Have Nuclear Weapons and How Many Are There?*

²⁵⁶ UNODA, *Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament*, 2018.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁸ Arms Control Association. *U.S.-Russian Nuclear Arms Control Agreements at A Glance*, 2020.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*

²⁶² Nuclear Threat Initiative, *Start II*, 2021.

²⁶³ Arms Control Association. *U.S.-Russian Nuclear Arms Control Agreements at A Glance*, 2020.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

framework for START III halted along with it.²⁶⁶ 2002 led to the establishment of the 2002 *Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty* (SORT) which was a compilation of old frameworks and new ideas discussed by the superpowers.²⁶⁷ SORT laid out a warhead limit for both superpowers to follow, however it lacked specifics on the type and location of warheads, leaving this up to interpretation by each Member State.²⁶⁸

Followed by SORT was the New START, entering into force in 2011.²⁶⁹ With this new, legally binding agreement, both Russia and the United States agreed to a limit of a total of 800 deployed and non-deployed launchers.²⁷⁰ In addition they agreed to limit their weapons to 700 strategic delivery systems with 1,550 deployable nuclear warheads.²⁷¹ New START showed progress as its warhead limit reflects a 30% decrease compared to the previous SORT, as well as a 50% decrease in delivery vehicles from START I.²⁷² This treaty includes verification measures such as on-site exhibitions and inspections, the facilitation of technology for treaty monitoring, and the exchange of data and notifications as it pertains to strategic offensive facilities and arms found within the treaty.²⁷³ New START does not limit the use of missile defenses or long-range strike capabilities, but does provide the exchange of missile flight-test data.²⁷⁴ In February of 2021 the superpowers agreed to extend New START by five years, until 2026.²⁷⁵ During the 75th session of the General Assembly First Committee in October of 2020, while calling for the extension of the New START, Member States discussed their frustrations with the bilateral disarmament regime thus far.²⁷⁶ With the superpowers currently holding a record \$1.9 trillion in nuclear weapons, Member States reflected that these negotiations have failed to make progress and instead have led to the modernization of arsenals.²⁷⁷ Additionally, Member States questioned why other Member States such as the Peoples Republic of China have not yet been incorporated into these agreements.²⁷⁸

Case Study: Success of the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone

A Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone (NWFZ) is defined by UNODA as a regional approach to strengthen global nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament norms and consolidate international efforts towards peace and security.²⁷⁹ Article VII of the NPT supports the establishment of NWFZs stating that nothing throughout the treaty shall prohibit Member States and regions in taking further action to prevent nuclear weapons in their respective territories.²⁸⁰ General Assembly resolution 3472 (XXX) B *Comprehensive Study of the Question of Nuclear Weapon Free Zones in all its Aspects* defines a NWFZ as any zone recognized by the General Assembly in which any group of Member States freely exercise their sovereignty through treaty or convention. working towards the complete disarmament of nuclear weapons in the zone as well as consisting of an international system verification to guarantee compliance from all Member States

²⁶⁶ Arms Control Association. *U.S.-Russian Nuclear Arms Control Agreements at A Glance*, 2020.

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

²⁷⁰ International Law and Policy Institute & UNIDIR, *A Prohibition on Nuclear Weapons: A Guide to the Issues*, 2016, p. 20.

²⁷¹ Arms Control Association. *U.S.-Russian Nuclear Arms Control Agreements at A Glance*, 2020; UNODA, *Disarmament Treaties Database*, 2021.

²⁷² Arms Control Association. *U.S.-Russian Nuclear Arms Control Agreements at A Glance*, 2020.

²⁷³ Ibid.

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

²⁷⁶ UN DGC, *Opening General Debate, First Committee Warns of New Arms Race, Emerging Bioterror Threats on Security Horizon, Imploring Nuclear Weapon Nations to Cut Arsenals*, 2020.

²⁷⁷ United Nations Meetings Coverage and Press Releases. *Opening General Debate, First Committee Warns of New Arms Race, Emerging Bioterror Threats on Security Horizon, Imploring Nuclear Weapon Nations to Cut Arsenals (GA/DIS/3647)*, 2020.

²⁷⁸ United Nations Meetings Coverage and Press Releases. *Opening General Debate, First Committee Warns of New Arms Race, Emerging Bioterror Threats on Security Horizon, Imploring Nuclear Weapon Nations to Cut Arsenals (GA/DIS/3647)*, 2020.

²⁷⁹ UNODA, *Nuclear-Weapon-Free-Zones*.

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

party to the agreement.²⁸¹ Currently six NWFZs exist globally, with five being regional covering Latin America, Asia and the Pacific, and Africa, while Mongolia has its own NWFZ.²⁸² Amongst these, the General Assembly's adoption of the *Treaty on An African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone* (1995) also known as the African NWFZ established by the *Treaty of Pelindaba* (1996) entered into force in 2009 and is comprised of 51 signatories and 41 States parties making it the largest NWFZ in the world.²⁸³ The *Treaty of Pelindaba* prohibits the research, development, manufacture, stockpiling, acquisition, testing, possession, control or stationing of nuclear weapons, as well as the dumping of radioactive waste.²⁸⁴ This treaty further explicitly makes it known that it shall not inhibit any Member State's right to nuclear sciences and technology for peaceful purposes as established through Article IV of the NPT.²⁸⁵ As all States parties work to fulfil this, the treaty requires them to maintain high levels of physical protection of all nuclear materials, facilities and equipment used for peaceful purposes to prevent any attacks by non-state actors.²⁸⁶

To fulfil obligations to the Treaty, State Parties established the African Commission on Nuclear Energy (AFCONE) to act as the executive body of the NWFZ.²⁸⁷ With AFCONE's operations through the African Union, it is the chief coordinating body for all nuclear activities on the continent.²⁸⁸ To allow for equal participation amongst all States parties, the AFCONE Commission comprises 12 Member States serving for three-year terms and reporting to the Conference of States parties.²⁸⁹ The Commission is responsible for the promotion of nuclear action amongst the region, and also serves as a link to compliance with international standards as they review the status of States parties in accordance with IAEA safeguards.²⁹⁰ As the *Treaty of Pelindaba* requires States parties to accept IAEA comprehensive safeguards, this regional NWFZ shows how AFCONE is able to promote regional interests while also promoting international goals such as achieving Article III of the NPT.²⁹¹ The establishment of this NWFZ and AFCONE has led to regional cooperation in making priorities as there have been four conferences of States Parties since its inception.²⁹² 2018 was the most recent conference which adopted the fourth AFCONE Strategy where common regional priorities were identified as ranging from peaceful uses capacity building in Africa to further international cooperation regarding human and financial resources to continue to fulfil the objectives of the Treaty.²⁹³ Beyond this, further cooperation has been sought for by AFCONE consulting the Latin American *Treaty of Tlateloco* (1967) as well as the Central Asian NWFZ for the Signature of Memorandum on Cooperation.²⁹⁴

Conclusion

Over the 50 plus years since the inception of the NPT, the General Assembly First Committee has played an important role in brokering negotiations relating to nuclear capabilities. As Member States continue to engage in negotiations, some valuable progress has been made, despite the lack of consensus among Member States pertaining to disarmament processes and verification mechanisms.²⁹⁵ While the COVID-19 pandemic continues to interrupt routine international negotiation relating to nuclear risk reduction, it will be important for the 2020 NPT Review Conference to reset the pace of the international nuclear

²⁸¹ UN General Assembly, *Comprehensive Study of the Question of Nuclear-Weapon-Free-Zones in all its Aspects (A/31/380)*, 1976; UNODA, *Nuclear-Weapon-Free-Zones*.

²⁸² United Nations Platform for Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones, *Home*.

²⁸³ UN General Assembly, *Final text of the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty (A/50/426)*, 1995.

²⁸⁴ United Nations Platform for Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones, *Treaty of Pelindaba*, 1996.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*

²⁹² *Ibid.*

²⁹³ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁵ UN General Assembly, *Disarmament and International Security (First Committee)*, 2021.

disarmament regime as they plan to convene prior to February of 2022.²⁹⁶ While much negotiation of the First Committee has been unable to take place in person over the past year, sixty eight resolutions were still passed.²⁹⁷ The First Committee continues to play a vital role in the international system and in furthering the Charter of the United Nations particularly in upholding Article 1.1 on maintaining international peace and security.²⁹⁸

Further Research

In conducting further research, it is worthwhile for delegates to consider the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the arms race, nuclear proliferation, and the ability to achieve complete nuclear disarmament by asking questions such as: How have Member States worked with NGOs and civil society to address these concerns up to this point? How will the outcome of the rescheduled 2020 NPT Review Conference come February of 2022 affect the international world order as it relates to nuclear danger? What steps can the international community take to prevent terrorists from gaining access to nuclear weapons? How can negotiations be structured in the future to avoid stalemates and domination by bilateral concerns?

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The IAEA was created to be the core intergovernmental agency responsible for monitoring nuclear weapons and applications by the UN system. This web page breaks down the mandate and functioning of the IAEA as they relate to this topic. This source is a way for delegates to familiarize themselves with the primary workings on this topic through the IAEA, to understand the Agency's important work on this issue, and to understand one of the avenues of implementation available to deliverables adopted within the General Assembly First Committee.

United Nations, General Assembly. (n.d.). *Disarmament and International Security (First Committee)*. Retrieved 19 June 2021 from: <https://www.un.org/en/ga/first/>

This web page is the home page describing the history and mandate of the General Assembly First Committee. It overviews landmark documents and resolutions, as well as significant historical events. As delegates prepare to simulate the General Assembly First Committee, they will be able to utilize this source to understand how the First Committee addresses nuclear applications, both in the present and historically. Delegates will find this source particularly useful in understanding the mandate of the First Committee when addressing reducing nuclear danger.

United Nations, General Assembly, Seventy-fifth session. (2020). *Reducing Nuclear Danger (A/RES/75/57)*. Adopted on the report of the First Committee (A/75/399). Retrieved 21 June 2021 from: <https://undocs.org/A/RES/75/57>

General Assembly resolution 75/57 is the most recent resolution that has been adopted on this topic. This resolution will support delegates in understanding the main priorities that the committee has discussed in reducing nuclear danger. Additionally, this source will make it clear what has and has not been addressed at the UN level concerning nuclear disarmament, and where obstacles remain to productive movement forward.

Wan, W. (2019). *Nuclear Risk Reduction: The State of Ideas*. United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research. Retrieved 20 June 2021 from: <https://unidir.org/sites/default/files/publication/pdfs/nuclear-risk-reduction-the-state-of-ideas-en-767.pdf>

²⁹⁶ UN Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, *Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)*.

²⁹⁷ UN General Assembly, *Disarmament and International Security (First Committee)*, 2021.

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

Reducing nuclear risk has also been discussed outside of the purview of the First Committee. UNIDIR in 2019 worked to define nuclear-risk-reduction as an idea to prevent nuclear danger, including defining risk reduction, summarizing current discourse on risk reduction, and reframing risk reduction within the context of nuclear safety. This publication describes the current UN definitions regarding this topic, in addition to proposing pathway forward on the issue, and will be helpful for delegates in understanding the key ideas behind this important topic.

United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. (2018). *Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament*. Retrieved 21 June 2021 from: <https://s3.amazonaws.com/unoda-web/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/sg-disarmament-agenda-pubs-page.pdf#view=Fit>

In light of the lack of multilateral agreements from 2016-2017 relating to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, the Secretary-General and UNODA collaborated to publish this document. This agenda addresses what the Secretary-General notes as key issues in furthering the global nuclear disarmament agenda. This source will be useful to delegates in understanding the UN's current priorities relating to nuclear danger, as well as the Secretary-General's vision on where how this dialogue should progress.

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