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## General Assembly First Committee Background Guide 2025

Written by Gamaliel Perez and Rahele Gadapaka



# NATIONAL MODEL UNITED NATIONS

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Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the 2025 National Model United Nations Washington DC Conference (NMUN•DC)! We are pleased to introduce you to our committee, the General Assembly First Committee. Your committee's work is facilitated by volunteer staff. This year's committee staff are Director Gamaliel Perez and Rahele Gadapaka. Gamaliel holds degrees in Political Theory and International Relations and has worked as a political campaign manager and analyst at the county level for several politicians. Rahele Gadapaka holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Cell and Molecular Biology, a Bachelor of Arts degree in Forensic Psychology, and currently works in the healthcare field. The preparation of these materials was supported by Under-Secretary-General Kenny Nguyen and Secretary-General, Alliyah Edwards.

The topics on the agenda for this committee are:

1. The Relationship between Disarmament and Sustainable Development
2. The Role of Science and Technology in the Context of International Security and Disarmament

The General Assembly First Committee is the United Nations' primary forum on international peace and security. The First Committee coordinates global security policy through thematic discussions and reports from the Security Council, ECOSOC, and specialized bodies. Negotiating consensus-based, non-binding resolutions and treaty recommendations for referral to the General Assembly Plenary. Its recent agenda links disarmament initiatives with the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals to advance stability.

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 their Position Papers by 11:59 p.m. (DC Time) on 15 October in accordance with the guidelines in the [Position Paper Guide](#) and the [DC Position Paper page](#).

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 Under-Secretary-General Kenny Nguyen at [usgkenny.dc@nmun.org](mailto:usgkenny.dc@nmun.org) or the Secretary-General, Alliyah Edwards at [secgen.dc@nmun.org](mailto:secgen.dc@nmun.org).

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

Gamaliel Perez, Director  
Rahele Gadapaka, Assistant Director



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## 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).<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup>

The General Assembly First Committee considers matters relating to disarmament and international peace and security.<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup>

### 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.<sup>5</sup> 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.<sup>6</sup> 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.<sup>7</sup>

The General Assembly adopts resolutions, which are formal documents expressing the agreement and will of the international community.<sup>8</sup> The majority of these resolutions are adopted by consensus, meaning no vote is taken and no Member State has specific cause to object.<sup>9</sup> 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

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations Conference on International Organization. *Charter of the United Nations*. 1945.

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

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. p. 69.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. pp. 69-70.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. p. 36.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. p. 52.

<sup>7</sup> United Nations Conference on International Organization. *Charter of the United Nations*. 1945.

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

<sup>9</sup> 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.<sup>10</sup>

- 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.<sup>11</sup>

The First Committee's mandate is based on that provided to the General Assembly by the *Charter of the United Nations*.<sup>12</sup> 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.<sup>13</sup>

### **Governance, Funding and Structure**

The General Assembly meets annually and is composed of all 193 United Nations Member States.<sup>14</sup> 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.<sup>15</sup> Observer status can be granted to intergovernmental organizations and states without full United Nations membership.<sup>16</sup> In the General Assembly, each Member State has one equal vote and most decisions require a simple majority.<sup>17</sup> As a principal organ of the United Nations, the General Assembly is largely self-governing, determining its own agenda, procedures, officers, and subsidiary bodies.<sup>18</sup> General Assembly meetings and events are funded through the United Nations regular budget.<sup>19</sup>

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

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid. p. 36; United Nations Conference on International Organization. *Charter of the United Nations*. 1945; UNFOLD ZERO. *UN Bodies*. N.d.

<sup>11</sup> 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.

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

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. pp. 68-70.

<sup>14</sup> United Nations Conference on International Organization. *Charter of the United Nations*. 1945.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *About Permanent Observers*. N.d.

<sup>17</sup> 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.

<sup>18</sup> 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.

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

<sup>20</sup> 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.<sup>21</sup> The United Nations Secretariat assists the First Committee by delivering substantive and logistical support.<sup>22</sup> 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.<sup>23</sup>

The First Committee also works in close cooperation with the Conference on Disarmament (CD) and the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC).<sup>24</sup> The CD is an independent entity and the only recognized “multilateral disarmament negotiating forum of the international community.”<sup>25</sup> 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.<sup>26</sup> Both the CD and UNDC report to the First Committee.<sup>27</sup> 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.<sup>28</sup>

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

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

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

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Conference on Disarmament*. N.d.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

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

<sup>28</sup> United Nations Conference on International Organization. *Charter of the United Nations*. 1945.



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## 1. The Relationship between Disarmament and Sustainable Development

*"Disarmament is an extremely important tool to strengthen peace and security, and to create the conditions for sustainable development and the promotion of human rights".<sup>29</sup>*

### Introduction

*Our Common Agenda Report of the Secretary-General* (2021) discussed collective peace and security have been tested due to various factors, like protracted conflicts and increased military expenditures.<sup>30</sup> In response, United Nations Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, has called for new strategic and multilateral partnerships to increase disarmament efforts, reducing the risk of future conflict outbreaks.<sup>31</sup> Disarmament efforts focus on the reduction and elimination of arms, weapons materials, and weapons delivery systems.<sup>32</sup> As a result, increasing arms races reflect decreased economic investment when compared to military expenditure.<sup>33</sup> Disarmament efforts assist reducing the gap in spending but also provide the condition for maintaining peace.<sup>34</sup> Sustainable development is based on the three central pillars of economic, environmental, and social inclusion that need to be in balance in order to ensure sustainability in development projects.<sup>35</sup>

Among the goals established by General Assembly resolution 70/1 on *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2030 Agenda) (2015), many can be improved through disarmament, and some have targets on peace and security.<sup>36</sup> Disarmament efforts contribute to the progress of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as was outlined in the Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament in 2018.<sup>37</sup> The agenda identifies four key ways it helps by reducing weapons of mass destruction, minimizing impact of conventional weapons, remaining vigilant of new emerging technology, and strengthening disarmament institutions.<sup>38</sup> Poverty and financial instability are common risk factors in regions afflicted by armed conflict and create tensions that fuel instability.<sup>39</sup> Investing in economic development and addressing issues, such as poverty through disarmament efforts would increase the global economy and assist in maintaining peace internationally.<sup>40</sup> In 2024, global military spending increased by 6.8% from the previous year, the steepest increase seen since 2009.<sup>41</sup> In response to regional security issues and rising tensions amid flash points located in Europe and the Middle East, many Member States are re-prioritizing military expenditures and prompting regional neighbors to do the same.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *New Disarmament Agenda: "Securing Our Common Future."* 2018.

<sup>30</sup> Guterres. *Our Common Agenda Report of the Secretary-General*. 2021. p. 59.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. p. 59.

<sup>32</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Report of the International Conference on the Relationship Between Disarmament and Development (A/39/160)*. 1984. pp. 1-4.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. pp. 1-4.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. pp. 1-4.

<sup>35</sup> International Atomic Energy Agency. *Sustainability in Energy Planning*. N.d.

<sup>36</sup> United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Disarmament and Sustainable Development*. N.d.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. pp. 1-4.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. pp. 1-4.

<sup>41</sup> Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. *Global military spending surges amid war, rising tensions and insecurity*. 2024.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.



Current growth outcomes for low-income countries are below expectations from previous years with the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) remaining the most vulnerable due to financial restraints and insufficient resources.<sup>43</sup> Despite continued global growth, LDCs continue to face challenges such as high debt levels, minimal investment and growth, and demographic pressures.<sup>44</sup> While some progress has been seen in achieving the SDGs, such as poverty levels returning to pre-pandemic levels, many have fallen behind the targets set for 2030.<sup>45</sup> The reduction of arms and adherence to disarmament treaties help reduce risk factors for conflict and contribute to achieving the SDGs.<sup>46</sup>

### *International and Regional Framework*

The United Nations first convened for the International Conference on the Relationship between Disarmament and Development in 1987 in response to rising global tension and hostilities.<sup>47</sup> The conference sought to address rising global military expenditure, its impact on global development, and prioritizing the needs of developing states.<sup>48</sup> In the conference report, it was concluded that arms races and economic development compete for the same financial resources, and heavy investment in one removes the available pool for the other.<sup>49</sup> As such, there have been several landmark treaties that have attempted to disarm and regulate emerging technologies such as the *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons* (1968).<sup>50</sup> The treaty placed limits on what both nuclear and non-nuclear Member States could pursue in terms of nuclear technology and peaceful uses of nuclear materials in accordance with the standards from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).<sup>51</sup> It serves as the central pillar of nuclear disarmament as it includes paths for nuclear disarmament, as well as establishing IAEA to be the main regulatory and observing body to assist Member States for the peaceful use of nuclear material.<sup>52</sup> In 2015, the General Assembly adopted the 2030 Agenda, which established 17 SDGs to be achieved by 2030.<sup>53</sup>

The disarmament of nuclear weapons creates new opportunities to pursue sustainable development of nuclear energy and can greatly assist in achieving SDG 7 (clean and affordable energy).<sup>54</sup> More specifically, it assists target 7.2, on “substantially increasing the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix.”<sup>55</sup> In 2017, the General Assembly took it further by convening to form a legally binding

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<sup>43</sup> United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *World Economic Situation and Prospects 2025 Executive Summary*. 2025. pp. II-III.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. pp. II-III.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. pp. II-III.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid. pp. II-III.

<sup>47</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Report of the International Conference on the Relationship Between Disarmament and Development (A/39/160)*. 1984. pp. 1-4.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. pp. 1-4.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid. pp. 1-4.

<sup>50</sup> United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)*. N.d.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. 2015.

<sup>54</sup> World Nuclear Association. *Nuclear Energy and Sustainable Development*. 2024.

<sup>55</sup> United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all*. N.d.



agreement to prohibit nuclear weapons activities and seek their ultimate elimination.<sup>56</sup> The resulting *Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons*, placed new prohibitions on nuclear activity including development, testing, usage, and stockpiling of nuclear weapons.<sup>57</sup> The treaty also established a scientific advisory group aimed at assisting Member States to disarm and transition nuclear technology for sustainable development purposes.<sup>58</sup> The transition from nuclear weapons production to sustainable developmental use of nuclear materials also assists in SDG 13 (climate action) as nuclear energy is a cleaner alternative to combustible fuel sources.<sup>59</sup>

Disarmament contributes to SDG 3 (good health and wellbeing) as armed conflict is the leading cause of premature death and a key contributor to injury, distress, and disease.<sup>60</sup> In essence, energy transitions would achieve target 3.9, on “substantially reducing the number of deaths and illnesses from hazardous chemicals and air, water and soil pollution and contamination.”<sup>61</sup> The United Nations has addressed armed conflict through disarmament treaties by focusing on weapons that are most destructive to civilian populations such as small arms and conventional weapons, as outlined in the *Arms Trade Treaty* (ATT) in 2013.<sup>62</sup> The ATT serves as the main binding agreement between Member States that establishes standards for the international trade in conventional and small arms.<sup>63</sup> The main focus of the treaty is to seek to reduce armed conflict by eradicating the illicit sale of conventional weapons and prevent non-state actors from acquiring illegal armaments.<sup>64</sup> The regulation of the arms trade also helps peacekeeping missions operate with more regional security and reduces the risks of the outbreak of armed conflict.<sup>65</sup> Disarmament efforts also extend to SDG 11 (sustainable cities and communities) as small arms and conventional weapons are often used in armed conflicts that damages civilian infrastructure and forces displacement of people.<sup>66</sup> This would help promote target 11.5, on “significantly reducing the number of deaths and the number of people affected and substantially decreasing the direct economic losses relative to global gross domestic product.”<sup>67</sup> Other treaties such as the *Convention on Cluster Munitions* (2008) sought to completely outlaw further use and development of cluster munitions due to its effect on civilians.<sup>68</sup> Weapon systems such as cluster munitions that saw usage during armed conflicts were never detonated and still remain an active threat to civilians who may live in those areas.<sup>69</sup> The Convention also calls upon States to collect and share transparency reports on their progress and provide compliance verification to States parties.<sup>70</sup> SDG 4 (quality education) is improved by redistributing resources from

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<sup>56</sup> United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons*. 2017. N.d.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> World Nuclear Association. *Nuclear Energy and Sustainable Development*. 2024.

<sup>60</sup> Nakamitsu. United Nations Chronicle. *Advancing Disarmament Within the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. 2018.

<sup>61</sup> United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages*. N.d.

<sup>62</sup> United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Arms Trade*. N.d.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Nakamitsu. United Nations Chronicle. *Advancing Disarmament Within the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. 2018.

<sup>67</sup> United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable*. N.d.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.



arms accumulation to more funding of education programs and initiatives that assists in achieving target 4.4, on “substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship.”<sup>71</sup> In addition, it also benefits from increased disarmament education and leads to better youth empowerment and engagement for safer communities.<sup>72</sup> Disarmament efforts also help promote goal 5 (gender equality) as women are the most affected group by violence during armed conflict and can reduce gender based violence.<sup>73</sup> This in turn helps cultivate target 5.2 on “eliminating all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres.”<sup>74</sup> Furthermore, SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth) also benefits from disarmament as reduction of military expenditures creates new availability of resources to invest in economic development.<sup>75</sup> This can be seen through target 8.2, on “achieving higher levels of economic productivity through diversification, technological upgrading and innovation.”<sup>76</sup>

### *Role of the International System*

The *Charter of the United Nations* (1945) established the General Assembly First Committee as the primary organ to cover disarmament and global challenges to peace and security.<sup>77</sup> The General Assembly adopted resolution 77/45 on “Relationship between Disarmament and Development” (2022), that covered and urged Member States to reaffirm its commitment to disarmament efforts in order to achieve the SDGs.<sup>78</sup> The resolution discusses strengthening the High Level Steering Group on Disarmament and Development, investing resources into achieving disarmament treaties, and reducing the gap between developed and developing Member States.<sup>79</sup>

The United Nations has various bodies and agencies assisting the General Assembly First Committee on disarmament efforts, such as the Disarmament Commission.<sup>80</sup> Originally commissioned in 1952 by the General Assembly, it was under the direction of the Security Council and tasked with proposing a treaty that would ban weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) and a reduction of armed forces.<sup>81</sup> The proposals were unsuccessful and it was later re-established under the General Assembly in 1978 after the special session dedicated to disarmament.<sup>82</sup> Since then, the Disarmament Commission has provided guidelines, recommendations, and principles on various disarmament issues that pass through consensus.<sup>83</sup> A

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<sup>71</sup> Nakamitsu. United Nations Chronicle. *Advancing Disarmament Within the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. 2018.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls*. N.d.

<sup>75</sup> Nakamitsu. United Nations Chronicle. *Advancing Disarmament Within the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. 2018.

<sup>76</sup> United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all*. N.d.

<sup>77</sup> United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *The Role of Science and Technology in the context of International Security and Disarmament*. N.d.

<sup>78</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Relationship Between Disarmament and Development (A/77/45)*. 2022.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *United Nations Disarmament Commission*. N.d.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.



recently adopted recommendation came in 2023 with guidelines on implementing confidence building measures to prevent an arms race in outer space, and the working group for peaceful use of outer space.<sup>84</sup> United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) that was originally established in 1982 as a result of the General Assembly's second special session on disarmament.<sup>85</sup> In 1998, it was changed to the Department of Disarmament Affairs and later renamed UNODA in 2007.<sup>86</sup> Since then, UNODA's mandate covers eliminating nuclear weapons, addressing the humanitarian impact of conventional weapons, and emerging weapon technologies.<sup>87</sup> UNODA releases yearly reports with the most recent being the 2023 Disarmament Yearbook that covers global trends in regional disarmament, emerging autonomous weapons systems, and ongoing disarmament programs and efforts.<sup>88</sup> Disarmament efforts significantly impact SDG 16 (peace, justice, and strong institutions) and cover some of its targets and indicators.<sup>89</sup> Target 16.1, on "significantly reducing all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere", aims to reduce arms and draw conflict zones further away from urban zones.<sup>90</sup> Additionally, this achieves target 16.4 on "significantly reducing illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets and combat all forms of organized crime", by reducing illicit arms trade in the effort to reduce the number of arms in circulation in local communities and unregistered weapons that affect civilians most.<sup>91</sup>

Other efforts from UNODA on disarmament also reach indicator 16.4.2 by collecting data on all reports of arms seized and traced to place of origins disrupting chains of distribution.<sup>92</sup> There are other collaborative efforts such as the partnership between UNODA and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to collect data, report, and track the trade of illicit arms and ammunition in accordance with the ATT.<sup>93</sup> UNODA has also supported regional efforts, such as the Africa Amnesty Month, where participating Member States launched voluntary surrender campaigns providing incentives and benefits for people to submit unregistered firearms from communities.<sup>94</sup> UNODA has also collaborated with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to launch the Saving Lives Entity Fund, aimed at assisting Member States in addressing small arms causing armed violence and establishing sustainable peace.<sup>95</sup>

Additionally, the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) conducts research independently on current obstacles towards disarmament efforts.<sup>96</sup> The Advisory Board for UNIDIR provides updated reports of its work with its most recent titled "Work of the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters Report of the Secretary-General", that provides various suggestions on how

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<sup>84</sup> United Nations General Assembly. *Report of the Disarmament Commission for 2023 (A/78/42)*. 2023. p. 12.

<sup>85</sup> United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *About Us*. N.d.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *The United Nations Disarmament Yearbook 2023*. 2023. pp. 11-12.

<sup>89</sup> United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Disarmament and Sustainable Development*. N.d.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Relationship Between Disarmament and Development Report of the Secretary-General (A/78/128)*. 2023. p. 3.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid. p. 3.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid. p. 3.

<sup>96</sup> United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research. *About UNIDIR*. N.d.



Member States can cut costs on military spending and better arms control.<sup>97</sup> *Securing Our Common Future* also included several specific recommendations, such as strengthening the General Assembly First Committee by expanding the number of working groups addressing the various complexities of disarmament.<sup>98</sup> This outlines how several United Nations disarmament institutions have converging areas of interest and could operate more effectively through increased synergy in areas of overlapping interest.<sup>99</sup> Some suggestions in the agenda include increasing the relationship between the First Committee and UNIDIR by further coordinating studies and advisory efforts.<sup>100</sup> Other suggestions include further direct collaboration between Member States and UNODA in assisting disarmament policies through regional centers.<sup>101</sup> The United Nations system has an opportunity to support and encourage regional bodies and organizations in drafting action plans and policy recommendations in efforts with UNODA.<sup>102</sup>

### **Disarmament and SDGs 7 and 13**

Disarmament treaties and efforts also impact the availability of resources to invest from military expenditures to more sustainable development projects for achieving the SDGs.<sup>103</sup> Increasing access to global energy and meeting rising energy demands are not only crucial to the fulfillment of SDG 7 (affordable and clean energy), but also to SDG 13 (climate action).<sup>104</sup> As it stands, there are currently over 730 million people still without access to electricity, roughly 1 in 10 people globally, and 2.3 billion people who still rely on polluting fuels or energy for cooking and heating.<sup>105</sup> Renewable energies only represent 30% of electrical power usage and are often located in highly developed areas with many LDCs still remaining without access or clean energy.<sup>106</sup> The world's poorest 4 billion people only consume 5% of the energy of their higher developed counterparts with major regional inequalities like those in Sub-saharan Africa.<sup>107</sup> In order to ensure the delivery of modern affordable energy to all, energy demands would increase sharply and lead to massive environmental repercussions.<sup>108</sup> Over 80% of primary energy consumption across all sectors come from oil, gas, and coal yet the combustion of these fuels causes climate change, environmental damage, and death.<sup>109</sup> It is estimated that the carbon emissions from traditional fuel sources cause the premature death of over 7 million people annually.<sup>110</sup> The challenge of meeting global energy demands is increasing energy production without putting human health and the environment at risk.<sup>111</sup> Among energy alternatives, nuclear energy is seen as a robust option as it has the

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<sup>97</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Work of the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters Report of the Secretary-General (A/78/287)*. 2023. pp. 9-11.

<sup>98</sup> United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Securing Our Common Future An Agenda for Disarmament*. 2017.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> World Nuclear Association. *Nuclear Energy and Sustainable Development*. 2024.

<sup>105</sup> United Nations, Sustainable Development Goals. *Ensure Access to Affordable, Reliable, Sustainable and Modern Energy*. N.d.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> World Nuclear Association. *Nuclear Energy and Sustainable Development*. 2024.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.





lowest risk association with further environmental damage, impacts on human health, and affordability.<sup>112</sup> Nuclear disarmament treaties and efforts have been pivotal in redirecting investment from nuclear weapons to energy projects and providing safer and peaceful use of nuclear materials.<sup>113</sup>

Two major disarmament treaties crucial in the development of nuclear energy for peaceful uses come from the *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons* (NPT) and the *Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons* (TPNW) as both contain provisions and inclusion for peaceful uses of nuclear materials.<sup>114</sup> Under the NPT, IAEA acts as the overseeing body that directs the peaceful development of nuclear energies and the TPNW provides a scientific advisory board to assist Member States in transitioning nuclear technologies for the purpose of sustainable development.<sup>115</sup> Nuclear energy has several environmental advantages that comply with the targets set by the SDGs.<sup>116</sup> Nuclear energy plants require minimal land compared to other energy processing plants as nuclear plants only require 1.3 square miles to generate enough electricity for 750,000 homes.<sup>117</sup> While water is a critical resource for nuclear energy plants, several advancements in modern facilities, including hybrid cooling systems with water towers have reduced the amount required in order to maintain nuclear plants.<sup>118</sup> Additionally, high energy density uranium produces low volumes of waste compared to other energy sources and are maintained at facilities before being removed to permanent off site disposal centers as opposed to being drained directly into waterways and spreading pollutants.<sup>119</sup>

There are other economic benefits in investing in nuclear energy as construction and operating costs for nuclear energy plants are the most affordable clean energy source to maintain.<sup>120</sup> While traditional fuels like coal and gas are less expensive, they have more external costs that come from the vast amounts of emissions they produce that may lead into environmental clean up and further ecological damages.<sup>121</sup> Nuclear energy systems also have a significantly less harmful impact on quality of human life as they reduce pollution and improve air quality while providing higher skilled labor demand that stimulates economic activity and investment.<sup>122</sup> In addition, nuclear energy is more specialized and requires various levels of oversight from governments as well as compliance with the safety standards and direction from the IAEA.<sup>123</sup> IAEA also works with Member States at their request to facilitate and guide the establishment of nuclear energy programmes including safety regulations, establishing required infrastructure for plants, and technical guidance to support the nuclear fuel cycle and nuclear waste management.<sup>124</sup>

### ***Impact of Conflict on Economic Development and Communities***

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)*. N.d.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> World Nuclear Association *Nuclear Energy and Sustainable Development*. 2024.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> International Atomic Energy Agency. *Sustainable Development Goal 7: Affordable and Clean Energy*. N.d.

Economic development and prosperity has a longstanding relation with peace and security, since peace is a catalyst for economic well-being.<sup>125</sup> Achieving peace as a means for economic stability and growth is a logical strategy and key contributor with lasting implications.<sup>126</sup> Conflict resolution is a key driver of investor confidence that helps states begin the path of economic recovery and invest in sustainable development.<sup>127</sup> Protracted conflicts also extract a toll on human development, a key driver of economic growth.<sup>128</sup> Disarmament is therefore a crucial component in the maintenance and achievement of SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth) and target 8.2, on “achieving higher levels of economic productivity through diversification, technological upgrading and innovation that reinvests resources into innovation for job development and training.”<sup>129</sup> During armed conflict several services such as education, healthcare, and skill development are often disrupted or affected leaving civilians without crucial infrastructure.<sup>130</sup> Disarmament efforts are one tool used to achieve conflict resolution that can also lead to regional economic zones and stability.<sup>131</sup> The European Union (EU) serves as an example of regional economic ties leading to greater economic stability and maintenance of peace.<sup>132</sup> These conditions lead to trade agreements and partnerships that also function as a natural deterrent to conflict.<sup>133</sup> When multiple States are involved in the trade and production of shared goods, there is an increased interest in preventing conflict from disrupting supply lines.<sup>134</sup>

The war in Ukraine has been one example of how conflict disrupts and affects global trade.<sup>135</sup> Both Russia and Ukraine are key suppliers of various essential goods such as food, energy, and fertilizers.<sup>136</sup> Disruption of shipments through the Black Sea have caused new trade agreements and partnerships to form in order to ensure the delivery of needed goods.<sup>137</sup> The conflict significantly impacts several goods as Russia and Ukraine together comprise 53% of global trade of sunflower seeds/oil, 27% of wheat, and 23% of barley.<sup>138</sup> The disruption of these goods has caused increases in food prices and places food insecurity risks on communities dependent on food imports.<sup>139</sup> Other regional conflicts in the Middle East demonstrate how conflict can disrupt and regress the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of communities.<sup>140</sup> During the years of 2006 to 2022 the GDP of Gaza decreased by 27%.<sup>141</sup> According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) prior military operations in Gaza in 2014 debilitated 85% of the capital stock leading

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<sup>125</sup> Baibourtian et al. United Nations Chronicle. *The Economics of Peace: Exploring the Interplay between Economic Stability, Conflict Resolution and Global Prosperity*. 2024.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Ukraine conflict putting global trade recovery at risk: WTO*. 2022.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. *The Impact on Trade and Development of the War in Ukraine*. 2022. pp. 3-5.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid. pp. 3-5.

<sup>140</sup> United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. *Preliminary Assessment of the Economic Impact of the Destruction in Gaza*. 2024.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.



to 80% of the population dependent on international aid.<sup>142</sup> Similar trends can also be seen in the recovery actions for Syria.<sup>143</sup> According to economic growth reports from 2024, Syria's economy won't recover to its pre-conflict state until 2080.<sup>144</sup> The conflict shrunk Syria's GDP to half of what it was in 2011 at the start of the Syrian Civil War.<sup>145</sup> There is an estimated loss of USD \$800 billion in GDP over 14 years and has left many civilians without access to crucial infrastructure.<sup>146</sup> An estimated 5.7 million people have been left without shelter, another 14 million without access to clean water, and brought its Human Development Indicator to its lowest ever in history.<sup>147</sup>

## Conclusion

The relationship between disarmament and sustainable development has been a continued priority of the General Assembly First Committee and serves as a pillar for the maintenance of peace and security internationally.<sup>148</sup> In addressing the economic, environmental, and social aspect of sustainable development, disarmament and maintenance of peace can bring renewed efforts to achieve the SDGs.<sup>149</sup> As a result, the Secretary-General has called for new strengthening and adherence to existing disarmament mechanisms and institutions.<sup>150</sup> The various disarmament agendas provide recommendations to improve the United Nations system, as well as assisting Member States in implementing their own action plans and policies.<sup>151</sup> New investment of previous nuclear weapons technologies into nuclear energy help promote further sustainable energy and better impacts on the environment.<sup>152</sup> A rise in military expenditure has also seen a stall in global economic growth with LDCs remaining the most impacted by a lack of economic investment in sustainable development.<sup>153</sup> The 2030 Agenda is also linked to disarmament efforts as many goals and targets benefit from disarmament.<sup>154</sup> The reduction of small arms, conventional arms, and weapons of mass destruction help achieve a variety of goals and targets by securing peace and security.<sup>155</sup> The resolution of conflict is a critical condition for economic recovery and reinvestment as it creates regional economic blocs and stability.<sup>156</sup>

## Further Research

Delegates should consider the following when searching for further research: What are some obstacles to implementing disarmament practices? What are the impacts of military expenditure on sustainable

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Guterres. *Our Common Agenda Report of the Secretary-General*. 2021. p. 59.

<sup>149</sup> International Atomic Energy Agency. *Sustainability in Energy Planning*. N.d.

<sup>150</sup> Guterres. *Our Common Agenda Report of the Secretary-General*. 2021. p. 59.

<sup>151</sup> United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Securing Our Common Future An Agenda for Disarmament*. 2017.

<sup>152</sup> World Nuclear Association. *Nuclear Energy and Sustainable Development*. 2024.

<sup>153</sup> United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *World Economic Situation and Prospects 2025 Executive Summary*. 2025.

<sup>154</sup> Nakamitsu. United Nations Chronicle. *Advancing Disarmament Within the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. 2018.

<sup>155</sup> Baibourtian et al. United Nations Chronicle. *The Economics of Peace: Exploring the Interplay between Economic Stability, Conflict Resolution and Global Prosperity*. 2024.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.



development initiatives? What are improvements that the United Nations and its subsidiaries can make to increase the effectiveness of disarmament? How can Member States be further supported to redirect investment in sustainable development instead of military expenditure? What role, directly and indirectly, does disarmament play in the achievement of SDG 8? How can LDCs see the benefit of disarmament from investment in needed infrastructure for further sustainable development?



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## 2. The Role of Science and Technology in the Context of International Security and Disarmament

*“The fate of Humanity must never be left to the ‘Black Box’ of an algorithm”* <sup>157</sup>

### Introduction

Military expenditure refers to government spending on all current and active military personnel, military expenses, research, and airspace activities.<sup>158</sup> As discussed in *Our Common Agenda Report of the Secretary-General* (2021), collective peace and security have been at an increasing risk due to various factors such as protracted conflicts and increased military expenditures.<sup>159</sup> In 2024, global military spending increased by 6.8% from the previous year, reaching about \$2443 billion in total military spending, the steepest increase seen since 2009.<sup>160</sup> Regional security issues and rising tensions have caused many Member States to respond by re-prioritizing military expenditures, prompting regional neighbors to do the same.<sup>161</sup> While military spending has been increasing for nine years, it marks the first time there has been a recorded increase across all regions globally.<sup>162</sup> Rapid innovation in weapons technology has outpaced international law, as new systems emerge faster than global agreements can adapt to regulate them.<sup>163</sup>

The *Charter of the United Nations* (1945) established the General Assembly First Committee as the primary organ to cover disarmament and global challenges to peace and security.<sup>164</sup> A primary focus is assisting governments in disarmament efforts and the regulation of new emergent technologies.<sup>165</sup> In line with this, the General Assembly adopted resolution 43/77A, “Scientific and Technological Developments and Their Impact on International Security” (1988).<sup>166</sup> This resolution marked the UN’s first formal recognition of the security risks posed by emerging weapons technologies.<sup>167</sup> In 2023, the General Assembly adopted resolution 78/22, on “Role of science and technology in the context of international security and disarmament”, requesting a report on the growing impact of new weapons systems, digital/cyber technologies, and the use of artificial intelligence (AI).<sup>168</sup> In 2024, the follow-up document, “Current developments in science and technology and their potential impact on international security and disarmament efforts Report of the Secretary-General”, included various mentions of new technologies

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<sup>157</sup> United Nations. Secretary General. *Secretary-General's remarks to the Security Council - on Artificial Intelligence*. 2024.

<sup>158</sup> Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. SIPRI Definition of military expenditure. N.d.

<sup>159</sup> Guterres. *Our Common Agenda Report of the Secretary-General*. 2021. p. 59.

<sup>160</sup> Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. *Global military spending surges amid war, rising tensions and insecurity*. 2024.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

<sup>163</sup> Guterres. *Our Common Agenda Report of the Secretary-General*. 2021. p. 59.

<sup>164</sup> United Nations Office of Disarmament Affairs. *The Role of Science and Technology in the context of International Security and Disarmament*. N.d.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> United Nations General Assembly. *Role of science and technology in the context of international security and disarmament (A/RES/78/22)*. 2023.



and their potential threat to peace and security.<sup>169</sup> The consistent growth of the internet, including 7 billion connected devices, is expected to increase by 25 million in 2025, further increasing reliance on information and communication technologies (ICTs).<sup>170</sup> ICTs play a crucial role as they are often the key targets of digital and cyber attacks that can leave populations vulnerable due to malicious intent.<sup>171</sup> Increased spending has also driven the rapid development and investment of new weapons systems and technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI)-powered warfare, hypersonic missiles, and cyber capabilities, raising concerns over the effectiveness of existing arms control frameworks.<sup>172</sup> During a 2023 Security Council Meeting, the Secretary General emphasized that AI-enabled cyberattacks could destroy Member States' critical infrastructure and basic human rights of citizens.<sup>173</sup> From intelligence-based assessments to target selection, algorithms have reportedly already been used in making life-and-death decisions.<sup>174</sup> From 2015 to 2019, the top 100 arms manufacturers and producers experienced a 19% increase in revenue.<sup>175</sup> This upward trend continued post-COVID, with revenues reaching \$632 billion in 2023, a 4.2% rise from the previous year, driven by current escalating tensions and prolonged conflicts worldwide.<sup>176</sup>

### *International and Regional Framework*

The *Geneva Protocol*, adopted in 1925, is the international community's earliest effort to establish prohibitive norms and deter the harmful use of science and technology.<sup>177</sup> While it established international law prohibiting the use of chemical and biological weapons, it did not address potential future innovations.<sup>178</sup> To address the gaps, the *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons* (NPT) was adopted in 1968.<sup>179</sup> The NPT commits signatories to refrain from transferring or assisting in the development of nuclear weapons and requires non-nuclear weapon states to conclude Comprehensive Safeguards Agreements (CSAs) with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).<sup>180</sup> CSAs require disclosure of nuclear activities and acceptance of IAEA inspection of nuclear facilities, increasing transparency and reducing the furtherance of destructive weapons.<sup>181</sup> These agreements enhance transparency by allowing the IAEA to inspect nuclear sites, collect material samples, and monitor facilities via surveillance and satellite imagery.<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> United Nations General Assembly. *Current developments in science and technology and their potential impact on international security and disarmament efforts Report of the Secretary-General (A/79/224)*. 2024. pp. 4-5.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid. pp. 4-5.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid. pp. 4-5.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid. pp. 4-5.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid. pp. 4-5.

<sup>174</sup> Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. *The SIPRI Top 100 Arms-producing and Military Services Companies*. 2023.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

<sup>177</sup> Geneva Conference for the Supervision of the International Traffic in Arms. *Protocol for the Prohibition of the Use in War of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or Other Gases, and of Bacteriological Methods of Warfare*. 1925.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

<sup>179</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons*. 2020. p. 1.

<sup>180</sup> International Atomic Energy Agency. *The Agency's Safeguards, INFCIRC/26*. 1961.

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<sup>182</sup> Ibid.



The 1972 *Biological Weapons Convention* (BWC) and the 1997 Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction commonly known as the *Chemical Weapons Convention* (CWC) also addressed major gaps in the Geneva Protocol by clarifying restrictions on the use and transfer of dual-use technologies.<sup>183</sup> The BWC prohibited the development, stockpiling, and transfer of biological and toxin weapons, marking a key step in curbing the spread of weapons of mass destruction.<sup>184</sup> Building on this framework, the CWC introduced stricter measures for chemical weapons, requiring member states to declare and destroy production facilities and to report chemical stockpiles, promoting greater transparency and accountability.<sup>185</sup>

The *Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition* (Firearms Protocol), adopted in 2001 as a supplement to the *United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime* (UNTOC), focused on preventing and combating the illicit manufacturing and trafficking of firearms, parts, and ammunition.<sup>186</sup> The Firearms Protocol aimed to promote cooperation to prevent and combat transnational organized crime that negatively impacted socioeconomic development and the well-being of Member States.<sup>187</sup> Building on these efforts to control conventional weapons, the 2002 Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation (HCOC) was introduced to address the growing threat posed by missiles capable of delivering weapons of mass destruction.<sup>188</sup> Although the HCOC is not legally binding, it serves as a confidence-building measure by encouraging transparency in ballistic missile programs and launches.<sup>189</sup> This soft-law mechanism supports international security by promoting restraint and information-sharing, further reinforcing efforts to curb the proliferation of delivery systems for nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons.<sup>190</sup>

The 2013 *Arms Trade Treaty* (ATT) was adopted by the General Assembly to establish the highest possible common standards for regulating the international trade in conventional arms.<sup>191</sup> Its primary aim is to regulate the global trade of a broad range of weapons, such as small arms to battle tanks, combat aircraft, and warships.<sup>192</sup> The ATT requires State Parties to assess whether exported arms could be used

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<sup>183</sup> 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 (XXVI)). 1971; United Nations, General Assembly. *Implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction* (A/RES/55/33H). 2000.

<sup>184</sup> 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 (XXVI)). 1971; United Nations, General Assembly. *Implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction* (A/RES/55/33H). 2000.

<sup>185</sup> 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 (XXVI)). 1971; United Nations, General Assembly. *Implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction* (A/RES/55/33H). 2000.

<sup>186</sup> United Nations, Office on Drugs and Crime. *The Firearms Protocol* (A/RES/55/255). 2001.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid.

<sup>188</sup> Nuclear Threat Initiative. *The Hague Code of Conduct (HCOC)*. N.d.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

<sup>191</sup> United Nations. General Assembly. *Arms Trade Treaty*. (A/RES/67/234 B). 2013.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.





to violate international humanitarian or human rights law, or contribute to terrorism and organized crime.<sup>193</sup> The treaty becomes increasingly relevant as advancements in weapon design, dual-use components, and manufacturing techniques, like 3D printing, complicate the identification and control of arms transfers.<sup>194</sup> By incorporating end-use verification and risk assessments into export decisions, the ATT provides a legal and policy framework that strengthens disarmament and arms control in an era of rapidly evolving technological capabilities.<sup>195</sup>

### *Role of the International System*

United Nations specialized agencies such as the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC) are a subsidiary body of the United Nations General Assembly that focuses on promoting multilateral disarmament and arms control.<sup>196</sup> UNDC also works to establish guidelines that regulate dual-use technologies, ensuring they are not exploited for illicit arms proliferation or destabilizing military capabilities.<sup>197</sup> UNDC works closely with Member States' governments, international organizations, and civil society groups to increase cooperation and transparency and build capacity to counter organized crime by developing and implementing national, regional, and global programs.<sup>198</sup> As an example, UNDC has facilitated discussions on the implications of additive manufacturing, electronic warfare, and biological and chemical technologies in arms control.<sup>199</sup> Supporting these efforts, experts from organizations such as the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), and the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean (UNLIREC), have contributed through technical briefings, policy recommendations, and in-depth reports.<sup>200</sup> Their inputs help shape guidelines on arms control, assess risks associated with emerging technologies, and support regional implementation of disarmament frameworks.<sup>201</sup>

UNIDIR, in particular, provides data-driven analysis on the impacts of cyberwarfare, AI, and space technology, helping states align scientific innovation with peace and security goals.<sup>202</sup> It advocates for responsible innovation and stronger governance mechanisms to ensure that technological progress does not outpace regulation.<sup>203</sup> As well as examines modern technologies like cyberwarfare, artificial intelligence, and space security to assess how they affect arms control and world stability.<sup>204</sup> UNIDIR supports responsible innovation for peace while assisting nations in navigating the difficulties of dual-use

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<sup>193</sup> Ibid.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid.

<sup>196</sup> United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime. *Overview of the Work of UNODC in relation to Organized Criminal Activities*. N.d.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid.

<sup>199</sup> United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime. *Report of the Secretary-General on current developments in science and technology and their potential impact on international security and disarmament efforts*. 2023.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

<sup>202</sup> United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Disarmament*. N.d.

<sup>203</sup> United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research. *Tackling the global security challenges posed by emerging digital technologies*. N.d.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid.



technology by offering data-driven insights and policy recommendations.<sup>205</sup> By ensuring that scientific developments contribute to security and disarmament rather than increasing military threats, it actively upholds international conventions and frameworks.<sup>206</sup> The *Our Common Agenda* report given by United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres in 2021, discussed the need for stronger governance of AI, autonomous weaponry, and missile technology to prevent the misuse of weaponry during conflicts.<sup>207</sup> The secretariat advocated for increased transparency on military AI development as well as enhancing scientific methods for disarmament verification and regulation.<sup>208</sup>

Similarly, the United Nations Office of Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), established in 1998, supports multilateral measures that attempt to achieve the ultimate goal of complete disarmament under strict and efficient international supervision.<sup>209</sup> The priorities of UNODA are guided by General Assembly resolutions and decisions on disarmament, including General Assembly resolution S-10/2, the “*Final Document of the Tenth Special Session of the General Assembly*” (1978), the first special session devoted to disarmament.<sup>210</sup> UNODA’s mandate includes promoting nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, strengthening disarmament regimes in conventional weapons, and supporting transparency and confidence-building measures.<sup>211</sup> These functions are implemented through policy coordination, technical assistance, and the facilitation of multilateral dialogue, forming the foundation of the program’s activities and strategic direction.<sup>212</sup>

Regionally, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has worked to create a foundation of trust and cooperation between countries by setting clear rules on how chemical and biological weapons should be controlled.<sup>213</sup> They also initiated a regional forum that focused on transparent verification, reporting systems, and open dialogue on disarmament and non-proliferation while addressing the advancements in cyberwarfare and emerging military technologies in the Asia-Pacific region.<sup>214</sup> Similarly, the *Pelindaba Treaty* in Africa and the *Treaty of Tlatelolco* in Latin America created nuclear-weapon-free zones, thereby diminishing the risks of mass destruction.<sup>215</sup> The *Wassenaar Arrangement* in Europe manages dual-use technology, while the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) tackle issues related to cybersecurity and arms regulation.<sup>216</sup>

The European Union (EU) is also dedicated to the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) and the responsible governance of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, and space security.<sup>217</sup> Through its Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) and

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<sup>205</sup> United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research. *Enabling Technologies and International Security A Compendium*. 2024.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

<sup>207</sup> Guterres. *Our Common Agenda Report of the Secretary-General*. 2021.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid.

<sup>209</sup> United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Disarmament*. N.d.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid.

<sup>212</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Resolution Adopted on the Report of the AD HOC Committee of the Tenth Special Session (A/RES/S-10/2)*. 1978.

<sup>213</sup> Association of Southeast Asian Nations Regional Forum. *ASEAN Regional Forum*. 2025.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid.

<sup>215</sup> United Nations, Platform of Nuclear-Weapons Free Zone. *Overview of Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones*. 1967.

<sup>216</sup> The Wassenaar Arrangement. *The Wassenaar Arrangement On Export Controls for Conventional Arms and Dual-Use Goods and Technologies*. 2024.

<sup>217</sup> European External Actions Service. *Disarmament, Non-Proliferation and Arms Export Control*. 2024.



collaboration with global bodies like the OPCW, the EU fosters transparency and accountability in arms control.<sup>218</sup> The EU Dual-Use Export Control Regime, updated in recent years, continues to regulate the export of sensitive technologies that could be misused for military purposes.<sup>219</sup> The EU Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Consortium, supported by the European External Action Service (EEAS), plays a vital role in shaping how science and technology are harnessed for peace rather than war.<sup>220</sup> Through regular publications and policy briefs, the Consortium confronts the growing disarmament challenges presented by emerging technologies.<sup>221</sup> Its 2023 analyses on AI-enabled weapons and autonomous systems underscored the deep ethical and humanitarian risks of allowing machines to make life-and-death decisions on the battlefield.<sup>222</sup> These findings echoed a broader fear: that rapid technological innovation, if left unregulated, could outpace the international system's ability to prevent catastrophic misuse.<sup>223</sup> The EU also funds disarmament research through its Horizon Europe Programme, including projects such as INHERIT and SecurITY, which explore the impact of innovation on global security architecture.<sup>224</sup>

### ***Curbing The Conventional Arms Race with Tech***

Global military spending has been rising rapidly, and in 2023, it is expected to have surpassed \$2 trillion.<sup>225</sup> The development of autonomous weaponry, hypersonic missiles, cyberwarfare, and AI-powered surveillance systems has become increasingly important for maintaining peace and security.<sup>226</sup> Continued increases in military expenditures have led to unprecedented investments in new weapons systems, such as artificial intelligence (AI) and information and communications technology (ICT).<sup>227</sup> While these advancements offer clear tactical benefits, they have also fueled military competition, as shown by a 19% rise in arms imports among European states from 2018 to 2022, pointing to the need for stronger international cooperation and clear rules to manage growing security risks.<sup>228</sup>

The dual-use nature of these new technologies allows them to be used for both military and civilian uses.<sup>229</sup> AI-driven automation, for instance, helps humanitarian efforts and disaster response in addition to defensive systems.<sup>230</sup> Recent international discussions, such as the United Nations' adoption of the resolution on lethal autonomous weapons systems (LAWS) in 2024 (A/RES/78/241), highlight the increasing global importance and the urgent need for regulation.<sup>231</sup> While LAWS currently lacks a universally accepted definition, this resolution represents a critical step toward building international consensus on their classification, ethical use, and governance, highlighting their increasing importance

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<sup>218</sup> European External Actions Service. *Shaping Common Security and Defence Policy*. N.d.

<sup>219</sup> European Commission. *Exporting dual-use items*. 2021.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid.

<sup>224</sup> European Commission. *Horizon Europe*. 2021.

<sup>225</sup> Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. *Global military spending surges amid war, rising tensions and insecurity*. 2024.

<sup>226</sup> Hartzell. *Future Weapons Technology of 2040*. 2023.

<sup>227</sup> Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. *Armament and disarmament*. N.d.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid.

<sup>229</sup> Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. *Emerging military and security technologies*. N.d.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid.

globally.<sup>232</sup> The resolution aims to establish guidelines for the use of AI in weaponry, The core ethical dilemma lies in the lack of human accountability; autonomous systems may act without meaningful human oversight, increasing the risk of unlawful killings, civilian casualties, and violations of international humanitarian law.<sup>233</sup> This raises fundamental questions about morality, responsibility, and compliance with the laws of war, making it a major point of contention in global disarmament debates.<sup>234</sup> In 2020, General Assembly resolution 75/240 on “*Developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security*” established a new Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG) on information and communication technologies (ICTs) and urged all Member States to adopt confidence-building measures (CBMs) in cyberspace.<sup>235</sup> CBMs are practical tools to reduce misunderstandings, increase transparency, and build trust between states in cyberspace.<sup>236</sup> CBMs include voluntary information-sharing on national cybersecurity policies, the creation of communication channels between states to prevent cyber incidents, and joint cyber exercises.<sup>237</sup> Beyond military contexts, CBMs promote the responsible development of emerging technologies, ensuring that innovations in AI, data infrastructure, and digital connectivity are used to support peaceful cooperation, economic development, and cybersecurity capacity-building, particularly in developing countries.<sup>238</sup>

Cyberwarfare refers to attacks, such as espionage or denial of critical services, aimed at threatening critical infrastructure or network systems, often carried out by nation-states or non-state actors with the potential to disrupt both virtual and physical domains, including financial institutions, military networks, and key infrastructure.<sup>239</sup> In addition to CBMs, expert-driven initiatives like the United Nations Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) and the Tallinn Manual on the International Law Applicable to Cyber Operations have emphasized the urgent need for clear, legally grounded norms to guide responsible state behavior in cyberspace.<sup>240</sup> The GGE examines how international law applies to cyber activities, while the Tallinn Manual provides a legal framework for understanding how sovereignty, non-intervention, and international humanitarian law relate to cyber conflict.<sup>241</sup> The General Assembly, through Resolution 73/27 (2018) on “*Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security*,” recognizes the threats posed by advanced technology and encourages significant international collaboration in arms control and cyberspace governance.<sup>242</sup>

While new technologies present opportunities for enhancing security, their militarization without oversight can exacerbate conflicts and instability.<sup>243</sup> Predictive analytics powered by AI can assess conflict zones

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<sup>232</sup> Ivezić. *U.N. Assembly Calls for Guidelines on AI-Driven Weaponry; Divergent Votes from Global Powers*. 2023.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid.

<sup>235</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security*(A/RES/75/240). 2020.

<sup>236</sup> Ibid.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid.

<sup>239</sup> United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime. *Cyberwarfare*. 2019.

<sup>240</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Group of Governmental Experts on Advancing Responsible State Behaviour in Cyberspace in the Context of International Security*. 2021.

<sup>241</sup> Tropeano. *Tallinn Manual 2.0 on the International Law Applicable to Cyber Operations*. 2019.

<sup>242</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security* (A/RES/73/27). 2018.

<sup>243</sup> Ibid.



and provide real-time data to support early warning systems, humanitarian aid coordination, and peacebuilding strategies.<sup>244</sup> Meanwhile, blockchain technology and advanced tracking systems enhance transparency and accountability in arms transfers by securely recording transactions by the ATT.<sup>245</sup> For instance, pilot programs have tested blockchain to trace weapon components and verify end-user certificates, reducing the risk of diversion to unauthorized groups.<sup>246</sup> AI-powered satellite surveillance aids in preventing the illegal spread of conventional and nuclear weapons and monitoring adherence to arms control agreements.<sup>247</sup> UNIDIR and the European Space Agency (ESA) support the development of such technologies and offer technical assistance to help states build satellite monitoring capacity for treaty verification and enforcement.<sup>248</sup>

### **Proliferation By Private Enterprise**

The global arms industry has significantly expanded in response to growing military expenditures driven by ongoing armed conflicts involving state and non-state actors.<sup>249</sup> This surge in demand has fueled increased arms production, sales, and profitability among private enterprises, further complicating international disarmament efforts.<sup>250</sup> While arms manufacturing is justified under national security interests and state sovereignty, the unregulated proliferation of conventional and advanced weaponry poses severe risks, including human rights violations and prolonged conflicts.<sup>251</sup>

One of the most pressing concerns in arms proliferation is the rise of additive manufacturing, also called 3D printing, which has made weapons production more accessible and cost-effective.<sup>252</sup> This technology allows individuals and non-state actors to circumvent traditional arms control measures by producing components or entire weapons independently, making regulation and tracking significantly more difficult and increasing the risk of illicit arms transfers.<sup>253</sup> At the multilateral level, the UN General Assembly First Committee has begun addressing this issue under broader discussions on emerging technologies and disarmament, calling for international cooperation to develop norms and oversight mechanisms.<sup>254</sup> However, a lack of consensus on technical definitions and verification tools has limited the scope of concrete regulatory action.<sup>255</sup> Unlike traditional manufacturing methods that require large-scale industrial facilities, non-state actors, paramilitary groups, and even individuals can now produce firearms and

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<sup>244</sup> United Nations Peacemakers. *Digital Technologies*. N.d.

<sup>245</sup> International Human Rights Clinic, Human Rights Program at Harvard Law School. *Interpreting the Arms Trade Treaty: International Human Rights Law and Gender-Based Violence in Article 7 Risk Assessments*. 2019.

<sup>246</sup> United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research. *Exploring the use of Technology for Remote Ceasefire Monitoring and Verification*. 2022.

<sup>247</sup> Ibid.

<sup>248</sup> European Space Agency. *Space Surveillance and Tracking - SST Segment*. N.d.

<sup>249</sup> McGrety et al..The International Institute for Strategic Studies. *Global defence spending soars to new high*. 2025.

<sup>250</sup> Ibid.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid.

<sup>252</sup> Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. *Additive Manufacturing*. N.d.

<sup>253</sup> Ibid.

<sup>254</sup> United Nations. General Assembly. *Summary of First Committee discussions on emerging technologies and arms control*. 2023.

<sup>255</sup> Ibid.





weapon components with minimal resources.<sup>256</sup> Additive manufacturing can produce more complicated structures and innovative product performance features, such as precise cooling channels in rocket motors, lightweight bionic designs, or novel types of artificial tissue.<sup>257</sup> While the CWC prohibits the development, production, and use of chemical weapons, advancements in 3D printing technologies can potentially facilitate the illicit production of dangerous weapons by both state and non-state actors.<sup>258</sup> In July 2023, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) confirmed the irreversible destruction of all declared chemical weapons stockpiles.<sup>259</sup> OPCW Director-General Ambassador Fernando Arias emphasized that “rapid developments in science and technology, new dangerous toxic chemicals, more sophisticated equipment and production methods present additional factors that will put the relevance of the *Chemical Weapons Convention* to the test.”<sup>260</sup> These emerging capabilities, such as 3D-printed parts for dispersal devices or delivery systems, are increasingly difficult to detect and regulate.<sup>261</sup> The lack of comprehensive monitoring mechanisms and regulatory frameworks to address these non-traditional manufacturing methods poses a serious challenge to international security.<sup>262</sup> By enabling illicit weapon flows, this threat jeopardizes SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions), fuels violence, and disrupts peace and development efforts.<sup>263</sup>

The development and global spread of new, more lethal weapon systems has become a major driver of revenue growth for private military contractors, reinforcing global military imbalances and intensifying regional arms races.<sup>264</sup> Weapons exporters often prioritize factors such as geopolitical influence, strategic alliances, and technological superiority, while importers typically focus on cost, reliability, and battlefield effectiveness.<sup>265</sup> This trend undermines the objectives of the *United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons (PoA)*, which seeks to prevent the illicit trade and proliferation of small arms, ensuring they do not contribute to conflict, violence, or human rights violations.<sup>266</sup> Countries and armament manufacturers who continue to benefit from the sale of cluster bombs frequently violate the *Convention on Cluster Munitions (CMC)*, which forbids their use, manufacture, transfer, and stockpiling.<sup>267</sup> The relation between arms exports and imports has also seen close political ties and has led major export countries to pressure other member States on who to buy armaments from.<sup>268</sup> Another notable trend in the previous year is the increase in countries exporting armaments due to the increased financial opportunities and revenue growth.<sup>269</sup> For example, the conflict in Ukraine has significantly increased

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<sup>256</sup> Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. *3D Printing Missiles on Demand? Additive Manufacturing as a Challenge to the Missile Technology Control Regime*. 2021.

<sup>257</sup> Ibid.

<sup>258</sup> Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. *Chemical Weapons Convention*. N.d.

<sup>259</sup> Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. *OPCW confirms: All declared chemical weapons stockpiles verified as irreversibly destroyed*. 2023.

<sup>260</sup> Ibid.

<sup>261</sup> Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. *Chemical Weapons Convention*. N.d.

<sup>262</sup> Ibid.

<sup>263</sup> United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Disarmament and Sustainable Development*. N.d.

<sup>264</sup> Defense News. *Top 100 for 2024*. N.d.

<sup>265</sup> Defense News. *The Top 100 is here: Find out how defense companies performed in FY23*. 2024.

<sup>266</sup> United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Programme of Action on small arms and its International Tracing Instrument*. 2021.

<sup>267</sup> United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Convention on Cluster Munitions*. N.d.

<sup>268</sup> Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. *Trends in International Arms Transfers, 2024*. 2024. pp. 2-7.

<sup>269</sup> Ibid. pp. 2-7.



global demand for anti-aircraft systems, drones, and missile defense technologies.<sup>270</sup> In 2023 various United States defense contractors secured contracts worth over \$6 billion for supplying Patriot missile systems, HIMARS launchers, and guided munitions to Ukraine and allied NATO countries.<sup>271</sup> Challenging initiatives like the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms (UNROCA) promote transparency by encouraging states to publicly report their arms transfers, helping build trust and accountability in the global arms trade.<sup>272</sup>

## Conclusion

Modern warfare has evolved due to technological advancements, but it also offers an unusual opportunity to improve verification procedures, strengthen arms control measures, and advance international security.<sup>273</sup> Implementing existing treaties, such as the ATT and the NPT, can be greatly enhanced by integrating artificial intelligence, satellite surveillance, and cybersecurity measures.<sup>274</sup> This will guarantee that disarmament efforts continue to be successful and flexible in the digital age.<sup>275</sup> Active initiatives—such as the cyber norms and the GGE on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems—represent key efforts to adapt disarmament frameworks to the realities of digital and autonomous warfare.<sup>276</sup> A future in which international security is reinforced through responsible scientific innovation, rather than the escalation of armaments, depends on sustained multilateral cooperation and the modernization of existing disarmament frameworks.<sup>277</sup>

## Further Research

Delegates should consider: What mechanisms can be put in place to hold private companies accountable for the ethical development and sale of military-grade technology to state and non-state actors? How can international treaties like the NPT or the ATT be updated to incorporate new verification and monitoring technologies? How can advancements in cybersecurity help prevent unauthorized access to nuclear and conventional weapons systems, thereby strengthening disarmament efforts?

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<sup>270</sup> Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. *European arms imports nearly double, US and French exports rise, and Russian exports fall sharply*. 2024.

<sup>271</sup> Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. *European arms imports nearly double, US and French exports rise, and Russian exports fall sharply*. 2024.

<sup>272</sup> United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research. *The end of transparency in international arms transfers*. 2022.

<sup>273</sup> Director of National Intelligence. *The Future of the Battlefield*. 2021.

<sup>274</sup> Ibid.

<sup>275</sup> United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *UNRCPD and UNODC join efforts to promote SDG Target 16.4 during 11th Asia-Pacific Forum for Sustainable Development*. 2024.

<sup>276</sup> Le Poidevin. Nations meet at UN for 'killer robot' talks as regulation lags. 2025.

<sup>277</sup> United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *UNRCPD and UNODC join efforts to promote SDG Target 16.4 during 11th Asia-Pacific Forum for Sustainable Development*. 2024.



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