

# The United Nations Disarmament Machinery

This learning unit will introduce you to technical, historical, political and legal aspects of the UN Disarmament Machinery.

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# 0. A Message from the Author

A quick video introduction from the home office.

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Hi and welcome to this learning unit. My name is Federica Dall'Arche and I am the nonproliferation and disarmament researcher at Istituto Affari Internazionali.

I am also a consultant to the Italian presidency of the council of ministers. This learning unit is

dedicated to the United Nations Disarmament Machinery. I will be very happy to guide you through it, exploring with you not only the historical steps that led to its creation, but also its structure and role.

I really hope you will enjoy it and thank you for choosing our EUNPD eLearning courses. Ciao.

# 1. Introduction

Humankind has always been disturbed by the use of particularly cruel methods of warfare. The establishment of the UN disarmament machinery is among the most important actions we have taken to restrict the use of such methods.

## What is Disarmament?

Disarmament aims to maintain international peace and security, prevent and resolve armed conflicts and protect civilians by completely eliminating specific weapons.

This is achieved through a broad spectrum of unilateral, bilateral, and multilateral measures and agreements such as the *BWC* and the *CWC*, which are designed to eliminate biological and chemical weapons respectively.

Disarmament is a separate, but related concept to both arms control and non-proliferation, which were introduced in Unit 1 [#1]. This unit will cover disarmament in more detail, specifically in the context of the United Nations.

## Why does Disarmament Matter?

Proponents of disarmament make a simple argument: Weapons are the prime mover of instability and violent conflict; therefore eliminating weapons stockpiles and stopping the production of new weapons reduces the likelihood of such conflict and the resulting human suffering and material destruction.

Weapons cause harm even in peacetime, because their production and maintenance binds public resources which otherwise could have been used to fund social programmes, healthcare, education or infrastructure. U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower articulated this idea in the 1953 "Chance for Peace" address:

**[...] Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed.**

This world in arms is not spending money alone. **It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children.**

The cost of one modern heavy bomber is this: a modern brick school in more than 30 cities. It is: two electric power plants, each serving a town of 60,000 population. It is: two fine, fully equipped hospitals. It is some fifty miles of concrete pavement. We pay for a single fighter plane with

a half million bushels of wheat. We pay for a single destroyer with new homes that could have housed more than 8,000 people.

**[...] This is not a way of life at all, in any true sense. Under the cloud of threatening war, it is humanity hanging from a cross of iron.**

Dwight D. Eisenhower, "Chance for Peace", speech to American Society of Newspaper Editors. April 16, 1953. Audio courtesy of the Miller Center, University of Virginia.

This argument for disarmament remains true today, and is one of the driving forces of the United Nation's disarmament efforts. Izumi Nakamitsu, head of the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs, reaffirmed this position in a 2018 essay:

[...] President Eisenhower recognized that unrestrained military spending creates distrust, worsens tensions and makes peaceful resolutions to conflict harder to achieve. [...] **Excessive spending on military hardware cannot address challenges such as climate change, mass refugee flows and extreme poverty.** In the absence of an urgent global response, these challenges will fuel tomorrow's conflicts and make each of us less safe.

Izumi Nakamitsu, Global Military Spending Has Doubled but the World Is No Safer. April 25, 2018, Time Magazine Online.

## Disarmament and the United Nations

Multilateral disarmament and arms limitation have been central to the United Nations' peace and security efforts since its founding in June 1945.

The UN has given the highest priority to reducing and eventually eliminating nuclear weapons, destroying all remaining chemical weapons, and strengthening the prohibition of biological weapons. It also works toward eliminating landmines and other indiscriminate weapons, preventing terrorists from acquiring arms, promoting transparency in military spending, and other intermediary targets.

To achieve these goals, the UN established a complex system of people, practices, and international organisations known as the UN Disarmament Machinery. The following chapters will cover its history, central and peripheral components, achievements, and challenges lying ahead.

## 2. Constructing the Disarmament Machinery

From the Strasbourg Agreement to the 10th Special Session.

### A brief history of disarmament

Humankind has always been disturbed by particularly cruel weapons of war. Throughout history, people have taken action to restrict or eliminate the use of such weapons.

#### 1675 · STRASBOURG AGREEMENT

Signed between France and the Holy Roman Empire following the Siege of Groningen (1672), this treaty was the first international agreement banning the use of chemical weapons, specifically poisoned bullets.

#### 1863 · LIEBER CODE

The Lieber Code (named after its author, the legal scholar Franz Lieber) was a set of instructions issued by Abraham Lincoln to Union soldiers in the American Civil War. Among other provisions, it prohibited the use of poison on the battlefield:

Military necessity does not admit of cruelty, that is, the infliction of suffering for the sake of suffering or for revenge, nor of maiming or wounding except in fight, nor of torture to extort confessions. **It does not admit of the use of poison in any way**, nor of the wanton devastation of a district. [...] in general, military necessity does not include any act of hostility which makes the return to peace unnecessarily difficult.

United States War Department / Francis Lieber (1863), Instructions for the Government of Armies of the United States in the Field, p. 7

#### 1899-1907 · HAGUE CONFERENCES

The Hague Conferences held in 1899 and 1907 (following proposals by Tsar Nicholas II and U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt, respectively) led to the adoption of a series of treaties and declarations known as the Hague Conventions.

Article 23 of the *Convention on Laws and Customs of War on Land* specifically prohibited the use of 'poison or poisoned arms' and 'arms, projectiles, or material of a nature to cause superfluous injury'.<sup>1</sup>

Specific declarations prohibiting poison gas munitions, expanding bullets, and balloon-based bombardment were also adopted.

#### 1920 · LEAGUE OF NATIONS

The League of Nations was the first international organisation designed to achieve world peace, and is considered a precursor to the United Nations. Its members committed to reduce armaments 'to the lowest point consistent with national safety and security' and negotiated a number of important treaties in the interwar period.

#### 1925 · GENEVA PROTOCOL

The Geneva Protocol, drafted and signed at a League of Nations conference, banned the use of chemical and biological weapons in war.

The Undersigned Plenipotentiaries, in the name of their respective Governments:

**Whereas the use in war of asphyxiating, poisonous or other gases, and of all analogous liquids, materials or devices, has been justly condemned by the general opinion of the civilized world; and**

Whereas the prohibition of such use has been declared in Treaties to which the majority of Powers of the world are Parties; and To the end that this prohibition shall be universally accepted as a part of International Law, binding alike the conscience and the practice of nations;

**Declare: That the High Contracting Parties, so far as they are not already Parties to Treaties prohibiting such use, accept this prohibition, agree to extend this prohibition to the use of bacteriological methods of warfare and agree to be bound as between themselves according to the terms of this declaration. [...]**

Protocol for the Prohibition of the Use in War of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or other Gases, and of Bacteriological Methods of Warfare. June 17, 1925.

#### 1932-37 · WORLD DISARMAMENT CONFERENCE

The first World Disarmament Conference was convened by the League of Nations to counter global militarisation following the First World War. The conference did not produce a substantial outcome (partly due to technical disagreements about the definition of 'offensive' and 'defensive' weapons) and is generally seen as a failure.

**1945 · UNITED NATIONS ESTABLISHED**

Representatives from 51 states establish the United Nations, defining disarmament and arms control as key missions of the organisation in its founding document, the UN Charter.<sup>6</sup>

**The First Special Session on Disarmament (SSOD-I)**

In addition to its annual sessions, the General Assembly of the UN occasionally holds special sessions on a single subject. The tenth special session (sometimes referred to as Special Session on Disarmament, or SSOD-I), held in 1978, was the first one solely focused on disarmament. Its final document is seen as the mission statement of the UN Disarmament Machinery:

[...] In adopting this Final Document, the States Members of the United Nations solemnly reaffirm their determination to work for **general and complete disarmament and to make further collective efforts aimed at strengthening peace and international security; eliminating the threat of war, particularly nuclear war; implementing practical measures aimed at halting and reversing the arms race; strengthening the procedures for the peaceful settlement of disputes; and reducing military expenditures** and utilizing the resources thus released in a manner which will help to promote the well-being of all peoples and to improve the economic conditions of the developing countries.

Resolutions and decisions adopted by the General Assembly during its 10th special session, 23 May-30 June 1978.

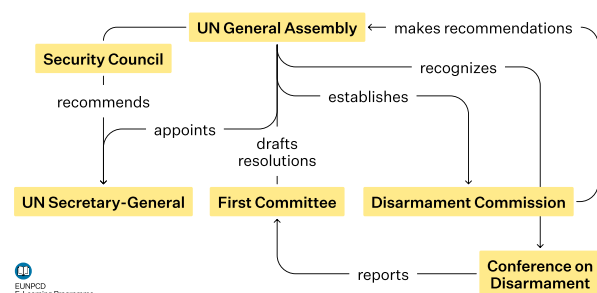
SSOD-I also formally established some of the Disarmament Machinery's central components, such as the Disarmament Commission and the Conference on Disarmament. Details on these institutions and various supporting bodies established after 1978 are covered in the following chapters.

Two more Special Sessions on disarmament were held in 1982 (SSOD-II) and 1988 (SSOD-III), but did not produce final documents. Discussions about a possible fourth Special Session on Disarmament have been ongoing since 2003.

1. Convention with Respect to the Laws and Customs of War on Land, art. 23, July 29, 1899. Available at [avalon.law.yale.edu/19th\\_century/hague02.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/hague02.asp)  
[[https://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th\\_century/hague02.asp](https://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/hague02.asp)]
2. Declaration on the Use of Projectiles the Object of Which is the Diffusion of Asphyxiating or Deleterious Gases; July 29, 1899, [https://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th\\_century/dec99-02.asp](https://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/dec99-02.asp)  
[[https://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th\\_century/dec99-02.asp](https://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/dec99-02.asp)]
3. Declaration on the Use of Bullets Which Expand or Flatten Easily in the Human Body; July 29, 1899  
[https://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th\\_century/dec99-03.asp](https://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/dec99-03.asp)  
[[https://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th\\_century/dec99-03.asp](https://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/dec99-03.asp)]
4. Declaration on the Launching of Projectiles and Explosives from Balloons, July 29, 1899, available at [avalon.law.yale.edu/19th\\_century/dec99-01.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/dec99-01.asp)  
[[https://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th\\_century/dec99-01.asp](https://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/dec99-01.asp)]
5. League of Nations Covenant art. 8, available at [https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th\\_century/leagcov.asp](https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/leagcov.asp)  
[[https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th\\_century/leagcov.asp](https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/leagcov.asp)]
6. United Nations Charter art. 11, 26, 47.

### 3. Central Components

This chapter covers the central components of the UN Disarmament Machinery: The UN Security Council, the UN Disarmament Commission, and the Conference on Disarmament.



**Central components of the UN Disarmament Machinery**  
EUNPDC (CC BY-NC 4.0)

#### The UN General Assembly First Committee (DISEC)

The UN General Assembly First Committee (sometimes referred to as the Disarmament and International Security Committee, DISEC, or C1) is one of the six main committees of the General Assembly. Its annual meeting in New York City is open to all members of the UN.

Every year the committee votes on roughly 50 resolutions or decisions to be adopted by the General Assembly. It also creates groups of governmental experts and open-ended working groups to address specific disarmament issues and convenes conferences for the negotiation and adoption of multilateral treaties.<sup>1</sup>

It focuses on seven thematic clusters:<sup>2</sup>

1. Nuclear weapons
2. Other weapons of mass destruction
3. Outer space
4. Conventional weapons
5. Regional disarmament and security
6. Other disarmament measures and international security
7. Disarmament machinery

#### The Secretary-General of the UN (UNSG)

The secretary-general is the chief administrative officer of the UN and head of the UN Secretariat, one of its six principal organs. Though successive secretary-generals have interpreted their role in the UN system differently over the years, many have made significant contributions to the development of the UN's disarmament regime through statements, reports, informal talks and activism.

António Guterres, who has held the office since 2017, developed an independent agenda titled *Securing our Common Future* [<https://www.un.org/disarmament/publications/more/securing-our-common-future/>] seeking to 'generate fresh perspectives and to explore areas where serious dialogue is required to bring disarmament back to the heart of our common efforts for peace and security.'

#### The UN Disarmament Commission (UNDC)

First formed 1952 and re-established by SSOD-I in 1978, The current iteration of UN Disarmament Commission (UNDC) was established by SSOD-I in 1978 as a deliberative body designed to make recommendations on foundational issues related to disarmament to the General Assembly.

The UNDC only considers two items per year, one of which is always related to nuclear disarmament. It was unable to produce any substantial outcomes from 1999 to 2017, when it adopted a set of recommendations on confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons

[<https://undocs.org/A/72/42>]. The commission meets annually in New York City and is open to all members of the UN.

#### The Conference on Disarmament (CD)



**Ambassador Amandeep Singh Gill briefs the press after the second session of the Group of Governmental Experts of the Conference of Disarmament, Geneva. 27 August 2018.**

UN Geneva / Violaine Martin (CC BY-NC-CD 2.0)

The Conference on Disarmament (CD) composed of 65 member states, was recognised by SSOD-I as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating



forum of the international community. Many important arms control agreements were drafted by the conference, including the *NPT*, the *BWC*, the *CWC* and the *CTBT*.

Though the conference is not formally a body of the UN, the conference submits regular reports on its activities to the General Assembly. It also receives organisational support from the UN Office of Disarmament Affairs.

The CD has a permanent agenda known as the *Decalogue*, named after the number of items it contained when it was drafted in 1979. It contains the following areas:

1. Nuclear weapons in all aspects
2. Other weapons of mass destruction
3. Conventional weapons
4. Comprehensive programme of disarmament
5. Reduction of armed forces
6. Reduction of military budgets
7. Collateral measures, confidence building, effective verification methods
8. ~~Chemical weapons~~ Removed after the adoption of the *CWC*
9. Disarmament and development
10. Disarmament and international security

The Decalogue serves as a framework to set annual, narrower programmes of work. The current programme covers seven areas:<sup>4</sup>

1. Cessation of the nuclear arms race, and nuclear disarmament
2. Prevention of nuclear war, including all related matters
3. Prevention of an arms race in outer space
4. Effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear weapon states against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons
5. New types of weapons of mass destruction and new systems of such weapons
6. Comprehensive programme of disarmament
7. Transparency in armaments

### The UN Security Council (UNSC)



**The Security Council meets in a designated chamber in the UN Conference Building in New York City.**

UN Photo / Eskinder Debebe (CC BY 4.0)

The UNSC is the only body of the UN with the power to adopt binding resolutions. It regularly uses this power to further the UN's disarmament agenda.

Examples include UNSC Resolution 1540

[<https://www.un.org/en/sc/1540/1540-fact-sheet.shtml>], a far-reaching instrument adopted in 2004 to address growing concerns about the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction to non-state actors. It requires member states to adopt national laws to prevent the spread of WMD, and imposes mandatory reporting mechanisms.

In 2009, a meeting chaired by President Barack Obama adopted Resolution 1887

[<http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/1887>], which calls on all countries to sign and ratify the *NPT* and the *CTBT*, and to refrain from conducting nuclear tests.

Many other resolutions on individual regional cases have also been adopted, including Resolution 687 [<http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/687>] on Iraq's *WMD* programme (1991), Resolution 1172 [<http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/1172>] condemning Indian and Pakistani nuclear tests (1998), Resolution 2118

[<http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/2118>] on Syria's chemical weapons (2013), and Resolution 2231

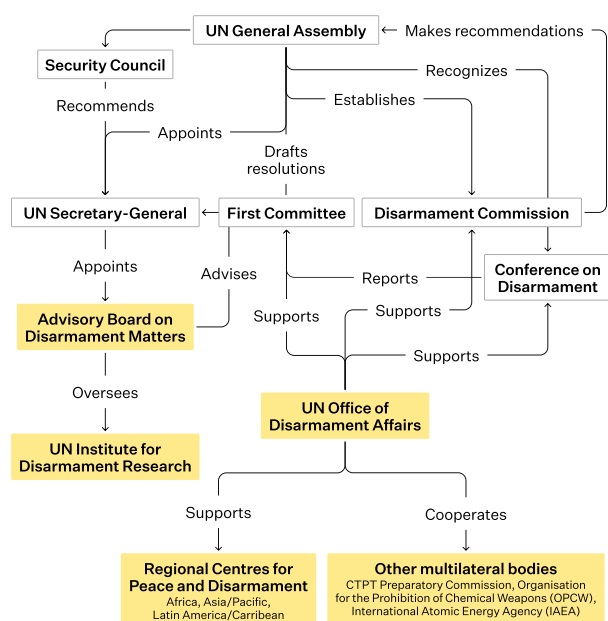
[<https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/content/2231/background>] on the *Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action* (2015) on Iran's nuclear programme. There are also numerous resolutions against North Korea's nuclear weapons and missiles program.

1. Disarmament and International Security (First Committee), General Assembly of the United Nations, [www.un.org/en/ga/first](http://www.un.org/en/ga/first)  
[<https://www.un.org/en/ga/first>]
2. <https://www.un.org/disarmament/institutions/disarmament-commission/>  
[<https://www.un.org/disarmament/institutions/disarmament-commission/>]
3. The Conference on Disarmament changed its name at various points. 1960–62: Ten-Nation Committee on Disarmament, 1962–68: Eighteen-Nation Committee on Disarmament, 1968–78: Conference of the Committee on Disarmament. 1978–84: Committee on Disarmament
4. <https://www.un.org/disarmament/update/un-disarmament-commission-adopts-by-consensus-practical-confidence-building-measures-in-the-field-of-conventional-weapons/>  
[<https://www.un.org/disarmament/update/un-disarmament-commission-adopts-by-consensus-practical-confidence-building-measures-in-the-field-of-conventional-weapons/>]



## 4. Supporting Bodies

In addition to the main deliberative bodies discussed in the previous section, the UN Disarmament Machinery contains a number of specialised and regional institutions.



**Supporting elements of the UN Disarmament Machinery**  
EUNPDC (CC BY-NC 4.0)

### The UN Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR)

The UN Institute for Disarmament Research [<https://www.unidir.org/>] (UNIDIR) is an autonomous research institute established by the General Assembly in 1980 following SSOD-I. It organizes experts' meetings, conducts and publishes research projects, and develops collaborations with governmental and non-governmental organizations, civil society, and the private sector on disarmament and related problems.

Its current research agenda, adopted in 2018, covers five areas:<sup>2</sup>

1. *WMD* and other strategic weapons
2. Conventional arms
3. Security and technology
4. Gender and disarmament
5. Middle East *WMD* Free Zone

UNIDIR's activities are overseen by the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters.

### The Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters (ABDM)



**The members of the Advisory Board on Disarmament. Geneva, January 2020.**

Courtesy of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs

The Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters is a group of fifteen experts on disarmament and international security appointed by the UN secretary-general. The board serves three main functions:

- To serve as the board of trustees of UNIDIR, reviewing projects, financial and personnel-related matters;
- To advise the secretary-general on matters of arms limitation and disarmament
- To advise the UN secretary-general on the implementation of the UN Disarmament Information Programme  
[<https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/739273>].

The board was established by SSOD-I 1978 and received its current mandate in 1999 through the General Assembly's decision 54/418. It meets twice a year, alternating between New York and Geneva.<sup>3</sup>

### UN Office of Disarmament Affairs (UNODA)

Established in 1982 following the recommendation of the second Special Session on Disarmament (SSOD-II), the UN Office of Disarmament Affairs provides substantive and organizational support to other parts of the Disarmament Machinery (including the Conference on Disarmament) and UN member states.

Its areas of work include the facilitation of multilateral dialogue, transparency and confidence-building measures, the provision of impartial and

up-to-date information on arms control and disarmament issues, outreach, and education.

### **Regional Centres for Peace and Disarmament**

The UN runs three Regional Centres for peace and disarmament to further its disarmament agenda in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. They are supported by the Office of Disarmament Affairs.

#### **The UN Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa (UNREC)**

UNREC was established by the General Assembly in 1986 and is headquartered in Lomé, Togo. UNREC supports member states of the African region in their efforts to maintain peace, arms limitation and disarmament. UNREC cooperates with the African Union [<https://au.int/>] on the implementation of regional disarmament activities.<sup>4</sup>

#### **The United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific (UNRCPD)**

Established by the General Assembly in 1987, UNRCPD assists 43 countries in the region in their efforts to promote and implement peace, security and disarmament goals through education programmes, the promotion of dialogue, confidence-building measures and the organization of major annual conferences. Its headquarters are located in Kathmandu, Nepal.

#### **The United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Latin America and the Caribbean (UNLIREC)**

Established by the General Assembly in 1986, UNLIREC supports the thirty-three States of the Latin American and Caribbean region in their implementation of peace and disarmament measures. Its main function is to implement the UN's decisions, instruments and commitments in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation at

national, sub-regional and regional levels. It is headquartered in Lima, Peru.

### **Other multilateral bodies**

Some international bodies, though not formally part of the UN system, are nevertheless considered to be part of the Disarmament Machinery. Their activities are supported by the Office of Disarmament Affairs.

#### **The Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization**

The Preparatory Commission (established in 1996, 184 member states) is the interim implementing body of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.<sup>5</sup>

#### **The Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)**

OPCW (established 1997, 193 member states) is the implementing body of the CWC. It oversees the global endeavor to permanently and verifiably eliminate chemical weapons.

#### **The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)**

The International Atomic Energy Agency (established 1957, 171 member states) is responsible for the international safeguards system, a set of technical measures used to verify that states are not diverting nuclear materials and technology into nuclear weapons programmes.

1. G.A. Res. A/RES/34/83M (December 11, 1979)

2. Rep. of the Director of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research on the activities of the Institute for the period from January to December 2019 and the proposed programme of work and financial plan for 2020 and 2021, at 3-8, U.N. Doc. A/75/134 (July 1, 2020)

3. <https://unrec.org/default/index.php/en/about-unrec/who-we-are> [<https://unrec.org/default/index.php/en/about-unrec/who-we-are>]

4. The Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (2012): About us, [www.ctbto.org/specials/who-we-are](http://www.ctbto.org/specials/who-we-are) [<https://www.ctbto.org/node/3249/>]

5. Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (2022): OPCW Basics, [www.opcw.org/about-us/opcw-basics](http://www.opcw.org/about-us/opcw-basics) [<https://www.opcw.org/about-us/opcw-basics>]

## 5. Accomplishments and Shortcomings

The UN Disarmament Machinery has played an important role in disarmament efforts since 1945. Still, experts have criticised some of its working methods, constituent organs, and proposed reforms.

### Accomplishments

The UN Disarmament Machinery plays an important role in the negotiation and adoption of major multilateral arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament treaties.

### Treaties

Treaty	Effective	UN Involvement
<i>NPT</i>	1970	Negotiated by Eighteen-Nations Committee on Disarmament, a precursor to the CD
<i>BWC</i>	1975	Negotiated by the CD
<i>CCW</i>	1983	?
<i>CWC</i>	1997	Negotiated by the CD, administered by OPCW
<i>Ottawa Treaty</i>	1999	?
<i>ATT</i>	2014	Preparatory committee established by UNGA, adopted by UNGA
<i>TPNW</i>	2021	Working group established by GA, negotiations led by C1
<i>NWFZ</i>	n/a	Recognised by the GA
<i>PAROS</i>	n/a	Explored by a CD ad-hoc commission
<i>CTBT</i>	n/a	Administered by CTBTO

### Civil society

Civil society plays a fundamental role in the advancement of disarmament goals and in assisting the United Nations Disarmament Machinery achieve its major accomplishments in the field.



Campaigners dressed as nuclear bombs express confidence that a treaty banning nuclear weapons is on its way. This was part of an action held during the UN open-ended working group on nuclear disarmament in May 2016.

International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons / Tim Wright (CC BY 2.0)

- marches
- studies and publications
- conferences
- side events at international conferences

... are only some of the ways in which civil society is able to generate incredible impact often resulting in the adoption of well-informed national policies and ground-breaking international treaties.

### Criticism and Proposed Changes

The Disarmament Machinery has been the subject of considerable criticism, mainly due to the inability of its bodies to produce substantive results in recent years.

[...] The intransigence of many state positions has frustrated all previous attempts to increase the effectiveness of UN disarmament institutions. In fact, **voting patterns at the First Committee clearly demonstrate the permanence of deep divisions on many disarmament issues**, and for most of the past decade **the Disarmament Commission has not even been able to agree on session agendas**. Even when consensus on agenda items exists, conference reports to the General Assembly simply record the disagreement on the disarmament issues under discussion, which does nothing to promote conceptual progress and agreement on substance.

This beleaguered situation **compounds frustration over the persistent lack of substantive negotiations at the Conference on Disarmament.**

Sergio Duarte 2013: How to Revitalize Disarmament Efforts, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

In particular, scholars have directed criticism and reform proposals at the machinery's central components:

### First Committee

Critique	Proposals
Many resolutions reiterate known ideas without proposing concrete actions and don't produce behavioural change.	Attach concrete actions with specific timelines and deadlines to resolutions, limit the number of resolutions
The committee deals with a sprawling agenda, diverting focus from critical needs of the international community.	Limit speaking time in general debate, make resolutions legally binding if approved by consensus or three quarters of states. <sup>1</sup>

### Conference on Disarmament

Critique	Proposals
The consensus rule allows progress to be easily blocked, leading to a stalemate.	Reconsider the consensus rule, at least for the adoption of the agenda
Political and regional groupings still reflect Cold War era divisions (i.e. some NATO countries are still in the Eastern Group).	Reconsider the composition of regional and political groups, consider enlargement of overall membership. <sup>2</sup>

### UN Disarmament Commission

- Its work has been affected by a lack of political will to deal with certain issues at the multilateral level.
- Its reports to the UNGA often focus on the disagreements on disarmament issues rather than on ways to produce conceptual and substantive progress.<sup>3</sup>

### UN Security Council

Sanctions imposed by Security Council resolutions aren't always effective in curbing nuclear weapons programmes and ambitions, particularly in the case of North Korea.<sup>4</sup>

### Within the Machinery

- encourage dialogue among main bodies
- convene a SSOD-IV to put a stronger emphasis on nuclear disarmament, reaffirming the SSOD-I's mandate

1. Morales Pedraza, J. (2015). The Reform of the United Nations Disarmament Machinery. *Public Organization Review*, 16(3), 319–334.
2. Lewis, Patricia; Thakur, Ramesh Chandra, *Maîtrise des armements, le désarmement et les Nations Unies* (2004), <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/517020?ln=en> [<https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/517020?ln=en>]
3. How to Revitalize Disarmament Efforts (2013), <https://carnegieendowment.org/2013/01/09/how-to-revitalize-disarmament-efforts-pub-50394> [<https://carnegieendowment.org/2013/01/09/how-to-revitalize-disarmament-efforts-pub-50394>]
4. John Hudson and David Francis (2016): *Why Did Sanctions Fail Against North Korea?*, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/09/09/why-did-sanctions-fail-against-north-korea/> [<https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/09/09/why-did-sanctions-fail-against-north-korea/>]



# 6. The Disarmament Machinery and the European Union

How does the European Union contribute to multilateral arms control in the context of the UN Disarmament Machinery?

## The European Position

[...] We do think that multilateralism has to have a chance. It is difficult but the only avenue for the future. We are supporting actively and fully the UN system – the United Nations – because with your work you pave the way to a better future. The United Nations are the cornerstone of multilateralism, the bridge to a better humanity, a better world. The European Union will remain the close partner of the United Nations and of António Guterres.

Jean-Claude Juncker, the 12th president of the European Commission

Jean-Claude Juncker, the 12th president of the European Commission, described the United Nations as 'the cornerstone of multilateralism, the bridge to a better humanity, a better world'.<sup>1</sup>

In a statement at the First Committee in October 2019

[[https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/un-new-york/eu-statement-%E2%80%93-united-nations-1st-committee-thematic-discussion-disarmament\\_en](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/un-new-york/eu-statement-%E2%80%93-united-nations-1st-committee-thematic-discussion-disarmament_en)], the EU reiterated its support for the three central elements the Disarmament Machinery: the First Committee, the Conference on Disarmament and the UN Disarmament Commission.

In the same statement, the EU also stressed the importance of continued financial support to the machinery and its various components to ensure its continued work toward international peace and security.

## Interview with Eran Nagan

In this video, Eran Nagan from the European External Action Service

[[https://www.eeas.europa.eu/\\_en](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/_en)] discusses the European Union's role in the UN Disarmament Machinery and how the EU contributes to multilateral arms control more broadly.

Hi! My name is Eran Nagan from the European External Action Service. I'm the Chair of COARM, the Working Group for Conventional Arms Exports.

## What is the EU's role in the UN disarmament system?

The EU is working towards a renewed rules-based multilateralism in order to make it fit for the 21st century – a model of multilateralism that serves good governance as well as EU and global interests and values. Cross-border challenges – like Disarmament, non-proliferation – can only be addressed if countries work together. The United Nations system is the framework through which the international community can create greater security and stability for all. The EU is an extremely active player in the multilateral UN system. Together with member states, we operate as one delivering with a single voice. That's how we make the most out of our political and economic leverage. At the Council Working Party on Non-Proliferation and Arms Exports in Brussels, we prepare EU positions with member states. The EU Permanent Missions to the UN in New York, Geneva, and Vienna, also coordinate on non-proliferation and disarmament matters. This enables the EU to express common decisions at UN meetings, also to engage in negotiations on resolutions and to implement our shared arms control interests in the treaty bodies.

## How can the EU contribute to multilateral arms control?

Now that the international arms control architecture is under severe pressure from geopolitical tensions, the EU will do more than ever to preserve and to strengthen it. We promote the full implementation of arms control treaties and lobby states to fulfil their obligations to prevent the use and spread of certain weapons. Our support to the Mine Ban Treaty and to the Biological Weapons Convention, guarantees a world without biological weapons and – in the future – also without landmines. We will join forces with our partners to keep arms control regimes fit for purpose in light of new technological developments. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons is a successful essential multilateral instrument that has prevented a global nuclear arms race for half a century. The EU supports its faithful implementation by all. Our assistance to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons will continue to ensure that the ban on chemical weapons is upheld and that those using chemical weapons are held to account. The prevention of an arms race in outer space has the EU's special attention. We also support establishing

a programme of action to advance responsible state behaviour in cyberspace. And the EU is helping to re-vitalize the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, so that it will again serve as the principal negotiation forum on disarmament. Through the budget for common foreign security policy, the EU supports the UN system's institutions and their treaty bodies for disarmament, including for instance the OPCW, the International Atomic Energy Agency, CTBTO, UNODA, UNIDIR ...

Our support amounts to over 200 million euros since the year 2004. It is part of our commitment to be a long-standing, reliable ally of the UN system, while discussing the changes these institutions need to make to meet modern challenges. This makes the EU-UN bond a truly strategic relationship. Finally, the EU sponsors ten actions of the UN

secretary-general's agenda for disarmament. These actions address nuclear, biological, chemical weapons, conventional arms, the participation of young people and women and much more.

In short: The EU promotes the reform of global governance. We are helping to create a multilateral system that makes effective, timely decisions. A system that is more inclusive, where governments, citizens and industries collaborate to build a safer world.

1. Press statement by President Jean-Claude Juncker with António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, following their meeting at the UN, available at [ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/fr/SPEECH\\_18\\_5871](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/fr/SPEECH_18_5871) [[https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/fr/SPEECH\\_18\\_5871](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/fr/SPEECH_18_5871)]



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# 7. Quiz

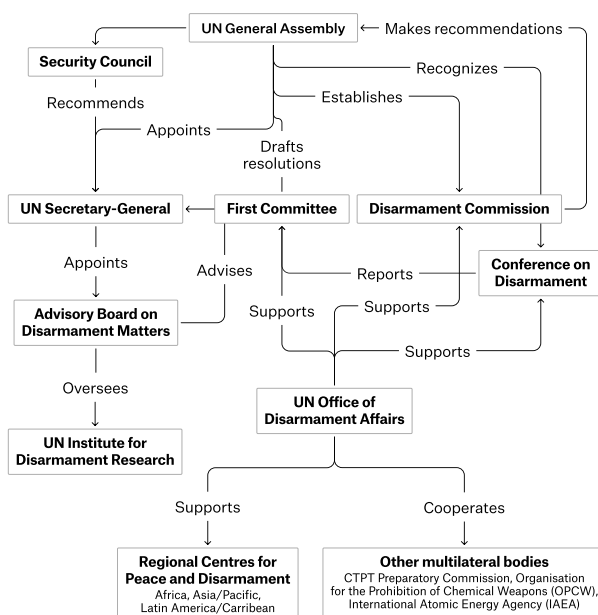
Test your knowledge!

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QUIZ HERE

## 8. Summary and Further Reading

Since its creation, the UN has been at the forefront of the global effort to eliminate weapons of mass destruction and to regulate the trade of small arms and light weapons. To achieve these goals, it established UN Disarmament Machinery, a set of multilateral processes, procedures and international bodies to address disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control issues.



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Core institutions of the Disarmament Machinery include:

- the General Assembly First Committee, which debates, drafts and adopts disarmament-related resolutions
- the UN Disarmament Commission, which deliberates basic disarmament concepts and principles and makes recommendations
- the Conference on Disarmament (CD), which negotiates and adopts multilateral treaties

The Disarmament Machinery is supported by a series of institutions which conduct research, convene experts' meetings, and monitor the implementation of non-proliferation and disarmament treaties. It includes:

- The secretary-general of the UN
- The UN Security Council
- The UN Institute for Disarmament Research
- The Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters
- UN Office for Disarmament Affairs and its regional centers

- The Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty Organization
- The Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons
- The International Atomic Energy Agency

While over the years the UN Disarmament Machinery and its related institutions have been subjected to growing criticism, it is undeniable that it has played a fundamental role in shaping the arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament agenda and in providing a framework for the adoption of groundbreaking and extraordinarily forward-looking multilateral treaties.

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