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General Assembly First Committee Background Guide 2025

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Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the 2025 National Model United Nations New York Conference (NMUN•NY)! We are pleased to introduce to you our committee, the General Assembly First Committee (GA1). Your committee's work is facilitated by volunteer staffers. This year's committee staff are: Director Clara Praschl and Assistant Director Kelsey Shabanowitz (Conference A), and Director Nicole Fett and Assistant Director Shi Haoyu (Conference B). Clara holds a double Bachelor's in History and Political Science from the Ludwig-Maximilians-University Munich and a Master in International and Development Studies from the Geneva Graduate Institute. Kelsey Shabanowitz has a Bachelor's Degree in Forensic Biology from the University of New Haven and is looking to pursue a career in medicine. Nicole Fett holds a Bachelor's degree in European Studies and is currently pursuing a Master's degree in International Organizations and Crisis Management. Shi Haoyu studies Interpreting at Dalian University of Technology and has a background in Chinese-English translation. The preparation of these materials was supported by Under-Secretaries-General Eric Lowe (Conference A) and Paul Gussmann (Conference B).

The topics on the agenda for this committee are:

1. Confidence-Building Measures in the Regional and Sub-Regional Context
2. Promoting Nuclear Disarmament and International 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 bibliography to further your knowledge on these topics. In preparation for the conference, each delegation should submit a Position Paper by 11:59 p.m. ET on 1 March 2025 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:

- The [NMUN Delegate Preparation Guide](#), which 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.
- The [NMUN Rules of Procedure](#), which includes 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 this committee, please contact the Deputy Secretaries-General at dsg.ny@nmun.org.

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

Clara Praschl, Director
Kelsey Shabanowitz, Assistant Director
Conference A

Nicole Fett, Director
Shi Haoyu, Assistant Director
Conference B



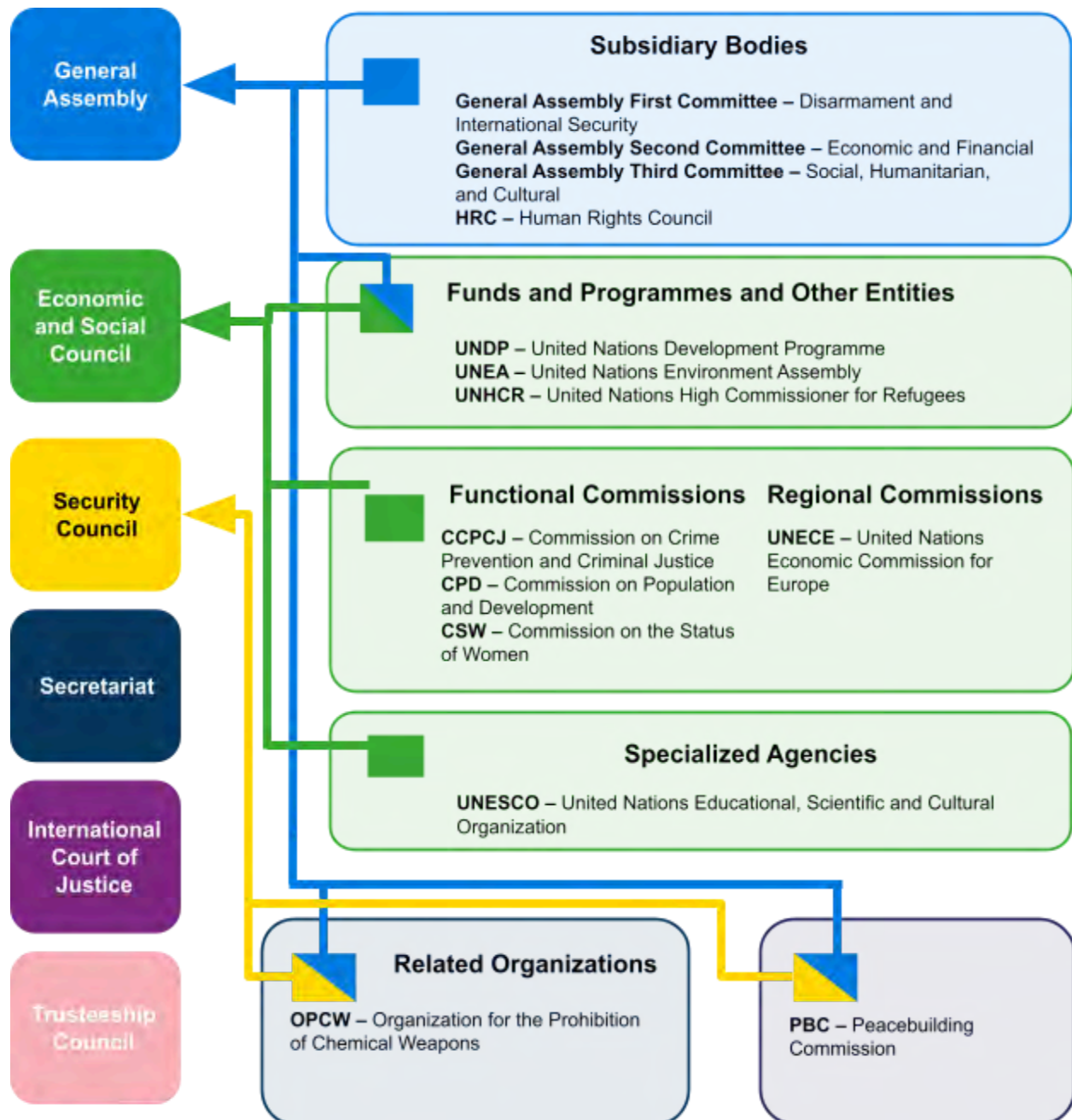
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United Nations System at NMUN·NY

This diagram illustrates the United Nations system simulated at NMUN·NY. It shows where each committee “sits” within the system to demonstrate 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 United Nations system.





Committee Overview

Introduction

The General Assembly is the main deliberative and policy-making body of the United Nations and one of the six principal organs established by the *Charter of the United Nations* (1945).¹ The work of the General Assembly is undertaken in subsidiary committees, each of which debates and adopts draft resolutions on their thematic areas and allocated agenda items.²

The General Assembly First Committee considers matters relating to disarmament and international peace and security.³ It considers agenda items under seven thematic clusters: nuclear weapons; other weapons of mass destruction; disarmament aspects of outer space; conventional weapons; regional disarmament and security; other disarmament measures and international security; and the disarmament machinery.⁴

Mandate, Function and Powers

The General Assembly acts as a forum for dialogue and cooperation, providing general policy recommendations rather than carrying out operative tasks.⁵ Its policy recommendations are non-binding and their implementation is conducted by Member States, the United Nations Secretariat, and other United Nations bodies, each of which independently align their work with General Assembly resolutions.⁶ The *Charter of the United Nations* provides the General Assembly with a broad mandate to discuss and make recommendations on any topic within the scope of the United Nations.⁷

The General Assembly adopts resolutions, which are formal documents expressing the agreement and will of the international community.⁸ The majority of these resolutions are adopted by consensus, meaning no vote is taken and no Member State has specific cause to object.⁹ In line with the *Charter of the United Nations*, the mandate of the General Assembly can be summarized as:

- The General Assembly **will generally**: make recommendations to Member States, the Security Council, other United Nations bodies and organs, United Nations specialized agencies, and other international actors; initiate studies and advance efforts to promote international cooperation in the economic, social, cultural, educational, and health fields and in the realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms; consider or request reports from other United Nations bodies and specialized agencies; establish United

¹ United Nations Conference on International Organization. *Charter of the United Nations*. 1945.

² Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations. *The GA Handbook: A Practical Guide to the United Nations General Assembly*. 2017. p. 68.

³ *ibid.* p. 69.

⁴ *ibid.* pp. 69-70.

⁵ *ibid.* p. 36.

⁶ *ibid.* p. 52.

⁷ United Nations Conference on International Organization. *Charter of the United Nations*. 1945.

⁸ Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations. *The GA Handbook: A Practical Guide to the United Nations General Assembly*. 2017. p. 52.

⁹ *ibid.* pp. 37, 52.



Nations observance days, create expert groups or commissions, formulate mechanisms for treaty negotiation, or refer an issue to the International Court of Justice.¹⁰

- The General Assembly **will not generally**: dictate the specific actions required for the implementation of policies it recommends, allowing Member States and other bodies to determine operational details; create new bodies, except for in those rare instances where ubiquitous international demand requires the consolidation of existing bodies or a concept and mandate have been fully developed, typically through years of negotiations; make recommendations on situations under consideration by the United Nations Security Council.¹¹

The First Committee's mandate is based on that provided to the General Assembly by the *Charter of the United Nations*.¹² The First Committee adopts around 50-70 resolutions each year, around half of which are adopted by consensus, after which they are sent to the General Assembly Plenary.¹³

Governance, Funding and Structure

The General Assembly meets annually and is composed of all 193 United Nations Member States.¹⁴ It may also convene special sessions on a particular topic at the request of the Secretary-General, Security Council, or a majority of Member States.¹⁵ Observer status can be granted to intergovernmental organizations and states without full United Nations membership.¹⁶ In the General Assembly, each Member State has one equal vote and most decisions require a simple majority.¹⁷ As a principal organ of the United Nations, the General Assembly is largely self-governing, determining its own agenda, procedures, officers, and subsidiary bodies.¹⁸ General Assembly meetings and events are funded through the United Nations regular budget.¹⁹

The First Committee's procedures are managed by its Secretariat and an elected Bureau.²⁰ The committee's Bureau assists with opening and closing each meeting, managing the discussions,

¹⁰ Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations. *The GA Handbook: A Practical Guide to the United Nations General Assembly*. 2017. p. 36; United Nations Conference on International Organization. *Charter of the United Nations*. 1945; UNFOLD ZERO. *UN Bodies*. N.d.

¹¹ United Nations, Dag Hammarskjöld Library. *Are UN resolutions binding?* 2023; United Nations, Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth. *UN Women: The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women*. N.d.; United Nations, Human Rights Council. *Welcome to the Human Rights Council*. 2024; United Nations Conference on International Organization. *Charter of the United Nations*. 1945.

¹² Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations. *The GA Handbook: A Practical Guide to the United Nations General Assembly*. 2017. p. 70.

¹³ *ibid.* pp. 68-70.

¹⁴ United Nations Conference on International Organization. *Charter of the United Nations*. 1945.

¹⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁶ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *About Permanent Observers*. N.d.

¹⁷ United Nations Conference on International Organization. *Charter of the United Nations*. 1945; Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations. *The GA Handbook: A Practical Guide to the United Nations General Assembly*. 2017. p. 13.

¹⁸ Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations. *The GA Handbook: A Practical Guide to the United Nations General Assembly*. 2017. pp. 13, 15, 44.

¹⁹ New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. *United Nations Handbook 2024-25*. 2024. p. 406.

²⁰ Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations. *The GA Handbook: A Practical Guide to the United Nations General Assembly*. 2017.



pronouncing decisions, assisting with drafts and documents, and ensuring compliance with the rules of procedure.²¹ The United Nations Secretariat assists the First Committee by delivering substantive and logistical support.²² The First Committee receives substantive and organizational support from three entities: the General Committee, the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, and the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management.²³

The First Committee also works in close cooperation with the Conference on Disarmament (CD) and the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC).²⁴ The CD is an independent entity and the only recognized “multilateral disarmament negotiating forum of the international community.”²⁵ UNDC is a subsidiary organ of the First Committee and makes recommendations on various issues in the field of disarmament and following up on past decisions.²⁶ Both the CD and UNDC report to the First Committee.²⁷ The General Assembly also jointly oversees the Peacebuilding Commission with the Security Council and the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development with the Economic and Social Council.²⁸

²¹ United Nations, General Assembly. *Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly (A/520/Rev.19)*. 2021. pp. 30-31.

²² Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations. *The GA Handbook: A Practical Guide to the United Nations General Assembly*. 2017.

²³ United Nations, General Assembly. *Disarmament and International Security (First Committee)*. N.d.

²⁴ *ibid.*

²⁵ United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Conference on Disarmament*. N.d.

²⁶ *ibid.*

²⁷ United Nations, General Assembly. *Disarmament and International Security (First Committee)*. N.d.

²⁸ United Nations Conference on International Organization. *Charter of the United Nations*. 1945.



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United Nations, Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth. *UN Women: The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women*. N.d. Retrieved 27 October 2024 from: <https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/2013/07/un-women-the-united-nations-entity-for-gender-equality-and-the-empowerment-of-women/>



1. Confidence-Building Measures in the Regional and Sub-regional Context

*In regions of conflict and tension, transparency and confidence-building mechanisms designed to prevent arms competition remain underutilized and underdeveloped, and strategic security dialogue is generally absent.*²⁹

Introduction

Confidence-building measures (CBMs) consist of a wide array of policies and practices that are implemented to foster cooperation and transparency among Member States.³⁰ CBMs include measures that increase government, military, and economic transparency in an effort to build trust between Member States to reduce the risk of conflict.³¹ Through increased transparency and trust, CBMs seek to foster coordination in military activities and disarmament, and ultimately sustainable peace.³² The United Nations Office for Disarmament (UNODA) groups military CBMs into the following categories: communication and coordination measures (e.g. exchanging information on arms transfers and military budgets), observation and verification measures (e.g. observations of military maneuvers or verification missions), and constraints missions (e.g. the establishment of demilitarized zones or rules on troop movement and military exercises).³³ CBMs can focus on specific types of weapons, such as biological or nuclear weapons, or on military activities, such as space or maritime CBMs.³⁴

CBMs can be applied at various levels, ranging from international, regional, and subregional approaches.³⁵ International CBMs follow a general approach targeting all Member States, such as universal reporting mechanisms or the adoption of treaties containing CBMs.³⁶ Regional measures take the context-specificity of the region into account, such as the Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Latin America or the *Treaty on Open Skies* (1992).³⁷ Regional CBMs can contribute to the implementation of

²⁹ United Nations, Secretary-General. *Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament*. 2018. p. 46.

³⁰ United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Military Confidence-Building Measures*. N.d.; United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Transparency and Confidence building*. N.d.

³¹ *ibid.*

³² United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Military Confidence-Building Measures*. N.d.

³³ *ibid.*

³⁴ Hong. Institute for China-America Studies. *Maritime Confidence-Building Measures in the South China Sea*. 2017; Saadia et al. The Henry L. Stimson Center. *Institutionalizing Nuclear Confidence-Building Measures between India and Pakistan*. 2023; Saalman et al. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. *Reinvigorating South Asian Nuclear Transparency and Confidence-Building Measures*. 2021; United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Biological Weapons: Confidence-Building Measures*. N.d.; United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Outer Space*. N.d.

³⁵ Higgins. Institute for Science and International Security. *Applying Confidence Building Measures in a Regional Context*. 2009. p. 23; United Nations, General Assembly. *Confidence-building Measures in the Regional and Subregional Context (A/RES/78/38)*. 2023.

³⁶ United Nations, General Assembly. *The Arms Trade Treaty (A/RES/67/234 B)*. 2013; United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. *United Nations Register of Conventional Arms*. 2024; United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Military Expenditures*. N.d.

³⁷ United Nations, General Assembly. *Confidence-building Measures in the Regional and Subregional Context (A/RES/78/38)*. 2023; United Nations Platform for Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones. *Overview of Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones*. N.d.; United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research. *Disarmament Forum - Nuclear-weapon-free zones*. 2011. p. 9; Arms Control Association. *The Open Skies Treaty at a Glance*. 2021; Conference on Security and Co-Operation in Europe. *Treaty on Open Skies*. 1992.



international norms and CBMs.³⁸ Subregional CBMs are measures targeting specific situations and cases; they are often included in peace agreements and processes.³⁹

Major challenges in advancing CBMs range from decreasing trust and cooperation, lacking infrastructure, and the undermining of existing mechanisms, as well as new technologies.⁴⁰ 2024 has been the year with the highest number of countries involved in conflict since 1945.⁴¹ The collective security system has been deteriorating with multi-faceted sources of instability, such as the return of Cold War tensions, the changing nature of armed conflict, geopolitical shifts, violence outside of conflict, increasing inequalities, and climate change.⁴² The United Nations Secretary-General has expressed major concern and called for expenditure regulation as global military spending reached the highest amount ever recorded, at \$2.24 trillion in 2022.⁴³ The international community has struggled to keep up with the rapid advancement of emerging technologies and consequent security issues that may arise.⁴⁴ CBMs for cooperation and communication have lost their effectiveness in times of a changing geopolitical environment and regional tensions as the infrastructure was not developed for complex situations.⁴⁵

Being an important element of the disarmament toolbox of the United Nations, CBMs have been regularly addressed by the First Committee of the General Assembly.⁴⁶ Since 2003, the General Assembly has discussed the topic of “Confidence-building measures in the regional and subregional context” under a dedicated agenda item.⁴⁷ Additionally, it is covered within several other agenda items on disarmament, such as “Regional Disarmament,” “Transparency Measures and Confidence-Building Measures in Outer-Space Activities,” or “Information on Confidence-Building Measures in the Field of Conventional Arms.”⁴⁸ Complementary CBMs have also been addressed in region-specific discussions.⁴⁹

³⁸ Control Arms. *Arms Trade Treaty Regional Actor Study*. 2021. p. 4.

³⁹ Mason et al. African Union and the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue. *Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) in Peace Processes*. 2013. pp. 57-65; Whitfield. Conciliation Resources. *Still Time to Talk: Adaptation and Innovation in Peace Mediation*. 2024. pp. 100-101.

⁴⁰ United Nations, Secretary-General. *Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament*. 2018. p.vii; United Nations, Secretary-General. *A New Agenda for Peace*. 2023. pp. 2-9.

⁴¹ Institute for Economics and Peace. Vision for Humanity. *Highest Number of Countries Engaged in Conflict since World War II*. 2024.

⁴² United Nations, Secretary-General. *A New Agenda for Peace*. 2023. pp. 2-8.

⁴³ United Nations, General Assembly. *Objective Information on Military Matters, including Transparency of Military Expenditures. Report of the Secretary-General (A/78/158)*. 2023. p. 3.

⁴⁴ United Nations, Secretary-General. *Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament*. 2018. pp. 51-52.

⁴⁵ *ibid.* pp. vii, 46; United Nations, Secretary-General. *A New Agenda for Peace*. 2023. pp. 11-12.

⁴⁶ United Nations, Secretary-General. *Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament*. 2018. p. 11.

⁴⁷ United Nations, General Assembly. *Confidence-building Measures in the Regional and Subregional Context (A/RES/58/43)*. 2003.

⁴⁸ United Nations, General Assembly. *Regional Disarmament (A/RES/78/36)*. 2023; United Nations, General Assembly. *Transparency and Confidence-building Measures in Outer Space Activities (A/RES/78/52)*. 2023; United Nations, General Assembly. *Information on Confidence-building Measures in the Field of Conventional Arms (A/RES/77/72)*. 2022.

⁴⁹ United Nations, General Assembly. *Regional Confidence-building Measures: Activities of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa (A/RES/76/60)*. 2021; United Nations, General Assembly. *United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean (A/RES/76/58)*. 2021; United Nations, General Assembly. *Establishment of a Nuclear-weapon-free Zone in the Region of the Middle East (A/RES/74/30)*. 2019.



International and Regional Framework

CBMs seek to contribute to collective security and peace, which is a central aim enshrined in several core documents of the United Nations.⁵⁰ Article 33 of the *Charter of the United Nations* (1945) calls for the peaceful settlement of disputes.⁵¹ Article 3 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948) recognizes the right to life, liberty, and security in person, which is inherently connected to the state of peace and security.⁵² In 1984, the General Assembly adopted the *Declaration on the Right to Peace*, which reaffirms that peace is a right and thus an obligation of Member States and the international community.⁵³ General Assembly resolution 57/337 on the “Prevention of Armed Conflict” (2003) recognizes CBMs as an important preventative tool for the peaceful settlement of disputes.⁵⁴

CBMs advance the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2030 Agenda) (2015), in particular SDG 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions).⁵⁵ Disarmament and arms regulation contribute to target 16.1, aiming to “significantly reduce all forms of violence and related deaths everywhere,” as well as target 16.4 to “significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets and combat all forms of organized crime.”⁵⁶ Transparency-building measures on military expenditures and arms flows contribute to target 16.6, aiming to “develop effective, accountable, and transparent institutions at all levels.”⁵⁷ The Secretary-General advocates for Member States to use peace and the SDGs as guidelines for reducing military spending.⁵⁸ As peace and sustainable development are interlinked, confidence-building is connected to several SDGs such as SDG 1 (zero poverty), SDG 3 (good health and wellbeing), and SDG 4 (quality education).⁵⁹

Regional CBMs have been implemented to build trust and reduce tensions, particularly in the context of European conflict management in the 1970s, and have been taken up in other regions and contexts.⁶⁰ In 1975, the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe adopted the *Helsinki Final Act*, which served as a détente instrument to reduce tensions during the Cold War, and contains a set of CBMs, such as prior notification on military exercises and the exchange of observers.⁶¹ In 1990, the Organization for

⁵⁰ United Nations, Secretary-General. *Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament*. 2018. p. 11.

⁵¹ United Nations Conference on International Organization. *Charter of the United Nations*. 1945.

⁵² United Nations, General Assembly. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/RES/217 A (III))*. 1948; United Nations, Human Rights Committee. *General Comment No. 36 : Article 6, Right to Life*. 2019. p. 14.

⁵³ United Nations, General Assembly. *Declaration on the Right of Peoples to Peace (A/RES/39/11)*. 1984.

⁵⁴ United Nations, General Assembly. *Prevention of Armed Conflict (A/RES/57/337)*. 2003.

⁵⁵ United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. 2015; United Nations, Secretary-General. *Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament*. 2018. pp. 8-9.

⁵⁶ *ibid.* pp. 8-9.

⁵⁷ *ibid.* pp. 8-9.

⁵⁸ United Nations, General Assembly. *Objective Information on Military Matters, including Transparency of Military Expenditures. Report of the Secretary-General (A/78/158)*. 2023. p. 3.

⁵⁹ United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. 2015; United Nations, Secretary-General. *Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament*. 2018. pp. 8-9.

⁶⁰ Harman. The Encyclopedia Britannica. *Confidence-building Measure*. 2016; Center for Strategic and International Studies. *Confidence-Building Measures*. 2024.

⁶¹ Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe. *The Helsinki Final Act*. 1975; Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. *Confidence Building in the OSCE*. 2012.



Security and Co-Operation in Europe (OSCE) adopted the *Vienna Document*, which requires the participating States to provide military information on their conventional forces, to accept inspections, and to provide information on military exercises.⁶² In 1992, the *Treaty on Open Skies* was adopted by European States, the Russian Federation, and the United States, which allowed States parties to conduct short-notice flights over each other's territory to collect information on military activities.⁶³ CBMs were introduced in other regions, such as when the Organization of American States adopted the *Declaration of San Salvador* (1998), which affirms, for example, increased cooperation in border regions or the exchange of military information.⁶⁴ On a local level, examples of agreements that address subregional CBMs include the *General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina* (1995) or the *Lahore Declaration* (1999).⁶⁵ The former marked the end of the Bosnian War and included several provisions on CBMs, such as provisions on demobilization as well as on the notifications of relevant military information of its forces.⁶⁶ The latter is a memorandum of understanding between India and Pakistan that constitutes a CBM framework for nuclear talks.⁶⁷

Compliance to international arms control and disarmament treaties, such as the *Arms Trade Treaty* (ATT), contributes to confidence-building and trust amongst Member States.⁶⁸ Treaties may also include specific CBMs in their treaty provisions.⁶⁹ The establishment of the ATT was driven by the General Assembly beginning in 2006 and was adopted by the General Assembly in resolution 67/234 B on “the arms trade treaty” in 2013.⁷⁰ It provides a set of standards for States parties to follow regarding the advancement of regulations and impede the unlawful trade and transfer of conventional arms.⁷¹ Under the ATT, States parties are required to set up regulations and national approval processes for the trade of arms.⁷² It prohibits the trade of weapons in certain contexts, such as potential violations of arms embargoes, and requires careful assessment of whether it would be used to commit violations of international

⁶² Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe. *Vienna Document*. 1990; Arms Control Association. *The Vienna Document*. 2023; Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe. *Ensuring Military Transparency - the Vienna Document*. N.d.

⁶³ Conference on Security and Co-Operation in Europe. *Treaty on Open Skies*. 1992; Arms Control Association. *The Open Skies Treaty at a Glance*. 2021.

⁶⁴ Organization of American States. *Declaration of San Salvador*. 1998.

⁶⁵ United Nations, General Assembly, Security Council. *General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina (A/50/790)*. 1995; United Nations, Peacemaker. *Memorandum of Understanding between the Governments of India and Pakistan*. 1999.

⁶⁶ United Nations, General Assembly. *General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina (A/50/790)*. 1995. Article IV - V.

⁶⁷ Abbas. *The Diplomat. Looking Back at the 1999 India-Pakistan Lahore Declaration*. 2022; Saadia et al. The Henry L. Stimson Center. *Institutionalizing Nuclear Confidence Building Measures between India and Pakistan*. 2023.

⁶⁸ United Nations, General Assembly. *The Arms Trade Treaty (A/RES/67/234 B)*. 2013; Woolcott. United Nations Audiovisual Library of International Law. *The Arms Trade Treaty*. 2014. p. 6; United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Military Confidence-Building Measures*. N.d.

⁶⁹ United Nations, General Assembly. *The Arms Trade Treaty (A/RES/67/234 B)*. 2013.

⁷⁰ United Nations, General Assembly. *Towards an Arms Trade Treaty: Establishing Common International Standards for the Import, Export and Transfer of Conventional Arms (A/RES/61/89)*. 2006; United Nations, General Assembly. *The Arms Trade Treaty (A/RES/67/234 B)*. 2013; Woolcott. United Nations Audiovisual Library of International Law. *The Arms Trade Treaty*. 2014; Arms Control Association. *The Arms Trade Treaty At a Glance*. 2023.

⁷¹ United Nations, General Assembly. *The Arms Trade Treaty (A/RES/67/234 B)*. 2013.

⁷² Ibid.



humanitarian or human rights law.⁷³ Another example constitutes the *Biological Weapons Convention* (1972).⁷⁴ States parties must regularly submit information relevant to the implementation to UNODA.⁷⁵

In recent key policy documents of the United Nations, the Secretary-General called for stronger CBMs.⁷⁶ In 2018, against the backdrop of the deteriorating collective security system, the Secretary-General launched *Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament*.⁷⁷ While it addresses disarmament in its entirety, several action points focus on the promotion of CBMs, such as the need to strengthen CBMs in the field of nuclear disarmament, outer space, and military expenditures.⁷⁸ It recognizes the need for stronger collaboration between the United Nations and regional organizations on CBMs.⁷⁹ For example, it calls for the exploration of pathways for regional dialogue on military spending and arms acquisitions.⁸⁰ In the *New Agenda for Peace* (2023), the Secretary-General highlights the role of CBMs and calls for the (re-)building of mechanisms to foster transparency and regional frameworks for confidence-building.⁸¹ In the *Pact for the Future* (2024), Member States agreed to develop CBMs to reduce tensions.⁸²

Role of the International System

The General Assembly advocates for the advancement of CBMs and has also contributed to the establishment of confidence-building infrastructure in specific contexts, such as in Central Africa.⁸³ General Assembly resolution 78/38, the most recent resolution on “Confidence-building Measures in the Regional and Subregional Context,” (2023) calls for strict compliance with regional and international agreements and encourages fostering regional and bilateral CBMs.⁸⁴ In the context of this agenda item, the General Assembly has tasked the Secretary-General with issuing reports on the topic and gathering the views of Member States on advancing CBMs in regional and subregional contexts.⁸⁵ Besides the thematic approach, the General Assembly has contributed to setting up CBMs at a regional and subregional level.⁸⁶ In 1991, General Assembly resolution 46/37 B on “regional confidence building” led to the establishment of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central

⁷³ United Nations, General Assembly. *The Arms Trade Treaty (A/RES/67/234 B)*. 2013.

⁷⁴ United Nations, General Assembly. *Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction (A/RES/2826(XXVII))*. 1972.

⁷⁵ United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Guide to Participating in the Confidence-Building Measures of the Biological Weapons Convention*. 2015. pp. 2-3.

⁷⁶ United Nations, Secretary-General. *Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda For Disarmament*. 2018. pp. 19, 29, 46, 65; United Nations, Secretary-General. *A New Agenda for Peace*. 2023. pp. 8-12.

⁷⁷ United Nations, Secretary-General. *Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament*. 2018. p. xi.

⁷⁸ *ibid.* pp. 19, 29, 46.

⁷⁹ *ibid.* p. 65.

⁸⁰ *ibid.* pp. 26, 46.

⁸¹ United Nations, Secretary-General. *A New Agenda for Peace*. 2023. pp. 8-12.

⁸² United Nations, General Assembly. *Pact for the Future (A/RES/79/1)*. 2024.

⁸³ United Nations, General Assembly. *Confidence-building Measures in the Regional and Subregional Context (A/RES/78/38)*. 2023; United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *The United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa*. N.d.

⁸⁴ United Nations, General Assembly. *Confidence-building Measures in the Regional and Subregional Context (A/RES/78/38)*. 2023.

⁸⁵ *ibid.*

⁸⁶ United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *The United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa*. N.d.



Africa.⁸⁷ It was set up to address the security challenges of the region and meets twice a year to discuss disarmament efforts and the security situation.⁸⁸

In addition to the norm-setting and policy-making role of the General Assembly, UNODA and the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC) contribute to both norm-setting and implementation efforts to advance CBMs.⁸⁹ In the context of the Agenda for Disarmament, UNODA seeks to contribute to the advancement of regional dialogue on confidence-building by exploring further opportunities for engagement.⁹⁰ UNDC is tasked with negotiating guidelines in the field of disarmament and has adopted Recommendations on Practical Confidence-Building Measures in the Field of Conventional Weapons (2017).⁹¹ The document points out several ways to advance CBMs and calls on Member States to make use of the existing international, regional, and subregional confidence-building infrastructure.⁹²

The United Nations has avenues to engage in confidence-building directly at the regional and subregional level through its Regional Centres for Disarmament and engagement with regional organizations.⁹³ With its three Regional Centres for Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific, Africa, and in Latin America and the Caribbean, UNODA aims to promote confidence-building at a regional level.⁹⁴ For instance, the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa (UNREC) serves as a platform for Member States to discuss common positions for disarmament, non-proliferation, and arms control.⁹⁵ It provides technical assistance for Member States in drafting national reports on combating the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons (SALWs).⁹⁶ Additionally, the United Nations has established several liaison offices to regional organizations, such as the United Nations Office to the African Union (UNOAU), or joint initiatives, such as the Joint Declaration on Comprehensive Partnership between the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the United Nations.⁹⁷ They serve as a channel to foster cooperation on

⁸⁷ United Nations, General Assembly. *Regional Confidence Building Measures (A/RES/46/37 B)*. 1991.

⁸⁸ United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa. *United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa*. 2024; United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *The United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa*. N.d.

⁸⁹ United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *About Us*. N.d.; United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Disarmament Commission*. N.d.

⁹⁰ United Nations, Secretary-General. *Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda For Disarmament*. 2018. p. 65.

⁹¹ United Nations, General Assembly. *Report of the Disarmament Commission for 2017 (A/72/42)*. 2017.
⁹² *ibid.*

⁹³ United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *The United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa*. N.d.; United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *UNODA Structure*. N.d.

⁹⁴ United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *UNODA Structure*. N.d.

⁹⁵ United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa. *What We Do*. 2024.

⁹⁶ *ibid.*

⁹⁷ Association of Southeast Asian Nations. *Joint Declaration on Comprehensive Partnership between the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the United Nations*. 2011; United Nations Office to the African Union. *Mandate*. 2024.



disarmament and confidence-building.⁹⁸ For example, UNOAU helps to operationalize the African Peace and Security Architecture and provides assistance on disarmament.⁹⁹

Regional institutions and conferences play a central role in the promotion of confidence-building, as these entities utilize different approaches as needed in specific contexts complementary to international efforts.¹⁰⁰ Regional organizations with wide-range mandates, such as the African Union (AU), the Organization of American States, and ASEAN, have addressed the topic of CBMs.¹⁰¹ Within the AU, the Peace and Security Council (PSC) is mandated to discuss the prevention, management, and resolution of conflicts.¹⁰² The PSC oversees the Military Staff Committee, a subsidiary body, which serves as a CBM targeting the exchange and convening of military personnel.¹⁰³ In other instances, regional institutions, such as OSCE or the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia have been established as CBMs and confidence-building is an integral part of their mandate.¹⁰⁴

Civil Society organizations (CSOs) strongly advocate for CBMs and provide technical assistance and data transparency.¹⁰⁵ For example, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) has established the SIPRI Military Expenditure Database, which gathers open-source data on military expenditures of all countries.¹⁰⁶ Transparency International advocates for ending corruption and advancing transparency for arms transfers.¹⁰⁷ CSOs such as the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons and the Arms Control Association all advocate for strengthening CBMs.¹⁰⁸ Despite their valuable contributions, CSOs are often sidelined in discussions due to limited access and representation.¹⁰⁹ The Secretary-General called for a stronger collaboration between experts and CSOs and the disarmament bodies in the Agenda for Disarmament.¹¹⁰

⁹⁸ Association of Southeast Asian Nations. *Joint Declaration on Comprehensive Partnership between the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the United Nations*. 2011; Association of Southeast Asian Nations. *Plan of Action to Implement the Joint Declaration on Comprehensive Partnership between ASEAN and the United Nations (2021-2025)*. 2021; United Nations, Political Affairs and Peacebuilding Affairs. *United Nations - African Union Partnership in Conflict Prevention and Mediation, Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding*. 2023; United Nations, Political and Peacebuilding Affairs. *African Union*. 2024; United Nations, Political and Peacebuilding Affairs. *Association of Southeast Asian Nations*. 2024.

⁹⁹ United Nations, Peacebuilding and Political Affairs. *United Nations - African Union Partnership in Conflict Prevention and Mediation, Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding*. 2023; United Nations Office to the African Union. *African Peace and Security Architecture*. 2024.

¹⁰⁰ United Nations, Security Council. *Cooperation between the United Nations and Regional and Subregional Organizations in Maintaining International Peace and Security (S/PRST/2021/9)*. 2021.

¹⁰¹ Association of Southeast Asian Nations. *ASEAN Political Security Community*. 2024; Organization of American States. *Disarmament*. 2024; Organization of American States. *Multidimensional Security*. 2024; African Union. *The Peace and Security Council*. N.d.

¹⁰² African Union. *The Peace and Security Council*. N.d.

¹⁰³ *ibid.*; United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Military Confidence-Building Measures*. N.d.

¹⁰⁴ Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia. *What is CICA?*. 2024; Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe. *Confidence and Security Building Measures*. N.d.

¹⁰⁵ United Nations, Secretary-General. *Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda For Disarmament*. 2018. pp. 69-70; Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. *SIPRI Military Expenditure Database*. 2024.

¹⁰⁶ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. *SIPRI Military Expenditure Database*. 2024.

¹⁰⁷ Transparency International Defence & Security. *Responsible Defence Governance*. 2024.

¹⁰⁸ International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons. *Civil Society Calls For Renewed Push For All States To Join Nuclear Test Ban Treaty*. 2023.

¹⁰⁹ United Nations, Secretary-General. *Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda For Disarmament*. 2018. pp. 69-70.

¹¹⁰ *ibid.* p. 70.



Transparency in Military Expenditures and Arms Trade - Regional Approaches

Transparency in military expenditures and arms trade plays a key part in building trust and cooperation between Member States, their citizens, and the international community.¹¹¹ The rationale for transparency in military and arms spending lies in the anticipated increase in trust and communication between Member States, leading to regional conversations to build CBMs.¹¹² Observing trends in expenditure reports throughout all Member States, especially those in active or post-conflict reconstruction, can assist in establishing a baseline to follow for defense sector reforms.¹¹³ Reporting arms transfers and military spending may facilitate reduction of such as it provides insight into military activities and possible discrepancies.¹¹⁴

The ATT and databases such as the United Nations Report on Military Expenditures (UNMILEX) and United Nations Register for Conventional Arms (UNROCA) all work to foster transparency between Member States by establishing guidelines as a reference when reporting national military spending.¹¹⁵ UNMILEX, an annual report gathering information on military expenditures, was created by the General Assembly in 1980 with transparency as a major priority.¹¹⁶ UNROCA was created by the General Assembly in 1991 to prevent unrestricted stockpiling while fostering confidence and stability regarding regional and international arms safety and stabilization.¹¹⁷ Member States are asked to submit data on international transfers of SALWs and major conventional weapons to UNROCA annually.¹¹⁸ Similarly, under the ATT, States parties are required to regularly submit reports on the trade of arms.¹¹⁹

Participation by Member states in reporting expenditures and arms trade has been decreasing, which has led to major discrepancies in the reporting system and a lack of transparency.¹²⁰ Some Member States do not provide any official information on military expenditures.¹²¹ In 2023, only 59 of 193 Member States

¹¹¹ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. *Transparency in Military Expenditure*. 2024; United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Military Expenditures*. N.d.

¹¹² United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Military Expenditures*. N.d.

¹¹³ *ibid.*

¹¹⁴ United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Transparency and Confidence Building*. N.d.; United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. *About*. N.d.

¹¹⁵ United Nations, General Assembly. *The Arms Trade Treaty (A/RES/67/234 B)*. 2013; United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Military Expenditures*. N.d.; United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. *About*. N.d.

¹¹⁶ United Nations, General Assembly. *Reduction of Military Budgets (A/RES/35/142 B)*. 1980; Wezeman et al. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. *A Practical Guide to State Participation in the UN Report on Military Expenditures*. 2022. p. 1; United Nations, General Assembly. *Objective Information on Military Matters, including Transparency of Military Expenditures. Report of the Secretary-General (A/78/158)*. 2023. p. 1; United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Military Expenditures*. N.d.

¹¹⁷ United Nations, General Assembly. *General and Complete Disarmament (A/RES/46/36)*. 1992; Holtom et al. Arms Control Association. *The Case for Strengthening Transparency in Conventional Arms Transfers*. 2022; United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *UN Register of Conventional Arms*. N.d.

¹¹⁸ United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *UN Register of Conventional Arms*. N.d.

¹¹⁹ The Arms Trade Treaty. *Reporting Requirements*. 2024.

¹²⁰ Holtom et al. Arms Control Association. *The Case for Strengthening Transparency in Conventional Arms Transfers*. 2022; Wezeman et al. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. *A Practical Guide to State Participation in the UN Report on Military Expenditures*. 2022. p. 1.

¹²¹ Wezeman et al. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. *A Practical Guide to State Participation in the UN Report on Military Expenditures*. 2022. p. 2; Statista. *Countries with the Highest Military Spending Worldwide in 2023*. 2024.



have reported their disaggregated military expenditures under the UNMILEX reporting system.¹²² Similarly, the transparency on arms trade data has been decreasing, proving Member States' hesitance to publicly share arms transfer information.¹²³ For instance, only 41 Member States contributed to the annual UNROCA reporting in 2022 and 44 ATT reports were publicly submitted in 2021.¹²⁴ Additionally, the quality of reports and accuracy of data varies between Member States.¹²⁵

Regional approaches to foster increased reporting can assist in overcoming reporting challenges and the increasing lack of transparency.¹²⁶ Data can be collected in regional and subregional contexts as a method to monitor trends in State reporting and complement the existing monitoring tools of the United Nations.¹²⁷ General Assembly resolution 77/33 (2022) on "objective information on military matters, including transparency of military expenditures" calls on regional organizations to advance military transparency and reporting.¹²⁸ It also calls for exchanging data with the United Nations.¹²⁹

Regional efforts to promote the implementation of the ATT are ongoing, including the implementation of workshops, guides, meetings, assessment projects, legal commentaries, and training courses, thus contributing to tackling the challenges of inaccurate information and reporting.¹³⁰ The European Union (EU) ATT Outreach Project was created to distribute best practice examples and training to strengthen national jurisdictions through advancing arms trade transparency efforts and aiding Member States in updating current and developing new legislation that aligns with guidelines set in the ATT.¹³¹ Colombia and Senegal hosted regional ATT outreach forums and workshops, both leading to improvements in confidence-building and transparency collaboration efforts in Latin America and West Africa.¹³² The ATT Secretariat is identifying regional champions on reporting for assisting other Member States in the region in reporting.¹³³

¹²² United Nations, General Assembly. *Objective Information on Military Matters, including Transparency of Military Expenditures. Report of the Secretary-General (A/78/158)*. 2023. p. 4.

¹²³ Holtom et al. Arms Control Association. *The Case for Strengthening Transparency in Conventional Arms Transfers*. 2022.

¹²⁴ *ibid.*

¹²⁵ *ibid.*; Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. *SIPRI Military Expenditure Database - Frequently Asked Questions*. 2024.

¹²⁶ United Nations, General Assembly. *Objective Information on Military Matters, including Transparency of Military Expenditures (A/RES/77/33)*. 2022.

¹²⁷ United Nations, General Assembly. *Group of Governmental Experts to Review the Operation and Further Development of the United Nations Report on Military Expenditures (A/72/293)*. 2017. p. 12.

¹²⁸ United Nations, General Assembly. *Objective Information on Military Matters, including Transparency of Military Expenditures (A/RES/77/33)*. 2022.

¹²⁹ *ibid.*

¹³⁰ Bauer et al. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. *Implementing the Arms Trade Treaty: Building on Available Guidelines and Assistance Activities*. 2015. pp. 4, 6; Stohl. Stimson Centre. *The Arms Trade Treaty at 10: Reflections and Recommendations*. 2024. pp. 29, 31.

¹³¹ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. *The EU ATT Outreach Project*. 2014. p. 5; Stohl. Stimson Centre. *The Arms Trade Treaty at 10: Reflections and Recommendations*. 2024. p. 31.

¹³² Bauer et al. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. *Implementing the Arms Trade Treaty: Building on Available Guidelines and Assistance Activities*. 2015. pp. 7-8.

¹³³ Stohl. Stimson Centre. *The Arms Trade Treaty at 10: Reflections and Recommendations*. 2024. p. 29.



Granting regions and Member States access to set guidelines in expenditure reporting provides the ATT and international databases like UNROCA with more accurate transparency data.¹³⁴ Setting clear standards for Member States to meet in standardized reporting establishes a foundation to compare transparency data between regions and the international community.¹³⁵ Regional efforts can reinforce transparency endeavors at the international level.¹³⁶ Additionally, technical assistance in reporting could help to increase participation, with regional and subregional approaches contributing to this.¹³⁷

Strengthening Regional Confidence-Building Infrastructure

Trust in the strength of regional confidence-building infrastructure is declining due to lasting tensions between Member States and the erosion of existing infrastructure, posing a strong risk to regional and international security.¹³⁸ In the Agenda for Disarmament, the Secretary-General expresses concern for the safety of citizens and governments due to a lack of communication and cooperation between Member States.¹³⁹ Examples of the erosion of existing CBMs include the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) or European security architecture.¹⁴⁰ The JCPOA was established in 2015 between Iran, the five permanent members of the Security Council, the EU, and Germany.¹⁴¹ After the withdrawal of the United States from the JCPOA in 2018, Iran re-started its nuclear programs and both parties were unable to come to a compromise.¹⁴² In the context of the European security architecture, arms control treaties and other CBMs such as the *Treaty on Open Skies* or the *Vienna Document* have been suspended or violated in the past years.¹⁴³ The invasion of Ukraine especially, poses a major threat to multilateralism, e.g. by paralyzing the OSCE.¹⁴⁴

Regions with limited stability and implementation of CBMs continue to experience increasing risk of conflict, decreasing the chances of effective cooperation.¹⁴⁵ In the Indo-Pacific, a region with simmering conflicts, effective CBMs would be needed to prevent further instability.¹⁴⁶ The lack of disarmament treaties or CBMs targeting the rapid military advancements in Asia and hesitance from Member States to

¹³⁴ Hagelin et al. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. *Transparency in the Arms Life Cycle*. 2006. pp. 266-267; Holtom et al. Arms Control Association. *The Case for Strengthening Transparency in Conventional Arms Transfers*. 2022.

¹³⁵ Hagelin et al. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. *Transparency in the Arms Life Cycle*. 2006. pp. 266-267.

¹³⁶ United Nations, General Assembly. *Group of Governmental Experts to Review the Operation and Further Development of the United Nations Report on Military Expenditures (A/72/293)*. 2017. p. 12.

¹³⁷ Holtom et al. Arms Control Association. *The Case for Strengthening Transparency in Conventional Arms Transfers*. 2022; Stohl. Stimson Centre. *The Arms Trade Treaty at 10: Reflections and Recommendations*. 2024. p. 16.

¹³⁸ United Nations, Secretary-General. *Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament*. 2018. p. vii.

¹³⁹ *ibid.* pp. vii-viii.

¹⁴⁰ Katsioulis et al. Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung. *Navigating the Disarray of European Security*. 2022. pp. 95-101; Robinson. Council on Foreign Relations. *What is the Iran Nuclear Deal?*. 2023.

¹⁴¹ Robinson. Council on Foreign Relations. *What is the Iran Nuclear Deal?*. 2023.

¹⁴² *ibid.*

¹⁴³ Hammer. Time. *The Collapse of Global Arms Control*. 2023.

¹⁴⁴ *ibid.*; Liechtenstein. Security and Human Rights Monitor. *How Creative Diplomacy has Averted a Collapse of the OSCE – until now*. 2023.

¹⁴⁵ Rudischhauser. German Institute for Global and Area Studies. *The Indo-Pacific: Confidence-Building in Times of Growing Conflict Potential*. 2023.

¹⁴⁶ Glaser. Center for Strategic and International Studies. *Cross-Strait Confidence Building: The Case for Military Confidence-Building Measures*. 2005. p. 158; Rudischhauser. German Institute for Global and Area Studies. *The Indo-Pacific: Confidence-Building in Times of Growing Conflict Potential*. 2023.



comply with and follow them creates significant risks.¹⁴⁷ Similarly, experts have been highlighting the need to establish CBMs in the Middle East, which have been largely absent in the past.¹⁴⁸ Yet, there have also been successful examples of CBMs despite tensions, in particular when the Member States share the same interests.¹⁴⁹ The *India-Pakistan Non-Attack Agreement* (1988) serves as an effective example to follow during the design of region-specific CBMs.¹⁵⁰ Easing decades of tension, both Member States agreed to prevent attacks on nuclear facilities and protect against radioactive threats, successfully meeting the agreement's conditions.¹⁵¹ As a result, the Non-Attack Agreement accomplished the milestone of the longest-lasting and strongest CBM established between India and Pakistan.¹⁵²

Vulnerabilities in the regional implementation of official arms trade documents like the ATT could open loopholes for exploitation of CBMs.¹⁵³ Weaknesses in a state's national security and disarmament sectors, including unregulated arms stocking and poor border governance, can contribute to the illegal arms market, therefore significantly increasing the risk of instability.¹⁵⁴ At the same time, it has been noted that regional SALW projects have seen more success than national efforts.¹⁵⁵ For example, UNREC implemented a project in the Sahel region to address stockpile management of SALW.¹⁵⁶

Prioritizing collaboration and partnership between regional and subregional organizations and the United Nations is imperative to the success of mending vulnerabilities in major regional confidence-building infrastructure.¹⁵⁷ Strengthening of regional CBM infrastructure starts with a discussion on the subregional scale to point out common vulnerabilities, which can then be brought to regional and international bodies for guidance and direction.¹⁵⁸ Subregional and regional organizations and Member States within the region are more familiar with the irregularities in existing confidence-building infrastructure.¹⁵⁹ The eventual intervention of Member States with the assistance of regional and international organizations supports subregional organizations in the application of reformed measures.¹⁶⁰

¹⁴⁷ Rudischhauser. German Institute for Global and Area Studies. *The Indo-Pacific: Confidence-Building in Times of Growing Conflict Potential*. 2023.

¹⁴⁸ Middle East Directions. *Confidence Building to Avoid Military Clashes in the Persian Gulf*. 2021; Vakil et al. Chatham House. *Steps to Enable a Middle East Regional Security Process*. 2021.

¹⁴⁹ Akhtar et al. Stanley Center for Peace and Security. *Through the Sands of Time: The Enduring Legacy of the India-Pakistan Non-Attack Agreement*. 2024. p. 6.

¹⁵⁰ *ibid.* p. 6.

¹⁵¹ *ibid.* p. 6.

¹⁵² *ibid.* p. 6.

¹⁵³ Spano et al. The Centre for Armed Violence Reduction. *The Arms Trade Treaty and Regional Benefits*. 2017. p. 109.

¹⁵⁴ *ibid.* p. 109.

¹⁵⁵ Alusala. ENACT. *Africa and Arms Control: Challenges and Successes*. 2018. pp. 3-4.

¹⁵⁶ *ibid.* p. 4.

¹⁵⁷ United Nations, Secretary-General. *Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament*. 2018. p. 65; United Nations Department of Global Communications. *Amid Rising Tensions, Emerging Threats in Eurasia, Assistant Secretary-General, Briefing Security Council, Notes Regional Organizations Can Help Build Bridges*. 2024.

¹⁵⁸ Rudischhauser. German Institute for Global and Area Studies. *The Indo-Pacific: Confidence-Building in Times of Growing Conflict Potential*. 2023.

¹⁵⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁶⁰ *ibid.*



Conclusion

Cooperation between United Nations disarmament organs, regions, and individual Member States plays a key role in establishing stable and secure regional or sub regional CBM structures.¹⁶¹ In times of deteriorating trust and instability, confidence-building infrastructure is increasingly challenged but also increasingly important; thus new innovative solutions and renewed commitments in the field of confidence-building are needed.¹⁶² Given the increase in military spending and the decreasing willingness to make information available, a particular field of attention is the question of how to advance transparency in military expenditure and spending.¹⁶³ Another aspect is to strengthen confidence-building infrastructure, meaning finding solutions to strengthen existing avenues as well as setting up new measures on a regional and subregional level.¹⁶⁴ Thus, new innovative solutions and renewed commitments in the field of confidence-building are much needed.¹⁶⁵

Further Research

As delegates conduct further research on how to address this topic, they should consider: How can trust be restored in the international disarmament mechanisms? How can existing mechanisms be adapted and reinvented? What confidence-building measures can be taken by regional and subregional actors? What actions can the General Assembly take to continue the promotion of transparency in expenditures in major regional organizations? What non-military CBMs can Member States implement to strengthen military-focused CBMs?

¹⁶¹ United Nations, Secretary-General. *Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament*. 2018. p. 35; United Nations, General Assembly. *Confidence-Building Measures in the Regional and Subregional Context (A/RES/78/38)*. 2023.

¹⁶² Whitfield. Conciliation Resources. *Still Time to Talk: Adaptation and Innovation in Peace Mediation*. 2024. pp. 100-101.

¹⁶³ Holtom et al. Arms Control Association. *The Case for Strengthening Transparency in Conventional Arms Transfers*. 2022; Marksteiner et al. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. *Improving Transparency in Military Spending through Disaggregated Information*. 2022.

¹⁶⁴ Whitfield. Conciliation Resources. *Still Time to Talk: Adaptation and Innovation in Peace Mediation*. 2024. pp. 100-101.

¹⁶⁵ *ibid.* pp. 100-101.



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2. Promoting Nuclear Disarmament and International Security

*"The paradox is that when each country pursues its own security without regard for others, we create global insecurity that threatens us all."*¹⁶⁶

Introduction

Nuclear weapons are the most dangerous weapons on our planet.¹⁶⁷ Deployed in warfare, they have the potential to destroy entire cities, kill millions of people, and cause serious long-term effects on human health, the natural environment, and socio-economic development that national borders cannot confine.¹⁶⁸ Moreover, the over 2,000 nuclear tests that have been carried out since 1945 have had devastating environmental consequences, including contaminating water sources, and causing desertification, landslides, tsunamis, and earthquakes.¹⁶⁹ Despite being used only twice in warfare, in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, increasing geopolitical tensions and growing distrust have made the risk of nuclear warfare the highest in decades.¹⁷⁰ Furthermore, the acquisition and use of nuclear weapons by non-state actors such as terrorist organizations pose a significant threat to international security and exacerbate the urgency for effective nuclear disarmament.¹⁷¹

Nuclear disarmament is essential to strengthen international security and prevent the use of nuclear weapons.¹⁷² Defined as the reduction and eventual elimination of nuclear weapons, nuclear disarmament is the only instrument to effectively prevent the use of nuclear weapons and has been a priority for the General Assembly First Committee since its establishment.¹⁷³ Measures to promote nuclear disarmament include not only the reduction of arsenals, but also building confidence among Member States and implementing measures to control and limit the development of new types of nuclear weapons.¹⁷⁴ In addition to that, robust verification arrangements, such as on-site inspections or satellite monitoring, are crucial to ensure the irreversibility of disarmament efforts.¹⁷⁵ By providing assurances that Member States are keeping their obligations under international disarmament treaties, verification measures can contribute to strengthening international security.¹⁷⁶ Such measures also address the challenge of dual-use materials, which, while critical for civilian purposes such as energy production and medical

¹⁶⁶ Guterres. United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Remarks at the University of Geneva on the launch of the Disarmament Agenda*. 2018.

¹⁶⁷ United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Nuclear Weapons*. 2024.

¹⁶⁸ International Committee of the Red Cross. *Humanitarian impacts and risks of use of nuclear weapons*. 2020; United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Nuclear Weapons*. 2024.

¹⁶⁹ Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization. *Banning Nuclear Explosions Protects the Environment*. 2024.

¹⁷⁰ Guterres. United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Secretary-General's briefing to the General Assembly on Priorities for 2023*. 2023.

¹⁷¹ Suh et al. German Council of Foreign Relations. *Nuclear Terrorism*. 2021.

¹⁷² United Nations, General Assembly. *Final Document of the Tenth Special Session of the General Assembly (A/RES/S-10/2)*. 1978. p. 3.

¹⁷³ United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament*. 2018. p. 6; United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Global Issues: Disarmament*. 2024.

¹⁷⁴ United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament*. 2018. p. 6.

¹⁷⁵ Podvig. United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research. *Transparency in Nuclear Disarmament*. 2012. p. 3.

¹⁷⁶ *ibid.* p. 3.



applications, can be diverted for building nuclear weapons or fall into the hands of terrorists if not adequately controlled.¹⁷⁷ Hence, careful implementation of nuclear safeguards is key in preventing, detecting, and deterring the misuse of nuclear material to protect international security while allowing for the development of peaceful applications of nuclear technology.¹⁷⁸

The process of nuclear disarmament remains a major global challenge.¹⁷⁹ Although nuclear disarmament has been a primary objective of the United Nations since its founding, approximately 12,500 nuclear warheads remain globally, and the number of operational warheads is rising again.¹⁸⁰ To this day, more than half of the world's population lives in Member States whose national defense programs rely on nuclear weapons either directly or through nuclear-armed allies.¹⁸¹ The leading causes of this insufficient progress in nuclear disarmament are a severe lack of commitment to the international non-proliferation regime and deteriorating international security.¹⁸² In recent years, the international community has witnessed renewed geopolitical tensions, increasingly complex armed conflicts, a changing global order, and eroding respect for international norms.¹⁸³ As tensions and distrust rise, Member States perceive nuclear arsenals as essential deterrents against threats and become less willing to engage in disarmament discussions.¹⁸⁴ Additionally, the two states with the largest nuclear arsenals, the United States and Russia, withdrew from some of their disarmament commitments in recent years, and there are currently no nuclear disarmament negotiations in progress.¹⁸⁵ Yet, it is especially in this deteriorated security environment that nuclear disarmament becomes more essential.¹⁸⁶

International and Regional Framework

The *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons* (NPT) (1968) built the foundation for efforts to achieve nuclear disarmament but now faces growing challenges.¹⁸⁷ It intends to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons, promote the peaceful use of nuclear energy, and further the goal of achieving international security and complete nuclear disarmament.¹⁸⁸ Today, a total of 191 Member States have joined the treaty, which prohibits nuclear-weapon States parties from transferring such weapons and

¹⁷⁷ Ferguson. Nuclear Threat Initiative. *Risks of Civilian Plutonium Programs*. 2004.

¹⁷⁸ European Commission. *Nuclear safeguards and non-proliferation*. 2024.

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¹⁸⁰ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons*. 2024; Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. *SIPRI Yearbook 2024*. 2024. p. 12.

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¹⁸² International Institutions and Global Governance Program. Council on Foreign Relations. *The Global Nuclear Nonproliferation Regime*. 2012.

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¹⁸⁷ United Nations, General Assembly. *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (A/RES/2373(XXII))*. 1968.

¹⁸⁸ *ibid.*



non-nuclear-weapon States parties from manufacturing or acquiring them.¹⁸⁹ Its provisions are reviewed in five-year intervals, and compliance is verified through a safeguarding system under the responsibility of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).¹⁹⁰ However, the effective implementation of NPT is challenged by increasing nationalism, the spread of nuclear technology, and the non-participation of several nuclear-weapon states.¹⁹¹ Nevertheless, the adoption of the *Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons* (TPNW) (2017) made considerable contributions to the fulfillment of NPT's provision to stipulate negotiations on a treaty on general and complete nuclear disarmament.¹⁹² It is the most recent international treaty in this field and prohibits the use, possession, deployment, production, testing, and stockpiling of nuclear weapons.¹⁹³ But despite the success of adopting such a far-reaching treaty, its potential impact on the elimination of nuclear weapons is limited since none of the current nuclear-weapon states have signed the treaty.¹⁹⁴ Moreover, states whose security is guaranteed by nuclear powers are reluctant to sign TPNW because doing so would prevent them from stationing nuclear weapons of their allies on their territory.¹⁹⁵

Furthermore, the international community has established a series of agreements and treaties that increasingly limit the use, testing, and development of nuclear weapons.¹⁹⁶ Aiming to limit radioactive contamination of the environment, the United States, the Soviet Union, and the United Kingdom signed the *Partial Test-Ban Treaty* (1963), which 125 Member States have since ratified.¹⁹⁷ It bans nuclear explosions in the atmosphere, underwater, and in outer space.¹⁹⁸ However, instead of limiting nuclear testing, Member States resorted to testing nuclear weapons underground - a gap in the treaty that was later closed by the *Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty* (CTBT) (1996), which prohibits all nuclear testing.¹⁹⁹ Since it was concluded, CTBT has been ratified by 178 Member States but has not yet entered into force.²⁰⁰ For the treaty to come into effect, all of the 44 Member States that possessed nuclear power or research reactors at the time of the adoption of the treaty and are listed in Annex 2 of the treaty have to ratify it.²⁰¹ However, nine of them have not yet done so.²⁰² Instead of addressing nuclear activities in general, other international treaties limit the use, testing, and development of nuclear weapons in certain

¹⁸⁹ United Nations, General Assembly. *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons* (A/RES/2373(XXII)). 1968.

¹⁹⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁹¹ Lee et al. *Challenges to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty*. 2020.

¹⁹² United Nations, General Assembly. *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons* (A/RES/2373(XXII)). 1968; United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Treaty on the prohibition of nuclear weapons*. 2023.

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¹⁹⁴ Trezza. *The UN Nuclear Ban Treaty and the NPT: Challenges for Nuclear Disarmament*. 2017.

¹⁹⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁹⁶ United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Nuclear Weapons*. 2024.

¹⁹⁷ Nuclear Threat Initiative. *Partial Test Ban Treaty (PTBT)*. 2008.

¹⁹⁸ United Nations, Department of Public Information. *Treaty banning nuclear weapon tests in the atmosphere, in outer space and under water*. 1963.

¹⁹⁹ Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization. *Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)*. 2024.

²⁰⁰ *ibid.*

²⁰¹ *ibid.*

²⁰² *ibid.*



territories.²⁰³ These include the *Antarctic Treaty* (1959), *Outer Space Treaty* (1967), *Seabed Arms Control Treaty* (1971), and *Moon Agreement* (1979).²⁰⁴

Several international agreements highlight the link between peaceful uses of nuclear technology, the protection and safe handling of dual-use materials, and the threat of nuclear terrorism.²⁰⁵ If used for criminal or other malicious purposes, stolen or lost nuclear material has the potential to cause significant consequences to people, property, and the environment, and poses a substantial threat to international security.²⁰⁶ As one of the first legal instruments related to nuclear security, the *Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material* (CPPNM) (1979) created obligations to physically protect nuclear material, criminalize certain offenses, and encourage international cooperation to resolve threats caused by unlawful takings of nuclear material.²⁰⁷ Following concerns over gaps in the convention, the General Assembly adopted the *International Convention on the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism* (ICSANT) (2005), obligating States parties to criminalize acts of nuclear terrorism and creating guidelines on extraditing and punishing offenders.²⁰⁸ Explicitly addressing the safety of nuclear power plants, the *Convention on Nuclear Safety* (1994) obligates States parties to implement safety standards and regulations at their nuclear facilities.²⁰⁹ Looking ahead, a multi-faceted approach to nuclear security is needed, addressing challenges such as technological advancements while continually adapting safety standards to a changing global landscape.²¹⁰

Several bilateral and regional treaties and arrangements seek to promote nuclear disarmament, build confidence, and maintain international security.²¹¹ Russia and the United States, the two states with the largest stockpiles of nuclear weapons, have long engaged in bilateral negotiations and managed to significantly reduce their nuclear arsenals by signing several agreements, such as the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT), including SALT I (1969) and SALT II (1979), and the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaties (START), including START I (1991), START II (1993), and New START (2010).²¹² However, crises and ongoing tensions have repeatedly led to disruptions, including Russia's withdrawal from New START in 2023.²¹³ On a regional level, a total of over 100 Member States have signed agreements and joined Nuclear-Weapon-Free-Zones (NWFZ) in Latin America and the Caribbean, South Pacific, Southeast Asia, Africa, and Central Asia.²¹⁴ They were established in response to shared security concerns by legally binding agreements that prohibit the acquisition, possession, testing, and use of

²⁰³ Arms Control Association. *Treaties & Agreements*. N.d.

²⁰⁴ *ibid.*

²⁰⁵ Nuclear Energy Agency. *International conventions and agreements*. 2024.

²⁰⁶ International Atomic Energy Agency. *IAEA Database Shows Continued Incidents of Trafficking and Loss of Control of Nuclear and Other Radioactive Material*. 2020.

²⁰⁷ International Atomic Energy Agency. *Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material (CPPNM) and its Amendment*. 2022.

²⁰⁸ United Nations, General Assembly. *International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism (A/RES/59/290)*. 2005.

²⁰⁹ International Atomic Energy Agency. *Convention on Nuclear Safety (INFCIRC/449)*. 1994.

²¹⁰ International Atomic Energy Agency. *INSAG Forum: The Future of Nuclear Safety and Influencing Factors*. 2023.

²¹¹ Heinrich Böll Foundation. *Nuclear Arms Control: The Most Relevant Treaties*. 2023.

²¹² Woolf. United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research. *The Past and Future of Bilateral Nuclear Arms Control*. 2023.

²¹³ *ibid.*

²¹⁴ United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones*. N.d.



nuclear weapons, and created systems of verification and control to guarantee compliance.²¹⁵ Beyond that, the General Assembly has promoted the establishment of NWFZ in the Middle East since it was first proposed in 1974.²¹⁶ However, due to ongoing geopolitical rivalries, security concerns, and the political influence from global nuclear powers in the region, the establishment of NWFZ or a similar arrangement appears unlikely.²¹⁷

Role of the International System

The General Assembly First Committee is one of the main United Nations bodies responsible for addressing nuclear disarmament and international security.²¹⁸ The Committee adopts resolutions that set norms and provide policy recommendations on non-proliferation, disarmament, arms control, and international security.²¹⁹ The General Assembly's first ever resolution 1(I) on the "establishment of a Commission to Deal with the Problems Raised by the Discovery of Atomic Energy" set the tone for the relevance of addressing nuclear disarmament and international security within the United Nations system.²²⁰ Its resolution 77/96 on "promoting international cooperation on peaceful uses in the context of international security," promotes the peaceful use of nuclear energy and advocates for compliance with non-proliferation obligations.²²¹ Furthermore, to effectively achieve nuclear disarmament verification, the General Assembly adopted resolution 78/239 on "nuclear disarmament verification", encouraging Member States to strengthen capacity-building efforts on both the international and regional level.²²²

Nuclear disarmament is one of the primary ways within the United Nations system to promote international security.²²³ Most recently, during the United Nations Summit of the Future, Member States adopted resolution 79/1 titled "the Pact for the Future," in which they recommitted themselves to eliminate nuclear weapons in all forms.²²⁴ In pursuit of general and complete disarmament, the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) provides substantive and organizational support to the General Assembly and other United Nations bodies.²²⁵ As another critical area of UNODA's work, confidence-building measures serve as the foundation for implementing legally binding measures and are the key to resume dialogue on nuclear disarmament.²²⁶ Additionally, UNODA held the Second Meeting of States parties to TPNW, during which Member States recognized the hindering effect of nuclear threat

²¹⁵ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Overview of Nuclear-Weapon-Free-Zones*. N.d.

²¹⁶ Davenport. Arms Control Association. *WMD-Free Middle East Proposal at a Glance*. 2019.

²¹⁷ Sabet. United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research. *Narratives of the Middle East WMD-Free Zone*. 2023.

²¹⁸ Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations. *The GA Handbook: A Practical Guide to the United Nations General Assembly*. 2017. p. 69.

²¹⁹ *ibid.* p. 69.

²²⁰ United Nations, General Assembly. *Establishment of a Commission to Deal with the Problems Raised by the Discovery of Atomic Energy (A/RES/1(I))*. 1946.

²²¹ United Nations, General Assembly. *Promoting International Cooperation on Peaceful Uses in the Context of International Security (A/RES/77/96)*. 2022.

²²² United Nations, General Assembly. *Nuclear disarmament verification (A/RES/78/239)*. 2023.

²²³ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Global Issues: Disarmament*. 2024.

²²⁴ United Nations, General Assembly. *The Pact for the Future (A/RES/79/1)*. 2024.

²²⁵ United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *About Us*. N.d.

²²⁶ United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament*. 2018. pp. 11, 18.



doctrines, such as deterrence strategies and first-use policies on nuclear disarmament progress.²²⁷ Complementing UNODA's efforts, IAEA aims to promote the peaceful uses of nuclear technology while administering safeguards that are designed to prevent the misuse of nuclear materials.²²⁸ To build confidence among states, these safeguards shall enable IAEA to independently verify that nuclear materials are used exclusively for peaceful purposes.²²⁹ Additionally, IAEA's Peaceful Uses Initiative raises extrabudgetary resources for IAEA to finance activities on the peaceful application of nuclear technologies.²³⁰ Furthermore, the Department of Nuclear Safety and Security within IAEA offers Member States technical support to prevent, detect, and respond to nuclear terrorism.²³¹

Regional and sub-regional cooperation complement international efforts and translate them into local contexts.²³² The African Union played an instrumental role in forming Africa into the largest NWFZ globally and consolidated efforts in nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation, and peaceful uses of nuclear technology through south-south cooperation.²³³ This form of cooperation is also supported through the Non-Aligned Movement, a forum with roots in the Cold War to counteract the two-block system, which also promotes nuclear disarmament and the peaceful use of nuclear technology.²³⁴ In the field of arms control and counter-terrorism, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe collaborates with the United Nations system to promote nuclear disarmament and international security by raising awareness and supporting the development of national action plans.²³⁵

Civil society organizations are instrumental in promoting nuclear disarmament and raising awareness.²³⁶ To promote a safer world through global engagement, the Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI) focuses on global engagement, and innovative and practical solutions.²³⁷ Through its Global Nuclear Policy Program, NTI collaborates with governments, other civil society organizations, and individuals to advocate for disarmament by promoting nuclear disarmament policies, fostering international cooperation, and conducting research for innovative disarmament approaches.²³⁸ Furthermore, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, an independent research institute, provides data and analysis on conflicts,

²²⁷ Second Meeting of States Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. *Report of the Second Meeting of State Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW/MSP/2023/14)*. 2023.

²²⁸ International Atomic Energy Agency. *Statute*. 1989. p. 5.

²²⁹ International Atomic Energy Agency. *IAEA Safeguards: Serving Nuclear Non-Proliferation*. 2024.

²³⁰ Kamishima. International Atomic Energy Agency. *Ten Years of the IAEA Peaceful Uses Initiative*. 2020.

²³¹ International Atomic Energy Agency. *Division of Nuclear Security*. 2024.

²³² United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament*. 2018. p. 65.

²³³ Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization. *Africa's Contribution to Putting an End to Nuclear Explosions*. 2018. p. 3; African Union. *Communique Adopted by the Peace and Security Council at its 837th meeting held on 4 April 2019 on international disarmament, with a focus on the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW)*. 2019.

²³⁴ United Nations, General Assembly. Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT/CONF.2020/PC.III/SR.1). 2019; Non-Aligned Movement. History. 2024.

²³⁵ Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. *Non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction*. N.d.; Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. *United Nations*. 2023; Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. *What is the OSCE?*. 2023.

²³⁶ United Nations, General Assembly. *Follow-up to the 2013 high-level meeting of the General Assembly on nuclear disarmament (A/RES/78/27)*. 2023.

²³⁷ Nuclear Threat Initiative. *Building a Safer World Through Innovation, Cooperation, and Action*. 2024.

²³⁸ Nuclear Threat Initiative. *Global Nuclear Policy Program (GNPP)*. 2024.



arms control, and disarmament to support international security.²³⁹ Additionally, as a coalition of non-governmental organizations, the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) advocates for the universal ratification and implementation of TPNW and challenges the legitimacy of nuclear deterrence.²⁴⁰ For its work to raise awareness of the threat posed by nuclear weapons, ICAN was awarded the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize.²⁴¹ Another Nobel Peace Prize on nuclear disarmament was awarded in 2024 to Nihon Hidankyo, a movement started by survivors of the nuclear attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, for their work on advocating against the use of nuclear technology for military purposes.²⁴²

Measures to Prevent Terrorist Actors from Acquiring Nuclear Weapons and Material

Nuclear terrorism is one of the most serious threats to international security.²⁴³ It refers to the use of nuclear materials by terrorist actors and can take on several different forms.²⁴⁴ Besides the use of a nuclear weapon, terrorists may attack nuclear power plants or create radiation dispersal devices, otherwise known as dirty bombs, using materials intended for energy production or medical applications.²⁴⁵ Among them, the use of a nuclear weapon stands out as potentially the most devastating, though it is also the most difficult to achieve.²⁴⁶ Nevertheless, even the dispersion of nuclear materials by a conventional explosive device can cause significant harm to human health and the environment, contaminate water supplies, and disrupt critical infrastructure.²⁴⁷ While terrorists have never used nuclear weapons or radioactive material, there is great concern among the international community over reports that certain terrorist groups have attempted to acquire nuclear material or planned to target nuclear facilities.²⁴⁸ Terrorist organizations such as Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State, for instance, have repeatedly expressed their intentions of acquiring nuclear weapons and attempted to procure nuclear material.²⁴⁹

Improving national legislation and international cooperation on nuclear security is critical in preventing nuclear terrorism.²⁵⁰ Between 1993 and 2021, IAEA recorded 630 incidents of radioactive material being stolen, and in 57% of these cases, the material was never recovered.²⁵¹ With information on how to produce an improvised nuclear device widely available, the most effective way to avoid nuclear terrorism is by preventing terrorists from acquiring nuclear material or accessing nuclear facilities.²⁵² This involves the use, storage, transportation, and disposal of nuclear materials in a secure manner, while also

²³⁹ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. *About SIPRI*. 2024.

²⁴⁰ International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons. *The Campaign*. N.d.; International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons. *Annual Report 2023*. 2024. p. 2.

²⁴¹ International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons. *The Campaign*. N.d.

²⁴² The Nobel Prize. Announcement. 2024.

²⁴³ United Nations, General Assembly. *International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism (A/RES/59/290)*. 2005.

²⁴⁴ International Atomic Energy Agency. *Talking About Terrorism*. 2006. p. 36.

²⁴⁵ *ibid.* p. 36; International Criminal Police Organization. *Radiological and Nuclear Terrorism*. 2024.

²⁴⁶ Hirschmann. *The Changing Face of Terrorism*. 2003. p. 305.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.* p. 306.

²⁴⁸ International Atomic Energy Agency. *Calculating the New Global Nuclear Terrorism Threat*. 2001. p. 2.

²⁴⁹ Bunn et al. Journal of Nuclear Materials Management. *All Stocks of Weapons-Usable Nuclear Materials Worldwide Must be Protected Against Global Terrorist Threats*. 2011. p. 1.

²⁵⁰ International Atomic Energy Agency. *Talking About Terrorism*. 2006. p. 37.

²⁵¹ International Atomic Energy Agency. *The Role of Safety and Security in Transport of Radioactive Material Discussed at Vienna Conference*. 2021.

²⁵² Brill et al. Arms Control Association. *Preventing Nuclear Terrorism: Next Steps in Building a Better Nuclear Security Regime*. 2017.



effectively responding to cases where material may be outside of regulatory oversight.²⁵³ Most importantly, even though nuclear security is widely recognized as a national responsibility, international cooperation is needed to ensure effective and sustainable nuclear security.²⁵⁴ In addition to that, the fact that terrorist organizations are not bound by international law or nuclear treaties calls for domestic legislation that includes mechanisms for holding individuals and entities accountable for actions related to nuclear security.²⁵⁵ In response to these challenges, Russia and the United States founded the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism (GICNT).²⁵⁶ Building on CPPNM and ICSANT, GICNT's nearly 90 Member States have committed themselves to a set of principles, including enhanced security at civilian nuclear facilities, the prevention of illicit trafficking of nuclear material, and increased information sharing.²⁵⁷ Recently, the General Assembly acknowledged the efforts of GICNT, urged Member States to strengthen national measures to prevent terrorist actors from acquiring such weapons, and encouraged further cooperation.²⁵⁸

Securing nuclear material is becoming more complex.²⁵⁹ With an increasing need for clean energy, there is a global growth in the number of nuclear facilities and transports of nuclear and radioactive material, especially in Member States that have limited experience in securing such materials.²⁶⁰ Furthermore, some of those Member States are located in regions that are characterized by political instability and armed conflict, and others are suspected of engaging in illicit activities and limited commitment to nuclear security.²⁶¹ But despite the increasing need for adequate protection of nuclear materials, nuclear security is declining in several Member States with weapons-usable nuclear materials and nuclear facilities.²⁶² At the same time, international efforts to improve nuclear security are largely inadequate due to the lack of obligatory review mechanisms and IAEA's limited role as an advisory and supporting rather than a regulatory entity.²⁶³

Strengthening the Peaceful Use of Nuclear Technology to Enhance International Security

Nuclear technologies, indispensable for sustainable development, have the potential to limit the diversion of materials to nuclear weapons.²⁶⁴ They offer numerous benefits in areas such as science, food and agriculture, human health, water resources, marine environment, and radiation technology.²⁶⁵ For

²⁵³ Buglova. International Atomic Energy Agency. *Nuclear Security for a Sustainable Future*. 2024.

²⁵⁴ *ibid.*

²⁵⁵ United Nations, General Assembly. *International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism (A/RES/59/290)*. 2005.

²⁵⁶ Nuclear Threat Initiative. *Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism (GICNT)*. 2023.

²⁵⁷ *ibid.*

²⁵⁸ United Nations, General Assembly. *Measures to Prevent terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction (A/RES/78/43)*. 2023.

²⁵⁹ Brill et al. Arms Control Association. *Preventing Nuclear Terrorism: Next Steps in Building a Better Nuclear Security Regime*. 2017.

²⁶⁰ *ibid.*

²⁶¹ *ibid.*

²⁶² Nuclear Threat Initiative. *Falling Short in a Dangerous World*. 2023. p. 7.

²⁶³ Brill et al. Arms Control Association. *Preventing Nuclear Terrorism: Next Steps in Building a Better Nuclear Security Regime*. 2017.

²⁶⁴ United Nations, Security Council. *Maintenance of international peace and security: Nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament (S/RES/1887(2009))*. 2009; United Nations, General Assembly. *Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT/CONF.2020/PC.III/SR.1)*. 2019.

²⁶⁵ International Atomic Energy Agency. *IAEA Annual Report 2022*. 2023. p. 57.



instance, nuclear technology can provide data on nutritional content and agricultural productivity, which is essential for accurate reporting on hunger and malnutrition, thus supporting progress towards Sustainable Development Goal 2 (zero hunger) of the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2015).²⁶⁶ In addition to that, in the context of climate change and the need for clean energy, nuclear power has become a significant energy source for many Member States.²⁶⁷ Therefore, policy regimes on nuclear disarmament must be drafted such that they effectively control the proliferation of nuclear material for military purposes while also ensuring that nuclear technology can be used peacefully to facilitate progress and innovation, and support sustainable development.²⁶⁸ Beyond that, NPT empowered Member States specifically to the peaceful use of technology needed to generate energy from nuclear reactors.²⁶⁹

The misuse of nuclear technology can pose significant risks to international security.²⁷⁰ As the reliance on nuclear technology grows and the overlap between military and civilian applications of nuclear-based technology increases, drafting regulations that promote nuclear technologies for peaceful purposes but impede their use for military purposes becomes increasingly difficult.²⁷¹ Additionally, there is increasing concern about the leakage of sensitive technologies and materials to adversary governments and non-state actors, such as terrorist groups.²⁷²

To prevent the diversion of nuclear materials, Member States must adhere to the obligations and commitments made under international agreements.²⁷³ Considering the dual-use nature of nuclear energy, NPT requires all States parties to accept and implement safeguards agreements with IAEA to ensure nuclear energy is used solely for peaceful purposes.²⁷⁴ NPT's three pillars, nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation, and peaceful uses of nuclear energy, are interconnected and must be pursued systematically and equally.²⁷⁵ As shown in General Assembly resolutions 71/67 and 78/239 on "nuclear disarmament verification", achieving complete nuclear disarmament also requires verification of Member States' peaceful usage of nuclear materials, for which continuous capacity-building and technical support are essential.²⁷⁶ The General Assembly also emphasized the importance of reviewing nuclear doctrines,

²⁶⁶ International Atomic Energy Agency. *Understanding Human Calorie Needs: IAEA Supports FAO and WHO*. 2024.

²⁶⁷ Moniz. Nuclear Threat Initiative. *Nuclear Non-Proliferation: Steps for the 21st Century*. 2019.

²⁶⁸ United Nations, Security Council. *Non-Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (S/RES/1540(2004))*. 2004.

²⁶⁹ United Nations, General Assembly. *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (A/RES/2373(XXII))*. 1968.

²⁷⁰ Ferguson. Nuclear Threat Initiative. *Risks of Civilian Plutonium Programs*. 2004.

²⁷¹ International Atomic Energy Agency. *Nuclear Law Institute: A Collective View on a Decade of Capacity Building and Development in Nuclear Law*. 2022. p. 172.

²⁷² United Nations, General Assembly. *The relationship between disarmament and development in the current international context (A/59/119)*. 2004.

²⁷³ United Nations, Security Council. *Maintenance of international peace and security: Nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament (S/RES/1887(2009))*. 2009.

²⁷⁴ United Nations, General Assembly. *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (A/RES/2373(XXII))*. 1968.

²⁷⁵ United Nations, 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. *Statement by the People's Republic of China, France, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America to the 2015 Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons Review Conference*. 2015. p. 1.

²⁷⁶ United Nations, General Assembly. *Final Document of the Tenth Special Session of the General Assembly (A/RES/S-10/2)*. 1978; United Nations, General Assembly. *Nuclear disarmament verification (A/RES/71/67)*. 2016; United Nations, General Assembly. *Nuclear disarmament verification (A/RES/78/239)*. 2023.



as these may pose significant obstacles to nuclear disarmament.²⁷⁷ Beyond that, diverging views on disarmament and proliferation of nuclear weapons among Member States demand cooperation between nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon states.²⁷⁸

Science and technological developments are outpacing existing normative and regulatory frameworks but can also support disarmament efforts.²⁷⁹ Advancements in the field of nuclear technology are complicating the enforcement of existing international agreements, highlighting the need for regulatory reviews.²⁸⁰ For example, the threat of nuclear proliferation has expanded from physical threats, such as the transport of nuclear material and equipment, to non-physical threats, such as the digital transfer of technologies.²⁸¹ In this regard, it is inefficient only to control items that are already listed in those agreements to prevent nuclear weapon proliferation.²⁸² On the other hand, new technological developments can support disarmament and confidence-building measures by promoting transparency and accountability among Member States.²⁸³ Some of the latest scientific and technical innovations, such as remote sensing technologies that are used to detect and monitor nuclear materials and activities from a distance through satellite imagery and other sensors, can be particularly useful in nuclear verification and non-proliferation efforts.²⁸⁴

Conclusion

Nuclear disarmament and international security reinforce each other.²⁸⁵ As geopolitical tensions rise and international dynamics evolve, nuclear weapons remain the most dangerous threat to international security, underscoring the urgency of nuclear disarmament.²⁸⁶ Meanwhile, rapid technological advancements still require updates on current normative and regulatory disarmament frameworks.²⁸⁷ Hence, to prioritize nuclear disarmament and promote international security, the international community must ensure that the use of nuclear technology is peaceful, beneficial, responsible, and sustainable.²⁸⁸ With the ongoing need for nuclear-based technologies, all Member States that utilize nuclear technology hold the responsibility of ensuring nuclear security.²⁸⁹ Moving forward, the promotion, enforcement, and

²⁷⁷ United Nations, General Assembly. *Reducing nuclear danger (A/RES/71/37)*. 2016; Second Meeting of States Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. *Report of the Second Meeting of State Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW/MSP/2023/14)*. 2023.

²⁷⁸ United Nations, General Assembly. *Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT/CONF.2020/PC.III/SR.1)*. 2019.

²⁷⁹ United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament*. 2018. pp. 51-52.

²⁸⁰ Stoutland. Nuclear Threat Initiative. *Detecting Proliferation Risks through Public Data*. 2024.

²⁸¹ International Atomic Energy Agency. *Nuclear Law Institute: A Collective View on a Decade of Capacity Building and Development in Nuclear Law*. 2022. pp. 172-178.

²⁸² *ibid.* p. 175.

²⁸³ United Nations, General Assembly. *The relationship between disarmament and development in the current international context (A/59/119)*. 2004.

²⁸⁴ International Atomic Energy Agency. *IAEA Safeguards: Serving Nuclear Non-Proliferation*. 2024.

²⁸⁵ United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament*. 2018. p. 14.

²⁸⁶ *ibid.* p. 3.

²⁸⁷ *ibid.* p. 52.

²⁸⁸ International Atomic Energy Agency. *Nuclear Energy Basic Principles*. 2008. p. 1.

²⁸⁹ International Atomic Energy Agency. *Factsheets and FAQs - Nuclear Safety*. 2011.



expansion of the existing international framework on nuclear disarmament is crucial for fostering international security.²⁹⁰

Further Research

As delegates conduct further research and consider how to address this topic, they should consider: How can existing nuclear disarmament frameworks be strengthened in the context of deteriorating international security? How can technological advancements be monitored effectively to ensure compliance with international treaties? What can be done to increase the ratification of CTBT and TPNW and ensure their full implementation? How can the international community ensure peaceful uses of nuclear technology and nuclear non-proliferation?

²⁹⁰ International Atomic Energy Agency. *Factsheets and FAQs - Nuclear Safety*. 2011.



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