

The United Nations **DISARMAMENT YEARBOOK**

Full edition

2023



United
Nations

Volume **48**

Office for Disarmament Affairs
New York, 2024

The United Nations
**DISARMAMENT
YEARBOOK**
2023

Volume **48**



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COVER DESIGN: Symbolizing hope and enduring resilience, the ginkgo tree stands as a witness to history—over 150 survived the 1945 atomic bombings in Japan. Its leaves, seen in the background, evoke the steadfast pursuit of a future where legacies of human destruction might give way to growth and lasting peace.

TIMELINE PHOTOS:

The Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belarus, Yury Ambrazevich (on screen in the photo), addresses the Conference on Disarmament on 28 February, in Geneva. (Credit: UN Photo/Violaine Martin)

Staff members of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean celebrate the first International Day for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Awareness, in Lima.

The General Assembly approves the Arms Trade Treaty on 2 April 2013. (Credit: UN Photo/Devra Berkowitz)

The High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Izumi Nakamitsu (left in the photo), addresses the Disarmament Commission on 3 April. Next to her is Akan Rakhmetullin, Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan to the United Nations. (Credit: UN Photo/Loeys Felipe)

Left to right: The Vice-Chair (Maritza Chan (Costa Rica)) and the Chair (Albrecht von Wittke (Germany)) of the Open-ended Working Group to elaborate a set of political commitments as a new global framework that would address existing gaps in through-life ammunition management.

The Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters at United Nations Headquarters, New York, in June.

On 10 July, Fernando Arias, Director-General of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), and Bonnie Jenkins, Under Secretary for Arms Control and International Security of the United States, mark the completion of the destruction of the country's declared chemical weapons stockpile. (Credit: OPCW)

The Secretary-General, António Guterres, launches his policy brief, *A New Agenda for Peace*. (Credit: UN Photo/Manuel Elías)

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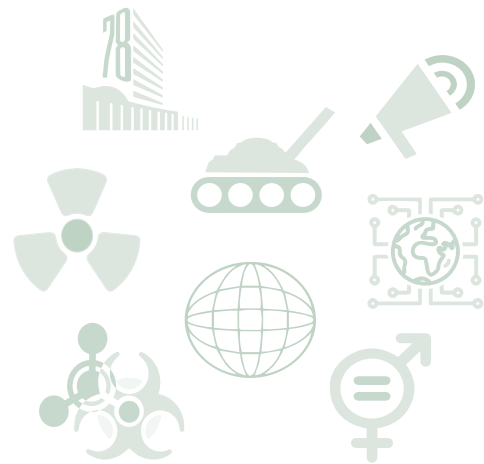
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GUIDE to the user

The United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs publishes the *United Nations Disarmament Yearbook* as a **concise reference tool** for diplomats, researchers, students and the general public on disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control issues under consideration by the international community.

The Office is releasing the present **condensed version** of the 2023 *Yearbook*, available in [PDF](#) and [website](#) formats, to provide an **easy-to-read overview** of the publication earlier in the year. The **full version**, with more comprehensive chapters on the year's activities, will be published on the website in **September 2024**.



The *Yearbook* is **divided into the main multilateral issues** under consideration throughout the year. It includes **developments and trends**, a convenient issue-oriented **timeline** and explanatory **graphics** and charts. The annex on **resolutions, status of treaties and other resources** is a one-stop shop for accessing recommended databases, publications and information materials from the year. The [Disarmament Resolutions and Decisions Database](#) contains the resolutions and decisions of the seventy-eighth session of the General Assembly, as well as their sponsors, voting patterns and other related information. The [Disarmament Treaties Database](#) provides the status of multilateral regulation and disarmament agreements. The information in those databases was formerly published each year within the *Yearbook*; producing it in database form offers *Yearbook* users a more interactive experience and easier access to data from previous years.



The *Yearbook* website is user-friendly—accessible on **mobile devices** and available in **multiple languages** through third-party machine translation. Official translations in the six official languages of the United Nations will be uploaded as they become available.

Because much of the background information is condensed, consulting **previous editions** for expanded historical knowledge will be helpful.

Websites of United Nations departments and specialized agencies, intergovernmental organizations, research institutes and non-governmental organizations are referenced as **hyperlinks in the online version** of the *Yearbook*.



Symbols of United Nations documents are composed of capital letters combined with figures. Hyperlinks to these documents are included in the online version of the *Yearbook*. Alternatively, they can be accessed, in the official languages of the United Nations, from <https://documents.un.org>.

Specific disarmament-related documents are also available from the disarmament reference collection at <https://library.unoda.org>.



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Throughout 2023,
disarmament advocates
around the world
demonstrated **remarkable
resilience** in the face of
multiplying crises and threats.

Izumi Nakamitsu

High Representative for Disarmament Affairs

”

FOREWORD

Welcome to the full edition of the 2023 *United Nations Disarmament Yearbook*. The *Yearbook*, now in its forty-eighth volume, provides a comprehensive and authoritative overview of recent developments and trends in the field of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control, including the relevant activities and achievements of the United Nations and other actors. The aim of this early-release preview edition, published last July, aimed to share key findings from the *Yearbook* at an earlier stage and provide a concise exploration of disarmament-related developments and trends from 2023.

Throughout 2023, disarmament advocates around the world demonstrated remarkable resilience in the face of multiplying crises and threats, from the ongoing conflicts in various regions and the escalation of nuclear tensions, to the proliferation of conventional weapons and the emergence of new technologies with destabilizing potential. Recognizing the interlocking nature of these and other global challenges, the Secretary-General issued his policy brief, *A New Agenda for Peace*, in July. This policy brief offered action-oriented recommendations to help Member States to integrate the tools of multilateral disarmament—including measures to regulate, reduce, or eliminate and destroy weapons—into **an anticipated global consensus** on tackling current and future problems. The Secretary-General also proposed that those tools, with their proven value in preventing conflict, could and should be used in support of broader efforts to advance our collective peace and security and achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.



Meanwhile, the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs undertook new initiatives in pursuit of a more peaceful and secure world. For example, the Office launched the Youth Leader Fund for a World Without Nuclear Weapons, offering 100 scholarships for young people in dozens of countries to develop their skills as change-makers for a nuclear-weapon-free world. My Office also launched its Leaders to the Future workshop series, empowering 55 young advocates to explore how disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control are linked with other matters vital to maintaining international peace and security.

Such efforts, with their aim of nurturing a new generation of disarmament advocates and thinkers, might be likened to the seeds of the *hibakujumoku*—the ginkgo trees renowned for surviving the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Thanks to recent efforts, saplings from those trees are now growing all around the world, serving as inspiration for the abolition of nuclear weapons and a future free from the scourge of war. It is my hope that the *United Nations Disarmament Yearbook*, as the definitive guide to developments in our field, will provide similar inspiration and historical perspective to all those committed to the cause of disarmament and the creation of a more peaceful and secure world for all.

Izumi Nakamitsu

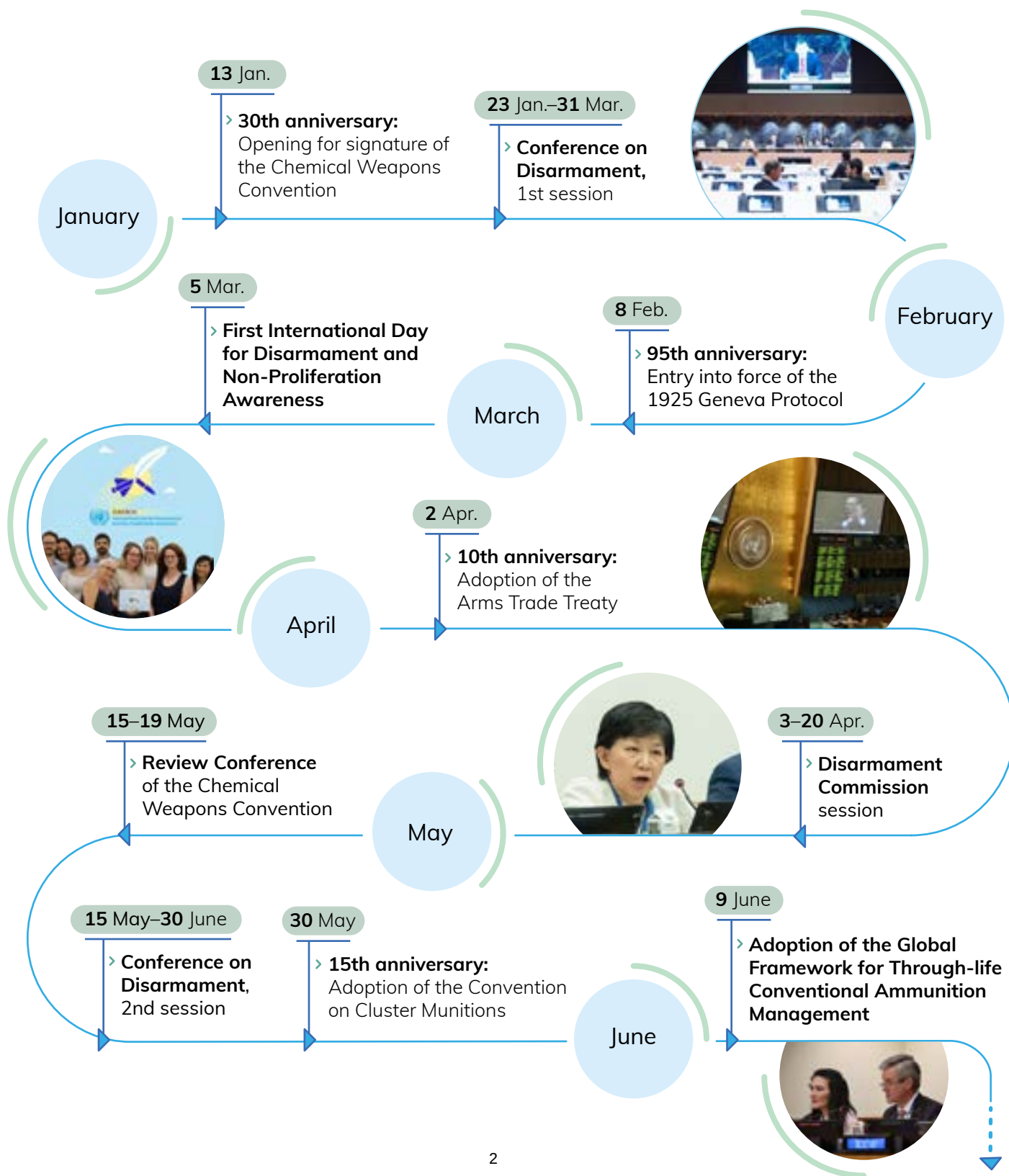
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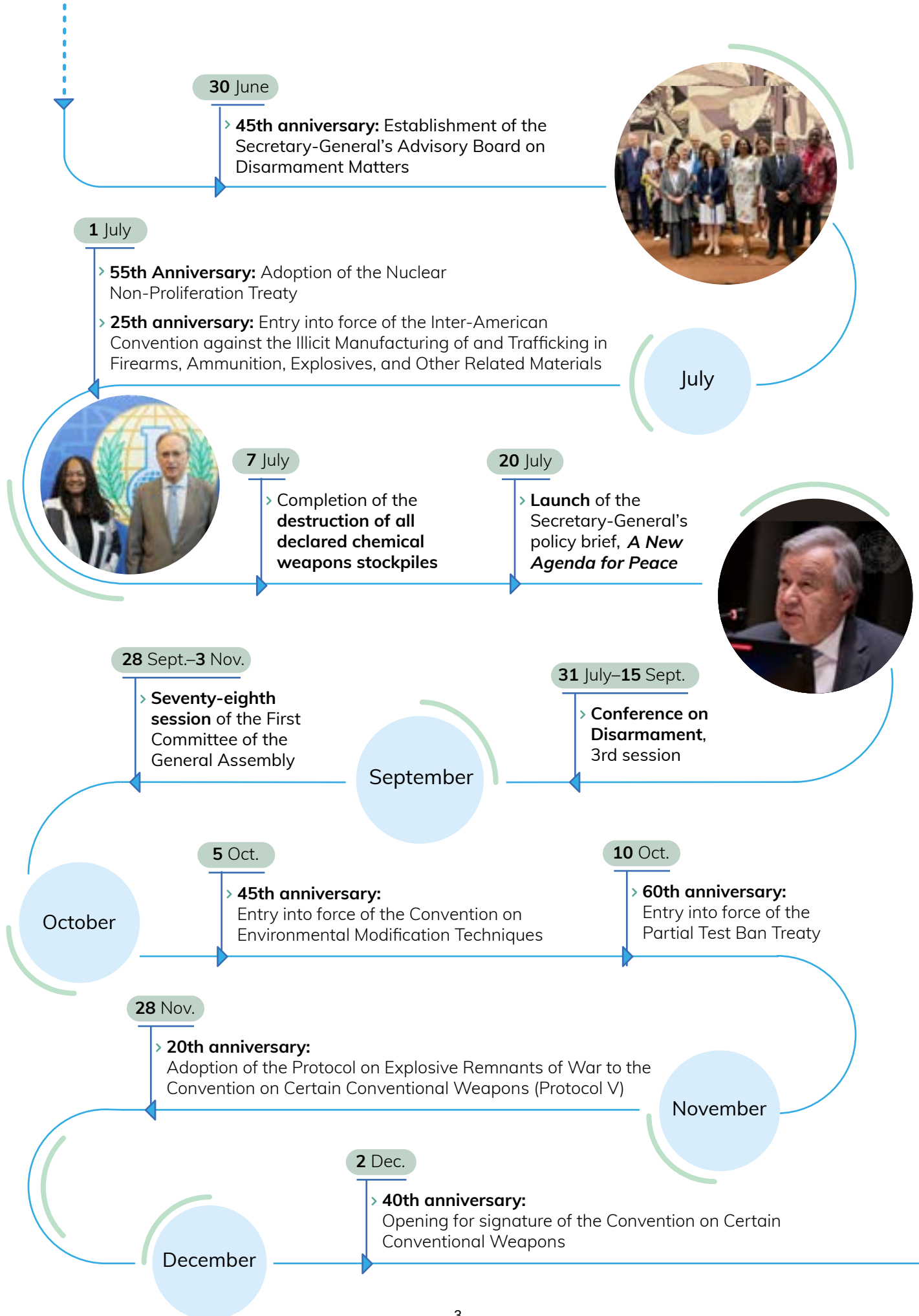
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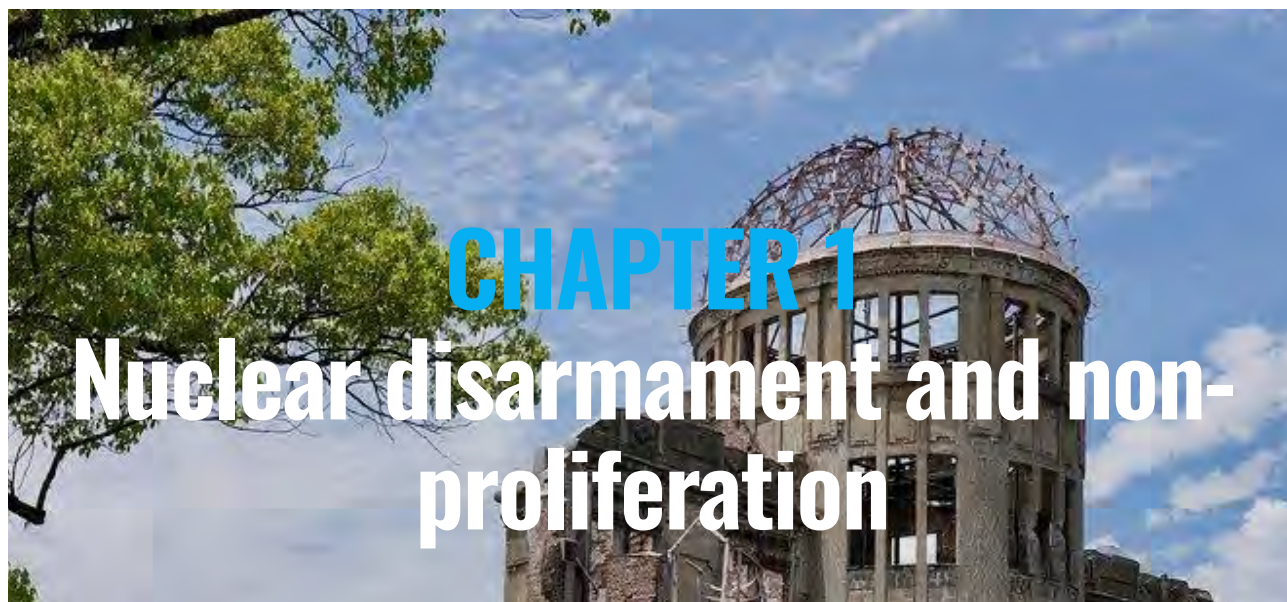
September 2024

Highlights, 2023

MULTILATERAL disarmament timeline







Eliminating nuclear weapons remains the United Nations' highest disarmament priority. We will not rest until the nuclear shadow has been lifted once and for all.

— [António Guterres](#) Secretary-General of the United Nations

Developments and trends, 2023

The year 2023 began with experts moving the hands of the “[Doomsday Clock](#)” to 90 seconds to midnight, reflecting their view that human civilization was at its closest to a cataclysmic tipping point in the clock's seven-decade history. That symbolic representation of existential danger stemmed in large part from growing fears about the use of nuclear weapons.

The trend of heightened nuclear risk continued in 2023 owing to six key interlinked trends and occurrences:

- The ongoing war in Ukraine
- The conflict in Gaza
- The increasing tension between nuclear-weapon States, including in the Asia-Pacific, coupled with ongoing qualitative improvements of nuclear arsenals and fears about a return to nuclear arms racing
- The failure to revive the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on the nuclear programme of the Islamic Republic of Iran

- Further progress by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in improving its nuclear capabilities
- The growing nexus between conventional weapons, new domains and nuclear weapons.

Those trends and occurrences combined not only served to raise nuclear risks—for example, through veiled threats to use nuclear weapons, the possibility of escalation in regional conflicts, and growing opportunity for mistake and miscalculation—but also diminished prospects for strengthening the disarmament and non-proliferation regime. Worse, they contributed to the further erosion of existing instruments and hard-won norms against the use, testing and proliferation of nuclear weapons. In November, the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs [reflected](#) on the situation: “We have witnessed nuclear threats in multiple acute crises. The instruments of the cold-war-era arms control regime have either crumbled away or are in acute danger of doing so. We appear to have reached the end of a decades-long trend of declining sizes in nuclear arsenals worldwide. Agreement in disarmament meetings ... seems increasingly difficult to find.”

The impact of the Russian invasion of Ukraine continued to be reflected both in fears about the use of a nuclear weapon and in strained relations across the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. Russian officials still issued [veiled threats](#) regarding the potential use of nuclear weapons, although less frequently than in 2022. The Russian Federation also “suspended” its participation in the Treaty between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (New START), including that Treaty’s verification mechanisms, albeit with a stated intention to strictly comply with the Treaty’s quantitative restrictions. The Treaty is the last bilateral arms control agreement on nuclear weapons.

On 25 May, the Russian Federation and Belarus announced that they were formalizing the deployment and storage of Russian non-strategic nuclear weapons in Belarusian territory. In December, Belarus [stated](#) that the Russian Federation had completed a shipment of non-strategic nuclear weapons to Belarusian territory. The issue of nuclear sharing and the stationing of nuclear forces outside of national territory continued to be a point of contention in multilateral forums, with critics charging that such arrangements—especially those of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)—were inconsistent with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). In August, a non-governmental organization [highlighted](#) excerpts of United States budget documents that indicated a possible return of United States nuclear weapons to the United Kingdom. Both the United States and the United Kingdom refused to comment on the matter.

Without directly referencing the conflict in Ukraine, the Russian Federation [withdrew](#) its ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, significantly damaging prospects

for the Treaty's entry into force and undermining the norm against nuclear testing. The withdrawal further exacerbated concerns raised by civil society about a potential return to nuclear explosive testing in the light of increased activity at test sites in China, the Russian Federation and the United States. Nevertheless, membership numbers of the Treaty continued to rise among non-nuclear-weapon States, with Solomon Islands and Sri Lanka ratifying the agreement and Somalia signing it in 2023.

In her statement to the Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (Article XIV Conference), the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs [stated](#): "It is deeply concerning to hear ... about potential backtracking on non-testing pledges. A return to nuclear testing would lead us to another age of instability, taking us closer to the edge of catastrophe, damaging human health and our environment in the process ... In today's climate of growing nuclear danger, I call on all States that have previously declared moratoriums on nuclear testing to reaffirm these moratoriums and to take immediate steps to sign and/or ratify the [Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty]."



Disarmament Fellows visit a monitoring station of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization, in September.

The conflict in Ukraine remained a significant point of contention in the NPT review process, especially in relation to the protection of the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant and threats to use nuclear weapons. Throughout the year, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) expressed concern regarding the situation at the Zaporizhzhia facility and called for the observance of the Agency's [Seven Pillars](#) for ensuring nuclear safety and security in an armed conflict. In November, the Director General of the IAEA [advised](#) that six of the Pillars were compromised at the facility either fully or partially, especially those related to staffing at the site, the conduct of regular maintenance activities and special measures taken for securing a stable cooling water supply. More broadly, the conflict continued to exacerbate tensions between States within the disarmament and non-proliferation regime, leading to acrimonious disputes over procedure and affecting efforts to implement relevant treaties and other instruments.

As noted, decreasing trust and resurgent competition between nuclear-weapon States also contributed to the rise in nuclear risk and diminished efforts to pursue nuclear disarmament. The United States and its allies pressed their allegations regarding the rapid expansion by China of its nuclear arsenal and fissile material production capability. In one [report](#), the United States Department of Defense alleged that China possessed 500 operational nuclear warheads. China continued to refute the allegation, asserting that the onus was on both the United States and the Russian Federation to lead in the process of nuclear arms reduction. China also pushed back strongly against calls for it to announce a moratorium on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons purposes, stating that such moratoriums were unverifiable and unfairly biased towards larger nuclear-weapon States.

Figure 1.1.

Estimated annual reduction in global nuclear warhead stockpiles



Although thousands of nuclear warheads have been destroyed since the 1980s, the annual reduction in global stockpiles has decreased significantly.

Note: The numbers shown are of total stockpiles, not of active military stockpiles.

Data source: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute yearbooks from 2017 to 2023; and Federation of American Scientists, Nuclear Information Project.

As calls for enhanced transparency by China mounted in various multilateral forums, so too did calls within the United States to expand its nuclear stockpile to meet its challenge of two near-peer nuclear-weapon States. The Congressional Commission on the Strategic Posture of the United States, a group of bipartisan experts, stated in a [report](#) that the United States needed a nuclear posture capable of simultaneously deterring both China and the Russian Federation. It also called for, inter alia, an increase in the number of available platforms for delivering nuclear weapons. With the ongoing development by the Russian Federation of novel nuclear delivery systems not constrained by any agreement, experts [expressed concern](#) that the post-cold-war trend of declining global nuclear weapons numbers was ending, after more than three decades.

Adding further to nuclear risk in the Asia-Pacific region, in 2023 the Democratic People's Republic of Korea continued its nuclear and ballistic missile programmes by conducting 31 test launches using ballistic missile technology—fewer than in 2022, but with five trials of

intercontinental ballistic missiles. The country also successfully put its first military satellite into orbit in November, after two failed attempts, in May and August. In addition, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea [amended](#) its Constitution in September to enshrine its nuclear policy, which significantly lowered its threshold for the potential use of nuclear weapons. Leaders from the country also held a summit with Russian counterparts, where they agreed to strengthen their collaboration in military matters. The Security Council convened nine times in response to the repeated violations of its relevant resolutions, but the body remained divided over taking further punitive action.

Anxiety about nuclear weapons was once again prevalent in the Middle East in 2023, with the conflict in Gaza serving to raise the spectre of their use and dampen prospects for either a resolution to the issue of the Iranian nuclear programme or the achievement of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction in the region. An unofficial comment in which an Israeli cabinet minister suggested Israel could use nuclear weapons in the conflict drew [condemnation](#) from States across the region and beyond.

Efforts to revive the JCPOA on the Iranian nuclear programme fell short once again. The remaining JCPOA parties and the United States achieved no gains in a new round of the Vienna Talks, while the Islamic Republic of Iran expanded its nuclear programme in both size and expertise. In June, the media [reported](#) on indirect talks between the United States and the Iranian Government aimed at reaching an informal deal that [allegedly](#) would have included, inter alia, a commitment from the latter to cease enrichment of uranium to or beyond 60 per cent, in exchange for the release of frozen Iranian assets and an exchange of prisoners. Despite a temporary drop in the country's enrichment of uranium to 60 per cent, it had [reverted](#) to the higher rate of production by the end of December. Throughout 2023, the IAEA reported that the Islamic Republic of Iran had continued to engage in several activities inconsistent with the JCPOA, including enrichment of uranium to 60 per cent, 20 per cent and 5 per cent, and creating a stockpile well above JCPOA limits ([GOV/2023/57](#)).^[1] The IAEA also detected highly enriched uranium particles containing up to 83.7 per cent U-235. However, following several meetings, it stated that it "had no further questions on the matter at that stage".

The year saw several attempts to increase monitoring and verification of the Iranian nuclear programme, as reflected in a [joint statement](#) issued in March by the IAEA and the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran. Nevertheless, the IAEA reiterated its position that its verification and monitoring had been seriously affected by the cessation of Iranian nuclear-related commitments under the JCPOA. Furthermore, the IAEA said that the situation had worsened because of a subsequent Iranian decision to remove all of the Agency's JCPOA-related surveillance and monitoring equipment.

For its part, the Islamic Republic of Iran continued to refute allegations that it was pursuing a nuclear weapons programme, contending that its activities were consistent with its commitments under the NPT. Meanwhile, several non-governmental organizations [calculated](#) that the State had acquired enough fissile material for multiple nuclear weapons. Adding to regional proliferation concerns, in September, Saudi Arabia [reaffirmed](#) that should the Islamic Republic of Iran acquire nuclear weapons, it would do so as well.

In 2023, the nuclear-weapon States maintained their rhetorical commitment to a world free of nuclear weapons, including at the first meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the 2026 Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT. However, those States continued programmes to qualitatively improve their nuclear arsenals, including through the development of new delivery systems. China, the Russian Federation and the United States progressed in the modernization of all three legs of their nuclear triads.

Figure 1.2.
Worldwide locations of nuclear weapons



This map of nuclear weapons locations includes sites where there is reason to believe that nuclear weapons probably are deployed or stored, and those where nuclear weapons and their components are designed, fabricated and assembled or dismantled. The list of locations is incomplete; locations for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea are unknown from open sources. Most States that possess nuclear weapons do not release information about locations of nuclear weapons and nuclear components.

The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. A dotted line represents approximately the line of control in Jammu and Kashmir agreed upon

by India and Pakistan. The final status of Jammu and Kashmir has not yet been agreed upon by the Parties. Final boundary between the Sudan and South Sudan has not yet been determined.

Base map source: United Nations Geospatial.

Data source: Federation of American Scientists, Nuclear Information Project.

Meanwhile, the United States announced plans to deploy its B61-12 nuclear gravity bomb to European allies in 2024. The variant is considered an upgrade, as its new tail fin allows for greater accuracy. The United States also announced the development of the [B61-13](#) gravity bomb—intended to be used against “harder and large-area military targets” and to allay concerns about the retirement of the B83-1 and the [W87-1](#)—which would be the first completely new nuclear warhead manufactured by the United States in over three decades. Although the President of the United States did not request any funding for a nuclear-armed, submarine-launched cruise missile in 2024, the United States Congress allocated funding for the proposed weapon in the 2024 National Defense Authorization Act.

Non-governmental sources [assessed](#) that China continued to develop three new missile silo fields for intercontinental ballistic missiles and was developing new variants and other advanced strategic delivery systems. China reportedly further expanded its dual-capable intermediate-range ballistic missile force, refitting its Type 094 ballistic missile submarines with the longer-range JL-3 submarine-launched ballistic missile, while also reassigning an operational nuclear mission to its bombers and developing an air-launched ballistic missile that might have nuclear capability.

The Russian Federation progressed with the replacement of legacy nuclear and dual-capable missile systems with newer variants and reportedly [deployed](#) a new Yars intercontinental ballistic missile at the Kozelsk base in the Kaluga region, south-west of Moscow, capable of carrying multiple thermonuclear warheads.

The Russian Federation also conducted further [deployments, production and testing](#) of novel delivery vehicles, including the Avangard hypersonic weapon and the Poseidon autonomous underwater vehicle. According to non-governmental sources, the country also engaged in the [upgrading and replacement](#) of non-strategic nuclear weapons systems.

In addition, the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2026 NPT Review Conference took place from 31 July to 11 August. Having skipped the one-year break that traditionally separates review cycles of the Treaty, the States parties revived contentious debates from the 2022 Review Conference on matters that included nuclear propulsion, nuclear sharing, the JCPOA, transparency around fissile material production and other activities, the protection of nuclear power plants in zones of armed conflict and the fulfilment

of article VI of the NPT. Divisions over those issues were exacerbated by parallel geostrategic developments, such as the war in Ukraine and tensions in the Middle East and the Asia-Pacific regions.

Despite an enduring articulated commitment by almost all the NPT States parties and to keeping it fit for purpose, the session was marked by procedural disputes, rancorous debate and frequent uses of the right of reply. As had become customary, the Preparatory Committee could not reach a consensus agreement on a summary of proceedings. The process reached a new low point when one State party refused to support the consensus adoption of a procedural report if the Committee Chair even submitted a draft summary of the proceedings as a working paper, something seen as pro forma in the past.

Despite the divisions affecting the Preparatory Committee, a working group established to discuss and make recommendations to the Preparatory Committee on measures that would improve the effectiveness, efficiency, transparency, accountability, coordination and continuity of the review process of the Treaty had met the week prior (24–28 July), and engaged in positive and constructive dialogue. In particular, the working group productively considered measures to strengthen accountability for the implementation of existing commitments through enhanced and interactive reporting, including in-person, during the review cycle. Although States parties could not agree on consensus recommendations or next steps, there was general agreement that they had made good progress that should be built upon.

The second Meeting of States Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons was another bright spot in 2023. Although the Treaty remained in its nascency with a relatively small membership, the meeting highlighted work by States parties to find practical, ethical and scientific approaches to achieving a world free of nuclear weapons. The participants made progress in efforts to assist victims of nuclear weapons use and testing, to lay the groundwork for a competent international authority that could verify nuclear disarmament, and to ensure the inclusion of diverse stakeholders in the Treaty's implementation. States parties adopted a declaration that unequivocally rejected the logic of nuclear deterrence and decried any and all threats to use nuclear weapons ([TPNW/MSP/2023/14](#), annex I). In her remarks during the meeting, the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs [reflected](#), "Important work has been done to implement the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. This is especially welcome considering the stagnant progress or backsliding that we are currently witnessing in other parts of the disarmament and non-proliferation architecture."

Although entrenched divisions around nuclear weapons featured prominently in the deliberations of the First Committee of the General Assembly, the body's session in 2023 included two notable highlights. The first was the adoption by a large majority of General Assembly resolution [78/240](#), entitled "Addressing the legacy of nuclear weapons: providing

victim assistance and environmental remediation to Member States affected by the use or testing of nuclear weapons". By that resolution, the General Assembly recognized the responsibility of Member States that had used or tested nuclear weapons to address the harm caused to victims. States also encouraged further international cooperation and discussions to assist victims and to assess and remediate environments contaminated by the use and testing of nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices.

Regarding the second highlight, as part of efforts to revive prospects for a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other explosive devices, the General Assembly included in its annual resolution on the matter, resolution [78/28](#), a call for the Secretary-General and the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs to facilitate engagement between States that possess or produce fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices on transparency and confidence-building measures with a view to launching negotiations.

Issues related to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

The [NPT](#) is a landmark international treaty whose objectives are to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and weapons technology, promote cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, and further the goal of nuclear disarmament and general and complete disarmament.

First session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2026 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

The Preparatory Committee for the 2026 NPT Review Conference held its [first session](#) in Vienna from 31 July to 11 August, with Jarmo Viinanen (Finland) serving as Chair.

Representatives from 113 States parties, 10 international organizations and 71 non-governmental organizations participated in the session (for the list of participants, see [NPT/CONF.2026/PC.I/INF/7](#)). The Committee adopted a procedural report ([NPT/CONF.2026/PC.I/6](#)).

The High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, in her [opening statement](#) to the Preparatory Committee, expressed concern about the current geostrategic environment, the erosion of the arms control regime and the consistently poor implementation of existing commitments, particularly in relation to the fulfilment of article VI of the Treaty. She stressed the need for States parties to strengthen the Treaty during the new review cycle by, among other things, (a) enhancing accountability for the implementation of existing commitments, especially disarmament commitments; (b) reinforcing the norms against the use, testing and

proliferation of nuclear weapons; (c) creating opportunities for dialogue between nuclear-weapon States in ways that reduce nuclear risk and find common understandings concerning new and emerging challenges, especially the nexus between technology and nuclear weapons; (d) strengthening the non-proliferation regime, including by considering assistance needed by the IAEA to fulfil its mandate; and (e) assisting in the resolution of regional proliferation crises and discussing what more could be done to strengthen regional solutions to nuclear weapons, including through nuclear-weapon-free zones. The High Representative also reiterated the need for States parties to use the Treaty as a platform for fulfilling the Sustainable Development Goals and other development initiatives, as well as for addressing global concerns such as pandemic prevention and climate change.

The Preparatory Committee set aside five meetings for a general debate on issues related to all aspects of its work. It heard 91 statements by States parties and 15 statements by non-governmental organizations.

Similar to the tenth Review Conference held just one year earlier, the Preparatory Committee occasionally saw heated rhetoric and recriminations between States parties on geopolitical matters, particularly the ongoing war in Ukraine, the crises in the Middle East and growing tensions in the Asia-Pacific region. National positions under the Treaty's three "pillars"—disarmament, non-proliferation and peaceful uses of nuclear energy—revealed familiar fissures between States. Many States parties expressed frustration regarding the implementation of past commitments, particularly on nuclear disarmament and the 1995 resolution on the Middle East, as well as the perceived imbalance of obligations between the two categories of States parties. Unsurprisingly, the war in Ukraine, the [AUKUS](#) partnership, the issue of nuclear sharing and the nuclear programme of the Islamic Republic of Iran proved to be the most contentious fault lines for the Committee.

Nevertheless, the States parties to the Treaty reaffirmed its central role as the cornerstone of the nuclear non-proliferation regime and the foundation of the pursuit of nuclear disarmament. In that regard, they emphasized the Treaty's vital contribution to international peace, security and stability, and stressed the fundamental importance of its full and effective implementation. They also emphasized the importance of ensuring the balanced implementation of the Treaty's three pillars, while noting their mutually reinforcing nature.

States parties recalled the necessity of implementing decisions 1 and 2 of the 1995 Review and Extension Conference, as well as the resolution on the Middle East adopted at that meeting ([NPT/CONF.1995/32 \(Part I\)](#), annex); the final document adopted at the 2000 Review Conference ([NPT/CONF.2000/28 \(Parts I and II\)](#)); and the conclusions and recommendations for follow-on actions adopted at the 2010 Review Conference ([NPT/CONF.2010/50 \(Vol. II\)](#)).

Following the general exchange of views, the Committee organized its meetings into three clusters, according equal time to each of the Treaty's three pillars: (a) non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, disarmament and international peace and security; (b) non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, safeguards and nuclear-weapon-free zones; and (c) the inalienable right of all NPT States parties to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, without discrimination and in conformity with articles I and II of the Treaty. The clusters addressed three specific issue areas, respectively: (a) nuclear disarmament and security assurances; (b) regional issues, including with respect to the Middle East and the implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East; and (c) peaceful uses of nuclear energy and other provisions of the Treaty. Discussions also took place on the strengthened review process.

Cluster 1

States parties reaffirmed their commitment to the full and effective implementation of article VI of the Treaty. They recalled the unequivocal undertaking made by the nuclear-weapon States in 2000, and reaffirmed in 2010, to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals, and deep concern was expressed about the lack of progress in the implementation of disarmament commitments, including that unequivocal undertaking. Delegations recalled the disarmament measures adopted by the 1995, 2000 and 2010 Review Conferences and, emphasizing that past commitments remained valid until fully implemented, called upon States parties to redouble their efforts in that regard. It was stressed that efforts were needed to reduce and ultimately eliminate all types of nuclear weapons, deployed and non-deployed, including through unilateral, bilateral, regional and multilateral measures, and States with the largest nuclear arsenals were encouraged to lead those efforts. States parties also emphasized the importance of applying the principles of transparency, verifiability and irreversibility in relation to the implementation of nuclear disarmament obligations.

In addition, the Preparatory Committee discussed the deteriorating international security environment, with numerous States parties arguing that the situation added urgency to the need for nuclear disarmament.

Separate concerns surfaced around the increased role of nuclear weapons in national and regional military doctrines. In that connection, nuclear-weapon States and all other States that continued to maintain a role for nuclear weapons in their military doctrines faced new calls to take measures to diminish and eliminate that role. Many States parties communicated unease about the alleged expansion of the nuclear stockpiles of some nuclear-weapon States and the possibility of a new arms race. Participants also signalled reservations about the continued qualitative improvement of nuclear weapons, their delivery systems and related infrastructure, as well as plans to further invest in upgrading, refurbishing or extending the service life of nuclear weapons and related facilities and in developing new nuclear weapons

and delivery systems. In that regard, it was stated that the indefinite extension of the Treaty at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference did not imply the indefinite possession of nuclear weapons.

Numerous States voiced apprehension regarding the practice of stationing nuclear weapons in the territory of non-nuclear-weapon States. Furthermore, States parties condemned threats of use of nuclear weapons and noted the prohibition on the threat or use of force contained in Article 2, paragraph 4, of the Charter of the United Nations.

The Committee discussed the risk of the use of nuclear weapons, whether intentionally or by miscalculation, miscommunication, misperception or accident. Pending the total elimination of nuclear weapons, the nuclear-weapon States, in cooperation with non-nuclear-weapon States, were called upon to take steps to prevent any use of nuclear weapons. In particular, the nuclear-weapon States were urged to rapidly reduce the operational readiness of nuclear weapons systems in line with previously agreed commitments. Numerous States raised the point that risk reduction, however, was not a replacement for disarmament measures.

Many States parties recalled the [joint statement](#) of 3 January 2022 by the leaders of the five nuclear-weapon States, in which they had affirmed that a nuclear war could not be won and must never be fought and had expressed their commitment to the obligations under the Treaty, including article VI.

The Committee also heard many calls from States parties for a return to the full implementation of the Treaty between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (New START), as well as expressions of regret regarding the [termination](#) of the Treaty between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Elimination of Their Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles. The Russian Federation and the United States were encouraged to resume negotiations to achieve further reductions in their nuclear arsenals, including non-strategic nuclear weapons, and other nuclear-weapon States were encouraged to join such negotiations.

Participants discussed the need for improved transparency and accountability in implementing nuclear disarmament obligations and commitments. In that regard, States parties welcomed the constructive discussion on transparency, accountability and reporting conducted during the meeting of the Working Group on further strengthening the NPT review process, including the proposals on regular, standardized reporting by the nuclear-weapon States and on the allocation of time throughout the review cycle for a focused discussion of such reporting. Discussants linked reporting and transparency to the principles of verifiability and accountability, as well as to confidence-building between States parties. Furthermore, it was suggested that establishing benchmarks and timelines could help to measure progress

and improve accountability in the implementation of nuclear disarmament obligations and commitments. Participants also suggested specific items on which nuclear-weapon States should report. ^[2]

Meanwhile, a notable number of States parties reiterated their concern over the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons. They reaffirmed the need for all States to comply with applicable international law, including international humanitarian law, at all times. Some stressed that both the humanitarian consequences and the need to prevent nuclear-weapon use should underpin nuclear disarmament efforts. States parties also heard calls to consider providing assistance to States affected by the use and testing of nuclear weapons. Such assistance could include sharing technical and scientific information and providing financial support for the purposes of victim assistance and environmental remediation.

NPT States parties that were also parties or signatories to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons drew attention to the entry into force of the latter agreement in 2021, as well as the convening of its first Meeting of States Parties in Vienna from 21 to 23 June 2022. They stressed that the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons represented an effective measure under article VI of the NPT, thus complementing the NPT.

Many States parties reiterated the need for the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty as a core element of the international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. Furthermore, States parties discussed the continued inability of the Conference on Disarmament to commence negotiations on either one of the two key issues: a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices; or legally binding arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons by all nuclear-weapon States.

Cluster 2

Many States parties emphasized that IAEA safeguards were a fundamental component of the nuclear non-proliferation regime, were essential for peaceful nuclear commerce and cooperation, and made a vital contribution to the environment for peaceful nuclear development and international cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. The Preparatory Committee discussed the role of the IAEA as the competent authority responsible for verifying and assuring compliance with safeguards agreements. Many States stressed that nothing should undermine the authority or independence of the Agency in that regard.

Participants emphasized that States parties with concerns regarding non-compliance with safeguards agreements should direct such concerns to the IAEA to consider, investigate, draw conclusions and decide on necessary actions in accordance with its mandate. Expressing

their concern over cases of non-compliance, many delegations stressed the importance of ensuring that States remain in or promptly return to compliance with their obligations. In that context, they noted the role of the Security Council and the General Assembly in upholding compliance with safeguards agreements.

Delegations recalled the importance of applying IAEA safeguards pursuant to comprehensive safeguards agreements based on [INFCIRC/153 \(Corrected\)](#) and welcomed that 182 States parties had comprehensive safeguards agreements with the Agency in force. The Committee encouraged States without such agreements to bring them into force as soon as possible.

Many States parties noted that, although comprehensive safeguards agreements provided assurances regarding declared nuclear material, implementing the model additional protocol ([INFCIRC/540 \(Corrected\)](#)) equipped the IAEA with broader information and access to provide increased assurances regarding the absence of undeclared nuclear material and activities in a State with a comprehensive safeguards agreement. Many States stressed that the additional protocol, together with the comprehensive safeguards agreement, would represent an enhanced verification standard and an integral part of the safeguards system. They welcomed the growing number of States parties that had brought additional protocols into force, which totalled 140, even as the Committee emphasized that it was the sovereign decision of any State to conclude an additional protocol. In addition, the Committee discussed how it was becoming increasingly challenging for the IAEA to draw a soundly based safeguards conclusion for States with small quantities protocols based on the original standard text. In that connection, many States parties called upon such States to amend their original small quantities protocols or rescind them as a matter of priority.

The Committee discussed the safety of nuclear power plants and other facilities or locations subject to IAEA safeguards in zones of armed conflict, particularly in the context of the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant, in Ukraine. Many States parties expressed concern about the implications of the loss of control by the competent authorities over such locations because of military activities, including negative impacts on safety, security—including physical protection of nuclear material—and safeguards.

The Committee continued to debate the topic of naval nuclear propulsion and the implications of such activities for safeguards and non-proliferation under the Treaty. Several States parties took note of discussions by the IAEA Board of Governors concerning safeguards arrangements related to naval nuclear propulsion and emphasized the need for full compliance with the Treaty and the relevant safeguards agreements.

Several States parties welcomed IAEA efforts to assist in strengthening national legal and regulatory frameworks related to safeguards, including through support for Governments to establish and maintain State systems of accounting for and controlling nuclear material.

The Committee discussed the importance of effective nuclear security, covering physical protection, cybersecurity and computer security for all nuclear and other radioactive materials and facilities, including those materials used for military purposes and related sites. Delegations emphasized the need for all States to achieve and maintain the highest standards of nuclear security.

Many States parties expressed concern over the existing and constantly evolving and emerging threat of terrorism, including the risk that non-State actors might acquire nuclear weapons and their means of delivery. They recalled the essential role played by the relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolution [1540 \(2004\)](#), and the obligation of all States to implement binding provisions of those resolutions. They also encouraged all States that had not yet done so to become party to the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism, as soon as possible.

Delegations discussed the need to ensure that exports of nuclear-related dual-use items do not support the proliferation of nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. States parties recalled the legitimate right of all States parties, in particular developing States, to full access to nuclear material, equipment and technological information for peaceful purposes.

The Committee also considered how the further establishment of internationally recognized nuclear-weapon-free zones, based on arrangements freely arrived at by the States of the region concerned, enhances global and regional peace and security, strengthens the nuclear non-proliferation regime and contributes towards realizing the objectives of nuclear disarmament. Many expressed support for the internationally recognized nuclear-weapon-free zones and acknowledged the contributions to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation represented by the Antarctic Treaty, the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (Treaty of Tlatelolco), the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty (Rarotonga Treaty), the Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone (Bangkok Treaty), the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty (Pelindaba Treaty) and the Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia, as well as the nuclear-weapon-free status of Mongolia.

Many States urged further progress towards ratification by nuclear-weapon States of the relevant protocols to nuclear-weapon-free-zone treaties. Several States parties welcomed the reaffirmations by the member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and by the nuclear-weapon States of their readiness to engage in constructive consultations on the outstanding issues relating to signing and ratifying the Protocol to the Bangkok Treaty. The nuclear-weapon States heard calls to review any reservations or interpretative statements made in connection with the ratification of such protocols and to engage in relevant dialogue with members of the zones.

The Committee discussed the resolution on the Middle East adopted by the 1995 Review and Extension Conference ([NPT/CONF.1995/32 \(Part I\)](#), annex), recalling the affirmation of its goals and objectives by subsequent review conferences and highlighting the need to implement the resolution. Many States parties argued that the 1995 resolution remained valid until its goals and objectives were achieved, noting that it was an essential element of the outcome of the 1995 Conference and of the basis on which the NPT was indefinitely extended without a vote. States also acknowledged the relevant developments at the first three sessions of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, convened in November 2019, November 2021 and November 2022 at United Nations Headquarters, in New York.

States parties strongly supported the JCPOA as an achievement of multilateralism endorsed by Security Council resolution [2231 \(2015\)](#) and as an indispensable mechanism in upholding the non-proliferation regime and promoting peace and stability in the Middle East. Expressing regret over the withdrawal of the United States from the JCPOA and its continued erosion, participants called for an immediate return to full implementation of the agreement by all relevant parties.

Participants also discussed the lack of progress in resolving the long-outstanding safeguards issues concerning the Syrian Arab Republic. The country was asked to cooperate fully with the IAEA to resolve all outstanding safeguards issues.

A large group of States parties reaffirmed their unwavering support for the complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. They condemned the nuclear tests conducted by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in 2016 and 2017, while stressing that it must not conduct any further nuclear tests. Additionally, many States parties stressed that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea could not have the status of a nuclear-weapon State pursuant to the Treaty, and called on it to return, without delay, to the Treaty and to the application of IAEA safeguards on all of its nuclear activities. In that connection, 74 States parties released a joint statement on "addressing the North Korean nuclear challenge" ([NPT/CONF/2026/PC.I/WP.36](#)).

Furthermore, the Committee discussed how each State party, in exercising its national sovereignty, had the right to withdraw from the Treaty if it decided that extraordinary events related to the subject matter of the Treaty had jeopardized its supreme interests. It reaffirmed that, pursuant to article X, a notice of withdrawal should be given to all other parties to the Treaty and to the Security Council three months in advance and should include a statement of the extraordinary events that the State party regarded as having jeopardized its supreme interests. States parties emphasized that withdrawal did not change any other existing legal obligations or political commitments between the withdrawing State and any other State party, including obligations that applied to nuclear materials and equipment or to scientific

and technological information acquired by a State prior to withdrawal, which should remain under safeguards.

Cluster 3

The Committee reaffirmed that nothing in the NPT should be interpreted as affecting the inalienable right of all the parties to the Treaty to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes without discrimination and in conformity with articles I, II, III and IV. It also reaffirmed that all NPT States parties should undertake to facilitate and had the right to participate in the fullest possible exchange of equipment, materials and scientific and technological information for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy in conformity with all the provisions of the Treaty. Many States parties also stressed that those in a position to do so should cooperate in contributing with other States parties or international organizations, such as the IAEA, to the further development of the applications of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, particularly in the territories of non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the Treaty, with due consideration for the needs of the developing areas of the world.

Delegations discussed the contribution of nuclear science and technology in meeting global challenges and socioeconomic development needs and emphasized the important role of nuclear science and technology in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change.

States parties reiterated that each of them had the right to define its national energy policy. Some noted that States parties wishing to pursue nuclear power could consider nuclear technologies and innovations—including advanced reactors, small and modular reactors, as well as large-capacity power reactors and fast-neutron reactors—and the role such technology could potentially play in facilitating energy security, decarbonization and transitioning to a low-carbon economy. States parties reiterated that, when developing nuclear energy, including nuclear power, the use of nuclear energy must be accompanied by commitments to and the ongoing implementation of IAEA safeguards, as well as appropriate and effective levels of safety and security, consistent with States parties' national legislation and respective international obligations.

The Committee discussed the importance of nuclear safety and nuclear security for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. While recognizing that the responsibility for safety and security rested with individual States, States parties reaffirmed the role of the IAEA in developing safety standards and nuclear security guidance and relevant conventions, based on best practices, in strengthening and coordinating international cooperation on nuclear safety and security.

Many States parties stressed the essential role of the IAEA, including through its Technical Cooperation Programme, in assisting States parties, upon request, in building human and institutional capacities, including regulatory capabilities, for the safe, secure and peaceful applications of nuclear science and technology. Many States parties added that those activities contributed to meeting energy needs, improving human and animal health, combating poverty, protecting the environment, developing agriculture, managing the use of water resources, optimizing industrial processes and preserving cultural heritage, thus helping to improve the quality of life and the well-being of humankind.

The discussion also covered the importance of IAEA technical cooperation activities and nuclear knowledge-sharing, as well as the transfer of nuclear technology to developing countries and least developed countries. Many States parties recognized the need to ensure that the IAEA had adequate and necessary support to enable it to provide, upon request, the assistance needed by member States. The Committee discussed how developing countries and least developed countries should be given priority in allocations from the IAEA Technical Cooperation Fund. Participants also welcomed the role of the IAEA Peaceful Uses Initiative in mobilizing extrabudgetary contributions.

States parties discussed how regional and cooperative agreements for the promotion of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, including under the auspices of the IAEA, could be an effective means in facilitating technical and technology transfers.

Additionally, delegations stressed the importance of transporting radioactive materials consistent with relevant international standards of safety, security and environmental protection. They encouraged continued efforts to improve communication between shipping and coastal States to build confidence and address concerns regarding transport safety, security and emergency preparedness.

The Committee also considered the [*IAEA Comprehensive Report on the Safety Review of the ALPS-treated Water at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station*](#). In that regard, numerous States parties emphasized the importance of the impartial, independent and objective safety review of the IAEA based on relevant safety standards during all phases.

A significant number of States parties emphasized the importance of nuclear safety and security regarding peaceful nuclear facilities and materials in all circumstances, including in armed conflict zones. They noted the IAEA Director General's seven indispensable pillars for ensuring nuclear safety and security during an armed conflict, which were derived from IAEA safety standards and nuclear security guidance. Gravely concerned for the safety and security of Ukraine's nuclear facilities and materials, particularly the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant, participants voiced strong support for the efforts of the IAEA and its Director General regarding the safety and security of those Ukrainian assets, and for the five concrete

principles of the IAEA to help to ensure nuclear safety and security at the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant.

Strengthened review process

Many States parties welcomed the robust discussion of the Working Group on further strengthening the NPT review process. Many delegations took note of the working paper submitted by the Working Group's Chair containing recommendations to the Preparatory Committee to improve the effectiveness, efficiency, transparency, accountability, coordination and continuity of the NPT review process. While States parties agreed to further consider proposals to improve the review process, many States expressed regret that the Working Group was not able to agree to continue its work. Participants also expressed divergent views on the possibility of continuing the Working Group's work during the meetings of the Preparatory Committee.

States parties exchanged views on several specific proposals to improve the effectiveness, efficiency, transparency, accountability, coordination and continuity of the review process. Furthermore, they discussed ways to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the Main Committees and subsidiary bodies of the Review Conference, including by eliminating overlaps between them. Improved time management was also raised as a possible means of improving the efficiency of the review process. Many States parties expressed support for measures to increase accountability for commitments through transparency, reporting and dedicated time to discuss national reports. Several States parties called for the use of a rolling text to improve continuity between the sessions of the Preparatory Committee. There were also calls for the early nomination of presidents of review conferences and chairs of preparatory committees, as well as for continuing to convene informal bureaux during each review cycle comprising the chairs of the Preparatory Committee sessions and presidents-designate of the review conferences to enhance the continuity of and coordination within the review process.

Pursuant to his mandate, the Chair presented delegations with a factual summary of States parties' deliberations. Owing to objections raised regarding the inclusion of a reference to the factual Chair's summary in the procedural report of the first session of the Committee, the Chair decided not to issue the draft factual summary as a working paper under his own authority.

The Chair submitted a document containing their reflections on potential areas for focused discussion at the second session of the Preparatory Committee, in 2024 ([NPT/CONF.2026/PC.I/WP.38](#)). While it had been usual practice for the reflection papers of chairs of the Preparatory Committee to be submitted as an official document of the Committee, that year

the reflection paper of the Chair of the Preparatory Committee's first session was instead submitted as a working paper.

Working Group on further strengthening the review process of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

The Working Group on further strengthening the NPT review process was established by the tenth NPT Review Conference to discuss and make recommendations to the Preparatory Committee relating to measures that would improve the effectiveness, efficiency, transparency, accountability, coordination and continuity of the NPT review process ([NPT/CONF.2020/DEC.2](#)).

The Working Group met in Vienna from 24 to 28 July, with 101 States parties participating in its work (for the list of participants, see [NPT/CONF.2026/WG.I/INF/6](#)), and elected Jarmo Viinanen (Finland) as its Chair. He also served as Chair of the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2026 NPT Review Conference, which took place the subsequent week.

At its first meeting, the Working Group decided to hold its deliberations in private unless otherwise decided by States parties in accordance with the rules of procedure. It also decided to allow representatives of regional organizations to participate in its meetings, submit working papers and make statements. The Group allocated a two-hour period during one meeting to substantive presentations by non-governmental organizations, and that segment was held in public. Three regional organizations were represented as observers at the Working Group,^[3] and representatives of six non-governmental organizations attended its public meeting (see [NPT/CONF.2026/WG.I/INF/5](#)).

In the lead-up to and during the Working Group's session, States submitted [working papers](#) in which they proposed measures to improve the effectiveness, efficiency, transparency, accountability, coordination and continuity of the review process. The suggested measures to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the review process included the following: imposing time limits for statements; clarifying the mandates of the Main Committees and subsidiary bodies and reducing redundancies between them; circulating the draft outcome document of review conferences in advance; and acting early to establish subsidiary bodies, nominate chairs and designate topics for discussion. Furthermore, many participants submitted working papers in which they supported the concept of "rolling texts" that would inform the discussions of successive preparatory committees and review conferences.

States also presented proposals aimed at improving the transparency and accountability of the review process. For example, participants urged States parties, particularly the nuclear-weapon States, to fully implement Actions 20 and 21 of the 2010 NPT Action Plan ([NPT/CONF.2010/50 \(Vol. II\)](#), annex), including with regard to a standard reporting form. Proposals were

made concerning items to include in such a form, and participants suggested holding dedicated discussions on national reports—particularly those by the nuclear-weapon States—during the formal meetings of the Treaty.

Finally, the working papers submitted by States included potential measures to improve the continuity and coordination of the review process. The ideas included earlier designation of the chairs of preparatory committees and the presidents of review conferences, as well as their respective officers; regional outreach such as workshops and consultations; funding assistance for developing States; and the establishment of an implementation support unit or Treaty support unit, or the formalization of the Office for Disarmament Affairs as the permanent secretariat of the NPT review process.

During the meeting of the Working Group, States parties exchanged views on the various proposals contained in the working papers and presented additional proposals on measures to improve the effectiveness, efficiency, transparency, accountability, coordination and continuity of the review process.

In line with the decision establishing the Working Group, the Chair presented a series of recommendations for the Group's adoption. However, States did not reach a consensus either to adopt the recommendations or to continue the deliberations of the Working Group. Under his own authority, the Chair of the Working Group submitted to the Preparatory Committee a working paper containing his recommendations for improving the effectiveness, efficiency, transparency, accountability, coordination and continuity of the NPT review process ([NPT/CONF.2026/PC.I/WP.34](#)).

Nuclear testing and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty

In 2023, there were both notable advancements and negative developments in the global commitment against nuclear explosive testing. The advancements were underscored through two significant ratifications of the [Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty](#), by Solomon Islands on 20 January and Sri Lanka on 25 July, further extending the Treaty's global reach. Somalia's signature on 8 September further underscored the Treaty's broad global support.

On 29 August, during the General Assembly's annual [commemoration](#) of the International Day against Nuclear Tests, many States echoed the urgency of advancing the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and highlighted the humanitarian consequences of nuclear testing. Pressing for the Treaty's entry into force, a significant number of delegations stressed the existential threat posed by nuclear weapons and their proliferation. Delegates also called on the nuclear-weapon States to uphold their responsibilities towards States and peoples

affected by nuclear testing. Such statements reflected a global consensus on the urgency of eliminating nuclear tests and the critical role of the Treaty in achieving that goal. In her [statement](#), the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs emphasized the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty as a key element in the global disarmament and non-proliferation regime. She stressed that although the Treaty was not in force, it had established a global standard against nuclear testing. At the same time, she underscored the urgency of its entry into force.

On 22 September, the biennial Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty ([Article XIV Conference](#)) took place at United Nations Headquarters, in New York. In the Final Declaration of the Conference ([CTBT-Art.XIV/2023/6](#), annex), the States parties and other signatory States emphasized the urgent need for the Treaty's entry into force and voiced "deep concern" over the delay in its implementation for the 27 years since it was opened for signature. Furthermore, they highlighted the Treaty as a crucial instrument for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation and welcomed progress towards its universalization. The States strongly urged the remaining Annex 2 States to ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty without delay and called on all States "to refrain from nuclear weapon test explosions or any other nuclear explosions, the development and use of new nuclear weapon technologies and any action that would undermine the object and purpose and the implementation of the provisions of the [Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty]". Representatives from 88 ratifying and signatory States, along with one observer State, attended the Conference. Additionally, two international organizations and seven non-governmental organizations participated in the Conference (for the list of participants, see [CTBT-Art.XIV/2023/INF.6](#)).

In her [address](#) to the Conference, the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs underscored the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty as a fundamental element in the pursuit of a nuclear-weapon-free future. She highlighted the considerable progress achieved since the Treaty's inception, reflected in the widespread support for the agreement and the establishment of a global verification system. However, she again expressed concern that the Treaty had not yet entered into force owing to the pending ratifications of remaining Annex 2 States. Emphasizing the danger of retreating from non-testing commitments, she urged States under nuclear testing moratoriums to reaffirm them. Additionally, she called for proactive efforts towards ratifying the Treaty, citing the need to "champion progress over regression".

Despite collective efforts towards banning nuclear testing, the latter part of the year saw a series of negative developments on the matter of nuclear tests. In September, satellite imagery provided by a non-governmental organization revealed that China, the Russian Federation and the United States had [expanded](#) their nuclear test site facilities from 2018 to 2023. That expansion included new construction and tunnelling at the Lop Nur site in China,

the Novaya Zemlya site in the Russian Federation and the Nevada National Security Site in the United States. In the context of escalating nuclear tensions exacerbated by the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, the activities at the test sites raised concerns about a possible weakening of the global norm against nuclear tests.

On 2 November, the President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, [signed](#) a law revoking his country's ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, marking a significant setback in advancing the Treaty's universalization. The development followed unanimous approval of the legislation by both the [State Duma](#) and the [Federation Council](#). Russian officials stated that the decision was tied to the policies of the United States towards the Russian Federation, reflecting President Putin's previously stated intention to “mirror” the position of the United States, which had signed but not ratified the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

In response, the Secretary-General [expressed](#) deep regret over the withdrawal, noting that it marked a departure from the Russian Federation's previous leadership in seeking to bring the Treaty into force.

With the Russian de-ratification, the number of Annex 2 States whose ratifications are needed for the Treaty's entry into force increased to nine, the number of ratifying States fell to 177, and the count of signatories remained at 187.

Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons

Signature and ratification

The [Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons](#), adopted in 2017, includes a comprehensive set of prohibitions on participating in any nuclear-weapon activity. The Treaty entered into force on 22 January 2021, following the deposit of the fiftieth instrument of ratification or accession with the Secretary-General on 24 October 2020.

In 2023, one State acceded to the Treaty (Sri Lanka), and two States signed it (Bahamas and Djibouti). As at 31 December, the Treaty had 69 States parties and 93 signatory States.

Scientific Advisory Group

The first Meeting of States Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons decided in 2022 to establish a scientific advisory group to facilitate decision-making on the basis of the most up-to-date scientific knowledge available to States parties ([TPNW/MSP/2022/6](#), annex III, decision 2). On 8 February 2023, the President of the second Meeting of States Parties, following consultations with States parties, [appointed](#) 15 members of the newly

established Scientific Advisory Group. The Group held its first meeting on 1 March. At that meeting, it elected its Co-Chairs, Patricia Lewis and Zia Mian. The Group would go on to hold a total of nine online meetings and one hybrid meeting in the lead-up to the second Meeting of States Parties.

The Group submitted to the second Meeting of States Parties a report on its annual activities ([TPNW/MSP/2023/6](#)) and a report on the status and developments regarding nuclear weapons, nuclear-weapon risks, the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons, nuclear disarmament and related issues ([TPNW/MSP/2023/8](#), also available as an [enhanced publication](#)). The Co-Chairs [presented](#) those reports at the second Meeting of States Parties.

In her [address](#) to the second Meeting of States Parties, the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs noted that the Group was unique among multilateral disarmament treaties and that its establishment was a sign of States parties' commitment to ensuring that their actions were founded on facts and rooted on impartial and expert scientific advice.

Intersessional process

The intersessional process initiated by the first Meeting of States Parties continued in the lead-up to the second Meeting. The Co-Chairs of the informal working groups, the informal facilitators and the gender focal point submitted reports to the second Meeting of States Parties detailing the progress achieved.^[4] In addition, the Coordinating Committee held a number of hybrid meetings and a virtual meeting to coordinate the intersessional process and prepare for the second Meeting of States Parties. The Coordinating Committee comprises the Presidents of the first, second and third Meeting of States Parties, the working group Co-Chairs, the informal facilitators of work to promote the complementarity of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons with other treaties, and the gender focal point.^[5]

Second Meeting of States Parties

The Secretary-General convened the [second Meeting of States Parties](#) to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons at United Nations Headquarters, in New York, from 27 November to 1 December. On 1 December, the Meeting adopted its report ([TPNW/MSP/2023/14](#)), as well as a declaration entitled "Our commitment to upholding the prohibition of nuclear weapons and averting their catastrophic consequences" (annex I) and a number of decisions (annex II).

Juan Ramón de la Fuente (Mexico) served as President of the Meeting. Its opening plenary included an [address](#) delivered by the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs on behalf of the Secretary-General, as well as statements from high-level officials. A general exchange of views took place at its fourth, fifth and sixth plenary meetings. In total, 48 States parties, 18

observer States, three international organizations, 13 civil society organizations and a nuclear test survivor spoke during the high-level opening segment and the general exchange of views.

At its second and third plenary meetings, on 27 and 28 November, the Meeting held a thematic discussion on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons. It consisted of two panel discussions, followed by questions and comments from States parties and observers. At its sixth to ninth plenary meetings, from 29 November to 1 December, the Meeting considered the Treaty's status and operation and other matters important for achieving its objectives and purpose. The President, the Co-Chairs of the informal working groups, the informal facilitators and the gender focal point introduced their reports and working papers, and they briefed participants on the work done during the intersessional period. Afterwards, States parties and observers had an opportunity to make comments (for more information, see [TPNW/MSP/2023/14](#), paras. 19, 20 and 22).

In the declaration entitled "Our commitment to upholding the prohibition of nuclear weapons and averting their catastrophic consequences" ([TPNW/MSP/2023/14](#), annex I), States parties noted that nuclear risks were being exacerbated by the continued and increasing salience of and emphasis on nuclear weapons in military postures and doctrines. The authors reaffirmed their grave concern about the catastrophic consequences of nuclear weapons, which underpinned the moral and ethical imperatives for nuclear disarmament. They said that they firmly deplored and remained deeply alarmed by threats to use nuclear weapons, as well as increasingly strident nuclear rhetoric. The States parties expressed their unyielding commitment to delegitimizing, stigmatizing and totally eliminating nuclear weapons. They also reaffirmed the complementarity between the NPT and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and pledged to work relentlessly to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons.

The Meeting adopted a number of decisions, extending the intersessional structure established by the first Meeting of States Parties to the period between the second and third Meetings (decision 1) and giving presidents of future Meetings the option to convene thematic debates at the Meetings (decision 2). The Meeting also adopted, on a provisional basis, for voluntary use by States parties, the reporting guidelines and the reporting format for articles 6 and 7 of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (decision 3), contained in document [TPNW/MSP/2023/3](#). The Meeting decided to hold focused discussions in its informal working group on victim assistance, environmental remediation, and cooperation and assistance regarding an international trust fund for victim assistance and environmental remediation (decision 4). The Meeting also established a consultative process between the second and third Meetings of States Parties to promote and articulate the legitimate security concerns and threat and risk perceptions enshrined in the Treaty that resulted from the existence of

nuclear weapons and the concept of nuclear deterrence, as well as to challenge the security paradigm based on nuclear deterrence (decision 5).

The Meeting elected Akan Rakhmetullin (Kazakhstan) as President of the third Meeting of States Parties in accordance with rule 6(3) of its rules of procedure. It decided that the third Meeting of States Parties would be held within the week of 3–7 March 2025 at United Nations Headquarters, in New York ([TPNW/MSP/2023/14](#), para. 24).

Bilateral agreements and other issues

Implementation of the Treaty on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms

On 5 February 2018, the United States and the Russian Federation met the central limits of the Treaty on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (New START). Under the Treaty, the parties must possess no more than 700 deployed intercontinental ballistic missiles, submarine-launched ballistic missiles and heavy bombers, and no more than 1,550 warheads associated with those deployed launchers.

In an address to the Russian Federal Assembly on 21 February, President Putin [announced](#) that the Russian Federation was “suspending its participation” in the Treaty, citing the conflict in Ukraine and hostile Western actions against the Russian Federation. He clarified that the Russian Federation was not withdrawing from the Treaty. In a subsequent [statement](#), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs noted that the Russian Federation intended to strictly comply with the quantitative restrictions on strategic offensive arms within the Treaty's life cycle, and that it would continue to exchange notifications with the United States on launches of intercontinental ballistic missiles and submarine-launched ballistic missiles. It added that the decision to suspend New START could be reversed if the United States demonstrated the political will and took efforts towards general de-escalation. There is no provision for suspension in the Treaty.

The two parties to New START did not participate in the biannual data exchange on Treaty-accountable items. However, on 12 May, the United States voluntarily released to the public [aggregate data](#) of its nuclear forces covered by the Treaty as at 1 March.

As of 1 June, the United States [announced](#) “countermeasures” to the Russian suspension that included withholding notifications required under the Treaty, such as updates on the status or location of missiles, launchers and other Treaty-accountable items—an obligation that the Russian Federation had allegedly ceased to fulfil since 28 February. However, the United States reported that it continued to notify the Russian Federation about launches of intercontinental ballistic missiles and submarine-launched ballistic missiles^[6] and of

exercises.^[7] Furthermore, the United States announced that it would refrain from facilitating New START inspection activities on its territory by revoking existing visas and that it would not provide telemetric information on the launches of intercontinental ballistic missiles and submarine-launched ballistic missiles. The United States also expressed its desire and readiness to reverse those measures and fully implement the Treaty upon the Russian Federation's return to full implementation of the Treaty.

The parties convened no meetings of the Bilateral Consultative Commission in 2023. If New START, as the last remaining bilateral strategic nuclear arms control agreement, expires on 4 February 2026 without a successor arrangement in place, there will be no limitations on strategic nuclear arsenals for the first time in five decades.

Democratic People's Republic of Korea

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea continued its nuclear and ballistic missile programmes in 2023, conducting a total of 31 launches using ballistic missile technology in contravention of the relevant Security Council resolutions.^[8] Although the country carried out fewer launches than in 2022, when it recorded its highest number in a single year,^[9] its activity in 2023 included launches of five intercontinental ballistic missiles. Moreover, three of those launches used the Hwasong-18, the country's first solid-fuelled intercontinental ballistic missile. As solid-propellant missiles do not need to undergo lengthy fuelling prior to launch, they can be prepared more quickly than liquid-propellant missiles and are thus harder to detect in advance.

The country also successfully put its [first military satellite](#) into orbit in November,^[10] following two failed attempts in May and August. Meanwhile, it maintained steady progress in implementing the five-year military development plan unveiled at its eighth Party Congress, in January 2021.

On 18 February, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea launched a [Hwasong-15](#) intercontinental ballistic missile from Pyongyang International Airport. It reportedly flew for a total of 66 minutes, reaching an altitude of around 5,768 km.

Then, on 16 March, the country launched a [Hwasong-17](#) intercontinental ballistic missile from the same location. Over 69 minutes, the missile flew a distance of 1,000 km and had a maximum altitude of 6,045 km.

On 13 April, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea reportedly [test-fired an intercontinental ballistic missile](#)—called the Hwasong-18—to confirm “the performance of the high-thrust solid-fuel engines for multi-stage missiles”.

On 12 July, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea conducted the [second test launch](#) of a Hwasong-18 intercontinental ballistic missile from the Pyongyang area. The missile reportedly flew for around 1,000 km and achieved an altitude of 6,000 km; the reported flight duration of around 74 minutes was the longest of any ballistic missile launched by the country.

Later, on 18 December, the Government again [launched](#) a Hwasong-18 intercontinental ballistic missile from the Pyongyang area. It flew for a period of 73 minutes.

In addition, the Government launched a number of shorter-range ballistic missiles in 2023. In that connection, in November, the nation [announced](#) its first successful test of solid-fuel motors intended for use in intermediate-range ballistic missiles.

On 31 May, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea attempted to launch what it described as a [military reconnaissance satellite](#), called Malligyong-1, mounted on a "new-type carrier rocket", Chollima-1, from the Sohae Satellite Launching Station, located on the country's western coast. The nation said that the rocket crashed after losing thrust following the separation of its first and second stages.

On 24 August, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea [attempted](#) a second time to launch a military reconnaissance satellite from the Sohae Satellite Launching Station. The launch failed again owing to "an error in the emergency blasting system during the third-stage flight", according to the Government.

On 21 November, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea made its third attempt at launching a military satellite. The country's National Aerospace Technology Administration announced that the rocket travelled along its predetermined flight path, as expected, and placed the reconnaissance satellite [in orbit](#) approximately 10 minutes after launch. It noted that the satellite would become operational on 1 December and had already successfully transmitted photographic images, adding that the Government planned to launch "several reconnaissance satellites in a short span of time".

The country also conducted several tests of other weapons systems during the year. Those included tests of Haeil-class unmanned underwater vehicle systems carried out from 21 to 23 March, from 25 to 27 March and from 4 to 7 April. The nation also claimed in April to have sent a nuclear-capable drone on its longest mission, stating that it travelled 1,000 km and remained underwater for 70 hours before successfully detonating a "trial warhead" on a target. Additionally, on 23 February, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea reported launching four Hwasal-2 strategic cruise missiles from its eastern coast; the four missiles reportedly flew a distance of around 2,000 km each. On 12 March, the country said that it had tested two "strategic cruise missiles" from a submarine off the east coast of the country. It

reported that the missiles flew in figure-eight patterns, covering a distance of around 1,500 km over approximately 125 minutes.

Furthermore, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea conducted several launches of cruise missiles in 2023. Although cruise missiles are not covered by relevant resolutions of the Security Council, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea had linked its development of cruise missiles to its nuclear weapons programme by referring to the weapons as “strategic”—a term it generally uses to signify a capability to deliver a nuclear payload.

On 28 March, the Korean Central News Agency, the state news agency of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, reported that Kim Jong Un—General Secretary of the Workers' Party of Korea, Chairman of the State Affairs Commission of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Supreme Commander of the Korean People's Army—was [guiding the work](#) of mounting nuclear warheads to ballistic missiles and of operating new tactical nuclear weapons. The leader reportedly also called on his country to expand its production of nuclear material in order to manufacture more weapons.

The IAEA Director General [reported](#) on 6 March that the Punggye-ri Nuclear Test Site “remains prepared to support a nuclear test”. The IAEA also observed construction activities at the Yongbyon nuclear complex, as well as indications that the 5-megawatt nuclear reactor was operating. In November, in his [opening statement](#) to the IAEA Board of Governors, the Director General stated that the IAEA had observed increased levels of activity since mid-October at and near the Light Water Reactor at Yongbyon, as well as a strong water outflow from its cooling system. Owing to its lack of access to the facility, however, the IAEA could neither confirm the reactor's operational status nor assess its safety. The Director General called on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to comply fully with its obligations under Security Council resolutions, cooperate promptly with the Agency in the full and effective implementation of its NPT Safeguards Agreement, and resolve all outstanding issues.

On 26 April, the President of the United States, Joseph Biden, and the President of the Republic of Korea, Yoon Suk Yeol, met in Washington, D.C., to mark the seventieth anniversary of the alliance between their countries. On that occasion, the two leaders announced an agreement to strengthen bilateral cooperation on extended deterrence. In the agreement, called the [Washington Declaration](#), their Governments outlined a plan for renewed bilateral nuclear cooperation, including through the establishment of a Nuclear Consultative Group to provide a platform for discussing issues of nuclear and strategic planning and execution. Both States also agreed to enhance the regular visibility of strategic assets to the Korean peninsula, including United States nuclear ballistic missile submarines, as well as take other measures to plan for and respond to regional threats.

Meanwhile, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the Russian Federation significantly strengthened their bilateral ties, marked by high-level diplomatic exchanges, increased economic cooperation and a shared stance on key regional security issues.

In July, the Russian Minister of Defence, Sergei Shoigu, [led a high-level delegation](#) to Pyongyang to attend celebrations for the Korean War armistice anniversary, on 26 July—the first high-level visit to the country by foreign dignitaries since the start of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic in 2020. A delegation from China also attended the celebrations. The Defence Minister met with Chairman Kim during the trip.

In September, Chairman Kim and President Putin met at Vostochny Cosmodrome in the Russian Federation on the topic of expanding bilateral relations, including through strengthened military collaboration. While no official statement was released at the end of their meeting, reports emerged after the visit that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea [had transferred a large quantity of ammunition and artillery shells](#) to the Russian Federation—an action widely believed to be linked to the Russian war in Ukraine. It was also alleged that short-range ballistic missiles from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea were used to attack Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia region from a launch point in the Russian Federation on 30 December.

During the ninth session of its Supreme People's Assembly in September, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea [amended](#) its Constitution, further enshrining its policy on nuclear forces. This move followed the Supreme People's Assembly's adoption of the law "on the [Democratic People's Republic of Korea's] policy on the nuclear forces" in 2022. Moreover, global concerns grew regarding the country's alleged illegal cyber activities, which could be linked to the financing of its nuclear and ballistic missile programmes.

For their part, the Republic of Korea and the United States resumed large-scale joint military exercises on the Korean peninsula, as well as trilateral naval exercises conducted in the region with Japan. In November, the Republic of Korea [partially suspended](#) its Comprehensive Military Agreement with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in response to the latter's military satellite launch. Subsequently, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea announced that it had completely scrapped the Agreement and would "forward deploy more powerful weapons and newer military equipment to the [border] area".

The Security Council met nine times in 2023 in response to the various launches by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea using ballistic missile technology (see [S/PV.9232](#), [S/PV.9246](#), [S/PV.9260](#), [S/PV.9272](#), [S/PV.9294](#), [S/PV.9308](#), [S/PV.9322](#), [S/PV.9345](#) and [S/PV.9357](#)). The Council remained divided, however, with many members strongly condemning the country's actions, and two of them placed the blame for the rise in tensions on the United States and its allies.

In July, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea attended a meeting of the Security Council for the first time since 2017 to defend its intercontinental ballistic missile test as a legitimate exercise of self-defence. It attended all of the Council's subsequent meetings on the topic for the remainder of the year.

In the last week of December, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea held the ninth plenum of the eighth Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea. As the meeting concluded, the nation's leader [ordered](#) his country's military, munitions industry and nuclear weapons sector to accelerate war preparations to counter what he called unprecedented confrontational moves by the United States and its regional allies. The Government added that it would continue in 2024 to implement its five-year military plan, including through increased nuclear weapons production and three additional launches of military reconnaissance satellites.

Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and Security Council resolution 2231 (2015)

The Islamic Republic of Iran continued to enhance its nuclear programme throughout 2023, significantly surpassing limits outlined in the JCPOA. The Government asserted that it had been progressively stepping away from its JCPOA undertakings since July 2020, following the United States' unilateral withdrawal from the JCPOA in May 2018.

From September 2022 to the end of 2023, there were limited developments concerning the talks between the remaining JCPOA parties^[11] and the United States on achieving a return to the JCPOA's full and effective implementation by all relevant parties. In June, the media [reported on indirect talks](#) between the United States and the Islamic Republic of Iran aimed at reaching an informal deal. The reported provisions included limiting Iranian uranium enrichment to 60 per cent in exchange for the release of frozen Iranian assets and a prisoner exchange between the two countries.

Around the same time, the IAEA reported that the Islamic Republic of Iran had slowed its production of uranium enriched to 60 per cent by approximately two thirds since June and had mixed some of that uranium stock with low-enriched uranium (see [GOV/2023/39](#)). However, by the end of December, the country had [returned](#) to the previous production rate, likely as a result of the deterioration in its relationship with the United States following the start of the war in Gaza.

On 18 October, the JCPOA "Transition Day", further restrictions on the Islamic Republic of Iran under Security Council resolution [2231 \(2015\)](#) were lifted, including those related to Iranian ballistic missile and drone activities. Although the European Union was required under the JCPOA to lift its sanctions against the Islamic Republic of Iran on the same day,^[12] the bloc

[announced](#) that it would retain non-proliferation sanctions, as well as arms and missile embargoes, owing to Iranian non-compliance with the JCPOA.

Nuclear activities by the Islamic Republic of Iran

In 2023, the IAEA continued to report to its Board of Governors and the Security Council on the implementation of nuclear-related commitments by the Islamic Republic of Iran under the JCPOA, as well as on matters related to verification and monitoring in the country in view of Security Council resolution [2231 \(2015\)](#). The IAEA reported that the Iranian Government continued to engage in several activities inconsistent with the JCPOA, such as accumulating uranium enriched to 60 per cent U-235, as well as to 20 per cent U-235 and to 5 per cent U-235, at its three fuel enrichment facilities.^[13] According to the IAEA's final report of the year on the matter ([GOV/2023/57](#)), as at 28 October, the Islamic Republic of Iran had stockpiled an estimated^[14] total of 4,130.7 kg of uranium enriched to various levels, including 128.3 kg of uranium enriched to 60 per cent U-235 and 567.1 kg of uranium enriched to 20 per cent U-235, both in the form of uranium hexafluoride (UF-6). In the previous year, from October 2022, the country had increased its total stockpile of enriched uranium by 457.7 kg (a 12.4 per cent increase), which included 66 kg of uranium enriched to 60 per cent U-235 (a 105.9 per cent increase) and 180.7 kg of uranium enriched to 20 per cent U-235 (a 46.8 per cent increase). Under the JCPOA, the Islamic Republic of Iran committed not to accumulate more than 202.8 kg of uranium enriched to 3.67 per cent U-235.

On 22 January, the IAEA detected highly enriched uranium particles containing up to 83.7 per cent U-235 in samples taken at the Fordow Fuel Enrichment Plant. Notably, that finding occurred one day after the Agency discovered an undeclared change in the configuration of centrifuge cascades at the plant, which the Islamic Republic of Iran had been using to enrich uranium to 60 per cent U-235. The IAEA held several meetings with the Government to clarify the matter, with Iranian officials initially attributing the traces found at the Fordow Plant to "unintended fluctuations". After evaluating information provided by the Islamic Republic of Iran, the IAEA assessed that the information provided "was not inconsistent with the Islamic Republic of Iran's explanation", and thus said that it "had no further questions on the matter at that stage". Furthermore, in its report to the Board of Governors and the Security Council dated 31 May ([GOV/2023/24](#)), the IAEA assessed that there had been no accumulation or collection of uranium enriched to 83.7 per cent.

As of June, the Islamic Republic of Iran had slowed its pace of accumulation of uranium enriched to 60 per cent U-235. In its report to the Board of Governors and the Security Council dated 4 September ([GOV/2023/39](#)), the IAEA reported that from early June, the Islamic Republic of Iran had reduced by two thirds the production rate of uranium enriched to that level, from approximately 9 kg per month to 3 kg per month. The Agency also noted that, while the Islamic Republic of Iran had produced 13.9 kg of uranium enriched to 60 per cent in

that period, it had blended down 6.4 kg of the material by mixing it with uranium enriched to 5 per cent.

Prior to that IAEA report, media had reported on indirect talks between the United States and the Islamic Republic of Iran aimed at reaching the informal deal described previously. Consequently, observers speculated that the Iranian Government had reduced its rate of enrichment as part of an informal arrangement with the United States. Furthermore, on 18 September, five United States citizens imprisoned in the Islamic Republic of Iran were allowed to return to the United States in exchange for the release of five Iranian citizens jailed in the United States. In addition, approximately \$6 billion in Iranian assets that had been frozen in the Republic of Korea were reportedly transferred to an account in Qatar for purchasing humanitarian goods such as medicine and food.

After a period of reduced production, however, on 26 December, the IAEA reported a notable shift in the Islamic Republic of Iran's enrichment of uranium to 60 per cent (GOV/INF/2023/18); the country had resumed production at a rate of approximately 9 kg per month, the level observed before June. The war in Gaza, in combination with the Iranian Government's alleged support for Hamas, had led to a considerable deterioration in the relationship between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the United States since October, likely bringing an end to the arrangement.

Meanwhile, the Islamic Republic of Iran continued to expand its enrichment capacity at its Fuel Enrichment Plant at Natanz. As at 28 October, the country was operating a total of 51 cascades of IR-1, IR-2m, IR-4 and IR-6 centrifuges there, and it had finished constructing an additional 15 cascades of IR-2m and IR-4 centrifuges (GOV/2023/57, B.4.1). About one year earlier, on 1 November 2022, the Islamic Republic of Iran had been operating 45 cascades of centrifuges of various types (GOV/2022/62, para. 21). The country had informed the IAEA of its plan to expand the number of cascades at the Fuel Enrichment Plant at Natanz to 72, from the 30 provided for in the JCPOA (GOV/INF/2022/24, paras. 2 and 3; GOV/2023/24, para. 22). In addition, the Government had advised the IAEA of its intention to commission Building 1000 at Natanz with a capacity of eight enrichment units, each of which could hold 18 cascades. However, at the end of 2023, the Islamic Republic of Iran had yet to provide the IAEA with details of centrifuge types or numbers of cascades to be installed in the new area.

Separately, the number of operating cascades in the country's Fordow Fuel Enrichment Plant did not increase in 2023, instead remaining at eight (six cascades of IR-1 centrifuges and two cascades of IR-6 centrifuges), despite a previously shared Iranian plan to increase the number of cascades at the site to 16 (GOV/2023/8, para. 27).

Verification and monitoring

Throughout the year, the Islamic Republic of Iran continued to not implement voluntary transparency measures contained in the JCPOA. The affected measures included provisions of the additional protocol to the country's comprehensive safeguards agreement, as well as modified code 3.1 of the subsidiary arrangements to its Safeguards Agreement, which the Government had ceased to implement in February 2021. Furthermore, the Islamic Republic of Iran had decided in June 2022 to remove all IAEA surveillance and monitoring equipment related to the JCPOA. Following the issuance on 4 March 2023 of a [joint statement](#) by the IAEA and the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran, on 2 and 3 May, the Agency installed surveillance cameras at centrifuge components manufacturing workshops in Esfahan, but without access to the data recorded by those cameras. As the cameras required servicing every three months for proper functioning, the Government allowed the IAEA to service the equipment on 2 September and 30 December. The Islamic Republic of Iran did not agree to the Agency's request to install cameras at another location in the country where centrifuge components were manufactured. In late April and early May, the IAEA installed enrichment monitoring devices at the Fordow Plant and the Pilot Fuel Enrichment Plant to measure the levels of U-235 contained in the highly enriched uranium produced at the facilities.

The IAEA reiterated that its verification and monitoring activities related to the JCPOA had been seriously affected by the cessation of the Islamic Republic of Iran's implementation of nuclear-related commitments under the JCPOA, and that the situation had been exacerbated by the subsequent decision to remove all of the IAEA's related surveillance and monitoring equipment. Since February 2021, the IAEA had not been able to perform verification and monitoring activities in relation to the production and inventory of centrifuges, rotors and bellows, heavy water and uranium ore concentrate. Even in the event of a full resumption of implementation by the Islamic Republic of Iran of its JCPOA nuclear-related commitments, the IAEA would not be able to re-establish continuity of knowledge in those areas; instead, the IAEA would have to establish a new baseline.

In a [letter](#) to the IAEA Director General dated 16 September, the Islamic Republic of Iran informed the Agency that it had decided to withdraw the designation of several experienced IAEA inspectors to work in the Islamic Republic of Iran. That move followed the country's recent withdrawal of the designation of another experienced IAEA inspector. While the IAEA noted that the measure was formally permitted by the country's NPT Safeguards Agreement, it was exercised by the Islamic Republic of Iran in a manner that directly and seriously affected the IAEA's ability to conduct its verification activities effectively in Iran. On 4 October, Mohammad Eslami, the Vice-President of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran, reportedly stated that "the dismissed inspectors were from three European countries that regularly demonstrated harsh political behaviours", appearing to indicate that the Islamic Republic of Iran withdrew their designations in retaliation to remarks

made by IAEA member States. The IAEA stressed that such linking was extreme, unjustified and unprecedented, and that it made the Agency's independent technical work subject to political pressure. The IAEA and the Islamic Republic of Iran met and exchanged letters in an effort to resolve the matter.

Implementation of safeguards under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

In 2023, the IAEA continued to report on the implementation of its 1974 agreement with the Islamic Republic of Iran on the application of safeguards in connection with the NPT and the additional protocol provisionally applied by the Government pending its entry into force. Since 2019, the IAEA had been undertaking efforts to obtain clarifications from the Islamic Republic of Iran concerning information related to anthropogenic uranium particles and possible undeclared nuclear material and nuclear-related activities at four locations that had not been declared.^[15]

On 4 March 2023, the IAEA Director General visited Tehran, where he met with Ebrahim Raisi, the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran; Vice-President Eslami; and Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, the Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The sides discussed matters related to Iranian cooperation with the IAEA, in particular the need to effectively implement the NPT Safeguards Agreement of the country. Following an exchange between the Director General and Vice-President Eslami, the discussants issued a [joint statement](#) addressing the implementation of the Safeguards Agreement, the outstanding safeguards issues and further verification measures.

In March, through a meeting between senior IAEA officials and Iranian officials in Tehran and a letter addressed to the IAEA, the Islamic Republic of Iran provided a possible explanation for the presence of depleted uranium particles at one location called "Marivan". Specifically, the Government reaffirmed its position that an organization from another Member State had operated a mine in the area in the 1960s and 1970s, including an on-site chemical laboratory that was the possible source of the contamination of depleted uranium particles with U-236. In a letter dated 27 April, the IAEA informed the Islamic Republic of Iran that the information provided offered a possible explanation for the presence of depleted uranium particles at the site. Therefore, the Agency said that it had "no additional questions" and the matter was "no longer outstanding at this stage" ([GOV/23/26](#), paras. 17 and 18).

The IAEA reported that, in April, the Islamic Republic of Iran had provided the Agency with revised nuclear material accountancy reports for its Uranium Conversion Facility. The revised data came in response to a discrepancy between the amount of nuclear material that the IAEA verified to have come from the dissolution of natural uranium at the site and the amount that the Iranian Government had declared. However, the IAEA assessed that the revised reports neither addressed the discrepancy nor satisfied the requirements for measuring

nuclear material stipulated under article 55 of the Islamic Republic of Iran's Safeguards Agreement. The Agency considered that the Iranian corrections were not based on scientific grounds and, therefore, concluded that they were not acceptable ([GOV/23/26](#), paras. 12–14). Subsequent exchanges between the IAEA and the Government on the matter in July and August did not resolve the issue ([GOV/2023/43](#), paras. 31–36).

Implementation of Security Council resolution 2231 (2015)

On 18 October, the JCPOA "Transition Day", further United Nations restrictions placed on the Islamic Republic of Iran under Security Council resolution [2231 \(2015\)](#) were lifted, such as those related to Iranian ballistic missile activities and drones, according to paragraphs 3 and 4 of annex B to the resolution. Although the European Union was required to lift its sanctions against the Islamic Republic of Iran on the same day,^[16] the bloc [stated](#) that it would retain non-proliferation sanctions on the country as a result of its non-compliance with the JCPOA.

On 14 September, in advance of the Transition Day, France, Germany and the United Kingdom issued a [joint statement](#) on their intention to maintain nuclear-related measures on the Islamic Republic of Iran, as well as arms and missile embargoes, owing to its refusal to return to commitments under the JCPOA. The three States added that their decision was fully compliant with the JCPOA and amounted neither to imposing additional sanctions nor to triggering the JCPOA's "snap back" mechanism.

On 18 October, 46 endorsing States of the Proliferation Security Initiative issued a [joint statement](#) in which they pledged to continue "to counter destabilizing Iranian missile- and [uncrewed aerial vehicle]-related activities".

Meanwhile, as per Security Council resolution [2231 \(2015\)](#), the Secretary-General submitted two reports to the Council in 2023 on the implementation of the JCPOA. In those reports ([S/2023/473](#) and [S/2023/975](#))—issued on 29 June and 15 December, respectively—the Secretary-General provided his fifteenth and sixteenth assessments on provisions of the resolution concerning restrictions applicable to nuclear- and ballistic missile-related transfers, as well as asset freezes and travel bans.

In the two reports, the Secretary-General underlined his view that the JCPOA remained "the best available option for ensuring the exclusively peaceful nature of the Iranian nuclear programme". With regard to restrictions on paragraph 4-related transfers to or from the Islamic Republic of Iran, he stated in his December report that, after examining the debris of a cruise missile used in an attack by the Houthis on the Dabbah oil terminal in November 2022, the Secretariat assessed that the missile used in the offensive was of Iranian origin and may have been transferred from the Islamic Republic of Iran in a manner inconsistent with resolution [2231 \(2015\)](#). Regarding the alleged transfer of uncrewed aerial vehicles from the

Islamic Republic of Iran to the Russian Federation, the Secretary-General stated in his June report that the Secretariat continued to examine the relevant available information.

International Atomic Energy Agency verification

Since its founding in 1957, the [IAEA](#) has served as the focal point for worldwide cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear technology, for promoting global nuclear security and safety and, through its verification activities, for providing assurances that States' international undertakings to use nuclear material and facilities for peaceful purposes are being honoured. The following is a brief survey of the work of the IAEA in 2023 in the area of nuclear verification, nuclear security, peaceful uses of nuclear energy and nuclear fuel assurances.

Nuclear verification

A major pillar of the IAEA's programme involves the implementation of safeguards activities that enable the IAEA to provide assurances to the international community regarding the peaceful use of nuclear material and facilities. The IAEA's verification programme thus remains at the core of multilateral efforts to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons by verifying that States are complying with their safeguards obligations.^[17]

Safeguards conclusions

At the end of each year, the IAEA draws safeguards conclusions for each State with a safeguards agreement in force for which safeguards are applied, based upon the evaluation of all safeguards-related information available to it for that year. For a "broader conclusion" to be drawn that "all nuclear material remained in peaceful activities", a State must have both a comprehensive safeguards agreement^[18] and an additional protocol^[19] in force, and the IAEA must have been able to conduct all necessary verification and evaluation activities for the State and have found no indication that, in its judgment, would give rise to a safeguards concern. For States that have a comprehensive safeguards agreement but no additional protocol in force, the IAEA draws a safeguards conclusion regarding only the non-diversion of declared nuclear material, as the IAEA does not have sufficient tools to provide credible assurances regarding the absence of undeclared nuclear material and activities in such States.

With regard to States for which the broader conclusion has been drawn, the IAEA was able to implement integrated safeguards—an optimized combination of measures available under comprehensive safeguards agreements and additional protocols—based on the State-level safeguards approach^[20] developed for that State.

In 2023, safeguards were applied for 189 States^[21],^[22] with safeguards agreements in force with the IAEA. Of the 136 States that had both a comprehensive safeguards agreement and an additional protocol in force, the IAEA concluded that all nuclear material remained in peaceful activities in 74 States;^[22] for 62 States, as the necessary evaluation regarding the absence of undeclared nuclear material and activities for each of these States remained ongoing, the IAEA was unable to draw the same conclusion. For those 62 States and the 45 States with a comprehensive safeguards agreement but no additional protocol in force, the IAEA concluded only that declared nuclear material remained in peaceful activities.

Integrated safeguards were implemented for the whole, or part, of 2023 for 70 States.^[22]

With regard to the three States for which the IAEA implemented safeguards pursuant to item-specific safeguards agreements,^[23] the IAEA concluded that nuclear material, facilities or other items to which safeguards had been applied remained in peaceful activities. Safeguards were also implemented with regard to nuclear material in selected facilities in the five nuclear-weapon States party to the NPT under their respective voluntary offer agreements. For those five States, the IAEA concluded that nuclear material in selected facilities to which safeguards had been applied remained in peaceful activities or had been withdrawn from safeguards as provided for in the agreements.

As of 31 December, four non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the NPT had yet to bring comprehensive safeguards agreements into force pursuant to article III of the Treaty. For those States parties, the IAEA could not draw any safeguards conclusions.

Safeguards agreements, additional protocols and small quantities protocols

Safeguards agreements and additional protocols are legal instruments that provide the basis for IAEA verification activities. The entry into force of such instruments, therefore, continues to be crucial to effective and efficient IAEA safeguards.

The Agency continued to implement the [Plan of Action to Promote the Conclusion of Safeguards Agreements and Additional Protocols](#), which was last updated in September. In addition to organizing an awareness-raising event with the Pacific island States on 25 April, the IAEA joined consultations throughout the year with representatives of a number of member and non-member States in Geneva, New York and Vienna. During those outreach activities, the Agency encouraged States to conclude comprehensive safeguards agreements and additional protocols, as well as to amend or rescind their small quantities protocols based on the original standard text.

In 2023, a comprehensive safeguards agreement with a small quantities protocol, based on the revised standard text, entered into force for Sao Tome and Principe. Furthermore,

additional protocols entered into force for the Plurinational State of Bolivia and for Sao Tome and Principe.

As concluded by the Board of Governors in 2005, the small quantities protocol based on the original standard text is a weakness in the Agency's safeguards system. In 2023, a small quantities protocol was amended for Nauru. At the end of 2023, 79 States had operative small quantities protocols in force, based on the revised standard text.

Verification activities

Between 16 January 2016 and 23 February 2021, the IAEA, in the light of Security Council resolution [2231 \(2015\)](#), verified and monitored the Islamic Republic of Iran's implementation of its nuclear-related commitments under the JCPOA. From 8 May 2019 onwards, however, the country reduced the implementation of those commitments on a step-by-step basis and, from 23 February 2021 onwards, stopped the implementation of those commitments altogether, including the additional protocol. That seriously affected the Agency's verification and monitoring in relation to the JCPOA, which was exacerbated in June 2022 by the Iranian decision to remove all of the Agency's equipment previously installed in the Islamic Republic of Iran for surveillance and monitoring activities in relation to the Plan of Action. In 2023, the IAEA Director General submitted quarterly reports to the Board of Governors and, in parallel, to the Security Council ([GOV/2023/8](#), [GOV/2023/24](#) and [Corr.1, GOV/2023/39](#) and [GOV/2023/57](#)). He also submitted two reports providing updates on developments in between the issuance of the quarterly reports ([GOV/INF/2023/1](#) and [GOV/INF/2023/18](#)), entitled "Verification and monitoring in the Islamic Republic of Iran in light of United Nations Security Council resolution 2231 (2015)".

During 2023, despite the Agency's continued efforts to engage with the Islamic Republic of Iran to resolve outstanding safeguards issues related to the presence of uranium particles of anthropogenic origin at locations in the country not declared to the Agency, limited progress was made. Unless and until the Iranian Government clarifies these issues, the Agency will not be able to provide assurance about the exclusively peaceful nature of its nuclear programme. The Director General submitted reports to the Board of Governors entitled "NPT Safeguards Agreement with the Islamic Republic of Iran" ([GOV/2023/9](#), [GOV/2023/26](#), [GOV/2023/43](#) and [GOV/2023/58](#)), as well as one update on developments in between the publication of the quarterly reports ([GOV/INF/2023/14](#)).

In August, the Director General submitted a report to the Board of Governors entitled "Implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement in the Syrian Arab Republic" ([GOV/2023/42](#)), covering relevant developments since the previous report from August 2022 ([GOV/2022/41](#)). The Director General informed the Board of Governors that no new information had come to the knowledge of the Agency that would have an impact on the Agency's

assessment that it was very likely that a building destroyed at the Dair Alzour site in 2007 was a nuclear reactor the Syrian Arab Republic should have declared to the Agency.^[24] The Director General, in his letter dated 11 August 2023, reiterated his willingness to engage with the Syrian Arab Republic to discuss all unresolved issues.

On the basis of an evaluation of information provided by the Syrian Arab Republic, and all other safeguards and relevant information available to it, the Agency found no indication of the diversion of declared nuclear material from peaceful nuclear activities and no indication of undeclared production or processing of nuclear material at declared facilities and location outside facilities. For 2023, the Agency concluded for the Syrian Arab Republic that declared nuclear material remained in peaceful activities.

In August, the Director General submitted a report to the Board of Governors and General Conference entitled "Application of Safeguards in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea" (GOV/2023/41-GC(67)/20), which included new information since the Director General's report of September 2022 (GOV/2022/40-GC(66)/16). In December, the Director General issued a [statement on recent developments](#) in the nuclear programme of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Since 1994, the Agency has not been able to conduct all necessary safeguards activities provided for in the NPT Safeguards Agreement of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Between the end of 2002 and July 2007, the Agency was not able to implement any verification measures in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea; and this has also been the case since April 2009. Therefore, the Agency could not draw any safeguards conclusion regarding the country.

In 2023, no verification activities were implemented in the field, but the Agency continued to monitor developments in the nuclear programme of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and to evaluate all safeguards-relevant information available to it, including open-source information and satellite imagery.

In 2023, the IAEA secretariat continued to maintain the Agency's enhanced readiness to play its essential role in verifying the nuclear programme of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The IAEA secretariat continued its collection and analysis of safeguards-relevant open-source information on the nuclear programme, increased its collection and analysis of high-resolution commercial satellite imagery, maintained necessary equipment and supplies, prepared Agency inspectors for verification and monitoring activities in the country, and continued to review and document the Agency's knowledge of the country's nuclear programme. Once a political agreement has been reached among the countries concerned, the Agency is ready to return to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in a timely manner if requested to do so by the country, and subject to approval by the Board of Governors.

In 2023, in Ukraine, the Agency continued to undertake a vital verification role to reach independent conclusions that nuclear material under safeguards remained in peaceful use and that safeguarded facilities were not used for the undeclared production or processing of nuclear material. The Agency continued to implement safeguards, including field verification activities, in accordance with Ukraine's comprehensive safeguards agreement and additional protocol. Based on the evaluation of all safeguards-relevant information available to the Agency to date, the Agency has not found any indication that would give rise to a proliferation concern.

Application of safeguards in the Middle East

As requested in operative paragraph 13 of resolution [GC\(66\)/RES/12](#) on the application of IAEA safeguards in the Middle East, adopted at the sixty-sixth regular session of the Agency's General Conference, in 2022, the Director General submitted to the IAEA Board of Governors and to the General Conference at its sixty-seventh regular session a report on the implementation of that resolution ([GOV/2023/45-GC\(67\)/17](#)). The report on the application of IAEA safeguards in the Middle East described, inter alia, the steps undertaken by the Director General in his efforts to further the implementation of his mandates conferred by the IAEA General Conference in resolution GC(66)/RES/12, as well as in decision [GC\(44\)/DEC/12](#).

In relation to this, in September 2013, following the discussions of the Board of Governors, the Director General provided to the IAEA member States the background documentation^[25] prepared for the 2012 Conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction, which described the work the IAEA undertook and the experience it gained with regard to modalities for a zone free of nuclear weapons in the Middle East region.^[26] Furthermore, in response to a request conveyed to the IAEA by the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, on behalf of the Secretary-General, pursuant to General Assembly decision 73/546, the IAEA secretariat provided in 2019 background documentation describing the work previously undertaken by the Agency on modalities of the application of safeguards in the Middle East and its role under nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties and regional arrangements ([A/CONF.236/3](#)). The IAEA background documentation was updated in 2023 for the fourth session of the Conference ([A/CONF.236/2023/BD.2](#)). At the invitation of the High Representative, on behalf of the Secretary-General, and pursuant to General Assembly decision 73/546, the IAEA attended, as an observer, the Conference's first, second, third and fourth sessions, held at United Nations Headquarters in 2019, 2021, 2022 and 2023, respectively.

Assurances of supply of nuclear fuel

In December 2010, the Agency's Board of Governors approved the establishment of the IAEA low-enriched uranium bank, a physical stock of up to 60 30B-type cylinders containing

standard commercial low-enriched uranium hexafluoride with enrichment levels of up to 4.95 per cent. The uranium bank serves as a supply mechanism of last resort in the event that an eligible member State's supply of low-enriched uranium is disrupted and cannot be restored by commercial means.

The low-enriched uranium bank was established and became operational on 17 October 2019 with the receipt in the IAEA Low Enriched Uranium Storage Facility—located at and operated by the Ulba Metallurgical Plant in Kazakhstan—of 32 30B cylinders filled with low-enriched uranium. The physical stock of low-enriched uranium in the bank was completed with the receipt on 10 December 2019 of 28 additional 30B cylinders filled with low-enriched uranium.

The IAEA contracts with KTZ Express, TENEX (Techsnabexport) and CNEIC (China Nuclear Energy Industry Corporation) to ensure possible shipments of the low-enriched uranium and equipment to and from the bank, either through China or the Russian Federation.

Under its cylinder management programme, the IAEA undertook activities in June to recertify 24 low-enriched-uranium-filled cylinders, so as to ensure their long-term safety and security, in situ at the IAEA Low Enriched Uranium Storage Facility and during subsequent transport, in compliance with the requirements of the revised ISO 7195:2020(E) standard. The recertification of the remaining 36 low-enriched-uranium-filled cylinders was planned for June 2024.

Minimization of highly enriched uranium

The IAEA maintained its efforts to minimize the use of highly enriched uranium in the civilian sector around the globe, both directly and through the support of member States. The Agency facilitates conversion of research reactors through supporting development of low-enriched uranium fuels and improved analytic techniques.

The IAEA also continued its direct support of efforts to remove highly enriched uranium fuel from various sites. In 2021, the Agency established contracts to enable preparations to ship spent highly enriched uranium fuel from the IVG.1M Reactor in Kazakhstan to the Russian Federation, anticipated to occur in the 2023–2024 period. Additionally, all major producers of the medical isotope Mo-99 were expected, in the following year, to finish converting their manufacturing processes to use low-enriched uranium rather than highly enriched material.

Nuclear security

Nuclear Security Plan

The IAEA continued to assist States, at their request, in making their national nuclear security regimes more robust, sustainable and effective, and to play a central role in enhancing international cooperation in nuclear security. In implementing the Nuclear Security Plan 2022–2025 ([GC\(65\)/24](#)) and contributing to global efforts to achieve effective nuclear security, the IAEA established comprehensive nuclear security guidance and promoted its use through peer reviews, advisory services and capacity-building, including education and training. Further, the IAEA worked to assist States in adhering to and implementing relevant international legal instruments, as well as in strengthening international cooperation and coordination of assistance.

International nuclear security framework

The year 2023 saw continued progress towards the universalization of the principal binding international instruments relevant to nuclear security, the [Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material, and its 2005 Amendment](#), both of which had been adopted under the auspices of the IAEA. During the year, the number of States parties to the original Convention remained at 164, and the number of States parties to the Amendment increased to 135. The Amendment entered into force in May 2016, establishing a legal basis for a strengthened framework to protect nuclear facilities and nuclear material in domestic use, storage and transport.

The IAEA continued to promote universal adherence to the Convention and its Amendment through various outreach activities, including two regional workshops held in March and May, as well as two country-specific workshops conducted in April and August.

Nuclear security guidance for member States

The IAEA continued to publish the [Nuclear Security Series](#) as part of its central role in providing nuclear-security-related international support and coordination. In 2023, the IAEA held two meetings of the Nuclear Security Guidance Committee and released one new publication in the series, reaching a total of 44 published volumes. The Agency also continued to translate publications in the series into other languages, with 14 of them available in all United Nations official languages at the end of 2023. In total, 36 of the Nuclear Security Series publications were available in languages other than English.

Incident and Trafficking Database

The IAEA Incident and Trafficking Database remained an important source of information, assisting the IAEA secretariat, participating States and selected international organizations in strengthening nuclear security. In 2023, States reported 168 incidents of nuclear and other radioactive material out of regulatory control, five of which were either confirmed or likely acts of trafficking,^[27] increasing the number in the database to 4,243. The database is a component of the information management systems supporting the implementation of the IAEA Nuclear Security Plan.

Nuclear security human resource development

The IAEA continued to provide comprehensive assistance to States on [nuclear security human resource development](#), including through programme development, needs analysis, training events, instructor training, educational programmes and further development of nuclear security support centres. In 2023, the Agency conducted 125 security-related training events, providing training to more than 2,900 participants from 164 States. The IAEA also continued to implement its e-learning programme, with over 1,500 users from 134 States completing more than 4,000 e-learning modules.

In February, the IAEA convened a leadership meeting of the [International Nuclear Security Education Network](#). It also facilitated two courses under the “International Schools on Nuclear Security” series in 2023, including one for fellows of the [Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship Programme](#). In the same month, the IAEA also convened the Annual Meeting of the [Nuclear Security Support Centres network](#).

Based on analysis of the needs of member States and the capabilities of nuclear security support centres in different regions, the IAEA established the [Nuclear Security Training and Demonstration Centre](#) at the Agency's laboratories in Seibersdorf, Austria. Equipped with state-of-the-art technical infrastructure and equipment, the Centre entered operation in October 2023. The facility complements and fills gaps in existing national and international capabilities in nuclear security that do not commonly exist among institutions in States, and focuses on new capabilities for the IAEA, further enhancing capacity-building in nuclear security by providing hands-on training and using advanced technology and expertise. As at December 2023, the Centre's training programme incorporated 23 courses and workshops. Those courses and workshops address member States' training needs in the areas of physical protection of nuclear and other radioactive material and associated facilities, as well as the detection of and response to criminal or intentional unauthorized acts involving or directed at nuclear or other radioactive material, associated facilities or associated activities.

Nuclear security peer reviews and advisory services

The IAEA continued to implement peer reviews and advisory services to help States to evaluate their nuclear security regimes. It conducted such missions with a focus on national nuclear security regimes, including practical security measures for nuclear and other radioactive material and associated facilities and activities.

In 2023, the IAEA carried out several expert missions and workshops to provide guidance to States on drafting regulating principles, reviewing regulatory frameworks and finalizing nuclear security regulations and associated administrative measures, including conducting five International Physical Protection Advisory Service missions, three International Nuclear Security Advisory Service missions and five Regulatory Infrastructure for Radiation Safety and Nuclear Security missions. In September 2023, the milestone of 100 International Physical Protection Advisory Service missions was reached with the completion of such a mission in Zambia. Since 1996, a total of 102 International Physical Protection Advisory Service missions have been conducted, upon request, in 60 Member States. The total number of Member States with approved Integrated Nuclear Security Sustainability Plans remained at 92.

Coordinated Research Projects

The Agency continued to coordinate with educational, nuclear security operational, and research and development institutions to implement [Coordinated Research Projects](#) focused on various scientific and technical areas of nuclear security to address evolving threats and technologies, including the establishment and sustainability of national nuclear security regimes. In 2023, the IAEA initiated one new security-related Coordinated Research Project, addressing computer security for small and modular reactors. Meanwhile, the Agency continued seven other Coordinated Research Projects on topics related to computer security; nuclear detection technology; nuclear forensics; radioactive material security; radiation detection equipment; preventing and protecting against insider threats; and counterfeit, fraudulent and suspect items.

Risk reduction

The IAEA continued to advise States on formal threat characterization and assessment; the development, use and maintenance of design-basis threats; the conduct and evaluation of exercises; methodologies for nuclear material accounting and control for security purposes; and the evaluation and inspection of physical protection systems. In 2023, the Agency continued to support member States in protecting radioactive material during and after use. The Agency assisted in the completed removal of 18 high-activity disused radioactive sources from two member States, continued work on the removal of 15 high-activity disused radioactive sources in six member States and the conditioning of four radioisotope

thermoelectric generators, and initiated the preparatory work for the removal of more than 30 sources from seven States. The Agency assisted eight member States with physical protection upgrades at nuclear facilities. It also assisted member States in drafting nuclear security regulations.

Nuclear disarmament verification

Group of Governmental Experts to Further Consider Nuclear Disarmament Verification Issues

Pursuant to its decision 76/515 of December 2021 ([A/76/49 \(Vol. II\)](#)), the General Assembly decided to hold two additional sessions of the Group of Governmental Experts to Further Consider Nuclear Disarmament Verification Issues in 2023 to compensate for the two planned sessions in 2021 that had to be postponed owing to COVID-19 travel restrictions. By that decision, the Assembly also called for one additional informal intersessional consultative meeting in New York and requested the Secretary-General to transmit the report of the Group of Governmental Experts to the General Assembly at its seventy-eighth session and to the Conference on Disarmament.

As requested by the General Assembly in operative paragraph 6 of resolution [74/50](#), the Secretary-General invited 25 Member States to nominate experts, selected on the basis of equitable geographical representation and equitable representation of women and men, to participate in the work.^[28]

The third session took place in February in Geneva. In April, the second informal intersessional consultative meeting took place in New York, allowing member States to further engage in interactive discussions and share their views.

Taking into account the views expressed during the intersessional consultative meeting, the Group held its fourth and last session in May in Geneva, successfully adopting a final report ([A/78/120](#)).

Export controls

Nuclear Suppliers Group

The [Nuclear Suppliers Group](#) is made up of 48 nuclear supplier countries seeking to support the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons by implementing two sets of guidelines for nuclear transfers and transfers of nuclear-related dual-use equipment, materials, software and related technology. The aim of the guidelines is to ensure that nuclear trade for peaceful

purposes does not contribute to the proliferation of nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, and that international trade and cooperation in the nuclear field is not hindered unjustly in the process. The European Commission and the Chair of the [Zangger Committee](#) participate as observers.

In 2023, the Nuclear Suppliers Group held its thirty-second Plenary Meeting in Buenos Aires on 13 and 14 July. Chaired by Gustavo Ainchil (Argentina), the Meeting exchanged views and agreed on several proposals to clarify and update the Group's Trigger List and Dual-Use List. ^[29] During the 2023 Plenary Meeting, the Group also exchanged views on national practices focused on raising awareness and on tools designed for engaging with industry and research institutions working in the nuclear field.

The Group also exchanged information on all aspects of the 2008 Statement on Civil Nuclear Cooperation with India. Separately, it added an "[awareness raising document](#)" to its website under the "national practices" section, providing insight and information on the importance of responsible nuclear supplier behaviour and effective export controls.

After the Argentina's term as Chair concluded in July 2023, the Group was chaired by Claudia Vieira Santos (Brazil).

Missile Technology Control Regime

Benno Laggner (Switzerland) served as the Chair of the [Missile Technology Control Regime](#) until 1 November, when Flávio Soares Damico (Brazil) assumed the responsibility for the period 2023–2024. During 2023, the Chair led outreach visits to [Malaysia](#) and [Singapore](#). In addition, the Regime convened an intersessional Reinforced Point of Contact meeting in Paris in April.

The Regime held its thirty-fifth plenary meeting in Rio de Janeiro from 1 to 3 November. As in 2022 and previous years, Partner States were not able to adopt a public statement reflecting the outcome of their deliberations. However, those States did agree on substantive decisions, including to continue their outreach to non-partners in an effort to limit the spread of missile systems capable of delivering weapons of mass destruction by controlling the transfer of related technology and equipment.

Missile-related issues

Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation

The twenty-second annual regular meeting of Subscribing States to the [Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation](#) took place in Vienna on 15 and 16 June, chaired

by Ireland. As in 2022, Subscribing States were unable to agree on issuing a press release reflecting the outcome of their meeting. Sao Tome and Principe subscribed to the Code on 7 August, bringing the total number of Subscribing States to 144.

Political declarations and other initiatives

Stockholm Initiative for Nuclear Disarmament

The [Stockholm Initiative for Nuclear Disarmament](#) was launched in 2019 by NPT States parties.^[30] Its aim is to strengthen disarmament diplomacy within the context of the NPT, as well as building bridges between nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States.

Members of the Stockholm Initiative delivered a [statement](#) on its behalf to the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2026 NPT Review Conference. In the remarks, the members called for the implementation of its “stepping stones for advancing nuclear disarmament” ([NPT/CONF.2020/WP.6](#)), which was submitted to the tenth Review Conference in support of meaningful progress in implementing article VI of the NPT. They also called for nuclear-weapon States to build upon existing frameworks and commitments and to take all measures necessary to reduce the risk of the use of nuclear weapons, whether intentionally, by miscalculation, miscommunication, misperception or accident.

Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative

Founded in 2010, the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative is a ministerial-level group of NPT States parties^[31] focused on practical steps that would promote the consensus outcomes of the 2010 Review Conference.

Members of the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative delivered a [statement](#) on behalf of the group to the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2026 NPT Review Conference. In the statement, they reiterated that nuclear-weapon States must uphold their commitments reflected in the “[Joint statement of the leaders of the five nuclear-weapon States on preventing nuclear war and avoiding arms races](#)”. The members also expressed concern regarding the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons and stressed that actions must be taken to reduce nuclear risks, acknowledging that the only way to eliminate risks was through complete, verifiable and irreversible nuclear disarmament.

Affirmations that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought

Following the [joint statement](#) of January 2022 of the leaders of the five nuclear-weapon States recognized by the NPT, in which they affirmed that “a nuclear war cannot be won and must

never be fought", references to the assertion continued to appear throughout 2023 in various forums, including during the [first session](#) of the NPT Preparatory Committee.

The eighteenth Summit of the Group of 20 (G20), held in New Delhi on 9 and 10 September, stated in a [declaration](#) that the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons is inadmissible. Leaders at the Summit also underscored that all States must act in a manner consistent with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations in its entirety. In line with the Charter, they said that all States must refrain from the threat or use of force to seek territorial acquisition against the territorial integrity and sovereignty or political independence of any State.

The 2022 joint statement of the five nuclear-weapon States was also noted in the [G7 Leaders' Hiroshima Vision on Nuclear Disarmament](#) of 19 May. The G7 leaders called on the Russian Federation to recommit to the principles enshrined in the 2022 statement.

P5 Process

Owing to the ongoing war in Ukraine, no ministerial-level meeting took place under the P5 Process in 2023. The United States, as Chair of the dialogue among the P5, organized a [working-level experts meeting](#) of the P5 in Cairo. Topics of discussion included strategic risk reduction, as well as nuclear doctrines and policy.

The P5 did not deliver any joint statements and did not submit any working papers to the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2026 NPT Review Conference.

Footnotes

[1] Owing to the Islamic Republic of Iran ceasing its implementation of the additional protocol to its comprehensive safeguards agreement and other voluntary transparency measures under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action since February 2021, IAEA could only estimate the size of the Iranian enriched uranium stockpile based on information provided by the country.

[2] Those items suggested were as follows: (a) the number, type (strategic or non-strategic) and status (deployed or non-deployed) of nuclear warheads; (b) the number and type of delivery vehicles; (c) plans related to the modernization of nuclear weapons, and related changes to their nuclear capabilities; (d) current nuclear postures and doctrines; (e) the measures taken to reduce the role and significance of nuclear weapons in military and security concepts, doctrines and policies; (f) the measures taken to reduce the risk of unintended, unauthorized or accidental use of nuclear weapons; (g) the measures taken to de-alert or reduce the operational readiness of nuclear weapons systems; (h) the number and type of weapons and delivery systems dismantled and reduced as part of nuclear disarmament efforts; and (i) the amount of fissile material for military purposes.

[3] European Union, League of Arab States, and Pacific Islands Forum.

[4] "Report of the Co-Chairs of the informal working group on universalization (Malaysia and South Africa)" ([TPNW/MSP/2023/2](#)); "Report of the Co-Chairs of the informal working group on victim assistance, environmental remediation, international cooperation and assistance (Kazakhstan and Kiribati)" ([TPNW/MSP/2023/3](#)); "Report of the gender focal point (Chile)" ([TPNW/MSP/2023/4](#)); "Report of the informal facilitators to further explore and articulate the possible areas of tangible cooperation between the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, and other relevant nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation instruments (Ireland and Thailand)" ([TPNW/MSP/2023/5](#)); and "Report of the Co-Chairs of the informal working group on the implementation of article 4 (Mexico and New Zealand)" ([TPNW/MSP/2023/7](#)).

[5] The Coordinating Committee also conducted its work with the participation of the International Committee of the Red Cross, the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons and the Co-Chairs of the Scientific Advisory Group.

[6] In accordance with the 1988 Ballistic Missile Launch Notification Agreement.

[7] In accordance with the 1989 Agreement on Reciprocal Advance Notification of Major Strategic Exercises.

[8] Security Council resolutions [1718 \(2006\)](#), [1874 \(2009\)](#), [2087 \(2013\)](#), [2094 \(2013\)](#), [2270 \(2016\)](#), [2321 \(2016\)](#), [2356 \(2017\)](#), [2371 \(2017\)](#), [2375 \(2017\)](#) and [2397 \(2017\)](#).

[9] Seventy launches using ballistic missile technologies were recorded in 2022.

[10] The Democratic People's Republic of Korea previously launched two satellites, in 2012 and 2016, that it said were non-military in nature.

[11] China, France, Germany, Islamic Republic of Iran, Russian Federation and United Kingdom.

[12] JCPOA, annex V, paras. 16.1–16.4.

[13] The Fuel Enrichment Plant and the Pilot Fuel Enrichment Plant at Natanz; and the Fordow Fuel Enrichment Plant.

[14] Owing to the ceasing of implementation by the Islamic Republic of Iran of the additional protocol to the comprehensive safeguards agreement and other voluntary transparency measures under the JCPOA since February 2021, the IAEA had not been able to verify but could only estimate the total enriched uranium stockpile of the Islamic Republic of Iran, using the information provided by the country.

[15] In January 2022, the IAEA reported that as a result of its verification and assessment, it had “no additional questions” on the issue related to one of the locations—called Lavisan-Shian—and thus stated that “this issue could be considered as no longer outstanding at this stage” (GOV/2022/5, para. 7).

[16] JCPOA, annex V, paras. 16.1–16.4.

[17] For more information, see www.iaea.org/safeguards. See also article III (1) of the NPT.

[18] Comprehensive safeguards agreements are based on the Structure and Content of Agreements between the Agency and States required in connection with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (INFCIRC/153 (Corrected)).

[19] Additional protocols are based on the Model Protocol Additional to the Agreement(s) between State(s) and the International Atomic Energy Agency for the Application of Safeguards (INFCIRC/540 (Corrected)).

[20] The IAEA develops a State-level safeguards approach for individual States on the basis of an acquisition path analysis, which is a structured technical method used to analyse the plausible paths by which, from a technical point of view, nuclear material suitable for use in a nuclear weapon or other nuclear explosive device could be acquired.

[21] Excluding the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, where the IAEA did not implement safeguards and, therefore, could not draw any conclusion.

[22] And Taiwan Province of China.

[23] Item-specific safeguards agreements are based on “The Agency's safeguards system (1965, as provisionally extended in 1966 and 1968)” (INFCIRC/66/Rev.2).

[24] In its resolution [GOV/2011/41](#) of June 2011 (adopted by a vote), the Board of Governors had, inter alia, called on the Syrian Arab Republic to urgently remedy its non-compliance with its NPT Safeguards Agreement and, in particular, to provide the Agency with updated reporting under its Safeguards Agreement and access to all information, sites, material and persons necessary for the Agency to verify such reporting and resolve all outstanding questions so that the Agency could provide the necessary assurance as to the exclusively peaceful nature of the Syrian nuclear programme.

[25] IAEA document, [GOV/2013/33/Add.1-GC\(57\)/10/Add.1](#).

[26] The 2010 Review Conference endorsed that the IAEA and other relevant international organizations be requested to prepare background documentation for the 2012 Conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction, taking into account work previously undertaken and experience gained ([NPT/CONF.2010/50 \(Vol. I\)](#), p. 30, para. 7(d)).

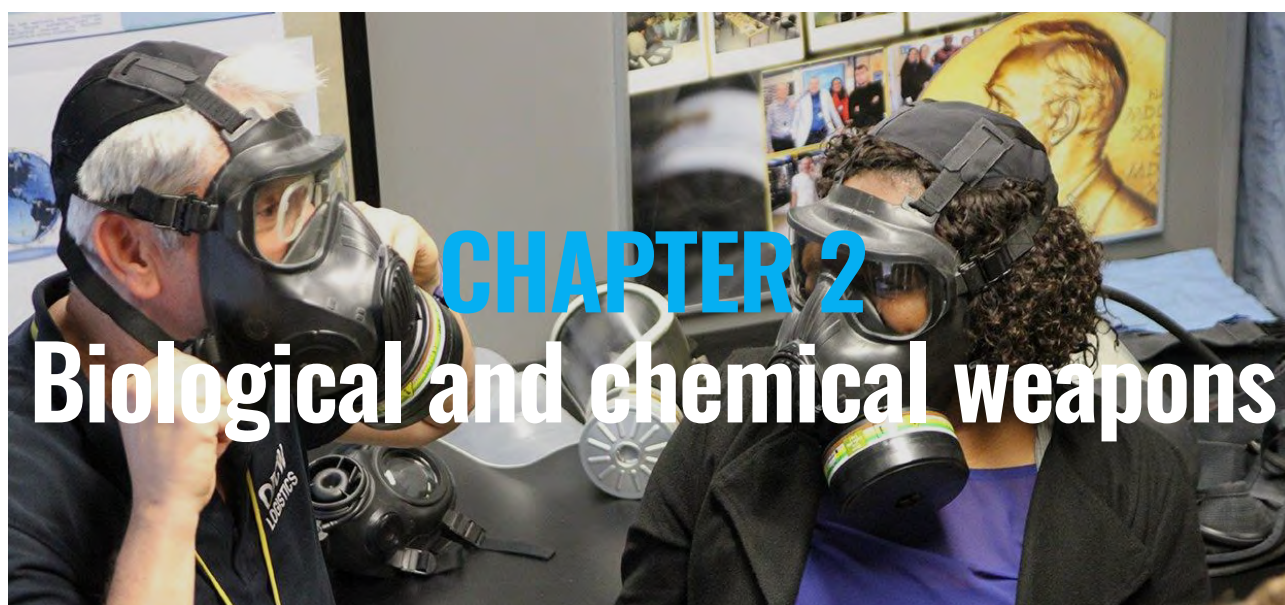
[27] In order to accurately categorize all reported trafficking incidents and distinguish them from other unauthorized activities, a definition of “trafficking” had been agreed for communication purposes among the points of contact of the Incident and Trafficking Database. According to that definition, incidents are grouped based on whether the intent to commit an act of trafficking or malicious use is confirmed, is not known or is absent.

[28] Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Egypt, France, Germany, Hungary, India, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Mexico, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Romania, Russian Federation, South Africa, Sweden, United Kingdom and United States.

[29] The Nuclear Suppliers Group generally updates its guidelines and control lists annually following its plenary meetings and informs of changes via its website. Every three years, the Group forwards consolidated changes of three Plenary Meeting decisions to the IAEA for official publication. For the most recent versions, see [INFCIRC/254/Rev.14/Part 1](#) and [INFCIRC/254/Rev.12/Part 2](#).

[30] Argentina, Canada, Ethiopia, Finland, Germany, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Netherlands, Norway, Republic of Korea, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland.

[31] Australia, Canada, Chile, Germany, Japan, Kingdom of the Netherlands, Mexico, Nigeria, Philippines, Poland, Türkiye and United Arab Emirates.



Chemical weapons are an abomination. They have no place in our world ... We must make every effort to eliminate these senseless weapons of terror. In the name of the victims of these attacks—and as a deterrent to future chemical warfare—those responsible for any use must be identified and held accountable for their crimes.

— António Guterres Secretary-General of the United Nations

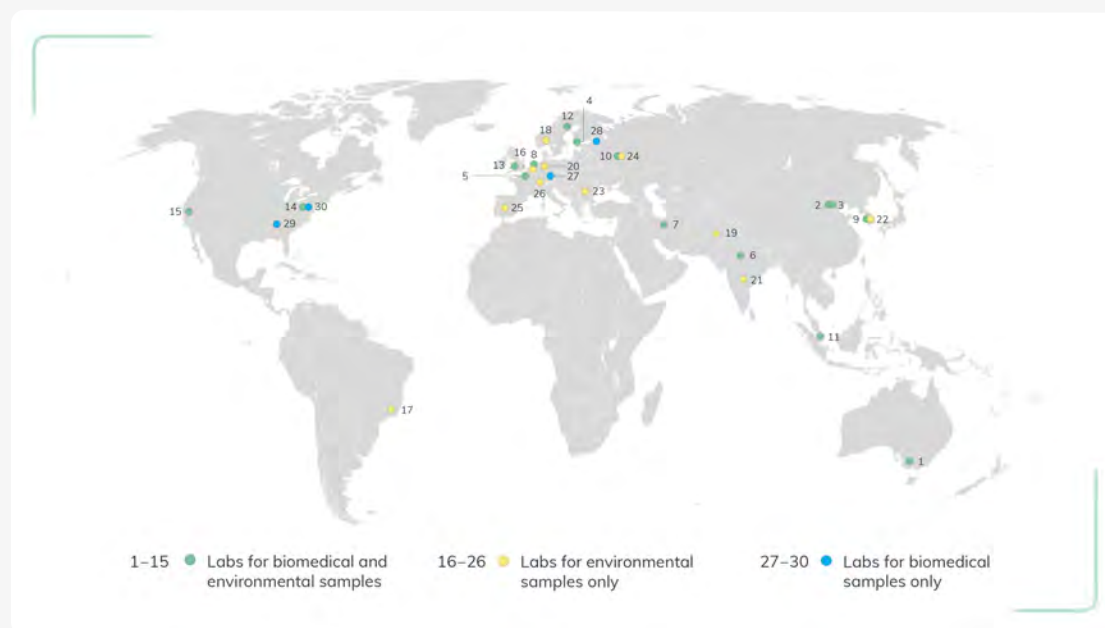
Developments and trends, 2023

In 2023, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) continued to deliver on its mandate and commitment to ensuring the full and effective implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction (Chemical Weapons Convention). OPCW marked several milestones during the year, including the inauguration and immediate start of operations of its Centre for Chemistry and Technology (ChemTech Centre), the convening of the fifth special session of the Conference of the States Parties to Review the Operation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (fifth Review Conference), and the end of the destruction of all declared chemical weapons stockpiles.

The year also marked one decade since OPCW began addressing the chemical weapons dossier in the Syrian Arab Republic. The organization's Technical Secretariat continued to make efforts to ensure that the Syrian Government resolved all gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies that had arisen from the initial declaration of its chemical weapons programme. Since April 2021, the Technical Secretariat had attempted, without success, to organize the

twenty-fifth round of consultations between the OPCW Declaration Assessment Team and the Syrian National Authority. That was owing to, inter alia, the Syrian Arab Republic's refusal to issue a visa to the lead technical expert of the Declaration Assessment Team. In October, however, after two and a half years of delays, the Syrian Arab Republic finally issued visas to all members of the Declaration Assessment Team, and the twenty-fifth round of consultations was held in Damascus in November. The OPCW Fact-Finding Mission maintained its work to establish the facts surrounding allegations of chemical weapons use in the Syrian Arab Republic. The OPCW Technical Secretariat issued a report of the Mission on 28 June regarding incidents of alleged use of toxic chemicals in Kharbit Massasneh, Syrian Arab Republic, on 7 July and 4 August 2017 ([S/2186/2023](#)). Likewise, the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team kept up its activities to identify the perpetrators of chemical weapons use in the country, pursuant to the decision of the Conference of the States Parties adopted on 27 June 2018 (decision [C-SS-4/DEC.3](#)). The OPCW Technical Secretariat issued a report of the Investigation and Identification Team on 27 January 2023 focusing on an incident in Douma, Syrian Arab Republic, on 7 April 2018 ([S/2125/2023](#)).

Figure 2.1.
OPCW-designated laboratories (as at November 2023)



The OPCW network of designated laboratories is a linchpin of the organization's verification regime and its capacity to investigate allegations of the use of chemical weapons. Across the globe, there are currently 30 laboratories designated by the OPCW for the analysis of authentic biomedical and/or environmental samples.

1. Defence Science and Technology Group (Australia)

2. Laboratory of Analytical Chemistry, Research Institute of Chemical Defence (China)
3. Laboratory of Toxicant Analysis, Academy of Military Medical Sciences (China)
4. Finnish Institute for Verification of the Chemical Weapons Convention (Finland)
5. DGA Maîtrise NRBC, Département Analyse Chimique (France)
6. VERTOX Laboratory, Defence Research and Development Establishment (India)
7. Defense Chemical Research Laboratory (Islamic Republic of Iran)
8. TNO Defence, Safety and Security (Kingdom of the Netherlands)
9. Chemical Analysis Laboratory, CBR Directorate, Agency for Defense Development (Republic of Korea)
10. Laboratory for the Chemical and Analytical Control of the Military Research Centre (Russian Federation)
11. Verification Laboratory, Defence Medical and Environmental Research Institute, DSO National Laboratories (Singapore)
12. Swedish Defence Research Agency, FOI (Sweden)
13. Defence Science and Technology Laboratory, Porton Down (United Kingdom)
14. DEVCOM Chemical Biological Center, Forensic Analytical Laboratory (United States)
15. Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory (United States)
16. Defensielaboratoria – Laboratoires de la Défense (Belgium)
17. Laboratório de Análises Químicas, Centro Tecnológico do Exército (Brazil)
18. Laboratory for Analysis of Chemical Threat Agents, Norwegian Defence Research Establishment (Norway)
19. Analytical Laboratory, Defense Science and Technology Organization (Pakistan)
20. Bundeswehr Research Institute for Protective Technologies and CBRN Protection (Germany)
21. Centre for Analysis of Chemical Toxins, Indian Institute of Chemical Technology (India)
22. CBRN Defense Research Institute, Republic of Korea Defense Command (Republic of Korea)
23. Research and Innovation Center for CBRN Defense and Ecology, Chemical Analysis Laboratory (Romania)

24. Central Chemical Weapons Destruction Analytical Laboratory of the Federal State Unitary Enterprise, "State Scientific Research Institute of Organic Chemistry and Technology" (Russian Federation)
25. Laboratorio de Verificación de Armas Químicas, INTA Campus La Marañosa (Spain)
26. Spiez Laboratory, Swiss NBC Defence Establishment (Switzerland)
27. Bundeswehr Institute of Pharmacology and Toxicology (Germany)
28. Laboratory of Chemical Analytical Control and Biotesting, Research Institute of Hygiene, Occupational Pathology and Human Ecology (Russian Federation)
29. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (United States)
30. U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Chemical Defense (United States)

The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. A dotted line represents approximately the line of control in Jammu and Kashmir agreed upon by India and Pakistan. The final status of Jammu and Kashmir has not yet been agreed upon by the Parties. Final boundary between the Sudan and South Sudan has not yet been determined.

Base map source: United Nations Geospatial.

Data source: OPCW.

While OPCW completed its critical work of verifying the destruction of the remaining declared chemical weapons stockpiles in July, it ramped up its article VI chemical industry inspections despite the remaining impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

In its efforts to build capacities among States parties to prevent the re-emergence of chemical weapons, the OPCW Technical Secretariat delivered, through strong engagement with States parties, international cooperation programmes via hybrid, virtual or in-person events, some of them conducted at the OPCW ChemTech Centre. That allowed the Technical Secretariat to assist in promoting the peaceful uses of chemistry; advancing scientific and technological cooperation; countering the threats posed by non-State actors; and expanding partnerships with international organizations, non-governmental organizations, the chemical industry and other entities. The OPCW Technical Secretariat also continued to deliver support to Ukraine, upon its request, under article X of the Convention (assistance and protection against chemical weapons).

Figure 2.2.

Secretary-General's Mechanism: nominated qualified experts, expert consultants and analytical laboratories by region (as at December 2023)



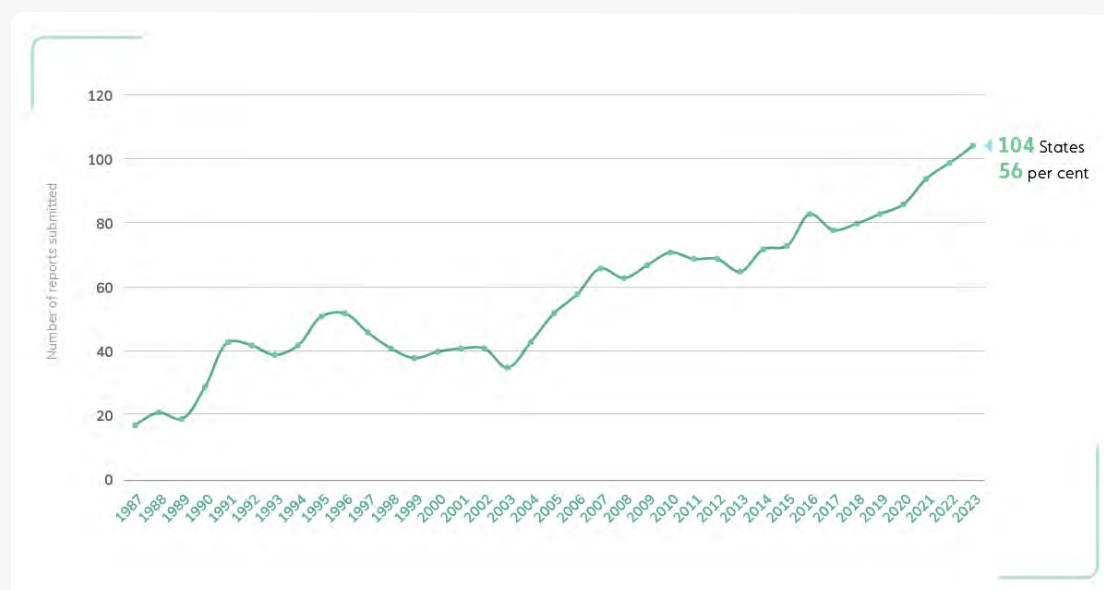
The Secretary-General has a mandate to carry out investigations when Member States bring to his attention the alleged use of chemical or biological weapons. To fulfil this mandate, the Secretary-General's Mechanism for Investigation of Alleged Use of Chemical and Biological Weapons was established. Under the Mechanism, a roster of experts and laboratories is maintained. The United Nations relies on countries to fill the roster by designating technical experts to deploy to the field on short notice, as well as analytical laboratories to support such investigations. Member States facilitate further the training of experts and laboratory exercises in close cooperation with the Office for Disarmament Affairs.

Additionally, OPCW continued its work to achieve the universality of the Chemical Weapons Convention, urging the remaining States not parties to the Convention to join without delay or preconditions. In October, at a major OPCW capacity-building exercise “CHEMEX Africa”, which was jointly organized in Algiers with Algeria, the Director-General of OPCW met with the Foreign Minister of South Sudan. During the meeting, both sides signed a [joint communiqué](#) and agreed to cooperate to complete South Sudan's accession process as soon as possible.

The year 2023 was also important for the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction (Biological Weapons Convention), as it marked the start of the 2023–2026 intersessional programme adopted by the ninth Review Conference of the Convention, in late 2022.

The centrepiece of the new intersessional programme, the Working Group on the Strengthening of the Biological Weapons Convention, held three sessions in Geneva in 2023. After considering organizational issues at its first meeting, held on 15 and 16 March, the body addressed substantive topics when it subsequently convened from 7 to 18 August and from 4 to 8 December. Additionally, delegations met from 11 to 13 December for the annual Meeting of the States Parties.

Figure 2.3.
Trends in confidence-building measures: participation of States parties in the Biological Weapons Convention's confidence-building measures, 1987–2023



This graph shows the history of submission rates for reports of States parties under the Convention's confidence-building measures system introduced in 1987.

While the overall level of participation in the measures has remained low over the years, a positive trend can be seen in recent years. In 2023, a record number of States parties (104) submitted confidence-building measure reports, resulting in a participation rate of 56 per cent.

Despite continued challenging geopolitical circumstances, the Working Group was able to conduct substantive deliberations concerning the strengthening of the Convention and addressed the topics allocated to its 2023 meetings ([BWC/CONF.IX/9](#), chap. II, para. 8). Furthermore, delegates discussed proposals regarding the mechanisms to be established on international cooperation and assistance under article X and on the review of scientific and technological developments. While discussions on the topics allocated to the Working Group remained at an early and conceptual stage, States parties shared a willingness and constructive spirit to make tangible progress by developing concrete recommendations and a road map for the way ahead.

On 15 February, South Sudan acceded to the Biological Weapons Convention, becoming the 185th State party. As at 31 December, four signatory States had not yet ratified the Convention, and eight States had neither signed nor ratified it.



The Youth for Biosecurity fellows learned about the laboratories with biosafety levels 3 and 4 (BSL-3 and BSL-4) designations, at the Spiez Laboratory on 9 August 2023.

Chemical weapons

In 2023, the Secretary-General persistently emphasized that there could be no justification for the use of chemical weapons and that those responsible for such use must be identified and held accountable for their crimes. The Secretary-General also reiterated the importance of the Chemical Weapons Convention^[1] as an essential pillar of the disarmament and non-proliferation regime. He maintained his support for the OPCW Technical Secretariat as it carried out its vital work in upholding the Convention. Meanwhile, the Office for Disarmament Affairs continued to support the Secretary-General's good offices in furthering the implementation of Security Council resolution [2118 \(2013\)](#) on the elimination of the chemical weapons programme in the Syrian Arab Republic. The Office also sustained its collaboration with members of the Security Council in their efforts to build unity, restore cooperation and ensure adherence to the global norm against chemical weapons.

Fifth special session of the Conference of the States Parties

In April 2023, a dedicated Open-ended Working Group completed a series of consultations that were launched the previous year in preparation for the fifth special session of the Conference of the States Parties to Review the Operation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (fifth Review Conference). Chaired by Lauri Kuusing (Estonia), the Open-ended Working Group convened 22 meetings, during which States parties exchanged views on a broad range of issues and topics related to the implementation of the Convention since the fourth Review Conference, in 2018. As per past practice, the Chair summarized the deliberations of the Working Group by issuing the Chairperson's draft provisional text (WGRC-5/2 RC-5/CRP.1), which was submitted to the fifth Review Conference for its consideration.

The fifth Review Conference was held in The Hague from 15 to 19 May with the participation of representatives from 137 States parties, one signatory State and one non-signatory State ([RC-5/3](#), paras. 1.2–1.4); 14 international organizations, specialized agencies and other international bodies ([RC-5/DEC.2](#), annex); and the chemical industry and scientific community ([RC-5/DEC.3](#), annex). In addition, 74 civil society organizations participated in the Conference ([RC-5/DEC.4](#), annex). The Secretary-General provided a recorded [message](#), and the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs delivered a separate [statement](#).

As set out in the Convention, the fifth Review Conference reviewed the implementation of all articles of the Convention, including developments in science and technology. Although the Conference could not reach a consensus to adopt a final document, its deliberations and preparatory process allowed for a thorough and comprehensive review of the Convention. States parties forged common ground on many issues—such as adapting the Convention's industry verification regime to reflect developments in the chemical industry and in science and technology; enhancing OPCW programmes on international cooperation and assistance based on new opportunities created by the newly established OPCW ChemTech Centre; and strengthening organizational governance—some of which were followed up by States parties within the framework of the regular sessions of the OPCW policymaking organs. The Technical Secretariat, for its part, continued to be guided in its activities by the Convention, the recommendations contained in the final documents adopted by previous Review Conferences and decisions of the OPCW policymaking organs.

Twenty-eighth session of the Conference of the States Parties

The twenty-eighth session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention took place from 27 November to 1 December in The Hague. Representatives of 143 States parties, one signatory State and one non-signatory State attended the Conference (C-28/5, paras. 1.2–1.4). Delegates from 106 civil society organizations registered to participate (C-28/DEC.4, annex), along with representatives from the chemical industry and scientific community (C-28/DEC.3, annex). The session was also attended by eight international organizations, specialized agencies and other international bodies (C-28/DEC.2, annex).

The twenty-eighth session of the Conference considered questions, matters and issues within the scope of the Chemical Weapons Convention, including disarmament, the prevention of the re-emergence of chemical weapons, assistance and protection, and international cooperation. The Conference also adopted a decision on addressing the threat from chemical weapons use and the threat of future use (C-28/DEC.12), recommending that States parties take collective measures, in accordance with national laws, with respect to the continued possession and use of chemical weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic and its failure to submit an accurate and complete declaration on its chemical weapons programme and to destroy all of its undeclared chemical weapons and production facilities.

The Conference also heard a briefing on progress made by the last declared chemical weapons possessor State party, the United States, which had completed its destruction operations in July. Additionally, delegates received updates on the efforts of China and Japan to recover and destroy chemical weapons abandoned by Japan on the territory of China. The Conference considered and approved the programme and budget of OPCW for 2024–2025 (C-28/DEC.9), providing the necessary resources for OPCW operations. It also adopted

decisions on the amendment of the OPCW tenure policy (C-28/DEC.10) and on an action plan for geographical representation within the Technical Secretariat (C-28/DEC.11).

Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons

On 7 July, OPCW [verified](#) that the last item of Category 1 chemical weapons declared by States parties, an M55 sarin rocket, was destroyed at the Blue Grass Chemical Agent-Destruction Pilot Plant, in Kentucky, United States. That marked a historic achievement for OPCW, as it completed the destruction of all categories of stockpiled chemical weapons declared by all the States parties that had possessed chemical weapons.

The total aggregate amount of Category 1 chemical weapons destroyed is 70,434 metric tons. Additionally, the total quantity of Category 2 chemical weapons destroyed is 1,811 metric tons, and the total for Category 3 chemical weapons is 417,833 items.

The year 2023 saw the continued destruction of abandoned chemical weapons in Haerbaling and Harbin, China, as well as the excavation of chemical weapons abandoned by Japan in several locations in China. Furthermore, China, Japan and the OPCW Technical Secretariat held their thirty-seventh and thirty-eighth trilateral meetings virtually, focusing on practical and technical aspects of the ongoing destruction projects.

Regarding industry verification activities in 2023, the Technical Secretariat was able to carry out 196 of 200 planned inspections pursuant to article VI of the Chemical Weapons Convention, including all planned inspections for chemicals listed in the Convention's Schedule 1 and Schedule 2. Furthermore, it completed 8 of 10 planned inspections for Schedule 3 chemicals and 128 of 130 planned inspections of other chemical production facilities.

OPCW maintains a global network of [designated laboratories](#) that must meet its proficiency criteria and be capable of performing off-site analysis of samples collected by OPCW inspectors. In 2023, 61 laboratories from 37 States parties participated in OPCW confidence-building exercises and proficiency tests for the analysis of chemicals related to the Convention. As at November, there were 30 designated laboratories from 21 States parties, including one new laboratory added to the network in 2023 (see [figure 2.1](#) for a map and list of the OPCW-designated laboratories).

OPCW started the process of constructing its ChemTech Centre in June 2021, culminating in an inauguration ceremony on 12 May 2023 in the presence of His Majesty King Willem-Alexander of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. By the end of 2022, OPCW had received more than €34.25 million in financial contributions and pledges for the Centre, from 54 countries, the European Union and other donors. Construction of the Centre was completed on

schedule and within budget. The ChemTech Centre significantly bolsters the capability of OPCW to fulfil the objectives of the Convention, enhancing the organization's ability to respond to emerging threats such as chemical terrorism, prevent the re-emergence of chemical weapons, and keep pace with developments in science and technology. The Centre also serves as a high-quality platform for research, analysis, training and various activities for international cooperation and assistance to improve the Convention's implementation.

In addition to carrying out inspector training, laboratory exercises, proficiency testing and mission-preparedness activities at the ChemTech Centre's Technology and Training Hub, OPCW used the Centre to convene several capacity-building events and topical meetings. Those events included an analytical chemistry course for women chemists, a training course on the investigation of incidents involving toxic industrial chemicals and a table-top exercise convened under the auspices of the OPCW Open-ended Working Group on Terrorism. In addition, an inter-agency workshop on deployments was organized in cooperation with the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, drawing participation from across the United Nations system and beyond.^[2]



Partnership with the chemical industry

The OPCW Technical Secretariat and the chemical industry continued efforts to strengthen their cooperation in accordance with the relevant recommendations of the third Review Conference of the Chemical Weapons Convention. In 2023, the Chemical Industry Coordination Group held two meetings where participants discussed current trends and challenges in the global chemical industry, among other issues. They also exchanged information on capacity development activities, focusing on the promotion of best practices in chemical safety and security.^[3]

Education and outreach

In 2023, the [OPCW Advisory Board on Education and Outreach](#) met for its fourteenth session from 7 to 9 February and for its fifteenth session from 20 to 22 June. The fourteenth session focused on various topics, such as the importance of developing a network with academic institutions worldwide, the need to tap into synergies with international organizations in areas related to education and outreach, and the enhancement of OPCW e-learning offerings. At the fifteenth session, the Advisory Board emphasized the ChemTech Centre's role in preventing the re-emergence of chemical weapons through contributions to the research, analytical and capacity-building capabilities of OPCW. The session also included a visit to the ChemTech Centre, where members of the Advisory Board received updates on related

activities, resources and plans. In addition, the Office for Disarmament Affairs participated in the fifteenth session, updating the Board on its new [Disarmament Education Strategy](#) and exchanging views with members.

National implementation, assistance and protection against chemical weapons, and international cooperation in promoting peaceful uses of chemistry

OPCW continued to assist States parties in achieving the full and effective implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. Its Technical Secretariat provided support in the areas of national implementation, assistance and protection against chemical weapons, as well as international cooperation in promoting peaceful uses of chemistry. It conducted 79 online and in-person capacity-building and knowledge-sharing sessions, benefiting 2,217 participants. Through the newly built ChemTech Centre inaugurated in May, the Technical Secretariat enhanced and expanded its capacity-building support to States parties while further promoting international cooperation. In 2023, the Technical Secretariat conducted 12 of its capacity-building activities at the ChemTech Centre, benefiting 255 participants from all regions.

Concerning national implementation, the Technical Secretariat continued to assist States parties, conducting 15 events that benefited 654 participants. It trained national authorities and other stakeholders on measures to meet the Convention's national obligations related to declarations and inspections, and strengthened the relevant capacities of customs administrations. The Technical Secretariat also continued to give targeted legislative support to States parties without comprehensive legislation for implementing the Convention. For instance, a subregional forum for Caribbean States parties was held in October to strengthen subregional cooperation and engagement in implementing the Convention, focusing on trans-shipment controls for countries without a substantial chemical industry.

Regarding [assistance and protection](#) against chemical weapons under article X of the Convention, the Technical Secretariat supported States parties in enhancing their capacity to respond to chemical incidents, organizing 36 events that benefited 805 participants. Notably, it delivered such support to Ukraine upon the State party's request under article X of the Convention. In particular, the Technical Secretariat conducted an online training course for Ukrainian first responders on emergency measures for incidents involving toxic chemicals; provided first responders opportunities for training related to assistance and protection; and acquired a significant quantity of protective, detection and identification equipment.

To support international cooperation in promoting the peaceful uses of chemistry under article XI of the Convention, OPCW focused on strengthening its existing programmes and activities as it continued to deliver them. It also developed new coursework in areas such as promoting integrated chemicals management, enhancing laboratory capabilities and

facilitating the promotion and exchange of chemical knowledge. In total, the Technical Secretariat organized 28 capacity-building events in 2023, benefiting 758 experts. For instance, it jointly organized with Malaysia a forum on peaceful uses of chemistry in order to raise awareness of chemical safety and security, and held its annual Symposium on Women in Chemistry under the theme “Empowering women and promoting gender diversity in the peaceful uses of chemistry and chemical security”. The twenty-fourth iteration of the [Associate Programme](#)—the flagship capacity-building activity of OPCW—took place in three parts: a training segment in the Kingdom of the Netherlands; a university segment in the United Kingdom; and an industry segment in different locations. The programme benefited 31 professionals from 31 States parties.

On the Programme to Strengthen Cooperation with Africa on the Chemical Weapons Convention (Africa Programme), OPCW launched the initiative's sixth phase (2023–2025), which focused on enhancing national implementation of the Convention, improving cross-border transfer controls on scheduled chemicals, developing capabilities for assistance and protection related to chemical emergencies, advancing management of chemical safety and security, and upgrading laboratory competencies across the continent. In 2023, the Technical Secretariat organized 55 capacity-building initiatives, including 22 intended specifically for Africa, reaching more than 850 participants from 45 African States parties. A key highlight of the year was CHEMEX Africa, a capacity-building exercise on chemical emergency response organized jointly with Algeria with funding from Canada. Held in Algiers from 23 September to 5 October with 81 participants from 33 African countries, the event included an activity simulating a coordinated response to a terrorist attack involving a toxic chemical agent. The Director-General of OPCW attended the high-level day of the event, meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Algeria and other senior officials.

Mission to eliminate the Syrian chemical weapons programme

In 2023, the OPCW Technical Secretariat continued its mission to verify the elimination of the Syrian Arab Republic's declared chemical weapons. The OPCW Declaration Assessment Team continued its efforts to clarify all outstanding issues regarding the initial and subsequent declarations submitted by the Syrian Arab Republic in accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention, as well as with relevant OPCW decisions and Security Council resolutions.

As previously reported from 2014 to 2016 and from 2019 to 2021, the Declaration Assessment Team conducted 24 rounds of consultations with the Syrian National Authority. Since April 2021, the Technical Secretariat's attempts to organize the twenty-fifth round of consultations in Damascus had been unsuccessful, mainly owing to the refusal by the Syrian authorities to issue an entry visa for the Team's lead technical expert. Under the Chemical Weapons Convention, and pursuant to Security Council resolution [2118 \(2013\)](#) and the corresponding

OPCW Executive Council decisions ([EC-M-33/DEC.1](#), [EC-83/DEC.5](#) and [EC-94/DEC.2](#)), the Syrian Arab Republic has an obligation to allow "immediate and unfettered access" to personnel designated by OPCW.

In December 2022, the Technical Secretariat proposed to the Syrian Arab Republic that OPCW organize limited in-country activities with a reduced team composed of several members of the Declaration Assessment Team. The Technical Secretariat emphasized that the limited activities would not involve any consultations between the reduced team and the Syrian National Authority.

The Declaration Assessment Team subsequently conducted two limited in-country activities in January and April 2023 with a reduced team. During those deployments, the reduced team visited two declared sites and an additional site related to one outstanding issue, collected samples and interviewed personnel involved in the Syrian chemical weapons programme.

In June, a meeting took place in Beirut between the delegations of the Technical Secretariat and the Syrian Arab Republic. The Syrian delegation committed to presenting to the Secretariat a proposal with a view to better implementing its obligations.

In October, the Syrian National Authority informed the Technical Secretariat of its readiness to resume technical consultations with the Declaration Assessment Team without any conditions. After two and a half years, the twenty-fifth round of consultations between the Team and the Syrian Arab Republic took place in Damascus in November. During the consultations, the parties revisited outstanding issues and discussed the ways forward for the resolution of those issues. The Declaration Assessment Team also shared the results of the analysis of samples collected in April and requested the Syrian National Authority to provide the Technical Secretariat with scientifically plausible and verifiable explanations of the results.

In November and December, the Syrian Arab Republic shared a series of documents comprising amendments to the declaration of two research and development facilities, explanations of the analysis results for the samples collected in April and additional information on four outstanding issues. As at December, the Declaration Assessment Team was analysing the information received to subsequently engage with the Syrian National Authority on those matters and other outstanding issues during the next round of consultations.

Meanwhile, pursuant to the OPCW Executive Council decision adopted in November 2016 ([EC-83/DEC.5](#)), the Technical Secretariat conducted the tenth round of inspections in December at the Barzah and Jamrayah facilities of the Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Centre.

Additionally, the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission continued to gather all available information related to allegations of the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic. The Mission analysed all information obtained by its team and provided by the Syrian Arab Republic during several deployments.

After completing the analysis of all available and collected information, the Technical Secretariat issued a note with the report of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission regarding incidents of alleged use of toxic chemicals as a weapon in Kharbit Massasneh, Syrian Arab Republic, on 7 July and 4 August 2017 ([S/2186/2023](#)). According to the conclusions of the report, the information obtained and analysed by the Fact-Finding Mission “did not provide reasonable grounds for the [Mission] to determine that toxic chemicals were used as a weapon in the reported incidents that occurred in Kharbit Massasneh, in Hama Governorate in the Syrian Arab Republic, on 7 July 2017 and 4 August 2017”.

In addition, the Fact-Finding Mission handed over information to the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team,^[4] as per the note of the Technical Secretariat dated 28 June 2019 ([EC-91/S/3](#)). The Mission also transferred information to the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011, which the General Assembly had established in 2016 through its resolution [71/248](#).

In 2023, the Investigation and Identification Team continued its investigations into several incidents where the Fact-Finding Mission had found that chemicals had been used as weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic. On 27 January, the Team's third report ([S/2125/2023](#)) was released, focusing on the use of chlorine gas in the town of Douma on 7 April 2018. Based on all of the information it had obtained and analysed, the Team concluded in the report that there were reasonable grounds to believe that, on 7 April 2018, at least one Mi-8/17 helicopter of the Syrian Arab Air Force, operating under the control of the Tiger Forces, had dropped two yellow cylinders filled with chlorine gas, which had hit two residential buildings in a central area of the city. Forty-three named individuals were killed, and dozens more were affected. The Director-General and the coordinator of the Team briefed the OPCW member States on the report on 2 February 2023 and the Security Council on 7 February.

At the end of the year, the Investigation and Identification Team was still being denied access to and direct engagement with representatives of the Syrian Arab Republic, as well as to relevant locations. On 11 December, the Syrian Arab Republic addressed a note verbale to the OPCW Technical Secretariat in response to a request for information relevant to the Team's ongoing investigations.

The Team also continued preserving and sharing information with the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism. The Team provided that information in line with paragraph 12 of

a decision of the fourth special session of the Conference of the States Parties ([C/SS-4/DEC.3](#)).

Science and technology-related activities

The OPCW Technical Secretariat continued collaborating with broad sectors of the global scientific community throughout the year to maintain strong ties with scientists and scientific societies, as well as to keep abreast of developments in science and technology relevant to the Convention's implementation. In support of those efforts and as a contribution to the fifth Review Conference, the [OPCW Scientific Advisory Board](#) issued a comprehensive scientific report on developments in science and technology ([RC-5/DG.1](#)).

The Scientific Advisory Board also adopted the final report of its Temporary Working Group on the Analysis of Biotoxins ([SAB/REP/1/23](#)). In connection with that report, as well as the outcome document of the Board's thirty-seventh session ([SAB-37/1](#)), the OPCW Director-General announced his decision to establish a new temporary working group focused on chemical forensics ([EC-104/DG.22](#)).

In addition to participating in numerous scientific and technical conferences, the Technical Secretariat and the Scientific Advisory Board collaborated extensively with the International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry during its [World Chemistry Congress](#), held in The Hague in August.

Biological weapons

The Biological Weapons Convention was opened for signature on 10 April 1972 and entered into force on 26 March 1975, becoming the first multilateral treaty banning an entire category of weapons. As at 31 December, the Convention had [185 States parties](#). [Four signatory States](#) had yet to ratify the Convention, and eight States had neither signed nor acceded to it.

Working Group on the Strengthening of the Biological Weapons Convention

At the ninth Review Conference, in 2022, States parties agreed to establish the Working Group on the Strengthening of the Biological Weapons Convention to identify, examine and develop specific and effective measures, including possible legally binding measures, and to make recommendations to strengthen and institutionalize the Convention in all its aspects ([BWC/CONF.IX/9](#), sect. II, paras. 8–16). The Review Conference decided that the Working Group would address measures on the following: (a) international cooperation and assistance under article X; (b) scientific and technological developments relevant to the Convention; (c) confidence-building and transparency; (d) compliance and verification; (e) national

implementation of the Convention; (f) assistance, response and preparedness under article VII; and (g) organizational, institutional and financial arrangements.

First session

As per its mandate, the Working Group convened its first session in Geneva on 15 and 16 March to make necessary procedural and organizational decisions. The Chief of Service for the Geneva Branch of the Office for Disarmament Affairs opened the session, and one of its Vice-Chairs, Camille Petit (France), presided over it. A total of 86 States took part in the first session, including 82 States parties, two signatory States and two States neither parties nor signatories to the Convention (which attended as observers). United Nations bodies, including the Office for Disarmament Affairs and the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, also attended. The European Union and the World Health Organization participated as observer agencies. Two non-governmental organizations and research institutes also joined the first session of the Working Group ([BWC/WG/1/INF.1](#)).

During the meeting, the Working Group elected Flavio Soares Damico (Brazil) as its Chair, and Camille Petit (France) and Irakli Jgenti (Georgia) as its Vice-Chairs. The Working Group also adopted its agenda ([BWC/WG/1/1](#)) and confirmed as its rules of procedure those of the ninth Review Conference, *mutatis mutandis*.

The first session of the Working Group dedicated most of its time to addressing the sequencing and allocation of the seven topics mandated to the Working Group by the ninth Review Conference. After intense negotiations, States parties adopted an indicative schedule of activities, distributing the 60 days allocated to the Working Group between 2023 and 2026 as follows:

- 10 days on compliance and verification
- 8 days on international cooperation and assistance under article X
- 8 days on scientific and technological developments relevant to the Convention
- 7 days on assistance, response and preparedness under article VII
- 5 days on confidence-building and transparency
- 5 days on national implementation of the Convention
- 4 days on organizational, institutional and financial arrangements
- 2 days on a mechanism for international cooperation and assistance under article X
- 2 days on a scientific and technological review mechanism
- 4 days on the overall consideration of all topics, including the two mechanisms
- 5 days on the preparation of its report to be adopted by consensus, if it so decides.

The Working Group confirmed that its substantive meetings in 2023 would be held from 7 to 18 August and from 4 to 8 December, and decided that it could prepare reports of a procedural nature for its sessions, as appropriate, based on consensus. At the end of the first session, on 16 March, States parties adopted a procedural report by consensus ([BWC/WG/1/2](#)).

Second session

The second session of the Working Group was convened in Geneva from 7 to 18 August. On the first day of the session, the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs [addressed](#) the Working Group through a video message. More than 600 participants from 122 States parties, two signatory States, two States neither parties nor signatories to the Convention, four United Nations bodies, nine specialized agencies and regional intergovernmental organizations, and 21 non-governmental organizations and research institutes attended the session ([BWC/WG/2/INF.1/Rev.1](#)).

In accordance with the indicative schedule of activities adopted at its first session, the Working Group commenced its consideration of agenda item 6 on identifying, examining and developing specific and effective measures, including possible legally binding measures, and making recommendations to strengthen and institutionalize the Convention in all its aspects within the mandate of the Working Group. It focused on three topics: international cooperation and assistance under article X (three days), scientific and technological developments relevant to the Convention (three days) and national implementation of the Convention (two days). The Working Group also devoted one day each to the mechanisms for international cooperation and assistance under article X and for the review of scientific and technological developments.

Deliberations on the topics above were enriched by nine panel sessions featuring representatives from States parties, regional and international organizations, United Nations bodies and non-governmental organizations. Additionally, the Biological Weapons Convention Implementation Support Unit provided brief overviews on relevant activities. After the presentations, States parties engaged in an interactive discussion, during which a total of 27 working papers were introduced ([BWC/WG/3/WP.1–27](#)).

At the first meeting of the session, on 7 August, the Chair announced that he had decided to appoint Friends of the Chair to assist him in his consultations and negotiations on the three issues under discussion during that session: Thomas Fetz/Trevor Smith (Canada) and Jonelle John S. Domingo (Philippines) on international cooperation and assistance under article X; Vincent Bodson (Belgium), Ljupčo Gjorgjinski (Canada), Grisselle Rodríguez (Panama) and Peter Ahabwe/Musa Kwehangana (Uganda) on scientific and technological developments relevant to the Convention; and Michelle Carr (Australia), Reski Ilahi (Indonesia), Grisselle

Rodríguez (Panama), Athikarn Dilogwathana (Thailand) and Faith Bagamuhunda (Uganda) on national implementation of the Convention. The Chair also announced that he had appointed Ichiro Ogasawara/Shigeru Umetsu (Japan), Arsen Omarov (Kazakhstan) and Husham Ahmed (Pakistan) as Friends of the Chair on organizational, institutional and financial arrangements.

Looking beyond the Working Group's plenary deliberations, the Chair requested the Friends of the Chair to carry out informal consultations to further advance discussions. Furthermore, at the end of the meeting, the Friends of the Chair on international cooperation and assistance under article X and those on scientific and technological developments issued conference room papers, providing delegates with "food for thought" during the intersessional period ([BWC/WG/2/CRP.2](#) and [BWC/WG/2/CRP.5](#)). The Chair also issued, under his own responsibility, a compilation of existing proposals on the two mechanisms ([BWC/WG/2/CRP.3](#) and [BWC/WG/2/CRP.4](#)). At the end of the second session, on 18 August, States parties adopted a procedural report by consensus ([BWC/WG/2/1](#)).

In his closing remarks, the Chair provided an overall positive assessment of the session, attributing the productive outcome to the preparatory work done by all the Friends of the Chair, the substantive level of engagement by all States parties and the quality of the input from the invited international organizations and other experts. Additionally, the Chair expressed appreciation for the diversity of participation in the discussions, with 122 of the 185 States parties attending and delegations from around the world taking the floor on every topic. The Chair noted that they had witnessed a paradigm shift towards a much more practical and concrete mode of operation, in which they were now working on draft proposals and text, particularly on the development of "appropriate recommendations" for the development of mechanisms for international cooperation and assistance and for the review of science and technology.

Third session

The third session of the Working Group was convened in Geneva from 4 to 8 December. It was attended by more than 640 participants from 117 States parties, two signatory States, one State neither party nor signatory to the Convention, two United Nations bodies, eight specialized agencies and regional intergovernmental organizations ([BWC/WG/3/1](#), paras. 3–7), and 28 non-governmental organizations and research institutes ([BWC/WG/3/INF.1](#)).

In accordance with the indicative schedule of activities adopted at its first session, the Working Group considered three topics at its third session: confidence-building and transparency (one day); compliance and verification (three days); and organizational, institutional and financial arrangements (one day). Notably, the session was the first meeting of the Convention in more than two decades to discuss issues relating to compliance and verification.

Following the practice at the second session, deliberations on the three topics were stimulated by four panel sessions, with representatives of States parties, regional and international organizations, United Nations bodies, non-governmental organizations and academia composing the panel. Additionally, the Biological Weapons Convention Implementation Support Unit delivered presentations on its activities. In the ensuing interactive discussions, States parties introduced 18 working papers (BWC/WG/3/WP.1–18). In preparation for the discussions on confidence-building and transparency, the Friends of the Chair circulated a non-paper as an aide-memoire to help inform the deliberations.

The following Friends of the Chair who were designated to the three topics under discussion at the third session assisted the Chair in his consultations and negotiations: Angel Horna (Peru) and Laurent Masméjean (Switzerland) on confidence-building and transparency; Robert in den Bosch (Kingdom of the Netherlands) and Alonso Francisco Martínez Ruiz (Mexico) on compliance and verification; and Ichiro Ogasawara/Shigeru Umetsu (Japan), Arsen Omarov (Kazakhstan) and Husham Ahmed (Pakistan) on organizational, institutional and financial arrangements.

At the end of the third session, on 8 December, States parties adopted a procedural report by consensus ([BWC/WG/3/1](#)). Overall, the States parties carried out constructive exchanges at the third session of the Working Group, with many delegations presenting concrete proposals and making substantive interventions on the three topics addressed at the session.

2023 Meeting of States Parties

The ninth Review Conference, held in 2022, decided to hold a three-day Meeting of States Parties each year from 2023 to 2026. Accordingly, delegations gathered from 11 to 13 December in Geneva for the 2023 Meeting of States Parties. The Meeting was attended by 120 States parties, two signatory States, three United Nations bodies and 25 non-governmental organizations and research institutes. Furthermore, three States neither parties nor signatories to the Convention and eight specialized agencies and regional intergovernmental organizations applied for observer status in accordance with the rules of procedure ([BWC/MSP/2023/INF.1](#)).

Cristian Espinosa Cañizares (Ecuador) chaired the Meeting. Thomas Göbel (Germany) and Nikola Yakov (Bulgaria) served as the Vice-Chairs.

On 11 December, the Meeting of States Parties adopted its agenda ([BWC/MSP/2023/1](#)) and heard a pre-recorded [video message](#) from the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs. However, the Meeting could not subsequently adopt its programme of work ([BWC/MSP/2023/2](#)) or its rules of procedure ([BWC/CONFIX/2](#)), because no consensus on them could be reached. The Russian Federation objected to the inclusion in the draft programme of work of

time for non-governmental organizations to address the plenary in an informal session, expressing its view that that was not in line with the rules of procedure. In response, 39 delegations took the floor to disagree with the objection, stating that it had been a long-standing practice, since 1996, for non-governmental organizations to be given the opportunity to speak at an informal session.

Regarding the rules of procedure, the Russian Federation insisted that they be applied strictly as written, thereby objecting to the long-standing practice of observer agencies being able to address formal meetings of the plenary. Again, several States parties objected to the Russian Federation's position. The Chair noted the lack of consensus on the programme of work and on the application of the rules of procedure and suggested continuing consultations.

Notwithstanding the continued lack of consensus among States parties on two agenda items, the Chair of the Meeting of States Parties, with the agreement of delegations, moved to a later agenda item and invited the Chair of the Working Group on the Strengthening of the Biological Weapons Convention to provide an update on the Working Group's work in 2023. Looking forward, the Chair of the Working Group spoke of the need to increase efforts in the coming year, adding that delegates should be "prepared to roll up [their] sleeves for a very intense 2024". He concluded by saying, "I will protect the mandate, its bottom-up character, its member-driven process and the effort to arrive at a safe harbour by 2024".

Despite informal consultations, States parties could not overcome the impasse concerning the adoption of the programme of work and the rules of procedure before the end of the Meeting. Therefore, several agenda items were not addressed, including the general debate, the management of the intersessional programme, budgetary and financial matters, progress with universalization of the Convention, and the annual report of the Implementation Support Unit. Delegations nonetheless agreed that in 2024 the Working Group would hold its fourth session from 19 to 23 August and its fifth session from 2 to 13 December. Additionally, they agreed that the 2024 Meeting of States Parties would be held from 16 to 18 December.

At the end of the Meeting, on 13 December, States parties adopted a brief report by consensus ([BWC/MSP/2023/6](#)).

Work of the Implementation Support Unit

As part of its mandated activities in 2023, the Implementation Support Unit provided administrative support for the Meeting of States Parties and the three sessions of the newly established Working Group. Its contributions included drafting and issuing communications for the office holders and to States parties, international organizations and non-governmental organizations; supporting the efforts of the Friends of the Chair of the Working Group; arranging 13 panel discussions for the second and third sessions of the Working Group, and

processing almost 1,000 meeting registrations; researching, drafting and collating compilations of working papers; preparing conference documents and reports; processing working papers; and providing procedural, technical and substantive advice to the Chairs of the Working Group and the Meeting of States Parties, as well as the other office holders.

The Implementation Support Unit continued to maintain and update the website of the Biological Weapons Convention (<https://disarmament.unoda.org/biological-weapons>), increasing its utility not only for States parties, but also for outreach, awareness-raising and communication to a global audience. The Unit also continued to use social media to increase awareness about the Convention.^[5]

Additionally, the Unit assisted in the comprehensive implementation of the Convention ([BWC/MSP/2023/4](#)), despite a staffing shortage from April to October. At the same time, voluntary contributions from States parties enabled the Unit to enhance its ability to carry out its mandated tasks. Such contributions also allowed for the employment of 10 additional fixed-term staff members and the assistance of 26 developing States parties upon their request (see the next section for further information on these and other related activities).

In 2023, the Unit continued to collect and update details of national contact points for the Convention, making them available to all States parties via a [restricted section](#) of the Convention's website. A total of 149 States parties had nominated a national contact point, as requested by previous Review Conferences, which represented an increase of 20 States parties since the last report of the Unit, in early 2022.

The Unit also assisted States parties in exchanging reports on confidence-building measures. Specifically, it maintained capabilities for electronic reporting, compiled and distributed submissions, provided routine assistance and substantive advice and followed up with States parties on their submissions. As part of those efforts, it launched an upgrade of the existing [electronic platform](#) for confidence-building measures in order to ensure continued compliance with United Nations cybersecurity standards.

In 2023, 104 States parties submitted annual reports on confidence-building measures covering relevant activities in 2022—the most to ever be submitted in a calendar year, reflecting a participation rate of more than 56 per cent. In its annual report, the Implementation Support Unit listed the States parties that had submitted reports on confidence-building measures in 2023 covering the 2022 calendar year ([BWC/MSP/2023/4](#), annex 3). (See also [figure 2.3](#) for a chart on the participation of States parties in the Convention's confidence-building measures from 1987 to 2023.)

Meanwhile, voluntary contributions supported the Implementation Support Unit in providing several States parties, upon their request, with assistance related to confidence-building

measures. In that regard, the Unit co-organized a subregional workshop in Kathmandu from 28 to 30 August, as well as a regional workshop in Bangkok on 10 and 11 October for member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. As a direct result of those events, plans were under way at the end of 2023 to hold national workshops on confidence-building measures in Cambodia, Timor-Leste and Viet Nam.



Participants of the Biological Weapons Convention Implementation Support Unit's regional workshop on promoting confidence-building measures in South-East Asia gather in Bangkok in October. The workshop was convened in partnership with the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute and the European Union, under its Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Risk Mitigation Centres of Excellence Initiative.

In addition, the Unit continued to maintain the database for assistance requests and offers under article X of the Convention. In 2023, it conducted a major review of the database requests and offers, contacting all States parties with active entries for confirmation or updates. As at 31 December, the database contained 29 new or updated offers of assistance from 11 States parties and 19 new or updated requests for assistance from nine States parties. An additional 27 assistance requests from eight States parties were undergoing updates.

From 14 to 16 June, the Unit co-organized a training course on virus detection and biosecurity in the framework of article X of the Convention, with the International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology at its headquarters in Trieste, Italy. Twenty-one technical

experts (8 men and 13 women) from 20 developing States parties participated in the course, which consisted of both lectures and hands-on practical exercises in the Centre's laboratories.

Separately, the Unit supported the Chair of the Meeting of States Parties in his activities to promote the Convention's universalization, assisting him in corresponding with States not parties to the Convention and in preparing for his meetings in Geneva with representatives of non-States parties (see [BWC/MSP/2023/3](#)). The Unit also supported States parties in promoting universalization, coordinating their activities and informing them about progress on accessions or ratifications. Moreover, the Unit informed and advised several signatories and non-States parties about the Convention.

The Unit also administered the Convention's [sponsorship programme](#), designed to support and increase the participation of developing States parties in the meetings of the intersessional programme. In 2023, five States parties (Canada, France, the Republic of Korea, Spain and the United Kingdom) and the European Union contributed to the Convention's sponsorship programme. In addition, the United States supported the programme through bilateral arrangements. The Unit arranged a record number of sponsorship grants (92) for the intersessional meetings in 2023. Thanks to voluntary contributions to the programme, 34 national experts from 28 developing States parties could attend the Working Group's second session, and 35 national experts from 34 developing States parties attended its third session. Additionally, 23 national experts from 23 developing States parties were sponsored to participate in the 2023 Meeting of States Parties.

International support to the Biological Weapons Convention

Funding from the European Union allowed the Office for Disarmament Affairs to carry out a number of activities in support of the Biological Weapons Convention. Through the 2023 Youth for Biosecurity Fellowship programme, held from March to August, the Office engaged 20 emerging biosecurity leaders from the global South in international biosecurity discussions within the framework of the Convention. The fellows from 17 States parties completed a three-month capacity-building programme consisting of online learning sessions, a collaborative research project and a one-week visit to Geneva during the second session of the Working Group. Marking its first year under the new format, the Fellowship saw a significant rise in interest, attracting more than 800 applicants from 84 countries—an increase of more than 600 per cent compared with previous years.

Separately, two "[Science for diplomats](#)" events took place on the margins of the organizational meeting of the Working Group on the Strengthening of the Biological Weapons Convention, in March. Scientific experiments and scenario exercises helped policymakers to learn more about potential policy challenges resulting from scientific advancements.

The Office for Disarmament Affairs also facilitated capacity-building activities at regional and national levels, mainly in Africa and Asia, to provide States parties with tailored assistance based on their specific requests. The initiatives included Cambodia's first national awareness-raising event, held in Phnom Penh from 4 to 6 October; two regional workshops for reporting on confidence-building measures, held in Kathmandu from 28 to 30 August and in Bangkok on 10 and 11 October (mentioned in the previous section); and a workshop in Ulaanbaatar from 23 to 27 October (the first in-person workshop under the cooperation between Mongolia and the Kingdom of the Netherlands on the establishment, initiated in July, of a national inventory of dangerous pathogens, including the provision of relevant legislative assistance).

In addition, by the end of 2023, the comprehensive [Guide to Implementing the Biological Weapons Convention](#) was published in all six official languages of the United Nations. First issued in 2022, the *Guide* had become a valuable resource for stakeholders helping to implement the Convention at the national level. It is available both electronically and in printed copy at relevant events.

To help build capacity among the Convention's national contact points, the Unit developed a set of dedicated training materials and organized two regional training workshops: on 16 and 17 May in Addis Ababa for national contact points from States parties in Africa; and on 25 and 26 October in Santo Domingo for national contact points from States parties in Latin America and the Caribbean. As at the end of the year, plans were under way to hold four more regional training workshops in 2024 for national contact points.

Supporting universalization and effective implementation of the Biological Weapons Convention in Africa

In 2023, voluntary contributions enabled the Office for Disarmament Affairs to maintain its [active support](#) for the Convention in Africa. Responding to requests by States parties, the Office aimed to promote and strengthen the Convention through efforts in four priority areas: promoting universalization; assisting States parties in developing and adopting national implementing legislation; supporting the preparation and submission of reports on confidence-building measures; and facilitating the establishment or designation of national contact points.

Throughout the year, the Office organized workshops in Africa designed to establish subregional implementation baselines, assess national needs and priorities and identify activities for supporting national implementation. After organizing the first subregional event, in 2022, for stakeholders in East Africa, the Office convened three additional workshops in 2023: from 24 to 26 May in Douala, Cameroon, for States in Central Africa; from 13 to 15 June in Rabat for States in North Africa; and from 11 to 13 October in Lomé for States in West Africa. The workshops addressed national implementation needs, priorities and challenges, and laid

a foundation for fruitful and collaborative working relationships moving forward. The final subregional workshop, scheduled for 2024 in Gaborone for States in Southern Africa, would mark the completion of the project's second phase, focused on establishing subregional baselines.

At the request of African States parties, the Office for Disarmament Affairs also organized national assistance activities for the Biological Weapons Convention. In 2023, the Office supported States in four key areas: general awareness-raising; legislative assistance; preparation and submission of reports on confidence-building measures; and general training of stakeholders and national contact points.

The Office facilitated four national workshops focused on raising awareness: on 29 and 30 August in Banjul and in Windhoek; on 23 and 24 October in Rabat; and on 21 and 22 November in Cotonou, Benin. The workshops were intended to familiarize participants with the Convention and the resulting obligations for States parties, while also focusing on the importance and benefits of comprehensive national implementation. By bringing together a diverse range of national actors, the gatherings represented important first steps towards promoting and strengthening inter-agency and stakeholder coordination at the national level.

The Office also supported three national workshops focused on legislative implementation of the Biological Weapons Convention. On 21 July, it collaborated with the Verification Research, Training and Information Centre and the United States Department of State to hold a national awareness-raising workshop in Naivasha, Kenya, to promote the importance of comprehensive national implementing legislation. From 13 to 15 September, a national legal drafting workshop took place in Accra, bringing together national stakeholders to provide tailored assistance in reviewing the initial draft of Ghana's national implementing law.

A national workshop on preparing and submitting reports on confidence-building measures, held in Lomé on 9 and 10 October, familiarized participants with the processes for preparing and submitting such declarations, while helping them to collaboratively review and prepare a national-level draft. As a result of the workshop, Togo submitted its first report on confidence-building measures since 1988.

In 2023, the number of States parties to the Biological Weapons Convention grew to 185 with the accession of South Sudan. Meanwhile, the Office for Disarmament Affairs continued to promote universalization of the Convention through coordinated outreach to the six African States not yet parties to the instrument. Representatives from Chad and the Comoros participated in the above-mentioned workshops in their respective subregions and sent delegations to Geneva for a series of presentations and meetings with senior United Nations officials and representatives of States parties.

Secretary-General's Mechanism for Investigation of Alleged Use of Chemical and Biological Weapons

When Member States report the alleged use of chemical or biological weapons to the Secretary-General, he has a mandate to carry out investigations. To fulfil that mandate, the United Nations relies on countries to nominate technical experts to deploy to the field on short notice and expert consultants to provide advice, as well as analytical laboratories to support such investigations. The Office for Disarmament Affairs maintains a roster of those nominations (see [figure 2.2](#) for infographics on the regional distribution of the roster's membership).

In 2023, the Office, as custodian of the Mechanism, held in-person training and outreach events, complemented by virtual workshops and webinars.

From 27 February to 3 March, the Office organized a [skills-training course](#) on biological crime management, in cooperation with the INTERPOL Bioterrorism Prevention Unit and the National Microbiology Laboratory (part of the Public Health Agency of Canada). A group of 28 experts on the Mechanism's roster, from 24 countries representing all United Nations regional groups, learned about personal protective equipment, considerations in accessing a contaminated scene, initial scene assessment, briefing and sampling strategy, as well as evidence packaging.

Experts nominated to the roster also took part in a two-week basic training course in Johannesburg, South Africa, in June and July. Organized by South Africa's National Institute for Communicable Diseases, the training course was the second of its kind hosted by the country. Nineteen participants from 17 States learned about the background and mandate of the Mechanism. In addition, they discussed all relevant aspects of an investigation, including safety and security, sampling, decontamination, planning and report writing. The course concluded with a one-day field exercise centred on a fictitious scenario.

Germany held a training course on sampling and transporting infectious substances, in Berlin from 19 to 23 September, partnering with the Office for Disarmament Affairs and the Public Health Agency of Canada. For the first three days of the course, 14 participants from 10 countries learned about complying with regulations established by the International Air Transport Association for the shipment of infectious substances. In the next part of the programme, the participants received training in sampling biological material.

From 25 September to 6 October, the Office for Disarmament Affairs facilitated a [basic training course](#) for 24 nominated experts from 17 countries, in cooperation with the Directorate General for International Relations and Strategy (DGRIS) of the French Ministry of Armed

Forces. The training course generally followed the same standardized agenda as the earlier course held in South Africa, and it was complemented by a short field exercise with support from Germany.

In cooperation with the Department of Safety and Security, the Office also organized a training course on "[Safe and secure approaches in field environments](#)". From 26 November to 2 December, a group of 20 experts from 18 countries was given an overview of the United Nations Security Management System, as well as general guidelines for working in field environments. The course included training on medical aspects of working in the field, with theoretical lessons, demonstrations and practical exercises on individual first aid and managing injuries in field environments.

In addition, the Office continued the strong virtual engagement it had started with experts and partners during the COVID-19 pandemic:

- From 9 to 11 May, the Office hosted three virtual onboarding sessions for newly nominated experts and laboratory focal points. Seventy-eight experts from 31 countries participated in the sessions.
- In November, the Office conducted the Mechanism's annual "call-out exercise", a routine, unannounced activity aimed at testing the response time of rostered laboratories and checking the continued availability of experts on the roster.
- In December, the Office hosted a virtual round-table session where all rostered experts could discuss past and upcoming activities intended to strengthen the Mechanism. The 170 participants heard from partners about recent and upcoming training activities, followed by a question-and-answer session with staff of the Office.

The Office also continued to prioritize outreach to raise awareness about the Mechanism and to enhance the diversity of its rostered experts and laboratories with respect to subject-matter expertise, geography and gender balance. To support that goal, the Office provided its third annual briefing of Member States on the margins of the General Assembly, First Committee, in October. In his opening remarks at that gathering, the Director and Deputy to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs highlighted the essential role of Member States in maintaining and strengthening the Mechanism. Those remarks were followed by a presentation on the nomination process and further information on the Mechanism. In November, the Office distributed the annual [note verbale](#) to Member States requesting the nomination of experts and laboratories for the roster. In December, the Office briefed the Working Group on the Strengthening of the Biological Weapons Convention about the Mechanism.

Furthermore, the Office gave several presentations on the Mechanism in 2023 as part of its outreach efforts:

- In April, the Office delivered a briefing on the Mechanism at the World Organisation for Animal Health's Global Conference on Emergency Management.
- In May, the Office organized an in-person outreach workshop in Addis Ababa for Member States in Africa. During the workshop, a representative from South Africa's National Institute for Communicable Diseases spoke about the basic training course held in Johannesburg in support of the Mechanism.
- On 28 July, staff members of the Office discussed the Mechanism at a conference organized by the Inter-American Committee against Terrorism of the Organization of American States.
- In September, the Office participated in a meeting of the Nordic Biopreparedness Forum to present information on the Mechanism.
- In November, the Office introduced the Mechanism during the second annual meeting of the Global Partnership against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction.

Export controls: Australia Group

The Australia Group is an informal forum of 42 countries and the European Union, which, through the harmonization of national export controls, seeks to ensure that their exports do not contribute to the production or proliferation of chemical or biological weapons. Participants use their national licensing measures to ensure that exports of certain chemicals, biological agents and dual-use chemical and biological manufacturing facilities and equipment do not contribute to the spread of chemical and biological weapons and that legitimate trade is facilitated. All participants in the Australia Group are States parties to both the Biological Weapons Convention and the Chemical Weapons Convention. Support for those regimes and their aims remains the overriding objective of the Australia Group's participants. Export licensing measures instituted by individual members also assist in implementing key obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention (article I, subparas. 1(a) and 1(d)) and the Biological Weapons Convention (articles I and III), as well as ensuring compliance with Security Council resolution [1540 \(2004\)](#). The Group's guidelines, common control lists, handbooks and public statements are available on its [website](#).

In 2023, the Australia Group met twice to consider current developments related to chemical and biological weapons, explore the scope for increasing the effectiveness of existing controls and identify areas where updates may be necessary to existing [common control lists](#).

Notably, the year saw the first in-person intersessional meeting of the Australia Group since the relaxing of COVID-19 pandemic travel restrictions. At the gathering, held in Rome in February, technical experts from participating countries took part in productive, face-to-face discussions on ways to further advance the Group's mission in the areas of new and evolving technologies, implementation and enforcement. The meeting also included outreach to a range of non-member countries.

That meeting was followed by the Australia Group Plenary, which took place in Paris in June. Participants again exchanged views on a range of relevant topics, including shared approaches for keeping pace with rapidly evolving dual-use technologies and the relevance of those efforts for non-proliferation and export control. Participants agreed to continue an active outreach programme to non-members to enhance efforts for preventing the proliferation of chemical and biological weapons. They also agreed to engage with representatives from the industry, academia and international organizations to further understand the impact and pace of new scientific and technological developments. The meeting resulted in further refinement of the common control lists.

Footnotes

[1] Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction. As at 31 December 2023, the Convention had [193 States parties](#).

[2] The event gathered representatives from the Office for Disarmament Affairs, the Biological Weapons Convention Implementation Support Unit, the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute, the World Health Organization and the World Organisation for Animal Health. With the ChemTech Centre fully operational, the Technical Secretariat is focused on developing and implementing new programmes that will leverage the Centre's capabilities and help to realize its full potential.

[3] For a detailed account of OPCW engagement with the chemical industry, see "Note by the Director-General: engaging the chemical industry associations" ([C-28/DG.15](#)).

[4] In accordance with decision [C-SS-4/DEC.3](#) of 27 June 2018, the Technical Secretariat established the Investigation and Identification Team in 2019 with the mandate to identify individuals or entities directly or indirectly involved in the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic, by investigating and reporting on all information potentially relevant to the origin of those weapons.

[5] The Implementation Support Unit's [X account](#) (formerly Twitter) has attracted more than 6,000 followers.



CHAPTER 3

Conventional weapons

We all need to keep pulling together in the same direction: the direction of saving lives, as many as we can, and as speedily as we can.

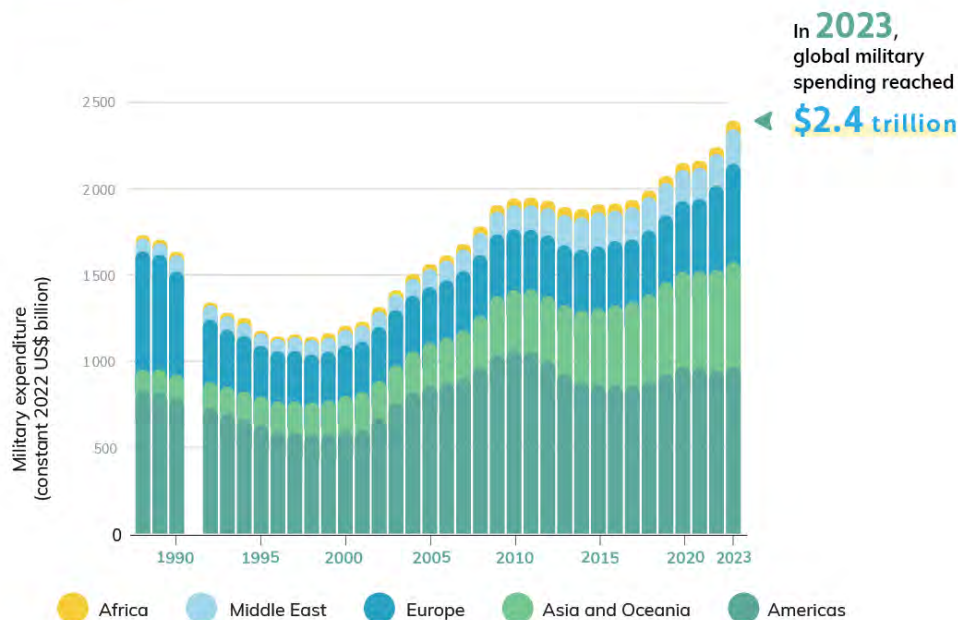
— [Izumi Nakamitsu](#) High Representative for Disarmament Affairs

Developments and trends, 2023

The year 2023 saw both positive developments and new challenges in the context of conventional arms. In much of the world, international peace and security continued to suffer from the illicit transfer, diversion, destabilizing accumulation and misuse of small arms and light weapons, as well as their ammunition. In a variety of settings, armed violence and conflict continued to be driven and sustained by the ongoing movement of weapons and ammunition to and between non-State actors, including in the context of organized crime and terrorism.

According to the [Stockholm International Peace Research Institute](#) (SIPRI), world military expenditure rose by 6.8 per cent in real terms in 2023, to a total of \$2.4 trillion, which amounts to 2.3 per cent of the global gross domestic product and around \$306 per capita. Factoring in plans announced by some Member States to boost military budgets in response to the current security landscape, global military spending is estimated to continue to rise sharply in the coming years.

Figure 3.1.
World military expenditure by region, 1988–2023



Note: The absence of data for the Soviet Union in 1991 means that no total can be calculated for that year.
Source: SIPRI Military Expenditure Database, April 2023



26,000
people can be treated for
malaria for the price of
1 battle tank.

Source: International Peace Bureau



The cost of
1 aircraft carrier
can reforest an area
3 times
the size of Costa Rica.

Source: International Peace Bureau



200,000
children can attend a year
of school for the price of
1 stealth fighter.

Source: Office for Disarmament Affairs,
Intro2Disarmament

Global military expenditure increased to a record \$2.4 trillion in 2023. The facts and figures above demonstrate how resources could be invested instead in priority areas such as conflict prevention, health, education and environmental protection.

Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, many States continued to provide military assistance to the Ukrainian armed forces, including transfers of arms and ammunition. Conventional arms transfers included heavy weapons and military equipment, such as armoured combat vehicles, anti-aircraft systems, artillery, helicopters, missile systems and uncrewed combat aerial vehicles, as well as small arms and light weapons and their ammunition. In addition, there were reports of States transferring or planning to transfer weapons to the Russian armed forces. Those weapons were reportedly used in Ukraine and said to include uncrewed aerial vehicles, ballistic missiles and ammunition. On eight occasions in 2023, the Security Council considered the issue of arms transfers, including the risks stemming from violations of the agreements regulating the export of weapons and military equipment.

Harm to civilians and civilian infrastructure also remained a significant concern, with most of the civilian casualties recorded in Ukraine continuing to be caused by explosive weapons with wide-area effects. The attacks included shelling from artillery, tanks, multiple-launch rocket systems, and cruise and ballistic missiles, as well as airstrikes.

Furthermore, the Security Council remained actively seized of threats posed by the misuse, illicit transfer and destabilizing accumulation of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition, particularly in situations of armed conflict and in relation to their potential diversion.

Efforts to implement the 2001 Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, along with its 2005 International Tracing Instrument, continued apace in 2023. Preparations for the fourth Review Conference on the Programme of Action also accelerated.



From 20 to 24 March, the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa conducted a training workshop for national commissions on combating the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. The workshop, held in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, was organized by the Peace and Security department of the West African Economic and Monetary Union.

States achieved a major milestone in comprehensively addressing the threats posed by illicit trafficking, diversion and unplanned explosions of conventional ammunition. The Open-ended Working Group on Conventional Ammunition successfully concluded its work in June, leading to the adoption by the General Assembly of the Global Framework for Through-life Conventional Ammunition Management ([A/78/111](#)). That new instrument filled the gap in dedicated regulatory instruments for conventional ammunition at the international level. The SaferGuard programme, managed by the Office for Disarmament Affairs, also continued its efforts to promote the application of the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines (IATG) to assist States in advancing safe and secure ammunition management.

Meanwhile, the Security Council continued to devote attention to the issue of improvised explosive devices in its thematic discussions and decisions. The Council addressed the matter in relation to various country-specific situations, including in the context of arms embargoes and peace operations.

Additionally, a growing number of Governments participated in two multilateral transparency instruments on conventional weapons. A total of 63 Member States submitted annual reports to the United Nations Report on Military Expenditures during its 2023 reporting cycle, an increase of 50 per cent from 2022. Likewise, 72 States submitted reports to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, up from 62 reports in 2022.

The United Nations Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation (UNSCAR) funded eight projects aimed at promoting and supporting the implementation of multilateral conventional arms and transparency instruments. As the administrator of the Trust Facility, the Office for Disarmament Affairs provided substantive input for those projects, ensuring their alignment with strategic thematic priorities established by the programme's strategic planning group. In 2023, the Office selected and launched 10 projects from the 50 responses it received to the 2022 annual call for proposals.



Izumi Nakamitsu, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, delivers opening remarks in the ministerial-level meeting on the Caribbean Firearms Roadmap in Saint Lucia on 15 November.

Arms Trade Treaty

The [Arms Trade Treaty](#)^[1] was created to establish common standards for international trade in conventional arms and to eradicate the illicit trade in conventional weapons. At the end of 2023, its total number of States parties stood at 113, with 29 signatory States that had not yet ratified the Treaty.

Ninth Conference of States Parties

The ninth Conference of States Parties took place from 21 to 25 August, presided by Seong-mee Yoon (Republic of Korea). The Conference was attended by 89 States parties, 18 signatory States and four States not party to the Treaty. In addition, nine international and regional organizations and 43 civil society organizations participated as observers (for the list of participants, see [ATT/CSPg/2023/SEC/772/Conf.PartList.Rev1](#)). In preparation, participants held two series of meetings of the Treaty's three working groups,^[2] and two informal preparatory meetings on 17 February and 12 May.

The High Representative for Disarmament Affairs delivered a [video statement](#) during the opening session of the Conference, underlining that the Treaty offered important opportunities to consider humanitarian and human rights perspectives. She welcomed the priority topic chosen by the presidency, "Role of industry in responsible transfers of conventional arms", noting that by adopting robust procedures, industry entities can make the transfer chain less vulnerable to diversion.

The Conference began with a thematic discussion on the priority theme chosen by the presidency ([ATT/CSPg/2023/PRES/766/Conf.WP.Ind](#)). Two of the panellists, the Republic of Korea and Romania, outlined their respective national administrative policies for engaging with representatives of industry. One of the speakers presented the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights ([A/HRC/17/31](#), annex), endorsed by the Human Rights Council in its resolution 17/4 of 2011, and stressed that the tool could be used to further industry's role in upholding human rights. She further underlined that under the Guiding Principles, Governments could use a wide variety of tools to ensure respect for human rights. In a working paper submitted to the Conference, Austria, Ireland and Mexico stressed the complementarity between the Arms Trade Treaty and the Guiding Principles ([ATT/CSPg/2023/AUT-IRL-MEX/774/Conf.WP](#)). In its final report, the Conference welcomed the Guiding Principles, encouraging States parties to continue discussions on how the Guiding Principles, human rights and international humanitarian law instruments apply in the context of the Arms Trade Treaty ([ATT/CSPg/2023/SEC/773/Conf.FinRep.Rev2](#)).

During the week, the Diversion Information Exchange Forum, established by the sixth Conference of States Parties ([ATT/CSP6/2020/SEC/635/Conf.FinRep.Rev1](#)), met and

provided an opportunity for States parties and signatory States to exchange information on concrete cases of detected or suspected diversion and to share concrete, operational, diversion-related information as contemplated in articles 11 and 15 of the Treaty. The Chair of the Exchange Forum, France, briefed the Conference and welcomed the presentations made by four States. The Conference encouraged all States parties and signatory States to present at forthcoming meetings of the Exchange Forum cases of diversion, which the President of the tenth Conference of States Parties would be expected to organize in accordance with the body's terms of reference ([ATT/CSP6.DIEF/2020/CHAIR/632/Conf.DIEFToRs](#)).

The Conference emphasized the importance of transparency and reporting and expressed its concerns about the low rate of compliance with reporting obligations. In keeping with a decision from the seventh Conference, States parties have the option to ask for Arms Trade Treaty reports to be submitted also to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. The aim is to reduce reporting fatigue and bolster reporting under the Register. In 2023, the Arms Trade Treaty Secretariat transmitted 31 reports to the Office for Disarmament Affairs through this sharing agreement.

In addition, the Conference considered the reports of the Treaty's working groups on effective treaty implementation, treaty universalization, and transparency and reporting, as well as various documents submitted by the Management Committee.^[3] However, due to financial difficulties and at the recommendation of the Management Committee, the Conference decided to hold fewer meetings in 2024 on a trial basis for one year. Specifically, instead of holding two in-person sessions for the working groups as they had done in previous years, the States parties opted to hold just one session over four days. Likewise, they chose to convene only one in-person preparatory meeting over two days for the tenth Conference of States Parties, diverging from their past practice of having two such meetings.

The Conference decided to hold the tenth Conference of States Parties in Geneva from 19 to 23 August. It elected Razvan Rusu (Romania) as President, and Australia, Japan, Namibia and Paraguay as Vice-Presidents. Furthermore, the Conference decided that the informal preparatory meetings and the meetings of the working groups would also be held in Geneva. The specific dates for those meetings remained undecided, to be confirmed by the President of the tenth Conference of States Parties at a later date.

Small arms and light weapons

Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons

In his policy brief [A New Agenda for Peace](#), launched in July, the Secretary-General recognized that small arms and light weapons and their ammunition were the leading cause of violent deaths in conflict and non-conflict settings alike. Their devastating impact includes enabling

criminal acts, human rights abuses and gender-based violence, hindering conflict prevention and peacebuilding, and stunting sustainable development. Given the human cost of such weapons, the [Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects](#) remains a critical framework under which States can cooperatively tackle their illicit proliferation, diversion, trafficking and misuse.

Throughout the year, Member States focused on enhancing the implementation of the Programme of Action. Notably, the General Assembly, in its annual resolution on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons ([78/46](#)), encouraged civil society, industry and relevant organizations to strengthen their cooperation and work with States in that regard.

Furthermore, Member States accelerated their preparations for the fourth Review Conference on the Programme of Action and its International Tracing Instrument, to be held from 18 to 28 June 2024. In late 2023, States endorsed Maritza Chan Valverde (Costa Rica) as President-designate of the Review Conference.

Meanwhile, the Office for Disarmament Affairs continued to fulfil its mandates on a range of issues, such as developing a new fellowship training programme on small arms and light weapons. Additionally, the Office worked on several proposals for enhancing the implementation of the Programme of Action, such as a structured procedure for processing requests for assistance, as well as options for a technical expert group to address new developments in small arms and light weapons manufacturing, technology and design. The Office planned to share its proposals with States for consideration at the fourth Review Conference.

Security Council

The Security Council recognized the negative impact of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition in various country contexts on its agenda, integrating weapons-related language into its resolutions on the Abyei area, Afghanistan, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti, Libya, Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen.

In December, the Security Council, presided over by Ecuador, held an [open debate](#) on the thematic agenda item “small arms”, in view of the release of the Secretary-General’s eighth report on the topic ([S/2023/823](#)). Ecuador titled the meeting “Addressing the threat posed by diversion, illicit trafficking and misuse of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition to peace and security” and requested a [briefing](#) from the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs. The other briefers were Cécile Aptel, Deputy Director of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, and Folade Mutota, Executive Director of the Women’s Institute for Alternative Development in Trinidad and Tobago. In the ensuing discussion, more than 60 speakers took the floor, recognizing the cross-cutting and

multifaceted challenge posed by small arms and light weapons and their ammunition, as well as the need for collaborative, comprehensive and gender-responsive approaches to address that serious threat to international peace and security.

The Security Council continued to recognize the nexus between small arms and light weapons, organized crime, terrorism and armed violence, holding an [open debate](#) in December on the theme “Threats to international peace and security: transnational organized crime, growing challenges and new threats”. By a presidential statement ([S/PRST/2023/6](#)), the Council expressed serious concern over the trafficking of small arms and light weapons to organized criminal groups and terrorists that threatened peace and security, urging States to strengthen judicial, law enforcement, border control and investigation capacities. The Security Council also emphasized the importance of national, regional and international measures to prevent criminal and terrorist groups from acquiring weapons through diversion and illicit supply, stressing the value of international cooperation in that regard.

Report of the Secretary-General

In November, the Secretary-General published his eighth report to the Security Council on small arms and light weapons ([S/2023/823](#)),^[4] in which he lamented the deteriorating security environment, the escalation of armed conflicts and the related surge in civilian casualties, as well as the impact of small arms and light weapons on peace, security and sustainable development. In the report, the Secretary-General underscored efforts undertaken over the past two years at the global, regional, subregional and national levels in support of small arms and light weapons control.

Referencing *A New Agenda for Peace*, the Secretary-General outlined recommendations for advancing comprehensive approaches, such as developing and strengthening national and regional instruments and action plans, setting voluntary targets, and integrating small arms and light weapons control into initiatives for national development, prevention and peacebuilding. Encouraging the Security Council to mainstream the issue of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition across its work, the Secretary-General outlined several relevant thematic areas, including the protection of civilians; human rights; women, peace and security; children and armed conflict; and transnational organized crime and terrorism. He also welcomed the increasing integration of weapons and ammunition management into the Security Council's country-specific resolutions and the work and mandates of its peace operations. Welcoming Security Council resolution [2616 \(2021\)](#) on illicit arms trafficking and diversion in violation of Council-mandated arms embargoes, the Secretary-General provided specific recommendations to improve the implementation and enforcement of those embargoes. Additionally, he addressed the challenges and opportunities of new and evolving technologies related to small arms and light weapons control.

Peace operations

The Security Council continued to integrate considerations related to weapons and ammunition into the work and mandates of peace operations, including in Afghanistan, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, South Sudan and the bordering Abyei area, and Yemen. In December, the Council renewed the mandate of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) through resolution [2717 \(2023\)](#), urging the Mission to work with the Office of the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes to seek political solutions to stop the cross-border flows of armed combatants, arms and natural resources, by aligning strategies, sharing information and coordinating their respective reporting. It further mandated the Mission to provide enhanced support in strengthening the capacities of the Congolese security forces, including on weapons and ammunitions management, countering improvised explosive devices and explosive ordnance disposal, as well as on basic investigation and forensics exploitation related to improvised explosive devices. The Security Council further requested the Mission to monitor the implementation of the arms embargo, in particular to observe and report on flows of arms or related materiel across the eastern border of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and to seize, collect, record and dispose of arms or related materiel brought into the Democratic Republic of the Congo in violation of the arms embargo.

In November, the Council, in its resolution [2709 \(2023\)](#), extended the mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), including its support on weapons and ammunition management. It tasked the Mission to monitor the implementation of the arms embargo, including by inspecting all arms and related materiel regardless of location. The Council further called on the national authorities and the authorities of neighbouring countries to cooperate at the regional level to investigate and combat transnational criminal networks and armed groups involved in arms trafficking and the illegal exploitation of natural resources.

On the situation in Libya, the Security Council, in its resolution [2702 \(2023\)](#), expressed concern at the threat posed by the diversion and proliferation of arms and ammunition in Libya and other countries in the region. Renewing the mandate of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya, it called on key Libyan institutions, with support from the United Nations, to take steps to secure and effectively manage stockpiles, clear explosive ordnance and explosive remnants of war from hazardous areas and protect civilians from the risks of unplanned explosions at munition sites.

In June, the Security Council, in its resolution [2687 \(2023\)](#), renewed the authorization of the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia, calling on the Government of Somalia to focus on implementing its weapons and ammunition management commitments at the federal and state levels. By the resolution, the Council requested the United Nations Assistance Mission in

Somalia and the United Nations Support Office in Somalia to support their host country in developing its capacity in logistics and warehouse operations, including distribution of weapons and ammunition to and from the front lines and weapons and ammunition management. The Security Council also requested the Secretary-General to continue United Nations support to Somalia in countering the threat of improvised explosive devices.

The Security Council addressed weapons and ammunition issues in the context of Haiti in several resolutions. In July, through the adoption of resolution [2692 \(2023\)](#), it renewed the mandate of the United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti to support Haitian authorities in combating illicit trafficking and diversion of arms and related materiel. The Council requested the Secretary-General to report to it on options that the United Nations could provide to enhance the security situation, including through support for combating illicit trafficking and diversion of arms and related materiel. It further requested the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime to provide updates every three months on sources and routes of illicit arms and on relevant United Nations activities and recommendations. By the same resolution, the Security Council welcomed the signing by Haiti of the National Action Plan to implement the Roadmap for Implementing the Caribbean Priority Actions on the Illicit Proliferation of Firearms and Ammunition across the Caribbean in a Sustainable Manner by 2030 ([Caribbean Firearms Roadmap](#)), an effort designed to help address the proliferation of illicit weapons and ammunition. The Council also called upon the Government to swiftly implement the National Action Plan. Recognizing the strong correlation between the illicit trafficking of arms and ammunition in Haiti and the expansion of territorial control by gangs and the extreme levels of armed violence, the Council urged Member States to prohibit the supply, sale or transfer of small arms, light weapons and ammunition to non-State actors engaged in gang violence, criminal activities or human rights abuses in Haiti, as well as take all appropriate steps to prevent their diversion and illicit trafficking.

In October, the Security Council adopted resolution [2699 \(2023\)](#), authorizing the deployment of the Multinational Security Support mission in Haiti, headed by Kenya in close cooperation and coordination with the Government of Haiti. Recognizing the importance and urgency of curbing the illicit trafficking of arms and ammunition and creating a safe operating environment for international security support, the Council requested the mission to cooperate with the United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti and other relevant United Nations entities to support the efforts of the Haitian National Police to combat the illicit trafficking and diversion of arms and related materiel and to enhance management and control of borders and ports.

Later, by its resolution [2700 \(2023\)](#), the Council called on the Multinational Security Support mission to implement management processes and oversight mechanisms for its own weapons and ammunition, and to report to the Panel of Experts of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution [2653 \(2022\)](#) any diversion of weapons and

ammunition. The Security Council further called upon the mission to cooperate with the Government of Haiti to reinforce their weapons and ammunition management.

Arms embargoes

To support reviews of arms embargoes, assessing the progress towards benchmarks related to weapons and ammunition management remained a focus under various sanctions regimes. In 2023, assessments of progress achieved on benchmarks were conducted in the context of the Central African Republic ([S/2023/356](#)), Somalia ([S/2023/676](#)) and South Sudan ([S/2023/300](#)). The sanctions regime on Haiti also introduced weapons- and ammunition-related benchmarks to measure trends in illicit trafficking and diversion of arms. In October, the Security Council asked the Secretary-General, in resolution [2700 \(2023\)](#), to conduct a benchmark assessment by October 2024, including progress achieved towards a weapons- and ammunition-related benchmark measured by a decrease in the number of incidents of illicit trafficking and diversion of arms, including by increasing the number and volume of arms seizures. In the context of the arms embargo on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, by resolution [2688 \(2023\)](#), the Security Council welcomed the report of the Government on its efforts to ensure safe and effective weapons and ammunition management, pursuant to resolution [2667 \(2022\)](#). The Council called for continued efforts by the Government in that area and encouraged the United Nations and international partners to increase their support to the Government.

As in the past, such assessments helped the Security Council to evaluate whether improvements in the national capacities of States to exert effective control over national arms and ammunition stockpiles could merit lifting or easing certain arms embargoes. In 2023, the Council continued its practice of selectively easing and partially lifting arms embargoes, including in the Central African Republic (resolution [2693 \(2023\)](#)), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (resolution [2688 \(2023\)](#)) and South Sudan (resolution [2683 \(2023\)](#)). The Security Council lifted the arms embargo on Somalia by adopting resolution [2714 \(2023\)](#), recognizing the progress made against the weapons and ammunition management benchmarks. In doing so, it called on Somalia to implement the national weapons and ammunition management strategy, promote further professionalization, training and capacity-building for all Somali security and police institutions, and take all measures necessary to prevent the diversion of weapons, ammunition and military equipment. Furthermore, the Council requested the Mine Action Service of the United Nations (UNMAS) and the international community to each provide Somalia with support related to weapons and ammunition management.

In October, the Security Council adopted resolution [2699 \(2023\)](#), expanding the scope of the targeted arms embargo on Haiti established in 2022 to a territorial arms embargo. The Council later reaffirmed that decision in its resolution [2700 \(2023\)](#).

Effective weapons and ammunition management in a changing disarmament, demobilization and reintegration context

Throughout 2023, the Department of Peace Operations and the Office for Disarmament Affairs continued to implement the joint project “Effective weapons and ammunition management in a changing disarmament, demobilization and reintegration context”, which serves as a critical bridge between arms control, peacekeeping, conflict prevention and peacebuilding. Their aim was to support disarmament, demobilization and reintegration practitioners in designing and implementing tailored weapons and ammunition management activities in line with international arms control standards and guidelines.

The implementing partners maintained their efforts to facilitate the use by peacekeeping operations and special political missions (as well as in non-mission settings) of guidance developed under the joint project. In 2023, for example, they published and disseminated the Arabic, French and Spanish translations of the [standard operating procedure](#) for weapons and ammunition management in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration contexts. The [Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards](#) modules on disarmament (4.10) and transitional weapons and ammunition management (4.11) were also translated into Arabic, French and Spanish, with their publication scheduled for the first quarter of 2024.

In 2023, the Department of Peace Operations and the Office for Disarmament Affairs continued to raise awareness and help to operationalize the robust policy and guidance tools developed through the joint project. They also focused on strengthening relationships with national authorities, United Nations entities, regional organizations and civil society organizations to promote the integration of weapons and ammunition management policies into disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes.

The partners collaborated with the United Nations Institute for Training and Research, the Folke Bernadotte Academy and the Ammunition Management Advisory Team to successfully organize the annual training course “Effective weapons and ammunition management in a changing disarmament, demobilization and reintegration context”, held in October. Conducted at the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre, in Accra, the course brought together disarmament, demobilization and reintegration practitioners, as well as experts in weapons and ammunition management from various peacekeeping operations, special political missions, international and regional organizations and non-governmental organizations. Those participants acquired the knowledge and skills essential to plan and implement safe, secure and effective disarmament operations and transitional weapons and ammunition management initiatives in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration settings.

Meanwhile, a joint technical assistance mechanism established under the project continued to provide weapons and ammunition management support relevant to various disarmament, demobilization and reintegration settings. Through that process, the implementing partners successfully engaged with stakeholders to integrate weapons and ammunition management provisions into relevant strategies, such as the National Disengagement, Disassociation, Reintegration and Reconciliation Strategy, in Chad. Additionally, in December, the process led to the finalization of a study on "Weapons and ammunition dynamics in the context of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration in Somalia". Developed in close collaboration with Somalia, the study contains recommendations for national authorities and the United Nations to guide the development and implementation of transitional weapons and ammunition management initiatives as part of community violence reduction. The authors also considered key challenges and ground realities in the context of the national defector rehabilitation programme.

In addition, the National Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Committee of Cameroon benefited from the joint project's support in developing the country's first manual of procedures on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, as well as in engaging with United Nations entities on issues related to small arms and light weapons in the Great Lakes region. That assistance included contributions to several activities. In March and April, the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Section of the Office of Rule of Law and Security Institutions, which is part of the Department of Peace Operations, conducted a joint assessment mission with the Central and Southern Africa Division of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, and Folke Bernadotte Academy. In October, the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Section took part in the "Regional roundtable dialogue to strengthen national institutions in the implementation of weapons and ammunition management (WAM) in the context of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR)", with assistance provided through the joint project. Organized by the Regional Centre on Small Arms and Light Weapons in partnership with the Bonn International Centre for Conflict Studies, the event brought together member States of the Regional Centre (Burundi, the Central African Republic, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, the Sudan and Uganda) to identify key challenges and gaps in existing national frameworks for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and for weapons and ammunition management, as well as to explore the possibility of developing a regional action plan. In July, the Department of Peace Operations and the Office for Disarmament Affairs contributed through the joint project to the Secretary-General's fourth assessment on weapons and ammunition management and arms embargo measures in relation to Somalia ([S/2023/676](#)). The assessment included an update for the Security Council on progress against the indicators set out in its resolution [2662 \(2022\)](#), to help to guide the body in reviewing the restrictions.

Modular Small-arms-control Implementation Compendium

The [Modular Small-arms-control Implementation Compendium \(MOSAIC\)](#) consists of a series of modules that offer practical guidance on small-arms-control measures. Governments and civil society organizations have made wide use of the publicly available modules, which together provide guidance on managing and controlling small arms throughout their life cycle. Developing and reviewing the modules are the responsibilities of technical experts from around the world, including individuals from civil society, industry and international organizations who form a dedicated expert reference group. MOSAIC helps to achieve the objectives of key global agreements aimed at preventing the illicit trade, destabilizing accumulation and misuse of small arms and light weapons. Moreover, implementing the MOSAIC guidance can support efforts to advance the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The General Assembly, in its resolution [78/46](#) of 4 December on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, again noted the role of web-based tools developed by the Secretariat, including MOSAIC. The Assembly also noted the utility of those tools in assessing progress made in implementing the Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons.

In 2023, two additional MOSAIC modules were adopted by the Coordinating Action on Small Arms mechanism, covering the following topics: small arms and light weapons control in the context of gun-free zones; and criminal justice responses to the illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

MOSAIC modules continued to support training activities, particularly those of the regional centres of the Office for Disarmament Affairs.

United Nations Coordinating Action on Small Arms

The United Nations Coordinating Action on Small Arms (CASA) is a mechanism established in 1998 to foster a coherent and cohesive approach within the United Nations system to small-arms policy and programming. In recent years, CASA had accommodated a growing number of relevant policy issues, such as the arms trade, armed violence and sustainable development, through-life management of conventional ammunition, and impacts on human rights. Twenty-four United Nations partners^[5] jointly address those and other issues from a wide variety of perspectives, including economic and social development, disarmament, organized crime, terrorism, conflict prevention, peacekeeping, human rights and international humanitarian law, safety of human settlements, public health, the environment, gender and children.

In its three working-level meetings of 2023, CASA collaborated with other contributors in formulating the Secretary-General's report to the Security Council on the issue of small arms, as well as in implementing Executive Committee decision 2023/46. That decision, adopted on 3 November, was expected to bolster ongoing CASA efforts to strengthen research in the field of small-arms and export control; data collection related to target 16.4 of the Sustainable Development Goals on reducing illicit arms flows; regional cooperation, including on implementing regional road maps; and the integration of small-arms control into national development frameworks. Notably, CASA also convened a special dedicated meeting on its possible contribution to the development of the Secretary-General's policy brief *A New Agenda for Peace*. In that regard, the perspectives of its partners were reflected in the policy brief, particularly Action 7 (Reduce the human cost of weapons).

Furthermore, CASA continued to function as a forum to adopt draft MOSAIC modules at the working level and to discuss and exchange information on the following:

- Implementation of the Global Framework for Through-life Conventional Ammunition Management, the United Nations SaferGuard programme and IATG;
- Updates on the Working Group on Firearms and the illicit arms flows questionnaire;
- Implementation of the "Effective weapons and ammunition management in a changing disarmament, demobilization and reintegration context" initiative;
- Relevant developments in the Human Rights Council, including around the impact of arms transfers on human rights;
- Regional activities aimed at countering the possible use of improvised explosive devices or small arms and light weapons by terrorists;
- Operations of United Nations funding mechanisms, such as the Saving Lives Entity trust fund (SALIENT) and UNSCAR.

Firearms Protocol and related intergovernmental processes

The General Assembly adopted the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (Firearms Protocol) on 31 May 2001 to promote, facilitate and strengthen cooperation among [States parties](#) so as to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, their parts and components and ammunition.

In 2023, China acceded to the Firearms Protocol, bringing the number of parties to 123.

Working Group on Firearms

On 3 and 4 May, the open-ended intergovernmental Working Group on Firearms held its tenth meeting in a hybrid format in Vienna. The Working Group, which meets annually, was established by the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, as a standing mechanism of the Conference.

The tenth meeting addressed the following topics: strengthening international and inter-agency cooperation and coordination mechanisms in accordance with the Firearms Protocol and the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime; and implementation of article 3 (Use of terms) and article 4 (Scope of application) of the Firearms Protocol.

Building on the provisions of the Firearms Protocol, the Working Group adopted various recommendations, including the following:

- Consider engaging with the private sector to discuss further improvements in firearms marking techniques with the aim of addressing and preventing the obliteration, removal or alteration of original markings, and to discuss methods for identifying firearms on which the markings have been erased;
- Evaluate the possibility of establishing national coordination mechanisms comprising government officials and all other relevant stakeholders, as well as national firearms focal points or other bodies to trace firearms;
- Post liaison officers in countries located along firearms trafficking routes in order to establish communication channels with the relevant authorities of those countries;
- Consider developing operating procedures and guidelines for the recovery of firearms that may have been illicitly manufactured or trafficked;
- Use the definitions provided in the Firearms Protocol to develop technical specifications that define when a weapon or any other object may be readily converted;
- Assess the potential of developing voluntary technical guidelines for the implementation of the Protocol in the light of technological developments related to, inter alia, the illicit manufacturing of firearms from semi-finished parts and components;
- Consider regulating devices, intended to be mounted on firearms, that make it possible to switch the firing mode of firearms from semi-automatic to automatic.

Furthermore, a representative of the secretariat of the Mechanism for the Review of the Implementation of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols thereto delivered a presentation on the latest status of the review process, providing updated information.

Saving Lives Entity: an innovative, comprehensive approach to sustainable security and development

Under their [SALIENT](#) joint initiative, the Office for Disarmament Affairs and UNDP work on the principle that small-arms control and armed violence reduction must be nationally led, people-centred, and both anticipatory and responsive. In 2023, SALIENT supported comprehensive and sustainable responses and completed the implementation of development-oriented projects in three pilot countries: Cameroon, Jamaica and South Sudan. Its programming in those countries involved legislative and policy framework support, including on gender mainstreaming, capacity-building for law enforcement and sensitization. It also incorporated educational activities held with communities in coordination with civil society actors and journalists, as well as youth, with a particular focus on the attitudes and perceptions of participants towards violence, guns and masculinity.

The proliferation of weapons fuels the systematic and widespread occurrence of sexual violence in conflict and violence against women in general, with firearms used in at least 70 per cent of all incidents of conflict-related sexual violence. With a view to mainstreaming gender meaningfully in its efforts, SALIENT had contributed approximately \$940,000 to activities incorporating a significant gender component, from its establishment in 2020 to the end of 2023. In that same period, SALIENT dedicated 31.75 per cent of its total project funding, or \$1.7 million, to activities organized in direct pursuit of gender equality and women's empowerment.

In Cameroon, the Office for Disarmament Affairs and UNDP convened SALIENT workshops with national experts, government actors, civil society representatives, media personnel, religious and customary leaders, and community members to assess local vulnerabilities and strengthen resilience to violence induced by small arms and light weapons. Through the project, the coordinators helped to establish a network of practitioners interested in countering the proliferation of small arms and light weapons while also supporting them in framing the issue within Cameroon's national development agenda. They also supported the training and education of 50 women ex-combatants and convened government representatives for a gender-informed discussion on regulation and control of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition. They raised awareness among 30 law enforcement and criminal justice officers on the linkages of gender and small arms; on the women, peace and security agenda; and on implementation and reporting for Sustainable Development Goal 16 (Peace, justice and strong institutions). In addition, Cameroon was developing its first "gender and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration" strategy through SALIENT support.

Meanwhile, in South Sudan, the SALIENT coordinators worked with local authorities and communities to catalyse voluntary civilian disarmament efforts. They actively encouraged women to participate in those efforts, which were aimed at helping police and security

institutions to build trust with the people they served. By co-organizing 11 senior leadership dialogues on the proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons and voluntary civilian disarmament, they encouraged community stakeholders to see disarmament as a voluntary civilian effort rather than a process imposed by security institutions. Those dialogues reached 454 national and local leaders, including governors and their deputies, mayors, heads of various ministries, representatives of the organized forces, and civil society actors, among others. Additionally, local police officers hosted radio talk shows to raise awareness about the project, delivering information on its activities to over 2 million people across the country. SALIENT also fostered mentorship programmes within the South Sudan National Police Service, establishing 10 new women's networks and operationalizing existing groups to help to improve engagement and trust between the Service and community members, particularly women. Meanwhile, the networks increased connectivity among women officers and provided a critical platform for them to share best practices and to advocate for a gender-responsive police service that addressed the security needs of women and children. Furthermore, targeted community outreach events allowed officers to hear first-hand accounts from women, youth and children who had experienced crimes aggravated by illicit firearms, such as child trafficking, forced marriage, rape and domestic violence. By actively listening to their stories, law enforcement personnel gained a deeper understanding of the harrowing impact of armed violence in South Sudan.

In Jamaica, SALIENT bolstered ongoing efforts to reduce access to firearms and ammunition. That work involved strengthening the interdiction capacity of law enforcement officials at the nation's maritime and seaports, as well as improving the ability of officials to analyse firearms and ammunition evidence at the various ports of entry, exit or transit. The SALIENT coordinators also facilitated Jamaica's first "violence audit", helping the country to utilize data in its development planning and decision-making processes while establishing a baseline for replication as well as a novel research methodology that the Government hoped to adapt for future audits. Furthermore, Jamaica developed new guidelines on the prevention of arms in schools, aiming to bolster its institutional capacity to respond to the threat of armed violence in educational settings. In that connection, SALIENT supported the collaborative development of strategies with teachers to help to prevent conflict and violence in schools, including after-school programmes for youth, as well as discussions on peer-to-peer conflict resolution and mediated exchanges on masculinity and gun culture.

In order to showcase the achievements of the three SALIENT pilot projects, the Office for Disarmament Affairs and UNDP organized in October a high-level side event on the margins of the General Assembly, First Committee. Moderated by the Peacebuilding Support Office, the event was attended by over 100 in-person and online participants, including permanent representatives and resident coordinators from the recipient and donor countries. The event provided an opportunity to garner broader support for the innovative approach of SALIENT, as well as to share the successful outcomes and lessons learned from the completed projects.

In 2023, five new SALIENT beneficiary countries were selected: Ghana, Honduras, Kyrgyzstan, Panama and Papua New Guinea. In-person and virtual exploratory scoping missions took place in the second half of the year to identify country priorities on armed violence reduction and on small arms and light weapons control. The missions incorporated discussions with representatives of civil society and government institutions, as well as with the United Nations country teams in the above-mentioned States. Planned for implementation in 2024, the projects in the new beneficiary countries would ensure a balanced regional distribution of SALIENT activities in its first phase, covering the period 2020–2024.

United Nations Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation

Since its inception a decade ago, [UNSCAR](#) has served as a multi-donor funding mechanism, financing small-scale, theme-focused, quick-impact projects that promote and support the implementation of multilateral conventional arms and transparency instruments.

Administered by the Office for Disarmament Affairs, UNSCAR has successfully mobilized international assistance, particularly for the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons. As at the end of 2023, UNSCAR had benefited a total of 148 countries through 122 projects awarded funding via an annual competitive selection process. The 2022–2023 funding cycle was supported by Australia, Czechia, Finland, Germany and Slovakia.

Key achievements from the UNSCAR projects implemented in the 2021–2022/23 and 2022–2023 cycles included the following:

- Destruction of 1,027 collected and stockpiled small arms and light weapons by national police in Malawi;
- Drafting and adoption by Central African States of a harmonized and integrated reporting template for the Kinshasa Convention and the Programme of Action;
- Assessment and introduction of a record-keeping and tracing software system in eight countries;
- Procurement of three weapons-marking machines for Burundi, the Central African Republic and the Congo;
- Drafting and launch of a regional road map towards a regional mechanism in weapons regulation in Asia;
- Adoption of an African regional plan of action by participating women parliamentarians from 10 African countries;
- Adoption of a revised gender action plan by the Regional Centre on Small Arms and Light Weapons;

- Provision of support for four Central American countries in implementing Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) on women, peace and security;
- Organization of capacity-building and public awareness activities in six border communities of Sierra Leone, in cooperation with tribal and religious leaders, representatives of women-led organizations, and law enforcement officials from Sierra Leone and Liberia;
- Publication of a study on the Arms Trade Treaty and conventional explosive weapons;
- Holding of a campaign aimed at encouraging participation in the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms by member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN);
- Support for the ongoing operations of a global civil society network addressing small-arms issues.

In response to its 2022–2023 call for proposals, UNSCAR received 50 applications, of which 10 were selected and launched in 2023. In addition to addressing national needs indicated in the Programme of Action, UNSCAR funding proposals must be designed to promote the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (i.e. Goals 5 and 16 and related national development frameworks); comply with the tools of MOSAIC and IATG; align with Action 7 of the New Agenda for Peace (Reduce the human cost of weapons); and support gender-responsive approaches in line with the women, peace and security agenda.

In accordance with the guiding principle of national ownership, UNSCAR remained committed to prioritizing partnership with civil society organizations, which are playing critical roles as the driving force of arms control issues in global and regional multilateral negotiations. In November, the UNSCAR strategic planning group agreed to support the new [Global Framework for Through-life Conventional Ammunition Management](#) and the development of a structured procedure for international assistance in the implementation of the Programme of Action when they are operationalized.

Meanwhile, the administrators of UNSCAR continued to exchange information with those of the Arms Trade Treaty Voluntary Trust Fund throughout 2023. They also maintained efforts to ensure complementarities between activities of UNSCAR and those funded through SALIENT, which supports multifaceted, development-integrated and country-specific projects.

Ammunition

Global Framework for Through-life Conventional Ammunition Management

In June, the Open-ended Working Group on Conventional Ammunition, established pursuant to General Assembly resolution [76/233](#), concluded the development of a set of political

commitments as a new global framework that will address existing gaps in through-life ammunition management. Following two substantive sessions in 2022, the Group held its third substantive session from 13 to 17 February 2023 and its fourth substantive session from 5 to 9 June 2023 at United Nations Headquarters, in New York. Those meetings were complemented by a series of intersessional informal consultations. During the deliberations, Member States expressed grave concern over the diversion and unplanned explosion of conventional ammunition at ammunition sites, recognizing the significant threat that such incidents posed to peace, security, stability and sustainable development at the national, subregional, regional and global levels.

On 9 June, the Open-ended Working Group adopted its final report without a vote, recommending that the General Assembly adopt, at its seventy-eighth session, the Global Framework for Through-life Conventional Ammunition Management ([A/78/111](#), annex). In line with the recommendation, the Assembly, in December through resolution [78/47](#), adopted the Global Framework, welcomed the final report of the Open-ended Working Group and called upon all States to implement the Global Framework.

The Global Framework is comprehensive in scope, covering all types of conventional ammunition “from small-calibre ammunition to the largest conventional ammunition” and adopting a through-life management approach to ammunition safety and security. It provides a means to comprehensively address the risks of diversion and unplanned explosion associated with conventional ammunition at every stage of its life cycle—from the point of manufacture, through pre-transfer, transfer, relocation and transport, stockpiling and recovery, to its eventual use or disposal.

Member States committed to 15 objectives and identified 85 related measures covering a range of aspects to promote the safety, security and sustainability of through-life conventional ammunition management. The provisions include a number of important security and safety measures at the technical level to prevent and mitigate the diversion of ammunition and unplanned explosions at munition sites. Its objectives also include strengthening both gender mainstreaming and the full, equal, meaningful and effective participation of women, as well as encouraging multi-stakeholder cooperation with relevant actors, including non-governmental organizations and civil society, academia, research institutions and industry.

Recognizing the central role of international cooperation and assistance, States committed to cooperating and coordinating with each other and to establishing and strengthening partnerships, including with international, regional and subregional organizations, as well as with relevant non-governmental organizations, academia, research institutions and the private sector, including industry.

The Global Framework contains a number of mandates for the Secretariat, particularly in relation to international cooperation and assistance. They include the establishment, under the United Nations SaferGuard programme, of an efficient and agile global mechanism for requesting, offering and receiving assistance in ammunition management; the maintenance of a roster of ammunition management experts through the dedicated validation process; the continued review and further development of IATG; the collection of information on subregional, regional and global initiatives; and the establishment of a new standing fellowship training programme on through-life conventional ammunition management.

To ensure effective implementation, the Global Framework lays out a dedicated follow-up and review process. It consists of a preparatory meeting of States in 2025; the voluntary submission of initial national overviews of implementation in 2026, followed later by voluntary national reports and updates; and a meeting of States in 2027 to review the implementation of the Global Framework and to determine the convening of subsequent meetings of States, as well as governmental technical expert meetings.

Activities related to the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines and the United Nations SaferGuard programme

The Office for Disarmament Affairs maintained its efforts under the United Nations SaferGuard programme to facilitate the use and application of [IATG](#) by States and other stakeholders. In 2023, the Office published Arabic and French translations of version 3 of IATG on its website, along with Arabic, English, French and Spanish translations of the technical online implementation support toolkit. In June, the Office and the Ammunition Management Advisory Team [launched three new tools](#) to support IATG implementation: the IATG [online digital tool](#); the IATG [comprehensive training package](#); and the [United Nations SaferGuard self-assessment tools](#).

The Ammunition Management Advisory Team, which was established as a joint initiative of the Office for Disarmament Affairs and the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining, sustained its work to provide technical advice and assistance on ammunition management in accordance with the IATG standards. The Team supported several States,^[6] as well as various agencies and international, regional and non-governmental organizations,^[7] in assessing and strengthening capacities for safe and secure ammunition stockpiles. Together, those activities contributed to the implementation of Action 22 of the Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament on securing excessive and poorly maintained stockpiles.

In December, the United Nations SaferGuard Technical Review Board and Strategic Coordination Group^[8] held their annual meeting in Geneva, with exchanges on projects taking place in the framework of the SaferGuard programme and on existing tools to support IATG application. Members also reflected on gaps and recommendations for the further

development and application of IATG and discussed next steps in undertaking technical updates in view of version 4, to be released in 2026. Furthermore, the meeting participants discussed how the adoption of the Global Framework could affect efforts to strengthen and expand the SaferGuard programme, and considered various capacities, resources and planned initiatives to support IATG implementation.

In 2023, UNMAS collaborated with the Office for Disarmament Affairs and the Ammunition Management Advisory Team to successfully pilot a train-the-trainer component of the course on weapons and ammunition management in United Nations peace operations. The two-week train-the-trainer programme brought together 11 representatives from the armed forces of nine troop-contributing countries at the Regional Service Centre Entebbe, in Uganda. The activity confirmed that the standardized training materials are appropriately designed to achieve their desired outcome of improving the capacities of United Nations personnel and troop- and police-contributing countries to effectively apply IATG and MOSAIC and to implement relevant United Nations policies.

In November, the Regional Arms Control Verification and Implementation Assistance Centre–Centre for Security Cooperation collaborated with the Office for Disarmament Affairs and the Ammunition Management Advisory Team to hold a regional seminar on “Developments in conventional ammunition management: What is new in policy and practice?”, drawing on substantive contributions from several international, regional and non-governmental organizations.^[9] Experts on conventional ammunition management from South-East Europe came together to reflect on the new Global Framework for Through-life Conventional Ammunition Management, including by discussing specific measures, practical examples and good practices for achieving its 15 objectives.

Improvised explosive devices

The threat posed by improvised explosive devices continued to expand in 2023, with significant impacts on civilians, humanitarian actors and United Nations missions and personnel across diverse regions. In Burkina Faso, Mali, Nigeria, Somalia and elsewhere, the placement of such devices on major roads killed and injured civilians indiscriminately. In the central Sahel and Lake Chad basin regions, non-State armed groups were reported to employ improvised explosive devices as an essential tactic against national security forces, using the devices to cut off access and expand territorial control while also hampering humanitarian responses ([A/78/259](#)). The Secretary-General, in his annual report on children and armed conflict ([A/77/895-S/2023/363](#)) released in June, reported an increase in grave violations against children, with 26 per cent of the killing and maiming of children committed with the use of explosive ordnance, including explosive remnants of war, improvised explosive devices and landmines.

On a global scale, the non-governmental organization Action on Armed Violence [recorded](#) a 30 per cent increase in incidents involving improvised explosive devices in 2023 compared with the previous year, resulting in 2,953 civilian casualties. Afghanistan, in particular, continued to experience significant levels of civilian harm from the use of such devices. Three quarters of the total civilian casualties [recorded](#) by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan between 15 August 2021 and 30 May 2023 were caused by indiscriminate attacks using improvised explosive devices in populated areas, including places of worship, schools and markets. In June, the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team reported to the Security Council that parts of Africa were experiencing greater and more destructive use of the devices ([S/2023/549](#)). In Somalia, the first quarter of 2023 saw the highest number of improvised explosive device incidents compared with any other quarter since 2017 ([S/2023/443](#)). Small Arms Survey, an independent research organization, issued a [report](#) in November in which it highlighted a dramatic expansion in the use of improvised explosive devices in West Africa over the previous decade, with attacks targeting national and international security forces, peacekeepers and civilians.

Security Council

In August, the Security Council adopted a presidential statement ([S/PRST/2023/4](#)) on conflict-induced food insecurity in situations of armed conflict. In the statement, the Council expressed deep concern over the serious humanitarian threat posed to civilians by landmines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices in affected countries, which had serious and lasting social and economic consequences, including to food security for the populations of such countries.

The Council also addressed the threat posed by improvised explosive devices in relation to country-specific situations, including in the context of arms embargoes and peace operations. Extending the arms embargo against the Central African Republic in July through resolution [2693 \(2023\)](#), the Council expressed concern about the increasing use of improvised explosive devices, accounting for a growing number of civilian casualties and disrupting humanitarian access, and requested the Panel of Experts to devote special attention to the analysis of such threats. By resolution [2709 \(2023\)](#), the Security Council recognized the increasing threat resulting from the use of explosive ordnance by armed groups in the Central African Republic and its impact on civilians, including children, as well as peacekeepers, humanitarian personnel and national defence and security forces, and renewed the mandate of MINUSCA to support national authorities in preventing, mitigating and responding to the threat posed by explosive ordnance, including removal and destruction of mines and other explosive devices.

In December, when the Council lifted the arms embargo on Somalia through resolution [2714 \(2023\)](#), it also encouraged the international community to provide training and capacity-building on tracing and analysing improvised explosive devices. On the same day, the Council

renewed the arms embargo against Al-Shabaab, reauthorizing Member States' maritime interdiction of improvised explosive device components through its resolution [2713 \(2023\)](#).

In June, through resolution [2688 \(2023\)](#), the Council renewed the arms embargo imposed on the Democratic Republic of the Congo and extended the mandate of the relevant Group of Experts. In addition, the Council stressed the importance of enhancing weapons and ammunition stockpile management to reduce the risk of diversion to armed groups for improvised explosive devices, called for continued efforts by the Government and encouraged increased support by United Nations and international partners.

The Security Council, by its resolution [2716 \(2023\)](#) on renewing the mandate of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team relating to the Taliban, tasked the Monitoring Team to consult with Member States, international and regional organizations and relevant representatives of the private sector on the threat posed by improvised explosive devices to peace, security and stability in Afghanistan. Furthermore, the Council called on the Monitoring Team to raise awareness of the threat and to develop recommendations for appropriate countermeasures.

When it extended the mandate of MONUSCO in December, the Council, in its resolution [2717 \(2023\)](#), condemned the use of improvised explosive devices and renewed the mandate to provide enhanced support to the national security forces on weapons and ammunition management, countering improvised explosive devices, and explosive ordnance disposal, as well as on basic investigation and forensics exploitation related to improvised explosive devices.

In December, the Security Council renewed the mandate of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force in the Golan through resolution [2718 \(2023\)](#), underscoring the importance of progress in deploying capabilities for countering improvised explosive devices to ensure the safety and security of its personnel.

By resolution [2682 \(2023\)](#), the Council, recognizing the threat of explosive ordnance and its impact on civilians, including children, mandated the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, for the first time, to advise, support and assist the Government of Iraq on issues related to the clearance of landmines, improvised explosive devices and explosive remnants of war.

Amended Protocol II to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons

States also took up the issue of improvised explosive devices at two meetings held in the framework of the Protocol on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Mines, Booby-traps and Other Devices, as amended on 3 May 1996, also known as Amended Protocol II to the

Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (for more information, see the section “Amended Protocol II” below).

Mine Action Service of the United Nations

In 2023, UNMAS engaged with entities across the United Nations system to achieve significant progress in implementing the recommendations of a Security Council-requested independent strategic review on the responses of United Nations peacekeeping operations to explosive ordnance devices ([S/2021/1042](#), annex). During that independent review, which was conducted in 2021, the most affected peacekeeping missions requested better training and equipping of uniformed contingents for the threat environments; improvements to peacekeeping intelligence capacities, including for forensic exploitation; and support for national capacities in countering improvised explosive devices.

To support those objectives, the Office of Military Affairs, with the assistance of UNMAS, revised 10 statements on requirements for units deploying to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), MONUSCO and MINUSCA, refining descriptions of the skills and equipment required to effectively operate within their threat environments. In addition, UNMAS deployed technical experts from its Threat Mitigation Advisory Team to support six predeployment or pre-rotation visits aimed at identifying challenges and enhancing the capabilities of contingents in United Nations personnel and troop- and police-contributing countries. Furthermore, technical experts from UNMAS supported the Office of Military Affairs in studying the capabilities of military police attached to MINUSMA and to the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara, contributing towards a comprehensive understanding of the staffing, training and equipment challenges faced by military units in threat environments with improvised explosive devices. Through the study, the Office of Military Affairs and UNMAS identified several recommendations to improve the operational effectiveness of peacekeepers.

Meanwhile, UNMAS continued through its field programmes to provide in-mission training and mentoring to peacekeeping units. For example, its Mobile Training Team engaged with national and regional training centres to assist in the development of national training curricula aligned with United Nations standards for countering improvised explosive devices. Through those activities, UNMAS improved national predeployment training programmes and helped to build enduring peacekeeping capacities to counter improvised explosive devices.

In addition, the Department of Peace Operations finalized its strategy to counter improvised explosive devices for peacekeeping operations, providing guidance to enable a coherent response for mitigating the growing threats faced by peacekeepers. By focusing on strengthening existing United Nations mechanisms, the strategy provides a framework to guide actions within the various echelons of United Nations peacekeeping forces.

Furthermore, the Office of Military Affairs, with support from UNMAS, continued to review doctrine, standards, manuals and training material relating to countering improvised explosive devices or explosive ordnance disposal, ensuring that lessons learned from missions such as MINUSMA are documented to inform future peacekeeping requirements.

Separately, the Contingent-Owned Equipment Working Group revised the Manual on Policies and Procedures concerning the Reimbursement and Control of Contingent-Owned Equipment of Troop/Police Contributors Participating in Peacekeeping Missions (COE Manual),^[10] with various intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance recommendations, including requirements for military forensic exploitation capacities. Additionally, the Working Group introduced capability-based reimbursement for armoured personnel carriers, and established a subgroup to study necessary improvements for mine-protected vehicles.

Explosive weapons in populated areas

Throughout 2023, the use of explosive weapons in populated areas remained a key concern for States, civil society and the United Nations, as the ongoing practice continued to result in devastating harm to civilians, including through the destruction of civilian infrastructure. Overall, 2023 saw a global surge in incidents involving explosive weapons, with a 22 per cent increase in civilian fatalities compared with the previous year. Explosive violence affected 64 countries, with particularly high civilian casualties in Gaza, Ukraine, the Sudan, Myanmar and the Syrian Arab Republic. According to [Action on Armed Violence](#), an independent research organization, 2023 had seen the highest number of civilians harmed by explosive weapons since its records began in 2010.

The Secretary-General, in his annual report to the Security Council on the protection of civilians in armed conflict ([S/2023/345](#)), noted that in 2022 alone, 2,399 incidents involving the use of explosive weapons were recorded in populated areas in 17 countries and territories affected by conflict, resulting in over 18,000 victims, nearly 94 per cent of whom were civilians.

In his policy brief *A New Agenda for Peace*, the Secretary-General recognized that armed conflicts were increasingly fought in population centres, with devastating and indiscriminate impacts on civilians. He therefore recommended that States “strengthen protection of civilians in populated areas in conflict zones, take combat out of urban areas altogether, including through the implementation of the [Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences Arising from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas](#), adopted on 18 November 2022, and establish mechanisms to mitigate and investigate harm to civilians and ensure accountability of perpetrators”.

The Office for Disarmament Affairs, in its efforts to promote universalization and implementation of the Political Declaration, which constitutes an important collective step

towards enhancing the protection of civilians amid the increasing urbanization of armed conflict, reiterated the urgent need for States to commit to an avoidance principle, in line with the long-held position of the Secretary-General.

Data collection and civilian casualty recording

OHCHR, in its capacity as the custodian agency for Sustainable Development Goal indicator 16.1.2 on conflict-related deaths, continued its efforts to report on incidents resulting in casualties. It collected data disaggregated by sex, age and cause of death. That data have supported a range of purposes, including to support prevention efforts and inform decision-making.

Available data for 2023 revealed over 33,400 conflict-related civilian deaths directly associated with 14 of the world's deadliest armed conflicts. Out of every 10 civilians killed, four were women, and three were children.

Moreover, the use of heavy weapons and explosive munitions sharply increased during the year. Whereas such arms had caused 4 of every 10 civilian deaths in armed conflict in 2022, that proportion rose to 7 of 10 civilian deaths in 2023. Based on the available documented data, the number of civilian deaths increased by 72 per cent between 2022 and 2023.

In May 2023, OHCHR published a report on the impact of casualty recording on the promotion and protection of human rights ([A/HRC/53/48](#)), pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution [50/11](#). In the report, OHCHR described the use of casualty recording by Governments, the United Nations, civil society, humanitarian organizations and others for insight and analysis into critical aspects of armed conflicts and situations of violence. It added that casualty recording had an impact on protection, compliance with international law, early warning, prevention, accountability, access to services and reparations, among other areas. OHCHR found that, through the multiplicity of contexts, actors and approaches, casualty recording could become an integral part of responses to violence and conflict.

The Human Rights Council discussed the report during an [interactive dialogue](#) at its fifty-third session, in July.

Export controls

Wassenaar Arrangement

The twenty-seventh Wassenaar Arrangement Plenary meeting was chaired by Jaideep Mazumdar (India) and held in Vienna on 30 November.

In 2023, the Wassenaar Arrangement continued to enhance global and regional security and stability by advocating for transparency and increased responsibility in the transfer of conventional arms and dual-use goods and technologies, thus preventing destabilizing accumulations. The Wassenaar Arrangement control lists underwent further updates and improvements in line with international security developments, technological advancements and market trends. In addition, the Arrangement promoted effective export controls worldwide through active outreach to non-participating States and relevant international and regional organizations.

In one highlight of the year, the Arrangement held its first enhanced technical briefing since 2018, presenting non-participating States with details about recent changes to the control lists and the implementation of export controls. Meanwhile, the Arrangement's participating States continued to exchange information on transfers of arms and dual-use goods and technologies, as well as the risks associated with potentially destabilizing arms flows to specific geographic regions of concern, including areas of conflict.

Participating States also reaffirmed the important role played by strong export controls and close cooperation in preventing arms diversion and the acquisition of conventional arms and dual-use goods and technologies by terrorists; continued a comprehensive and systematic review of the Wassenaar Arrangement control lists to ensure their ongoing relevance; adopted new controls, including for equipment used in producing certain electronic components; updated existing controls for high-performance electronic equipment; and clarified a number of control list entries, including those on sonar, optical sensors, certain rocket propulsion technologies, encryption and decryption, and technologies enabling the lawful interception of communications.

Furthermore, participating States shared experiences in national export control implementation, including with respect to licensing and enforcement practices; updated several of its public documents regarding the implementation of export controls, including "Elements for controlling transportation of conventional arms between third countries" and "List of advisory questions for industry"; maintained informal technical contacts with the Missile Technology Control Regime and the Nuclear Suppliers Group on control list issues; and reviewed the progress of current membership applications.

On 1 January 2024, Italy will become the Chair of the Wassenaar Arrangement Plenary, Austria will become the Chair of the General Working Group, Canada will become the Chair of the Licensing and Enforcement Officers Meeting, and Mexico will continue to serve as the Chair of the Experts Group. The Wassenaar Arrangement planned to hold its next regular plenary meeting in Vienna in December 2024.

Transparency in conventional arms and military expenditure

United Nations Register of Conventional Arms

Within the framework of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, Member States continued to report their imports and exports of conventional weapons in seven categories: battle tanks; armoured combat vehicles; large-calibre artillery systems; combat aircraft and unmanned combat aerial vehicles; attack helicopters and rotary-wing unmanned combat aerial vehicles; warships; and missiles and missile launchers. States also submitted information on their imports and exports of small arms and light weapons under the “seven plus one” option, as recommended by the 2019 Group of Governmental Experts on the Register. States were also requested to provide background information on national arms transfer policies, as well as additional data on military holdings and procurement through national production.

In 2023, the Office for Disarmament Affairs continued to publish the reports submitted by States in the Register’s dedicated database (www.unroca.org). The platform, entitled “Transparency in the global reported arms trade”, features information dating back to 1992.

In April, the Office for Disarmament Affairs published Occasional Paper No. 39, *The Global Reported Arms Trade: Transparency in Armaments Through the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms – A Guide to Assist National Points of Contact in Submitting Their National Reports*. In the paper, the Office provided updated guidance in support of Member States’ participation in the Register.

In May, the Office partnered with the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research to hold two virtual training workshops on preparing submissions for the Register. Intended for national points of contact and staff from permanent missions of Member States, the [workshops](#) helped to raise awareness about the importance of transparency in armaments while building relevant State reporting capacities. In total, 65 government representatives attended the training workshops.

The Office also held periodic meetings with the informal group of friends of the Register, a new mechanism created upon the recommendation of the 2022 Group of Governmental Experts on the Continuing Operation of the Register of Conventional Arms and its Further Development ([A/77/126](#)). The informal group was established to support the Secretariat and Member States in implementing the other recommendations of the Group of Governmental Experts, as well as in revitalizing the Register.

Annual reporting to the Register

In 2023, 72 States or 37 per cent of Member States submitted reports on their transfers of conventional arms during the previous calendar year. Those reports were added to the relevant report of the Secretary-General, as well as to the aforementioned [electronic database](#). The number of reports submitted in 2023 represented an increase from 2022 (62 reports).

One factor driving the rise in participation was the information-sharing arrangement between the Arms Trade Treaty Secretariat and the Office for Disarmament Affairs, by which States parties to the Treaty can share their annual reports with the Office to be considered a submission to the Register.

Of the 72 reports received in 2023, 10 were “nil” reports, indicating that the reporting Member States had not undertaken any transfers of arms in the Register’s seven categories in 2022. Among the other 62 reports, 30 contained information on exports, and 34 contained information on imports of major conventional arms. In addition, 15 States provided background information on military holdings, five States submitted details on procurement of weapons through national production, and 57 States shared information concerning international transfers of small arms and light weapons.

With regard to participation in the Register, a long-standing pattern of regional variation continued through 2023. The number of reports submitted by African States increased from six in 2022 to seven in 2023, while the figure for Asia and the Pacific decreased from nine to eight. The number of reporting Eastern European States rose from 15 to 17, and the submissions for Latin America and the Caribbean increased from 7 to 14. Meanwhile, Western European and other States submitted 26 reports, which was one more than in 2022.

Trends in global arms transfers

According to SIPRI, which maintains a database on the global arms trade, the volume of major international arms transfers [dropped by 3.3 per cent](#) between the 2014–2018 and 2019–2023 periods. The five largest exporters during the most recent five-year period were the United States, France, the Russian Federation, China and Germany. The five largest importers of major arms were India, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Ukraine and Pakistan.

Objective information on military matters, including transparency of military expenditures

United Nations Report on Military Expenditures

The General Assembly created the United Nations Report on Military Expenditures in 1980 to enhance transparency in military spending. States are requested to provide information on their annual military expenditure using templates developed by the United Nations Secretariat. Member States that do not allocate any funds to military activities may submit a nil report. Those that do maintain armed forces are encouraged to submit either a standardized or simplified form, both of which disaggregate spending by service branches and function. Member States wishing to report only total military expenditure may complete the “single figure” form, which was adopted following a recommendation by the 2017 Group of Governmental Experts.

In March 2023, the Office for Disarmament Affairs, in collaboration with SIPRI, held virtual training workshops for national points of contact and staff from the permanent missions of Member States on preparing submissions for the United Nations Report on Military Expenditures. Designed around an independently developed practical guide to preparing such submissions based on public national budget documents,^[11] the training workshops contributed towards raising awareness about the importance of transparency in military expenditures while also helping to build the reporting capacity of States. In total, 70 government representatives attended the training workshops.

The Office for Disarmament Affairs makes the reports submitted by Member States available through a report of the Secretary-General and via the [online database](#).

Annual reporting on military expenditures

The number of reports submitted by Governments to the United Nations Report on Military Expenditures increased during its 2023 reporting cycle.

During the year, 63 States or 33 per cent of all United Nations Member States submitted information to the instrument, compared with 42 reports received in 2022. Of the reports submitted in 2023, six were nil forms, and six provided a single figure for military expenditure. The majority of reporting States, amounting to 24, used the standardized form. The remaining 27 reports were based on the simplified form.

As in the past, participation rates varied by region. The number of reports submitted by African States increased from zero in 2022 to one in 2023. Participation among Asia-Pacific States increased from 6 submissions in 2022 to 10 in 2023. The number of reports submitted by

Eastern European States in 2023 increased to 18, from 15 reports in 2022. Of the States in Latin America and the Caribbean, 13 provided information in 2023, up from 7 in 2022. Submissions also increased among Western European and other States, from 14 in 2022 to 21 in 2023.

Trends in global military spending

According to data published by SIPRI, global military spending hit an all-time high of [\\$2.443 trillion](#) in 2023, a real-term increase of 6.8 per cent from the previous year. The top military spenders during the year were the United States, China, the Russian Federation, India and Saudi Arabia. Together, those States accounted for 61 per cent of total military expenditure.

Confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms

Military confidence-building measures are planned procedures involving the national defence organizations of States that aim to prevent hostilities, avert escalation, reduce military tension, and ultimately build mutual trust and strong and secure relations between countries. Therefore, military confidence-building measures continue to be recognized as an essential tool for preventing and resolving conflict.

In accordance with the General Assembly's biennial resolution entitled "Information on confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms" ([77/72](#)), the Office for Disarmament Affairs maintained its engagement with interested Member States and regional organizations to develop and advance military confidence-building measures, as well as strengthen understanding of the topic.

The Office continued to update its online repository of military confidence-building measures, which provides a list of the most tested and trusted measures in the areas of communication and coordination, observation and verification, military constraint, training and education, and cooperation and integration.

Furthermore, in the context of [Action 23](#) of the Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament, the Office engaged with regional organizations to equip those entities and their member States with skills and expertise to enhance their understanding and generate momentum around transparency and confidence-building measures within their respective regions.

With funding from the Republic of Korea, a national "champion" for Action 23, the Office organized a two-day capacity-building workshop on military confidence-building measures for the ASEAN region in Bangkok in January. During the workshop, the Office focused on familiarizing participants with the concept of military confidence-building measures. It provided "food for thought" on the region's existing institutional frameworks, as well as specific regional examples, sparking discussions on concrete opportunities to foster regional

dialogue and enhance transparency and confidence-building on military matters. Looking forward, the Office planned to build upon its initial engagement with ASEAN member States to further advance the development and implementation of military confidence-building measures in the region.

Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons

The Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects ([Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons](#)) entered into force in 1983 with the aim of banning or restricting for humanitarian reasons the use of weapons considered to be indiscriminate or to cause unnecessary or unjustifiable suffering. By allowing the negotiation of further protocols, the Convention provides unique flexibility to address new weapon technologies or developments in armed conflict.

In 2023, Singapore [acceded](#) to the Convention, becoming the 127th High Contracting Party, and consented to be bound to Protocols I, III and IV to the Convention. The number of annual compliance report submissions decreased by 5 per cent from the previous year, with a total of 55 reports submitted. Meanwhile, the Convention's office holders and the Office for Disarmament Affairs strengthened their universalization and outreach efforts, organizing several well-attended workshops for non-High Contracting Parties and other events to explore issues related to the Convention.

2023 Meeting of the High Contracting Parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons

The [2023 Meeting of the High Contracting Parties](#) took place in Geneva from 15 to 17 November, with Federico Villegas (Argentina) as Chair. The Meeting drew participants from 90 High Contracting Parties, two signatory States and two States not party to the Convention. Also taking part in its work were two United Nations entities, three international organizations and 17 non-governmental organizations and other entities (for the list of participants, see [CCW/MSP/2023/INF.1](#)). The Meeting concluded with the adoption of a final report ([CCW/MSP/2023/7](#)).

The Meeting of the High Contracting Parties was faced with procedural challenges during the consideration of agenda item 4 "Confirmation of the rules of procedure" ([CCW/MSP/2023/1](#)), owing to objections made by one High Contracting Party regarding the participation of observers. Following protracted informal consultations, the Meeting decided, by consensus, to continue in an informal format without confirming its rules of procedure. It also agreed to negotiate and adopt a final report in order to decide on, among other things, the mandate of the Group of Governmental Experts on Emerging Technologies in the Area of Lethal

Autonomous Weapons Systems. The Meeting then held informal sessions, during which delegations made general statements and exchanged views on several issues related to the implementation of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and its Protocols, as well as on the mandate of the Group of Governmental Experts.

On its final day, the Meeting discussed and adopted its final report by consensus. In the report, the Meeting recommended that the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the elected Chair of the 2024 Meeting of the High Contracting Parties work towards achieving the goal of universality of the Convention and its Protocols; reiterated the call for all High Contracting Parties to submit national reports on compliance in accordance with the decision taken at the sixth Review Conference; urged all High Contracting Parties to honour their financial obligations under the Convention; and also reiterated that the Convention's Implementation Support Unit was an essential element for the effective implementation of the Convention and its operational continuity.

Regarding the mandate of the Group of Governmental Experts, the Meeting decided that the Group would further consider and formulate, by consensus, a set of elements of an instrument, without prejudging its nature, and other possible measures to address emerging technologies in the area of lethal autonomous weapons systems. In that regard, the Group was to take into account the example of existing Protocols within the Convention, proposals presented by High Contracting Parties and other options related to the normative and operational framework on emerging technologies in the area of lethal autonomous weapons systems, build upon the recommendations and conclusions of the Group, and bring in expertise in legal, military and technological aspects. The Meeting also decided that the Group should submit a report to the seventh Review Conference, complete its work as soon as possible (preferably before the end of 2025), and meet for 10 days every year. Furthermore, it agreed that the Chair of the Group would update the annual Meeting of the High Contracting Parties on the Group's work.

The Meeting decided to nominate a representative from the Eastern European States as Chair of the 2024 Meeting of the High Contracting Parties to the Convention.

Group of Governmental Experts on Emerging Technologies in the Area of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems

The [Group of Governmental Experts on Emerging Technologies in the Area of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems](#) met in Geneva for 10 days in 2023 (6–10 March and 15–19 May), in accordance with a decision taken by the 2022 Meeting of the High Contracting Parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons ([CCW/MSP/2022/7](#), para. 37(b)). Flavio Soares Damico (Brazil) chaired the meetings of the Group in 2023.

In accordance with its mandate and agenda ([CCW/GGE.1/2023/1](#)), the Group intensified the consideration of proposals in order to elaborate, by consensus, possible measures to address emerging technologies in the area of lethal autonomous weapons systems. It considered oral and written proposals, including on the topics of meaningful human control over autonomous weapons systems and the use of force; the legal, ethical, humanitarian and security risks posed by autonomous weapons systems; an international legal instrument on lethal autonomous weapons systems; and draft articles relating to autonomous weapons systems on prohibitions and other regulatory measures on the basis of international humanitarian law, among others. Proposals that had been submitted for the [2022 sessions](#) of the Group were also considered.

In accordance with the [indicative timetable](#) proposed by the Chair, the discussions of the Group were structured around the following thematic lines: general statements and presentation of proposals; characterization of lethal autonomous weapons systems (definitions and scope); application of international humanitarian law (possible prohibitions and regulations); human-machine interaction/meaningful human control/human judgment and ethical considerations; responsibility and accountability; legal reviews; risk mitigation and confidence-building measures; and any other subjects raised by delegations.

Although the Group remained divided regarding the need for a legally binding instrument on lethal autonomous weapons systems, it was able to adopt a report ([CCW/GGE.1/2023/2](#)) that contained a basic notion of the so-called two-tiered approach, affirming that weapons that could not be used in compliance with international humanitarian law must not be used and that other regulations were optional. As the Group did not consider its continuing mandate, that matter was taken up by the 2023 Meeting of the High Contracting Parties.

Amended Protocol II

The Protocol on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Mines, Booby-traps and Other Devices, as amended on 3 May 1996, also known as [Amended Protocol II](#) to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, was designed to limit indiscriminate harm from such weapons by requiring all feasible precautions by parties to protect civilians from their use. At the end of 2023, the Protocol had 106 High Contracting Parties.

Group of Experts

On 9 and 10 November, the Amended Protocol II [Group of Experts](#) met in Geneva in preparation for the twenty-fifth Annual Conference of the High Contracting Parties to Amended Protocol II. Building on its work on the matter since 2009, the Group, under the overall responsibility of the Coordinators (France and Peru), held discussions on improvised explosive devices, including a general exchange of views and thematic panel discussions on

new types of such devices, methods of clearance, risk education and other methods to protect civilians, updates on relevant developments in other forums addressing the threat posed by such devices, and national and regional responses.

Throughout the discussions, delegations expressed their concerns over the proliferation and serious threat posed by improvised explosive devices, including their increased usage by non-State actors and criminal organizations. States also highlighted the severe humanitarian implications of the devices, especially in urban and densely populated areas, and their long-term negative impact on security, political stability and socioeconomic development. In that regard, they underscored the importance of continued international and regional cooperation to address the issue of improvised explosive devices.

Invited experts reiterated the importance of multi-stakeholder strategies developed at the regional and international levels, and welcomed the steps taken by States to further international cooperation and knowledge-sharing, including the following: (a) the convening of international seminars and workshops on counter-terrorism and improvised explosive devices; (b) regional partnerships and the provision of specialized training courses for armed forces, law enforcement and other experts on improvised explosive devices; (c) partnerships with civil society and international organizations; and (d) contribution to and participation in international demining programmes. Following the meeting, the Coordinators issued a report on the relevant discussions ([CCW/AP.II/CONF.25/2](#)).

Twenty-fifth Annual Conference

Ib Petersen (Denmark) presided over the twenty-fifth Annual Conference of the High Contracting Parties to Amended Protocol II, convened in Geneva on 14 November. Of the 106 High Contracting Parties to Amended Protocol II, 68 participated in the Conference, along with nine High Contracting Parties to the Convention. Other participants included UNMAS (on behalf of the United Nations Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action), the European Union, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (for the list of participants, see [CCW/AP.II/CONF.25/INF.1](#)).

The proceedings of the Conference were stalled due to discussions on the interpretation of the rules of procedure related to the participation of observers. As no consensus could be found on the confirmation of the rules of procedure, the Conference concluded with the adoption of a procedural report ([CCW/AP.II/CONF.25/5](#)), ensuring the continuity of work under the Protocol in 2024. It decided that the 2024 session of the Group of Experts would continue to be held for a duration of two days and that a representative of the Eastern European Group would be nominated as President-designate of the twenty-sixth Annual Conference of the High Contracting Parties, scheduled for 2024.

Protocol V

[Protocol V](#) on explosive remnants of war was adopted in 2003 to prevent and minimize the humanitarian impact of unexploded ordnance and abandoned explosive weapons, including through provisions on clearing and destroying explosive remnants of war, protecting civilians, recording the use of explosive ordnance, and providing international cooperation and assistance. At the end of 2023, the Protocol had 97 High Contracting Parties.

Informal open consultations

In preparation for the seventeenth Annual Conference of the High Contracting Parties to Protocol V, informal open consultations on the Protocol took place in Geneva on 8 November. The consultations were chaired by the President-designate of the seventeenth Annual Conference, Gordan Markotić (Croatia), while the Coordinator on Clearance of Explosive Remnants of War and Technical Assistance, Hannah Abubakar (Philippines), and the Coordinator on Victim Assistance, Andreas Bilgeri (Austria), moderated thematic discussions on their respective areas of expertise.

The Coordinator on Victim Assistance reaffirmed that explosive remnants of war threatened lives and affected socioeconomic conditions long after hostilities ceased. That evaluation was echoed by the first panel of experts on victim assistance, composed of representatives from the World Health Organization, UNMAS and the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

During the second thematic discussion, on clearance of explosive remnants of war and technical assistance, delegations heard from Norwegian People's Aid and the International Committee of the Red Cross. Those organizations underscored the crucial need for consistent funding to efficiently implement projects in countries affected by explosive remnants of war, noting that new technologies (such as the combined use of drones and artificial intelligence) could improve detection and clearance efforts.

Throughout the meeting, delegations highlighted challenges related to clearing explosive remnants of war, including problems relating to their quantity and the lack of information regarding their location, especially in urban areas, as well as difficulties in the use of clearance equipment on certain types of terrain. Participants underlined the importance of sharing best practices, especially within the framework of Protocol V, to improve clearance procedures. Following the meeting, the President-designate of the seventeenth Annual Conference issued a report on the relevant discussions held during the informal open consultations ([CCW/PV/CONF/2023/2](#)).

Seventeenth Annual Conference

The [seventeenth Annual Conference](#) took place in Geneva on 13 November, presided by Gordan Markotić (Croatia). Of the 97 High Contracting Parties to Protocol V, 63 participated in the Conference, along with nine High Contracting Parties to the Convention and one observer State. Other participants included UNMAS (on behalf of the United Nations Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action), the European Union, the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining and the International Committee of the Red Cross (for the list of participants, see [CCW/P.V/CONF/2023/INF.1](#)).

During the deliberations, many States stressed the relevance of Protocol V, especially in the light of the increasing use of explosive weapons by armed forces and the multiplication of armed conflicts around the world resulting in a large number of explosive remnants of war. However, substantive exchanges were stalled owing to procedural discussions on the participation of observers in the work of the Annual Conference.

Despite protracted procedural discussions, the Conference adopted a final document ([CCW/P.V/CONF/2023/5](#)) and decided to reinstate the Meeting of Experts on Protocol V. Following the Conference, the President submitted a working paper ([CCW/P.V/CONF/2023/WP.5](#)) containing a summary of discussions on issues relating to compliance with provisions of Protocol V that were raised during the meeting, concerning which consensus could not be reached.

Work of the Implementation Support Unit

In 2023, the Implementation Support Unit of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons was fully staffed. Its staffing, effectiveness and functionality continued to depend on sustainable, timely and predictable receipt of funds.

In 2023, the Unit assisted in implementing the decisions of the 2022 Meeting of the High Contracting Parties to the Convention, as well as providing support to office holders and to the Convention's meetings and processes. It briefed office holders on their responsibilities and supported them in carrying out their functions, including preparing for and chairing the intergovernmental meetings. In the area of universalization, the Implementation Support Unit, among other things, accompanied the office holders to several bilateral meetings with representatives of the High Contracting Parties to provide information on the Convention, its Protocols and their relevance to the respective State, national implementation and relevant obligations arising from adherence to the instruments.

As the substantive secretariat of the Convention, the Implementation Support Unit assisted the Chair of the 2023 Group of Governmental Experts on Emerging Technologies in the Area of

Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems in preparing official documents and drafting the final report of the Group. In addition, the Unit provided substantive guidance and organized and supported numerous informal thematic consultations and procedural matters.

Moreover, the Unit coordinated within the United Nations Office at Geneva to contribute to practical planning, effective organization and regular monitoring of the activities related to the Convention. For example, it tracked related developments in the framework of the General Assembly, First Committee, to ensure consistency and continuity with activities under the Convention, particularly in the area of lethal autonomous weapons systems.

The Unit also continued to play an important role in administering the Convention's Sponsorship Programme. It worked closely with the Steering Committee to designate a coordinator, launch a call for applications and select awardees. Furthermore, it engaged with the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining to coordinate with sponsored delegates. In 2023, 23 experts from 19 countries received sponsorships to participate in Convention meetings.

International cooperation and assistance in support of the Convention

The Geneva Branch of the Office for Disarmament Affairs conducted numerous activities under the two-year project pursuant to European Union Council decision [2021/1694](#) supporting the universalization, implementation and strengthening of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. Its work included improving the quality and quantity of national reports, facilitating discussions on underexplored, emerging and cross-cutting issues, organizing regional universalization workshops, and developing and updating educational and outreach materials.

In a workshop on national reporting organized by the Office, for example, 43 participants from 27 High Contracting Parties had the opportunity to identify gaps and challenges in the current compliance and implementation mechanisms of the Convention, fostering better utilization of existing tools and information sources. Drawing from the discussion, the Office published guidelines for reporting on compliance with the Convention and Amended Protocol II, as well as a qualitative and quantitative analysis of trends, commonalities and gaps in more than 130 national annual reports submitted since 2006.

The Geneva Branch also held several webinars to facilitate consideration of underexplored, emerging and cross-cutting issues. An exchange on "meaningful human control" for autonomous weapons systems successfully linked legal aspects to key issues discussed by the Group of Governmental Experts on that issue, including through real-life case studies on human-machine interaction. The webinars also explored directed energy weapons and their

legal implications, as well as risks associated with integrating artificial intelligence into autonomous weapons systems.

The Office held four regional workshops in Addis Ababa, Bangkok, Manila and Port of Spain on the universalization of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and regional concerns related to the weapons systems it covers.

In addition, several [information notes and publications](#) were developed under the project and published online to enhance understanding of the Convention among High Contracting Parties, States not party to the Convention and the general public.

Cluster munitions

The [Convention on Cluster Munitions](#) entered into force in 2010, prohibiting the use, development, production, transfer or stockpiling of cluster munitions under any circumstances. It also created a framework for clearing contaminated areas and destroying stockpiles, as well as providing risk-reduction education in affected communities. In 2023, the Convention welcomed two new States parties, Nigeria and South Sudan, bringing the total number of States parties to 112.^[12]

Eleventh Meeting of States Parties

The [eleventh Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions](#) took place in Geneva from 11 to 14 September, convened pursuant to the decision of the second Review Conference ([CCM/CONF/2021/6](#), para. 84). Abdul Karim Hashim Mustafa (Iraq) presided over the Meeting, in which 69 States parties, five signatory States and 12 observer States and entities participated (for the list of participants, see [CCM/MSP/2023/INF.2/Rev.1](#)). The Meeting concluded with the adoption of a final report ([CCM/MSP/2023/11](#)).

At the [first plenary meeting](#), held on 11 September, Iraq played a short video narrating the country's efforts to fight and recover from the contamination of cluster munitions. Attendees also heard video messages from the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs and the Vice-President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Gilles Carbonnier, as well as statements from Julien Thoeni (Switzerland) and Anna Phommachanthone (Cluster Munition Coalition). In addition, the Meeting welcomed Nigeria's ratification of the Convention and South Sudan's accession. It elected Nicaragua, Sri Lanka, Switzerland and the United Kingdom as Vice-Presidents.

The Meeting underscored the obligation of States parties to never, under any circumstances, use, develop, produce, otherwise acquire, stockpile, retain or transfer cluster munitions and, in accordance with the object and provisions of the Convention, condemned any use of cluster

munitions by any actor. In that connection, the Meeting expressed its grave concern at the significant increase in civilian casualties and the humanitarian impact resulting from the repeated and well-documented use of cluster munitions since the second Review Conference. Its grave concern applied in particular to the use of cluster munitions in Ukraine. The Meeting also welcomed the [progress report](#) on the implementation of the [Lausanne Action Plan \(CCM/MSP/2023/8\)](#), covering the period from 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023.

The Meeting praised Bulgaria and Slovakia for complying with their article 3 obligations and welcomed their declarations of completion. It also congratulated Bosnia and Herzegovina for declaring the completion of all of its obligations under article 4 of the Convention. Furthermore, the Meeting welcomed South Africa's announcement on the completion of its cluster munitions stockpile destruction process on 7 September, taking note that its Department of Defence had yet to officially certify the milestone.

The Meeting assessed a request submitted by Iraq for an extension of its deadline for completing the clearance and destruction of cluster munition remnants in accordance with article 4.1 of the Convention. It agreed to grant an extension of five years, until 1 November 2028 ([CCM/MSP/2023/4](#)). Likewise, the Meeting positively assessed Mauritania's request to delay its deadline for fulfilling its national obligations under the same article, granting an extension until 1 August 2026 ([CCM/MSP/2023/6](#)).

The Meeting expressed its appreciation to the Coordinators on the general status and operation of the Convention, France and Belgium, for their important work in that regard. It also acknowledged their role as focal points of the Convention to provide advice on gender mainstreaming and ensure that matters related to gender and the diverse needs and experiences of people in affected communities were considered in the implementation of the Lausanne Action Plan, in cooperation with the other thematic coordinators.

Reiterating that assistance to victims, their families and communities was a key factor in the implementation of the Convention, the Meeting thanked Chile and Austria, Coordinators on victim assistance, for their ongoing work on an integrated approach in that area.

The Meeting also adopted new reporting formats ([CCM/MSP/2023/7](#)) for future use by States parties.

On its last day, the Meeting confirmed Francisca Elizabeth Méndez Escobar (Mexico) as the President of the twelfth Meeting of States Parties, to be held in Geneva from 10 to 13 September 2024.

Anti-personnel landmines

Anti-personnel mines are delayed-action, victim-activated weapons that kill and maim indiscriminately, many years after the end of the armed conflict. Most of the victims of anti-personnel landmines are civilians. A complete prohibition of this category of weapons took effect with the entry into force of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction ([Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention](#)), on 1 March 1999. The Convention also provides for the following positive obligations for States parties: to destroy existing mine stocks and to clear all mine-contaminated areas within established deadlines; to promote cooperation and assistance for achieving its goals; and to address the needs of survivors, their families and affected communities within the Convention's strong victim-assistance framework. For the achievement of the Convention's goals, its States parties have established an implementation machinery, which meets annually. At the end of 2023, the Convention had 164 States parties.

Pursuant to article 11 of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and the relevant decisions of its fourth Review Conference ([APLC/CONF/2019/5](#), para. 34(i)) and the twentieth Meeting of the States Parties ([APLC/MSP.20/2022/15](#), para. 116), the twenty-first Meeting of the States Parties took place in Geneva in November. The participants built on three days of informal intersessional meetings held in June, as well as work by the Convention's four committees.^[13] The President of the twenty-first Meeting of the States Parties, Thomas Göbel (Germany), had also convened the Convention's [eighth Pledging Conference](#) in Geneva in March, seeking to bolster the financial stability of the Convention's Implementation Support Unit and the implementation of its 2023 workplan, as well as secure funds for the Convention's Sponsorship Programme and the twenty-first Meeting of the States Parties.

Intersessional working programme

The [informal intersessional meetings](#) took place from 19 to 21 June. As per the established practice, the Chairs of the Convention's four committees^[14] and the representative of the gender focal points^[15] presented the committees' activities and preliminary observations. In carrying out their respective mandates, the four committees met regularly throughout the year to review information from States parties on their implementation of commitments contained in the Oslo Action Plan of the fourth Review Conference, in 2019 ([APLC/CONF/2019/5/Add.1](#)). In addition, several States provided updates on their efforts to implement the Convention and the Oslo Action Plan. Those countries included States parties implementing victim-assistance commitments,^[16] as well as States parties in alleged or known violation of the general prohibitions under article 1 of the Convention,^[17] which provided information on their efforts to address those matters.

In addition, the President of the twenty-first Meeting of the States Parties provided information and preliminary observations on the status of implementation of article 4 of the Convention (stockpile destruction), particularly in relation to the two States in non-compliance

with their article 4 obligations.^[18] He also presented updated information on the status of implementation of article 3, in particular on matters related to anti-personnel mines retained for permitted purposes under article 3, and briefed participants on activities on universalization.

The meetings also included exchanges of views on the extension process related to article 5, the requests presented informally by States parties^[19] with article 5 obligations,^[20] preparations for the twenty-first Meeting of the States Parties, and the Convention's financial status.

Several thematic discussions took place during the intersessional meetings, covering the following topics: "The Convention and the threat of improvised anti-personnel mines"; "Victim assistance and the Oslo Action Plan: are we on track in providing mental health and psychosocial support"; and "Finishing strong—preparing for completion^[21] as soon as possible". The meetings also included exchanges on some cross-cutting priorities of the German presidency of the twenty-first Meeting, such as "Green implementation: integrating environmental considerations in the Convention's implementation" and "Gender and the diverse needs of mine-affected communities—lessons learnt and way ahead".

Twenty-first Meeting of the States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention

The [twenty-first Meeting of the States Parties](#) was held in Geneva from 20 to 24 November. Its President, Thomas Göbel (Germany), was supported by eight Vice-Presidents: France, Iraq, Italy, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Switzerland, Thailand, Türkiye and Uganda. The Meeting concluded with the adoption of a final report ([APLC/MSP.21/2023/18](#)).

Pursuant to the established practice, the Meeting commenced with a [high-level opening ceremony](#) that featured a musical performance by the Nürnberg Symphony Orchestra and messages by the Minister of State at the German Federal Foreign Office, Katja Keul; the [High Representative for Disarmament Affairs](#); a representative of Humanity & Inclusion, Emilie Vath, who spoke on behalf of the mine victims and survivors; the Convention's Special Envoy, Prince Mired bin Raad bin Zeid Al Hussein of Jordan; Marc Pecsteen de Buytswerve (Belgium), who spoke on behalf of the Convention's Special Envoy, Princess Astrid of Belgium; the Vice-President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Gilles Carbonnier; the mine action fellow from Sri Lanka, Nimaya Dahanayake, who spoke on behalf of the [International Campaign to Ban Landmines](#); and the President of the [Council of the Foundation of the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining](#), Barbara Haering. A [thematic panel](#) discussion entitled "More effective cooperation between mine-affected and supporting States parties: the individualized approach in context" was also held as part of the opening of the Meeting.

The Meeting reaffirmed the determination of the States parties to put an end to the suffering and casualties caused by anti-personnel mines, including improvised anti-personnel mines, and their commitment to strengthening efforts towards a mine-free world and the full and equal inclusion of survivors and victims. The Meeting also condemned the use of anti-personnel mines anywhere, at any time, and by any actor, including by armed non-State actors.

The Meeting's discussions on the operation and status of the Convention focused primarily on the extension request process related to article 5, including the requests by States parties to extend their respective deadlines for destroying mines in mined areas. Following the established procedure and taking into account the requests submitted under article 5, the Meeting granted the extension requests of Eritrea and Ukraine. The Meeting heard updates from other States parties in the process of fulfilling their article 5 obligations. The Meeting also considered a document entitled "Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention—extension request process" ([APLC/MSP.21/2023/15](#)), prepared by the Committee on Article 5 Implementation; welcomed the recommendations contained therein; and decided to continue exploring how to strengthen the article 5 process in the lead-up to the fifth Review Conference.

Taking note of the updates provided by the States parties in non-compliance with their article 4 obligations, Greece and Ukraine, the Meeting appealed them to intensify efforts for the completion of their stockpile destruction obligations.

The Meeting welcomed the papers, and the recommendations contained therein, on "Anti-personnel mine of an improvised nature and the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention" ([APLC/MSP.21/2023/5](#)) and on "Green implementation: integrating environmental considerations into the implementation of the Convention" ([APLC/MSP.21/2023/16](#)), submitted by the President. It decided to further explore how best to ensure that environmental and climate change considerations were integrated into the Convention's implementation in the lead-up to the fifth Review Conference.

Given that no additional accessions to the Convention had taken place since 2017, the Meeting called upon all States that had not yet done so to accede to or ratify the Convention as soon as possible. It also took note of the activities of the Universalization Coordination Group, established by the President of the twentieth Meeting of the States Parties.

With respect to the operation of the Convention, the Meeting took decisions on the following matters:

- Composition of the Convention's committees
- Timing of the 2024 intersessional meetings

- Holding of the fifth Review Conference of the States Parties in Siem Reap, Cambodia, on the week of 25–29 November 2024, as well as holding the first Preparatory Meeting for the fifth Review Conference in Geneva on 21 June 2024 and the second Preparatory Meeting on 18 September 2024
 - Holding of the twenty-second Meeting of the States Parties in late November and early December 2025
 - Election of Ly Thuch (Cambodia) as the President of the fifth Review Conference, Tomiko Ichikawa (Japan) as the President of the twenty-second Meeting of the States Parties, and Eunice Tembo Luambia (Zambia) as the President of the twenty-third Meeting of the States Parties
 - Estimated costs of the twenty-second Meeting.
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Footnotes

[1] The Arms Trade Treaty entered into force on 24 December 2014.

[2] Working Group on Effective Treaty Implementation; Working Group on Transparency and Reporting; and Working Group on Treaty Universalization.

[3] Arms Trade Treaty, documents [ATT/CSP9.WGETI/2023/CHAIR/767/Conf.Rep](#), [ATT/CSP9.WGTU/2023/CHAIR/769/Conf.Rep](#), [ATT/CSP9.WGTR/2023/CHAIR/768/Conf.Rep](#), [ATT/CSP9.MC/2023/MC/764/Conf.Rep](#) and [ATT/CSP9.MC/2023/MC/765/Conf.Prop](#).

[4] The previous reports were in 2008 ([S/2008/258](#)), 2011 ([S/2011/255](#)), 2013 ([S/2013/503](#)), 2015 ([S/2015/289](#)), 2017 ([S/2017/1025](#)), 2019 ([S/2019/1011](#)) and 2021 ([S/2021/839](#)).

[5] The following United Nations entities participated in 2023: Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate; Department of Economic and Social Affairs; Department of Global Communications; Department of Peace Operations; Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs; International Civil Aviation Organization; Office for Disarmament Affairs; Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs; Office of the Special Adviser on Africa; Office of the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide; Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict; Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR); Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; United Nations Children's Fund; United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women); United Nations Environment Programme; United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat); United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research; UNMAS; Office of Counter-Terrorism; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime; and World Health Organization.

[6] Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Mozambique, Peru, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine.

[7] UNDP Office; UNMAS; United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research; Economic Community of West African States; Regional Arms Control Verification and Implementation Assistance Centre–Centre for Security Cooperation; Regional Centre on Small Arms and Light Weapons; South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons; United States European Command; and Norwegian People's Aid.

[8] Technical Review Board members are national ammunition technical experts from Austria, Bangladesh, Brazil, Canada, China, Germany, India, Peru, Singapore, South Africa, Switzerland and the United States. The Board receives inputs and guidance from the wider Strategic Coordination Group composed of IATG implementing organizations.

[9] United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research; Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe; South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons; Conflict Armament Research; ITF Enhancing Human Security; Mines Advisory Group; and Small Arms Survey.

[10] The Contingent-Owned Equipment Working Group was established in connection with General Assembly resolution [50/222](#) of 11 April 1996. Its purpose is to standardize procedures for reimbursing Member States for equipment used in peacekeeping missions. Every three years the Working Group reviews and updates the COE Manual, providing guidance on reimbursement rates and operational procedures. Comprising representatives of Member States, it operates under the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly and collaborates with the Secretariat to ensure fair compensation and adherence to United Nations standards.

[11] SIPRI, *A Practical Guide to State Participation in the UN Report on Military Expenditures*, 2022. The publication was funded through UNSCAR.

[12] For more information, see the websites of the Convention (www.clusterconvention.org) and the Office for Disarmament Affairs (www.unoda.org).

[13] Committee on Article 5 Implementation; Committee on Cooperative Compliance; Committee on Victim Assistance; and Committee on the Enhancement of Cooperation and Assistance.

[14] France, Chair of the Committee on Article 5 Implementation; Uganda, Chair of the Committee on Victim Assistance; Thailand, Chair of the Committee on the Enhancement of Cooperation and Assistance; and Germany, Chair of the Committee on Cooperative Compliance.

[15] Kingdom of the Netherlands.

[16] Albania, Algeria, Angola, Cambodia, Chad, Colombia, Iraq, Mauritania, Mozambique, Nigeria, Peru, Somalia, South Sudan, Tajikistan, Türkiye, Ukraine, Yemen and Zimbabwe.

[17] Ukraine and Yemen.

[18] Greece and Ukraine.

[19] Ukraine. By the time of the intersessional meetings, Eritrea had not submitted a request for extension of its article 5 deadline and was in non-compliance with the Convention.

[20] Under article 5 of the Convention, each State party undertakes to destroy or ensure the destruction of all anti-personnel mines in mined areas under its jurisdiction or control, as soon as possible but not later than 10 years after the entry into force of the Convention for the State party concerned. If a State party believes it will be unable to destroy or ensure the destruction of all such anti-personnel mines within that time period, it may submit a request to a Meeting of the States Parties or a Review Conference for an extension of the deadline for up to 10 years.

[21] Completion of the State Party's obligations under article 5.



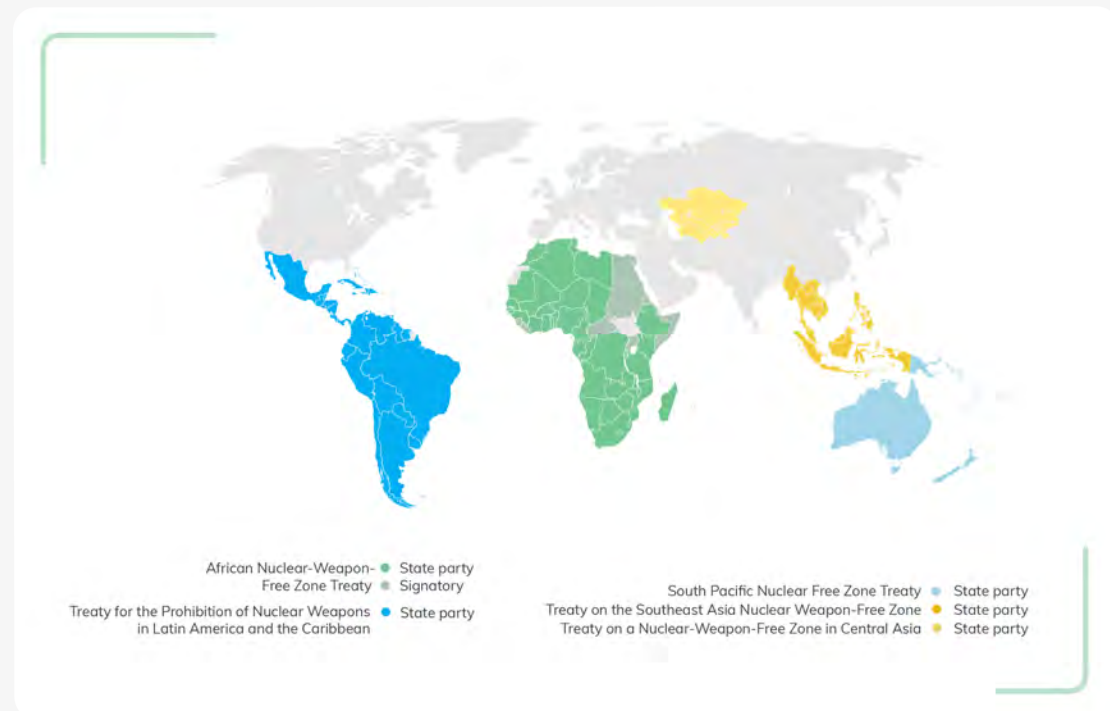
Regional frameworks and organizations are critical building blocks for the networked multilateralism that is at the heart of the Secretary-General's vision. Successful implementation of these regional approaches requires robust and sustainable partnerships between the United Nations and regional organizations, donors and, of course, civil society.

— [Izumi Nakamitsu](#) High Representative for Disarmament Affairs

Developments and trends, 2023

In 2023, despite the conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza exacerbating tensions, regional activities in support of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control continued to endure. The goals of the year's regional disarmament efforts ranged from preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction to countering the illicit manufacturing of and trade in conventional arms, particularly small arms, light weapons and their ammunition. The United Nations engaged, coordinated and facilitated cooperation with States, regional and subregional organizations, relevant international organizations and civil society, including through exchanges and dialogues, capacity-building projects and information campaigns.

Figure 4.1.
States parties of nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties



Nuclear-weapon-free zones strengthen the global nuclear non-proliferation regime, advance the case for global nuclear disarmament, and strengthen both regional and international peace and security. In parallel, nuclear-weapon-free zones are “landmark instruments” that cover roughly half the world's land mass (86 million square kilometres).

The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. A dotted line represents approximately the line of control in Jammu and Kashmir agreed upon by India and Pakistan. The final status of Jammu and Kashmir has not yet been agreed upon by the Parties. Final boundary between the Sudan and South Sudan has not yet been determined. A dispute exists between the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland concerning sovereignty over the Falkland Islands (Malvinas).

Base map source: United Nations Geospatial

Data source: [Office for Disarmament Affairs Treaties Database](#)

In the field of weapons of mass destruction, three States ratified or signed the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. In Latin America and the Caribbean, the Bahamas signed the Treaty. In Africa, Djibouti signed the agreement. In Asia and the Pacific, Sri Lanka acceded to the Treaty. Separately, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty gained two new States

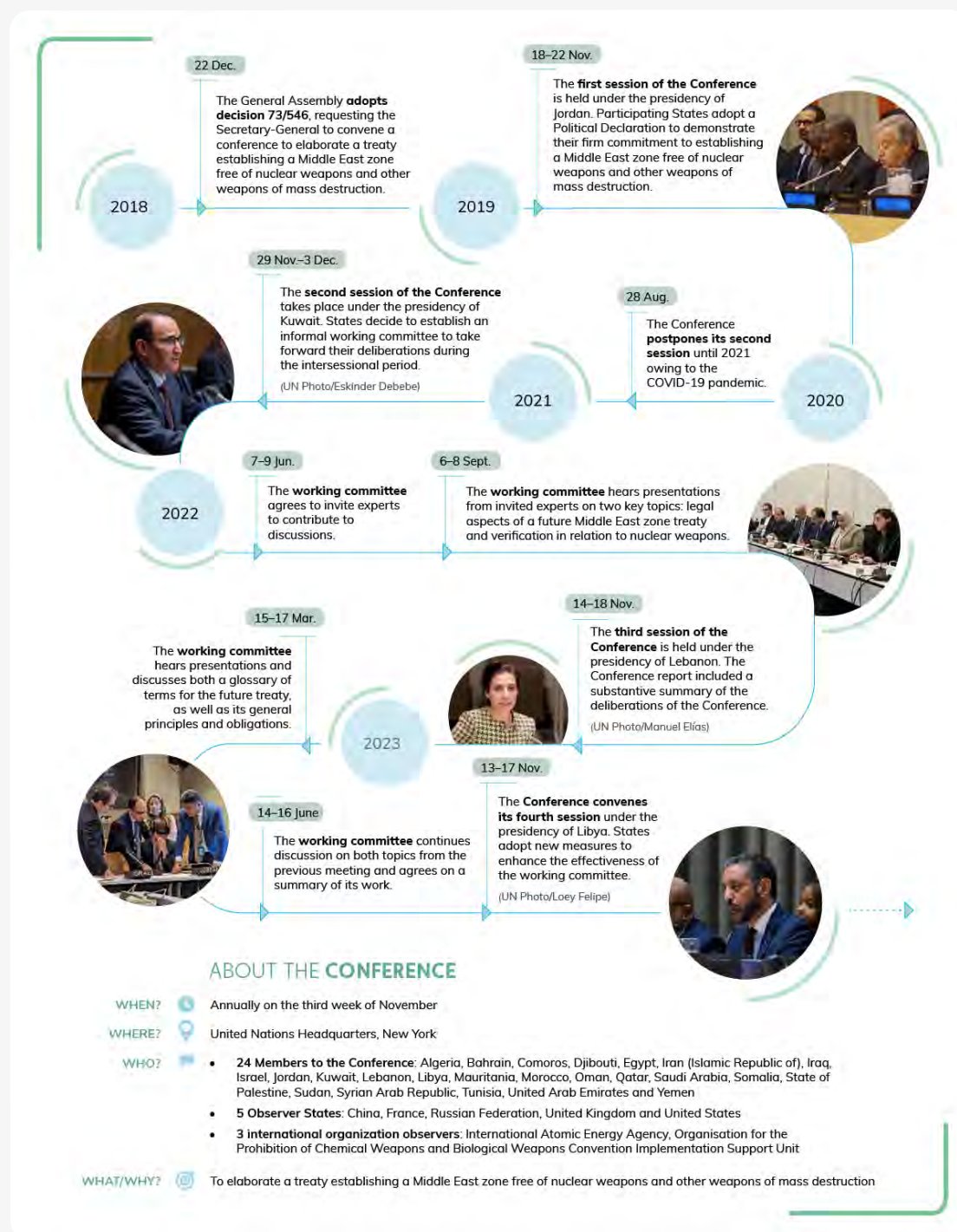
parties via ratification by Solomon Islands and Sri Lanka, while Somalia signed the Treaty and the Russian Federation withdrew from it. Albania, the Congo and Zimbabwe ratified or acceded to the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism, in August, September and November, respectively. In February, South Sudan acceded to the Biological Weapons Convention.

In the area of conventional weapons, a degree of progress was made in adherence by States to relevant global and subregional treaties. Singapore acceded to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, in September. Nigeria ratified the Convention on Cluster Munitions, in February.

The fourth session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction was convened at United Nations Headquarters from 13 to 17 November. That meeting represented the commitment of the participating countries to multilateralism and dialogue for improving the current security environment and strengthening regional and international peace and security amid the conflict in Gaza and its effects on the wider region.

Figure 4.2.

Timeline of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction



In the meantime, States within existing nuclear-weapon-free zones continued efforts to strengthen those zones in 2023 by enhancing cooperation within and between them, thus contributing to the global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime at the regional level. In particular, States in nuclear-weapon-free zones worked together to ensure full implementation of their respective treaties by building the capacities of their implementation

agencies and fully utilizing their consultation mechanisms. Furthermore, those States continued engaging with nuclear-weapon States to resolve outstanding issues regarding assurances against the use or the threat of use of nuclear weapons. In the case of the Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone, States parties continued dialogues and discussions with nuclear-weapon States to obtain their signatures or ratifications of the relevant Protocol to the Treaty. In addition, the President of Kazakhstan [discussed](#) the importance of the potential ratification by the United States of the Protocol (on negative assurances) to the Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia.

Meanwhile, the Office for Disarmament Affairs and its three regional centres expanded their engagement with regional and subregional organizations to explore new opportunities and strengthen existing platforms for regional dialogue on security and arms control. As part of that effort, the centres assisted States and regional organizations in acceding to and implementing multilateral and regional treaties and conventions, as well as in further developing capacities to manage conventional weapons and ammunition and combat their illicit manufacturing and trade. For instance, the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, in partnership with the Caribbean Community's Implementation Agency for Crime and Security, continued implementing the [Caribbean Firearms Roadmap](#), which is aimed at accelerating efforts to prevent and combat the illicit proliferation of firearms and ammunition in the region by 2030. The Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific, based in Kathmandu, supported the organization of a regional workshop and seminar on confidence-building measures and the Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons, and its International Tracing Instrument, while also conducting scoping missions for the Saving Lives Entity (SALIENT), a United Nations funding facility. In Lomé, the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa organized regional seminars on preventing violent extremism, managing conventional weapons and integrating gender-responsive action into small-arms-control measures.

Furthermore, regional and subregional organizations increased their activities to advance a range of disarmament goals. The United Nations supported those organizations by, for example, bolstering its support to the African Union's flagship initiative, "Africa Amnesty Month", as well as a new effort by the Organization of American States to develop a road map for preventing and combating the illicit trafficking of firearms and ammunition.



Police officers participate in the course on interdicting small arms, ammunition, parts and components, held in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines from 21 to 23 March.

Nuclear-weapon-free zones

Nuclear-weapon-free zones remained a key regional approach for bolstering global nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament norms, while simultaneously fostering peace and security at both the regional and international levels. Such zones derive their legal foundation from the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations on “regional arrangements or agencies” for maintaining international peace and security. The significance of the zones is reaffirmed in article VII of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which preserves “the right of any group of States to conclude regional treaties in order to assure the total absence of nuclear weapons in their respective territories”. Furthermore, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons recognizes nuclear-weapon-free zones as instruments that

enhance global and regional peace and security, strengthen the nuclear non-proliferation regime and contribute towards realizing the objective of nuclear disarmament.

In 2023, the number of States that were parties or signatories to nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties exceeded 100, accounting for approximately 60 per cent of United Nations Member States. There continued to be five regional nuclear-weapon-free zones, each underpinned by its respective treaty: (a) the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (Treaty of Tlatelolco, 1969); (b) the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty (Rarotonga Treaty, 1986); (c) the Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone (Bangkok Treaty, 1997); (d) the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty (Pelindaba Treaty, 2009); and (e) the Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia (2009). Additionally, the General Assembly maintained its recognition of Mongolia's self-declared nuclear-weapon-free status, having reaffirmed that position for the twelfth time since 1998 through resolution [77/56](#) of 7 December 2022. (See [figure 4.1](#) for a map of States parties of nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties.)

During its 2023 session, the General Assembly adopted two relevant resolutions: "African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty" ([78/14](#)) and "Treaty on the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone (Bangkok Treaty)" ([78/39](#)).

The five NPT nuclear-weapon States maintained varying positions on the relevant protocols to each of the five nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties in 2023. Under those protocols, the nuclear-weapon States commit to respecting the nuclear-weapon-free status of the corresponding regions and undertake not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against States parties to the agreements. All five nuclear-weapon States adhered to Additional Protocol II to the Treaty of Tlatelolco. Four of those States ratified Protocols 1, 2 and 3 to the Rarotonga Treaty, Protocols I and II to the Pelindaba Treaty, and the Protocol to the Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia. The United States signed all those protocols but had not yet ratified them.

None of the five nuclear-weapon States had signed the Protocol to the Bangkok Treaty by the end of the year.

The following table presents the status of adherence to the protocols.

Status of ratification of the protocols to the treaties establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones, as at 31 December 2023

Protocol	Status	China	France	Russian Federation	United Kingdom	United States
Additional Protocol II to the Treaty of Tlatelolco	Signed Ratified	21 Aug. 1973 2 June 1974	18 July 1973 22 Mar. 1974	18 May 1978 8 Jan. 1979	20 Dec. 1967 11 Dec. 1969	1 Apr. 1968 12 May 1971
Protocol 2 to the Rarotonga Treaty	Signed Ratified	10 Feb. 1987 21 Oct. 1988	25 Mar. 1996 20 Sept. 1996	15 Dec. 1986 21 Apr. 1988	25 Mar. 1996 19 Sept. 1997	25 Mar. 1996 --[a]
Protocol to the Bangkok Treaty	Signed Ratified	-- --	-- --	-- --	-- --	-- --
Protocol I to the Pelindaba Treaty	Signed Ratified	11 Apr. 1996 10 Oct. 1997	11 Apr. 1996 20 Sept. 1996	5 Nov. 1996 5 Apr. 2011	11 Apr. 1996 12 Mar. 2001	11 Apr. 1996 --[b]
Protocol to the Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia	Signed Ratified	6 May 2014 17 Aug. 2015	6 May 2014 21 Nov. 2014	6 May 2014 22 Jun. 2015	6 May 2014 30 Jan. 2015	6 May 2014 --[c]

Note: The status of signature and ratification of the treaties and protocols is available from the Treaties Database of the Office for Disarmament Affairs. [a] The Protocol was submitted on 2 May 2011 to the United States Senate for its consent to ratification (United States, Message from the President of the United States Transmitting Protocols 1, 2, and 3 to the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty, Signed on Behalf of the United States at Suva on March 25, 1996 (Washington, D.C., United States Government Printing Office, 2011). [b] The Protocol was submitted on 2 May 2011 to the United States Senate for its consent to ratification (United States, Message from the President of the United States Transmitting Protocols I and II to the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty, Signed on Behalf of the United States at Cairo, Egypt, on April 11, 1996, Including a Third Protocol Related to the Treaty (Washington, D.C.,

United States Government Printing Office, 2011). [c] The Protocol was submitted on 27 April 2015 to the United States Senate for its consent to ratification (United States, Message from the President of the United States Transmitting the Protocol to the Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia, Signed at New York on May 6, 2014 (Washington, D.C., United States Government Printing Office, 2015).

Treaty of Tlatelolco

On 14 February, the [member States](#) of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL) issued a communiqué ([Inf.01/2023Rev.2](#)) to commemorate the fifty-sixth anniversary of the [Treaty of Tlatelolco](#), presenting the document at a [civic ceremony](#) in Mexico City. Later in the year, on 26 September, OPANAL released a declaration ([Inf.37/2023Rev.4](#)) to mark the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons.

On 3 November, OPANAL held the [twenty-eighth session](#) of its General Conference in Guatemala City, with related documents and resolutions made publicly available on the Agency's website.

OPANAL also engaged in other international forums throughout the year. In August, its Secretary-General, Flávio Roberto Bonzanini (Brazil) attended the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2026 NPT Review Conference, where he delivered a statement ([Inf.32/2023](#)). The following month, OPANAL presented remarks at the sixty-seventh session of the General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) ([Inf.41/2023](#)). The OPANAL Secretary-General also issued a statement to the First Committee of the General Assembly during its general debate, delivered by the OPANAL Coordinator, Flávio Damico ([A/C.1/78/PV.9](#)), and to the [second Meeting of States Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons](#), in Spanish ([Inf.52/2023](#)).

OPANAL continued its educational initiatives, organizing the ninth edition of its [Summer School on Nuclear Disarmament and Non-Proliferation for Diplomats from Latin America and the Caribbean](#) from 10 to 15 July in Mexico City. The event, attended by 31 diplomats from 27 countries of the region, was co-organized with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Mexico, the Matías Romero Institute and the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies of the Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey. Additionally, OPANAL conducted a course on disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons in Guatemala from [24 to 26 July](#), and in Ecuador from [5 to 7 December](#).

Throughout the year, OPANAL also worked to strengthen cooperation with other nuclear-weapon-free zones, notably participating in two meetings of the working committee of the

Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, where it presented papers on relevant topics.

Bangkok Treaty

In 2023, the [Bangkok Treaty](#), signed on 15 December 1995, remained the key instrument of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) on disarmament and non-proliferation.

At the [forty-second](#) ASEAN Summit, held in Labuan Bajo, Indonesia, on 10 and 11 May, and the [forty-third](#) ASEAN Summit, held in Jakarta on 5 September, the ASEAN leaders reiterated their commitment to preserving South-East Asia as a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction, as enshrined in the Bangkok Treaty and the ASEAN Charter. They also reaffirmed their commitment to continuously engaging with the nuclear-weapon States and to intensifying ongoing efforts to resolve all outstanding issues in relation to their accession to the Protocol to the Bangkok Treaty in accordance with its objectives and principles.

ASEAN continued to make progress under the [Plan of Action to Strengthen the Implementation of the Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone \(2023–2027\)](#). Under the Plan, ASEAN has continued to actively promote nuclear safety, security and safeguards through the work of its relevant sectoral bodies, including the ASEAN Network of Regulatory Bodies on Atomic Energy and the ASEAN Nuclear Energy Cooperation Sub-Sector Network.

Nuclear safety, security and safeguards remained important areas of cooperation between ASEAN and the IAEA. Under the practical arrangements between ASEAN and the IAEA (signed in 2019 to promote cooperation in nuclear science, technology and applications, nuclear safety, security and safeguards), work was under way to ensure that ASEAN and its sectoral bodies could further benefit from regional IAEA projects, especially in the areas of capacity-building, education and training, sharing information and best practices. Work to renew the practical arrangements—set to expire in 2024—commenced during the year.

ASEAN undertook a number of efforts to enhance the profile of the Bangkok Treaty globally. A biennial resolution on the Treaty ([78/39](#)) was adopted without a vote at the seventy-eighth session of the General Assembly on 4 December. ASEAN also worked to strengthen its cooperation with other nuclear-weapon-free zones in the world, in particular through OPANAL, to support the goal of complete disarmament and promote international peace and security.

Rarotonga Treaty

The [Rarotonga Treaty](#) established a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the South Pacific region, contributing to nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament at the regional level, while reinforcing the legally binding commitments made under the NPT. The Secretary General of the [Pacific Islands Forum](#),^[1] acting as the depositary for the Rarotonga Treaty, is obligated under the Treaty to report annually to Forum leaders on matters related to its implementation.

At the [fifty-second Forum Leaders Meeting](#), held in Rarotonga, Cook Islands, from 6 to 10 November, the Secretary General, Henry Puna, reported to the Forum leaders on four key matters: (a) status of the Treaty and its three Protocols; (b) matters arising under the Treaty; (c) matters arising in relation to the Treaty; and (d) interzonal cooperation with other nuclear-weapon-free zones. In that context, the Forum leaders expressed support for the progress achieved to date under the Treaty and for the next steps in its operationalization.

The leaders also endorsed the [2050 Strategy Implementation Plan 2023–2030](#), one year after their 2022 endorsement of the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent. The Implementation Plan articulates specific goals, outcomes and collective regional actions across seven thematic areas affected by nuclear matters. Through the Implementation Plan, the Pacific Islands Forum and its member States expected to further advance the region's ongoing work on nuclear legacy issues. That effort would include a preliminary independent review of nuclear contamination in the Pacific, expected to commence in 2024.

At the international level, the [second United States–Pacific Islands Forum Summit](#) was convened in Washington, D.C., on 25 and 26 September. Meeting at the White House, the participating States reaffirmed their commitment to the international nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime—including support for the Rarotonga Treaty and the NPT—and its central role in maintaining international peace and security.

On 7 February, a high-level delegation of the Pacific Islands Forum [met in Tokyo](#) with the Prime Minister of Japan and relevant ministers to discuss Japan's planned release of water treated by its Advanced Liquid Processing System into the Pacific Ocean. Japan provided assurances that the treated water would not be released until doing so was safe.

Pelindaba Treaty

The African Commission on Nuclear Energy (AFCONE) further enhanced its capacity to implement the objectives of the [Pelindaba Treaty](#), such as ensuring adherence to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation commitments, promoting peaceful applications of nuclear energy, and facilitating regional and international nuclear-related cooperation involving African States. In implementing its programme of work, the AFCONE secretariat prioritized

urgent continental matters that can be addressed through the Pelindaba Treaty, particularly alleviating energy poverty and promoting a shift towards sustainable and low-carbon energy sources.

Throughout 2023, the AFCONE secretariat advocated at various international events^[2] for a multilateral approach to developing nuclear power in Africa. In that advocacy, it emphasized the potential role of nuclear energy in decarbonizing diverse economic sectors. AFCONE also highlighted the versatility of small modular reactors, particularly for specialized applications such as water desalination and power generation for mining operations and remote areas.

Additionally, AFCONE undertook various initiatives to strengthen safeguards capacities and implementation in Africa. In May, it initiated a five-year programme—the first of its kind to be managed by an African institution—in collaboration with African States and the Radiation and Nuclear Safety Authority of Finland. As part of the initiative, it organized three workshops during the year, in which 13 countries participated.^[3]

In addition, AFCONE continued to foster measures to promote and strengthen nuclear safety and security. At a workshop held in Nairobi in March on Security Council resolution [1540 \(2004\)](#), AFCONE emphasized the complementarity between the Pelindaba Treaty and the resolution's requirements and urged relevant States to ratify the Treaty's protocols. Later, in May, AFCONE established the Centre National de l'Énergie, des Sciences et des Techniques Nucléaires in Morocco as its first regional collaborating centre for nuclear safety and security. AFCONE also participated in the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2026 NPT Review Conference in Vienna from 31 July to 11 August. On the margins of the meeting, it co-hosted an event with the Radiation and Nuclear Safety Authority of Finland on sustaining safeguards capacity in Africa. AFCONE also participated in an event on the proposed Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. During that event, AFCONE highlighted potential synergies with the African nuclear-weapon-free zone and emphasized how AFCONE activities and experiences in implementing the Pelindaba Treaty could benefit the Middle East initiative.

AFCONE also continued to strengthen its cooperation with other nuclear-weapon-free zones. On 3 November, it delivered a pre-recorded statement at the twenty-eighth session of the OPANAL General Conference in Guatemala City. On 22 December, AFCONE signed a memorandum of understanding with the Central Asian Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone, enabling them to cooperate in areas such as the environmental rehabilitation of former nuclear test sites.

Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia

On 1 January 2023, Tajikistan assumed the rotating chairpersonship within the [Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia](#).

On 29 August, in commemoration of the International Day against Nuclear Tests, Kazakhstan partnered with the International Committee of the Red Cross and non-governmental organizations such as the Center for International Security and Policy, the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons and Soka Gakkai International to hold a [regional conference](#) on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons and the nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. Diplomats and government experts representing all five Central Asian States attended the conference.

The First Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan, Kairat Umarov, welcomed the participants on behalf of the host country and noted that the event in Astana was part of a series of global events to promote the pursuit of a world free from nuclear tests and nuclear weapons. The conference participants [exchanged views](#) on the compatibility and complementarity of the main international legal instruments in the field of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, such as the NPT, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia.

On 14 September, the fifth Consultative Meeting of the Heads of State of Central Asia adopted a [joint statement](#) underscoring the critical role of the Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia in strengthening the global nuclear non-proliferation regime. The participating Heads of State also highlighted the importance of further cooperation both within the Treaty's framework and with other nuclear-weapon-free zones. They also underscored the importance of the earliest entry into force of the Treaty's Protocol on negative security assurances.

On the margins of the seventy-eighth session of the General Assembly in New York, the President of Kazakhstan, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, met with the President of the United States, Joseph Biden, and other Central Asian leaders. During the meeting, President Tokayev [emphasized](#) the importance of the United States' ratification of the Treaty's Protocol on negative security assurances.

On 22 December, a memorandum of understanding between the Central Asian Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone and AFCONE was formally [signed](#) by the Ambassador of Tajikistan to Austria, Idibek Kalandar, and the Executive Secretary of AFCONE, Enobot Agboraw. The signing marked a milestone in interregional cooperation on promoting nuclear non-proliferation, disarmament and the peaceful applications of nuclear science and technology.

Establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction

The [fourth session](#) of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction was held in New York from 13 to 17 November under the presidency of Libya. Participating States continued deliberations on key aspects regarding the elaboration of a treaty to establish the Middle East zone. The Conference successfully adopted its substantive report ([A/CONF.236/2023/4](#)), as well as a new decision ([A/CONF.236/2023/DEC.3](#)) intended to improve the effectiveness of its working committee. Despite the acute humanitarian crisis resulting from the conflict in Gaza and its possible spillover to the wider region, the participating States demonstrated their commitment to dialogue and multilateral diplomacy as the sole means of enhancing regional and international peace and security. (See [figure 4.2](#) for an infographic about the Conference, including a timeline of developments since 2018.)

United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs regional centres

United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa

The United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa worked to promote peace and security across the continent in 2023. The Centre collaborated with Governments, regional stakeholders and other partners to organize events and initiatives addressing disarmament, arms control and the prevention of violent extremism, underscoring the importance of collective action in addressing complex security challenges.

The Centre collaborated with Mozambique and the African Union on the annual commemoration of [Africa Amnesty Month](#), an initiative launched in 2017 to promote disarmament, arms control and sustainable peace across Africa by encouraging civilians every September to voluntarily surrender illicit arms to authorities, as part of the African Union's Silencing the Guns flagship initiative. Held in Maputo on 11 and 12 September 2023, the commemorative event was attended by the Chair of the African Union Peace and Security Council, Churchill Ewumbue-Monono (Cameroon), the African Union High Representative for Silencing the Guns, Mohamed Ibn Chambas, and the Foreign Affairs and Cooperation Minister of Mozambique, Verónica Macamo. It also featured speeches from United Nations representatives, including the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy, Mirko Manzoni, the Resident Coordinator for Mozambique, Catherine Sozi, and the Centre's Director, Anselme Yabouri. The event highlighted Mozambique's peace and disarmament achievements while showcasing the growing partnership between the African Union and the United Nations in advancing peace and disarmament initiatives across the continent.

On 25 November, the Centre co-organized a symposium at the University of Lomé on [countering terrorism](#) in the Sahel and Gulf of Guinea regions. Participants included diplomats and government officials, including members of Togo's National Assembly and Ministry of Education, as well as academics, representatives of two civil society organizations,^[4] and members of the United Nations country team in Togo. Against a backdrop of increasing terrorism, the participants analysed historical trends, assessed security and humanitarian situations, and explored counter-terrorism policies and initiatives. Recommendations included establishing a platform to exchange information on relevant research and designing action-oriented programmes to enhance collaboration between academics, practitioners and civil society in formulating counter-terrorism strategies.

The Centre also partnered with Switzerland and the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) to organize a [regional seminar](#) on preventing violent extremism and managing conventional weapons in West Africa. Held in Lomé from 5 to 7 December, the event drew over 60 participants from 15 countries, including human rights commissioners, parliamentarians, United Nations staff, delegates of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), civil society representatives and experts. The participants explored how through-life management of conventional weapons can help to prevent violent extremism, highlighting the value of prevention-focused and people-centred approaches in addressing root causes of armed violence. Recommendations included enhancing information exchange, bolstering multi-stakeholder dialogue and cooperation between national institutions, integrating weapons management and the prevention of violent extremism in strategic documents, reaffirming the State's role in security, and empowering women and youth. The aim was to initiate a broader regional process for sharing experiences, establish regular meetings between relevant institutions, assess existing frameworks and develop regional guidelines.

On 11 December, the Centre launched a [webinar series](#) on integrating gender-responsive actions into small-arms-control measures. The inaugural event, held in connection with the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons), was attended by officials from Burundi, Cameroon and Sierra Leone who had implemented gender-sensitive projects in their respective countries. The participants assessed progress and shared best practices in adopting and implementing gender-sensitive disarmament and arms control initiatives, including through national action plans on women, peace and security and on small arms and light weapons. While acknowledging achievements, participants identified challenges such as the ongoing weapons proliferation, limited gender integration in small-arms control, insufficient resources for capacity-building and lack of effective monitoring mechanisms. Attendees emphasized the importance of women and youth participation in policymaking, sustained awareness campaigns targeting policymakers, support for women's integration into defence and security sectors, and continued capacity-

building to advance women, peace and security efforts and combat illicit small-arms trafficking.

From 13 to 15 December, ECOWAS [hosted](#) the Annual Coordination Meeting of the National Commissions on Small Arms and Light Weapons, in Dakar. Attendees discussed national experiences in addressing escalating threats from improvised explosive devices, youth-related gun violence and terrorism. They sought to develop a regional framework for tackling those challenges, including by impeding terrorists' access to weapons and establishing benchmarks for a regional strategy against improvised explosive devices, in line with the ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons. Participants included representatives of national commissions and key partners such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), UNIDIR, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and various non-governmental organizations.^[5] The ECOWAS Commissioner for Political Affairs underscored the importance of collective action against terrorism and recommended training, equipment provision and humanitarian assistance. The Centre highlighted the need for integrated strategies, institutional cooperation and international collaboration to combat weapons proliferation and violent extremism, emphasizing the cross-cutting nature of threats from improvised explosive devices and small arms. United Nations entities heard calls to continue supporting ECOWAS and its member States in developing relevant policies and strategies.

On 13 and 14 December, the Centre organized a regional workshop in Lomé on weapons and ammunition management and cross-border control in the Lake Chad basin. The event marked the commencement of a capacity-building project aimed at preventing violent extremist and terrorist groups in the region from acquiring arms and ammunition. Participants included diplomats in Lomé, representatives of the Lake Chad Basin Commission, the Resident Coordinator of the United Nations System in Togo, Abdou Dieng, and the Centre's Director and Togo's Minister of Security and Civil Protection, Calixte Batossie Madjoulba. The discussion emphasized the importance of stockpile management and regional cooperation for peace, security and development. Participants from member States of the Multinational Joint Task Force of the Lake Chad Basin (Benin, Cameroon, Chad, the Niger and Nigeria) joined representatives from United Nations entities, regional organizations and non-governmental actors^[6] to share information on contextual threats, illicit arms flows, legal frameworks and subregional cooperation, and to identify good practices and challenges in weapons and ammunition management and the prevention of violent extremism. Participants highlighted knowledge gaps, resource constraints and outdated legislation as challenges, emphasizing the need for prevention and joint action. The workshop underscored the urgency of aligning with international standards, such as the Modular Small-arms-control Implementation Compendium (MOSAIC) and the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines, to enhance cross-border control and deter illicit flows of small arms and light weapons to violent extremist groups.

United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa

The United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa held three ministerial meetings to discuss continuing and emerging peace and security challenges in the region and ways to collectively address them. Countries assessed progress in the implementation of recommendations emanating from previous sessions, while also sharing information and analysis on the geopolitical and security situation in Central Africa.

The Committee's fifty-fourth meeting took place in Brazzaville from 12 to 16 January, focusing on refugees as its overarching theme, while addressing several other peace and security-related questions. The Committee encouraged all Member States that had not yet ratified the Central African Convention for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and All Parts and Components That Can Be Used for Their Manufacture, Repair and Assembly, or deposited their instrument of ratification with the Secretary-General, to do so. It urged the United Nations to fund institutional support projects related to the Convention, including establishing and strengthening national commissions for the control of small arms and light weapons, setting up a platform for those commissions to exchange experiences, and establishing and operationalizing a Convention secretariat. The Committee encouraged Member States that had not yet established national small-arms commissions to do so.

The Committee's fifty-fifth meeting took place in Sao Tome from 15 to 19 May with the theme of climate security. The Committee also considered coordination, harmonization and management challenges related to individuals associated with Boko Haram-affiliated and splinter groups, as well as the collection of small arms and light weapons and improvised explosive devices. The Lake Chad Basin Commission updated attendees on the implementation of the Regional Strategy for the Stabilization, Recovery and Resilience of the Boko Haram-affected Areas of the Lake Chad Basin Region, focusing on resilience and long-term development. Beyond the Lake Chad basin, the circulation of small arms and light weapons was also raised as a challenge for the larger Central Africa subregion, including in relation to the illegal exploitation of natural resources.

The Committee convened its fifty-sixth meeting in Kigali from 20 to 24 November under the overall theme of non-constitutional changes of government. The circulation of small arms and light weapons was raised by several countries. Angola highlighted a proposed law that would establish supervisory control by defence and security agencies over small arms and light weapons of war, while also establishing various partnerships to strengthen the new control measures. Angola also reported that it was working towards establishing a national observatory and counter-terrorism centre.

United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean

Throughout the year, the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean supported States of the region in implementing international disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control commitments. The Centre conducted over 50 technical, legal and policy-related activities in various formats, reaching nearly 1,000 participants—over a third of them women.

The Centre continued assisting Governments in implementing international instruments on conventional arms at their request. It supported regional mechanisms to effectively implement global commitments such as the Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons and the International Tracing Instrument, with significant progress made on the [Roadmap for Implementing the Caribbean Priority Actions on the Illicit Proliferation of Firearms and Ammunition across the Caribbean in a Sustainable Manner by 2030](#) (Caribbean Firearms Roadmap). Additionally, the Centre helped to initiate the development of a Central American road map to prevent and address illicit firearms and ammunition proliferation and trafficking.

The Centre maintained its support for States in developing national action plans and baseline assessments for the Caribbean Firearms Roadmap, as well as in implementing it. Eight States adopted plans establishing national priorities: Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia and Suriname. Meanwhile, further progress towards national approval was made in four other States: Barbados, Jamaica, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago. By the end of 2023, 75 per cent of the region's States had at least made progress on their national action plans, while all Caribbean Community (CARICOM) member States¹⁷¹ and the Dominican Republic had started implementation.

Following the 2022 roll-out of the Roadmap's monitoring and evaluation framework and the 2023 launch of its reporting platform, six States completed baseline assessments: Belize, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago. That step enabled them to track progress towards their action plans and Roadmap goals, such as bolstering policy and legal frameworks, strengthening law enforcement capacity, curbing arms trafficking and misuse, and preventing weapons diversion.

The CARICOM Implementation Agency for Crime and Security continued to serve as the Roadmap co-custodian along with the Centre, coordinating activities with partners, donors and States. At the Roadmap's [annual meeting](#) in Saint Lucia in November, participants discussed progress and next steps. States adopted a [statement](#) in which they renewed their commitment to addressing illicit firearms and ammunition trafficking through Roadmap implementation and evaluation, and requested a midterm review in 2025.

In 2022, member States of the Organization of American States (OAS) mandated the development of a [similar regional approach](#) to firearms in collaboration with the Centre ([AG/RES. 2986 \(LII-O/22\)](#)). Throughout 2023, the initiative included a meeting on lessons learned with custodians of other road map processes, as well as awareness-raising workshops and an in-person meeting with national focal points. The meeting of focal points took place in Panama from 25 to 27 October. Delegates from Belize, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Panama met with representatives of the Centre, OAS and the subregional organization Central American Integration System. Participants discussed national priorities, opportunities and challenges in preventing and combating illicit firearms and ammunition trafficking, and identified main priority areas, objectives and actions for the proposed road map. The discussion was intended to inform the development of the first draft, which States planned to refine further in 2024.

The Centre continued working with States throughout Latin America and the Caribbean to combat illicit firearms trafficking at the national level. It strengthened capacities among forensic scientists, firearms examiners, police officers and armourers through specialized training courses on restoring weapon serial numbers, integrating gender perspectives in firearms investigations, interdicting weapons and ammunition at border points, and managing government-owned arsenals. In addition, the Centre conducted dedicated workshops in Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala and Peru to deepen national stakeholders' understanding of illicit firearms and ammunition manufacturing, including through new technologies, such as 3D printing. It covered similar material in week-long courses on combating trafficking in arms and ammunition delivered for authorities in Guyana, Guatemala and El Salvador. The Centre also incorporated the topic into multi-week classes on interdicting small arms, ammunition, parts and components, which were organized for officials in Chile, Colombia, Dominica, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

The Centre sustained its backing for the regional initiatives of SALIENT, an innovative trust fund jointly administered by the Office for Disarmament Affairs and UNDP. In Jamaica, those efforts were focused on preventing firearms in schools; and Honduras and Panama hosted scoping missions within their territories.

Additionally, the Centre assisted States in implementing Security Council resolution [1540 \(2004\)](#). As part of the Wiesbaden Process, it organized the [Regional Industry Outreach Conference for Latin American States](#) in Chile in October. The Conference fostered dialogue and partnership between government and industry representatives in support of the resolution's implementation.

United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific

In 2023, the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific pushed ahead with its efforts to strengthen the national capacity of Member States to implement the Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons and the Arms Trade Treaty, maintaining its focus on the women, peace and security agenda. The Centre also continued supporting States as they addressed challenges related to weapons of mass destruction.

Conventional arms and ammunition

The Centre actively pursued its mission to foster transparency and confidence-building in Asia and the Pacific. In January, it joined the Conventional Arms Branch of the Office for Disarmament Affairs to co-organize a two-day regional workshop in Bangkok on military confidence-building measures for the ASEAN region. The workshop brought together officials from South-East Asian States to discuss information-sharing and explore global mechanisms to support confidence-building measures, such as the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and the United Nations Report on Military Expenditures.

As part of its ongoing commitment to supporting national efforts to reduce armed violence in Asia and the Pacific, the Centre carried out scoping missions in Papua New Guinea and Kyrgyzstan under the SALIENT initiative. Through its involvement in these missions to Papua New Guinea in July and to Kyrgyzstan in December, the Centre facilitated the creation of foundational projects in partnership with the respective United Nations country teams.

In October, the Centre organized a [virtual regional seminar](#) for the national points of contact of the Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons and the International Tracing Instrument. The seminar connected national points of contact from the region, introduced upcoming initiatives for the Programme of Action and laid the foundation for the [Asia-Pacific Regional Preparatory Meeting](#) for the fourth Review Conference on the Programme of Action, scheduled for January 2024.

Additionally, the Centre collaborated with the Implementation Support Unit for the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects, to co-organize two universalization workshops. Hosted for South-East Asian States in Bangkok in April and for Pacific Island States in Manila in December, the workshops enabled States in those regions to learn more about the Convention's significance, as well as available international assistance mechanisms. The Centre underscored the critical need for Asia-Pacific States to participate in global disarmament dialogues, especially in the context of rapid scientific and technological developments that are changing the global security context.

Weapons of mass destruction

In 2023, the Centre maintained its support for State efforts to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. It supported national and regional efforts to strengthen the implementation of international mechanisms, organized platforms for regional dialogue on national perspectives, challenges and priorities, and facilitated peer-to-peer exchanges to strengthen regional transparency.

At the [2023 Wiesbaden Conference](#), co-hosted by Germany and the Office for Disarmament Affairs, the Centre showcased its regional initiatives for strengthening strategic trade control in Asia and the Pacific. The Conference brought together industry leaders, regulators and front-line customs officials from around the world, reinforcing the importance of international efforts to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction to non-State actors.

On 7 and 8 March, the Centre participated in a [regional meeting](#) of stakeholders promoting efforts to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction to non-State actors, organized by Japan and the Office for Disarmament Affairs. It also took part in a meeting of the Global Partnership against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction, held in Tokyo. At both events, the Centre highlighted the importance of regional cooperation and coordination and introduced the Centre's programmes to support States in strengthening their efforts to prevent the spread of weapons of mass destruction. The Centre also stressed the importance of active participation by Asia-Pacific States to ensure that the region's priorities and challenges were heard and reflected in global discussions on the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

The Centre also partnered with UNODC to conduct two regional workshops promoting the universalization of the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism. Held in May for States in the Pacific and in June for States in South-East Asia, the workshops strengthened participants' understanding of the Convention's importance, the obligations of States parties, and assistance available to them before and after joining the Convention.

The Centre also worked to support the implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction (Biological Weapons Convention) in Asia and the Pacific. In partnership with the Convention's Implementation Support Unit, the Centre conducted a regional workshop in Kathmandu in August for States in South Asia. Participants studied key obligations under the Convention and practised drafting reports on voluntary confidence-building measures using fictional cases. Through stakeholder identification and tabletop exercises, State representatives enhanced their understanding of the Convention's requirements and available international assistance for its implementation.

On 7 and 8 September, the Centre represented the Office for Disarmament Affairs at a [regional workshop](#) for Central Asia held in Bishkek. Hosted by the Center for Energy and Security Studies of the Russian Federation, the workshop examined the outcomes of the tenth NPT Review Conference and ongoing preparations for the 2026 Review Conference. The event provided a forum for experts to discuss the current state of the nuclear non-proliferation regime and for State delegates to share their national perspectives.

Youth, disarmament education and outreach

In 2023, the Centre increased its outreach aimed at broadening awareness of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control issues among the wider public, including young people, students, peace advocates and field practitioners, primarily in collaboration with civil society organizations at both the regional and national levels.

On 19 and 20 January, the Centre hosted a [round-table discussion](#) for high school and university educators in Nepal, focusing on strengthening disarmament education in Nepal and other South Asian States. The participating educators contributed to a needs assessment by sharing insights on the challenges of integrating peace and disarmament themes into regular and extracurricular activities in schools.

From 21 to 30 June, the Centre partnered with the Prajnya Trust, an India-based civil society organization, to conduct the second iteration of the [Disarmament Toolkit](#) series. The six-session online course provided conceptual, political and technical information on disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control to students and professionals in the field of peace and security. Over 100 university students and practitioners from civil society organizations, academia, United Nations entities, international organizations and Governments from the region participated in the course.

On 4 and 5 December, the Centre supported the twenty-second [Republic of Korea–United Nations Joint Conference on Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Issues](#). With the theme “Governance of artificial intelligence in the military domain”, the Conference featured discussions on the challenges of artificial intelligence (AI) governance, including its dual-use nature, technical and definitional hurdles, and the integration of AI in lethal autonomous weapons systems and armed uncrewed aerial vehicles. The Conference attracted over 100 participants, underscoring the growing attention to the governance of AI in the military domain.

Disarmament and arms regulation at the regional level

Africa

Economic Community of West African States

Enhancing capacities in member States

In 2023, the ECOWAS Commission maintained its efforts to enhance member States' capabilities to address the proliferation of small arms, light weapons and improvised explosive devices across West Africa. The Commission focused its training initiatives on three core areas:

- Transfer procedures: at workshops held by the Commission in Nigeria and Côte d'Ivoire, security officials learned to manage exemptions under the ECOWAS regulations governing movements of small arms, light weapons and related materials in the subregion.
- Explosive ordnance disposal: military and security officials from the Commission's 15 member States developed knowledge and skills to effectively apply strategies for explosive ordnance prevention and response.
- Physical security and stockpile management: the Commission trained police and military personnel from member States on effective approaches to national weapons and ammunition stockpile management and design, helping to prevent unintended explosions and counter the significant level of diversion afflicting the region.

Facilitating civil society engagement in controlling small arms and light weapons

In 2023, under new leadership, the West African Action Network on Small Arms repositioned itself for more constructive engagement in small arms and light weapons control in the region. It aimed to facilitate collaboration between civil society, national commissions and the ECOWAS Commission to bolster the implementation of the ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons.

Gender mainstreaming

The ECOWAS Commission collaborated with UNIDIR to organize the [annual seminar on disarmament and non-proliferation](#). The seminar brought together global and regional experts to analyse and discuss gender perspectives on disarmament and arms control, with a focus on West Africa. The effort aimed to promote an approach to small arms and light weapons control that accounts for the differential impact of weapons proliferation on women, men, boys and girls in the region.

Destroying weapons and ammunition

The Commission destroyed significant quantities of obsolete and surplus weapons and ammunition in member States through its Organized Crime: West African Response to Trafficking project. By helping to prevent accidental ammunition explosions and diversion of seized weapons, the project contributed towards stronger national and regional small-arms control, including through the ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and Other Related Materials.

Regulating civilian possession and addressing licensing of arms

As part of its project Organized Crime: West African Response to Trafficking, the Commission analysed civilian firearms possession and licensing policies in the region and developed operational guidelines to help member States to improve their licensing regimes in compliance with regional and international instruments.

Southern African Development Community

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) pursued initiatives throughout 2023 to combat the proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons, including the contribution of such illicit weapons to transnational organized crime.

A key development was the entry into force of the Agreement Amending the SADC Protocol on the Control of Firearms, Ammunition and Other Related Materials, following the signature by 8 of the 11 States parties to the original Protocol. Approved in August 2020 by the SADC Summit of Heads of State and Government, the Agreement marked a significant step in the Protocol's evolution, reflecting changing dynamics and challenges in controlling and managing firearms, ammunition and related materials within the subregion. By introducing more comprehensive measures and international standard practices, as well as strategies to address the proliferation of firearms and ammunition, the Agreement helped to ensure that SADC policies would remain effective and relevant.

The SADC Chiefs of Police Sub-Committee called on member States to make small arms and light weapons the focus of a regional joint operation. The body also urged those States to observe Africa Amnesty Month, a campaign that encourages the public every September to voluntarily surrender illegally held weapons to authorities, as part of the African Union's Silencing the Guns flagship initiative.^[8]

The SADC Regional Coordinating Committee on Small Arms and Light Weapons held its annual meeting to review progress in implementing the SADC Protocol. Member States highlighted notable achievements, including enhanced public awareness campaigns,

progress in digitizing firearms databases to improve record-keeping and tracking, advancements in firearms marking for identification and traceability, and an increase in the voluntary surrender of firearms by the public, a benefit of the growing awareness of Africa Amnesty Month and improved cooperation to reduce illicit firearms circulation.

To enhance regional expertise, SADC nominated two officers to participate in an executive-level course on weapons and ammunition management conducted by the Bonn International Centre for Conflict Studies, from 5 to 15 December in Frankfurt, Germany. Organized in partnership with the Verification Centre of the German Armed Forces, the course covered a range of topics, including international instruments, strategies, standards for arms and ammunition management, and techniques in weapons and ammunition monitoring and verification. The participating officers were expected to play a pivotal role in bolstering SADC strategies and operations to prevent the proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons.

The SADC region reinforced efforts against small arms and light weapons proliferation through the active implementation of the SADC Protocol and alignment with the [African Union's Master Roadmap of Practical Steps to Silence the Guns in Africa](#). In addition to observing Africa Amnesty Month, the region actively participated in regional and interregional joint operations aimed at preventing and combating small arms and light weapons proliferation. Those coordinated efforts were crucial for enhancing regional stability, reducing armed violence, and ensuring the safety and security of SADC member States.

Americas

Organization of American States

Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials

In 2023, the Technical Secretariat of the [Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials](#) reported that 31 of the 34 OAS member States were States parties to that Convention.

The Convention's Consultative Committee held its twenty-third [regular meeting](#) virtually on 5 April with Mexico as Chair. The Meeting also received support from the Convention's Technical Secretariat, jointly staffed by the OAS Department of Public Security and the OAS Department against Transnational Organized Crime.

Countering firearms trafficking

At the fifty-fourth meeting of the Group of Experts for the Control of Money-Laundering, held on 23 and 24 May, delegations approved a study on best practices for coordination by authorities in confiscating materials in cases of money-laundering used to support illicit arms trafficking. The Working Sub-Group on Forfeiture and International Cooperation developed the study with technical support from the OAS Department against Transnational Organized Crime.

Meanwhile, through its Department of Public Security, OAS continued to provide its member States with comprehensive assistance in strengthening their capacities against illicit firearms and ammunition proliferation and trafficking. Its assistance benefited from European Union funds and emphasized legislative support, through-life management of weapons and ammunition, armed violence prevention, and regional coordination mechanisms. In 2023, the Department of Public Security organized the delivery of capacity-building technical and material assistance for weapons and ammunition management to 19 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. That assistance included training 1,011 national personnel, improving security conditions in five storage areas, installing inventory control software in five national defence and security institutions, and destroying 37,518 firearms and 110 tons of ammunition. Additionally, a partnership with Spain enabled 11 military and police officers from seven Latin American countries to be certified in Level 3 explosive ordnance disposal.

To support efforts to prevent armed violence, the Department of Public Security supported 1,100 at-risk youths, in Tela (Honduras) and in Lima, who participated in daily orchestra classes aimed at improving their life skills. It also launched two massive open online courses on preventing armed violence and inaugurated the Center for Psychosocial Support of Victims of Armed Violence, in Tela.

The Department of Public Security also collaborated with the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean to [launch](#) the development of a Central American road map to prevent the illicit proliferation and trafficking of firearms and ammunition. With funding from the European Union, the Department of Public Security organized several rounds of awareness-raising and dialogue sessions with national authorities, concluding with an in-person workshop to gather inputs for the future road map. The anticipated plan was scheduled for adoption in 2024, with all Central American countries, except Nicaragua, engaging in the initiative.

Humanitarian demining

The Department of Public Security's comprehensive mine action programme continued to support Colombia in addressing explosive ordnance contamination, in line with a 2012

bilateral agreement. In 2023, it supported quality management for seven humanitarian demining operators, comprising two State/military entities and five humanitarian non-governmental organizations. The Department conducted seven evaluations of operational procedures and 5,167 field monitoring visits, and it verified the decontamination of 314,587 square metres of land.

In Colombia, the Department's mine action programme delivered explosive ordnance risk education directly to the public. Throughout the year, 11,689 people in 16 municipalities across eight departments participated in regular explosive ordnance risk reduction activities. With respect to age and gender, the group comprised 1,842 women, 1,592 men, 4,079 girls and 4,176 boys.^[9] Of those participants, 3,151 people in high-risk areas (447 women, 335 men, 1,173 girls and 1,196 boys) benefited from a special educational methodology emphasizing rapid response.^[10] Furthermore, 20 survivors of explosives received assistance in accessing state medical services and additional opportunities for sustainable livelihoods.

Support for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004)

In 2023, the secretariat of the Inter-American Committee against Terrorism maintained its role in implementing Security Council resolution [1540 \(2004\)](#) in the Americas, including through efforts to counter biological and chemical threats.

The Committee supported eight countries^[11] in strengthening biosafety and biosecurity measures in line with the resolution, emphasizing three priorities: (a) helping to align national legislation with international standards; (b) conducting capacity-building activities, including biosafety and biosecurity training of 250 technicians, scientists and laboratory personnel; and (c) undertaking outreach and awareness-raising, including through virtual events, to highlight bioterrorism and other related threats and establish a regional network of biosafety and biosecurity professionals. The Committee also completed [biosecurity threat assessments](#) for four countries and the broader region,^[12] published four reports on its website, and [analysed](#) chemical weapons threats in key free trade zones, presenting the findings in international law enforcement forums.

As hemispheric coordinator for resolution 1540 (2004) in Latin America and the Caribbean, the Committee facilitated two peer review exercises: (a) an exercise conducted in Mexico City in September by Brazil, Chile and Mexico with a focus on biological weapons non-proliferation; and (b) an exercise in November and December between Ecuador and Paraguay on implementing the Biological Weapons Convention. The Committee also collaborated with relevant organizations to further strengthen the region's network of points of contact for resolution 1540 (2004).

Asia and the Pacific

Association of Southeast Asian Nations

The Treaty on the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone (Bangkok Treaty), signed on 15 December 1995 by the 10 ASEAN member countries, continued to be the most important instrument of ASEAN on disarmament and non-proliferation. At the fifty-sixth ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting, held in Jakarta on 11 and 12 July, the ministers [stressed](#) the importance of the full and effective implementation of the Treaty. At the forty-second and forty-third [ASEAN Summits](#) (held in Labuan Bajo, Indonesia, on 10 and 11 May, and in Jakarta on 5 September, respectively), the ASEAN leaders reiterated their commitment to preserving South-East Asia as a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction, as enshrined in the Bangkok Treaty and the ASEAN Charter.

The ASEAN foreign ministers issued a [statement](#) on 13 July in which they expressed deep concerns over the launch of a ballistic missile by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on 12 July; re-emphasized the importance of the full compliance with all relevant Security Council resolutions and international law; and reiterated the readiness of ASEAN to play a constructive role, including through the utilization of ASEAN-led platforms, such as the ASEAN Regional Forum.

The issues of non-proliferation and disarmament were also deliberated within the ambit of the ASEAN Regional Forum, a platform to foster constructive dialogue and cooperation on political-security issues of common interest and concern among its 27 participants, through the Forum's fourteenth Inter-Sessional Meeting on Non-Proliferation and Disarmament, held in Colombo. Participants exchanged views on various national and global disarmament undertakings, including peaceful uses of nuclear energy, such as photoimaging and radiation therapy for cancer treatment; reiterated the importance of open communication and dialogue to mitigate the environmental impacts of nuclear energy; and noted the importance of collaboration and coordination among Forum participants to support global non-proliferation efforts.

At the seventeenth ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime—held in Labuan Bajo, Indonesia, on 21 August—the ministers responsible for addressing transnational crime reaffirmed the commitment of ASEAN to intensifying law enforcement cooperation against arms smuggling through the adoption of the [ASEAN Declaration on Combating Arms Smuggling](#). The Declaration calls on all ASEAN member States to, among other things, intensify cooperation to curb arms smuggling, particularly in the areas of law enforcement, border management and capacity-building of front-line border officers, mutual legal assistance in criminal matters, timely information exchange and community engagement, and practical experience-sharing. Additionally, practical cooperation on this issue continued

through the implementation of activities identified under the arms smuggling component of the Work Programme to implement the [ASEAN Plan of Action in Combating Transnational Crime \(2016–2025\)](#), managed under the platform of the Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crime Working Group on Arms Smuggling.

Pacific Islands Forum

Nuclear legacy issues in the Pacific

At their fifty-second Meeting from 6 to 10 November, leaders of the Pacific Islands Forum [expressed](#) ongoing concern regarding outstanding nuclear testing legacy issues. They reaffirmed their commitment to supporting bilateral, regional and multilateral action on outstanding nuclear testing legacy issues in the Blue Pacific Continent. The leaders also commended the Human Rights Council's adoption of resolution [51/35](#), entitled "Technical assistance and capacity-building to address the human rights implications of the nuclear legacy in the Marshall Islands", and recommended full support for its implementation.

On 1 March, the Marshallese community in Fiji commemorated Nuclear Victims Remembrance Day, an annual observance in the Marshall Islands. The event in Suva was co-organized with the University of the South Pacific and the Marshall Islands Student Association. The Acting Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum, Filimon Manoni, attended the commemoration alongside representatives of the National Nuclear Commission of the Marshall Islands, the Pacific Conference of Churches, students and staff of the University of the South Pacific and local residents. In his [remarks](#), the Acting Secretary General recognized the victims and survivors of the Pacific's shared nuclear legacy. He also reaffirmed the collective resolve of the parties to the Rarotonga Treaty to oppose the proliferation of nuclear weapons and radioactive waste.

On 29 August, in his [statement](#) for the International Day against Nuclear Tests, the Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum, Henry Puna, highlighted Forum leaders' concerns about the threat of nuclear contamination to the health, security and future of the Blue Pacific and its people. He also re-emphasized the importance of upholding the nuclear-free zone under the Rarotonga Treaty.

At the regional level, Pacific Islands Forum leaders endorsed the [2050 Strategy Implementation Plan 2023–2030](#), following their 2022 endorsement of the [2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent](#). The Implementation Plan outlines specific goals, outcomes and regional collective actions across seven thematic areas, with nuclear issues as a cross-cutting theme. Under the Plan, ongoing regional work on nuclear legacy issues will continue, including through a preliminary independent review, scheduled to begin in 2024, of nuclear contamination in the Pacific.

At the international level, the second United States–Pacific Islands Forum Leaders Summit was held in September at the White House in Washington, D.C. The participating parties^[13] reaffirmed their commitment to the international nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime, including the Rarotonga Treaty and the NPT, and its central role in maintaining international peace and security. Acknowledging the legacies of the Second World War and cold war nuclear testing, they welcomed the United States' commitment to addressing the Second World War legacy issues and ongoing environmental, public health and welfare concerns in the Marshall Islands.

Decommissioning of the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant

On 6 and 7 February, a high-level Pacific Islands Forum delegation met in Tokyo with the Prime Minister of Japan and relevant ministers to discuss Japan's planned release of water treated by its Advanced Liquid Processing System into the Pacific Ocean. Japan said that it would not release the treated water until doing so was deemed safe.

At their Special Leaders Retreat on 24 February, Forum leaders recalled their strong concerns about the potential threat of nuclear contamination to the health, security and future of the Blue Pacific region and its people. They reaffirmed the importance of ensuring international consultation, as well as adherence to international law and independent, verifiable scientific assessments, as outlined in the declaration adopted at their ninth Leaders Meeting, held in 2021. Despite concerns raised by the Forum's expert panel,^[14] Japan began to release treated water on 24 August after the IAEA found that its approach was consistent with international standards.

At their fifty-second Meeting in November, Forum leaders recalled their concerns about nuclear contamination and emphasized its importance as a transgenerational and possible transboundary issue, particularly in the context of the region's nuclear testing legacy, the Rarotonga Treaty and the 2050 Strategy. Noting in a statement and communiqué that Japan would continue to release treated water over the next 30 years, Forum leaders recommended and encouraged the country to (a) establish the Fukushima issue as a standing agenda item of the Leaders Meeting; and (b) launch an annual political dialogue to address safety issues based on international standards and independent IAEA monitoring. Looking ahead to 2024, Forum leaders committed to continuing the dialogue with Japan through the fifty-third Pacific Islands Forum Leaders Meeting and with the IAEA through a proposed dialogue mechanism.

Europe

European Union

The European Union's non-proliferation and disarmament activities continued to be guided by its 2003 Strategy against Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction ([15708/03](#)) and its strategy entitled "Securing arms, protecting citizens" ([13581/18](#)), addressing illicit firearms, small arms and light weapons and their ammunition. In "A strategic compass for security and defence" ([7371/22](#)), adopted in 2022, the European Union and its member States committed to upholding, supporting and further advancing the disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control framework, in coordination with partners.

Activities related to weapons of mass destruction, including the implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004)

The European Union and its member States actively participated in the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2026 NPT Review Conference, held in Vienna from 31 July to 11 August. The bloc submitted a working paper on a prospective fissile material cut-off treaty ([NPT/CONF.2026/PC.I/WP.4](#)) and organized three events on the margins of the meeting.^[15] Additionally, the European Union and its member States endorsed a joint statement entitled "Addressing the North Korean nuclear challenge" ([NPT/CONF.2026/PC.I/WP.36](#)). It also participated in the debates of the working group on further strengthening the review process, held in Vienna from 24 to 28 July, and submitted another [working paper](#).

Throughout 2023, the European Union continued to support the IAEA in carrying out its responsibilities related to nuclear non-proliferation, energy, safety, security and technical cooperation, including ensuring safety and security in Ukrainian nuclear facilities. The bloc maintained its advocacy for universal adherence to IAEA comprehensive safeguards agreements and additional protocols, which together remained the standard for verifying that declared nuclear material or technology is used only for peaceful purposes. The European Union further supported peaceful uses of nuclear energy through a project amounting to €11.6 million for the period 2020–2023 in support of achieving effective nuclear security, assisting in the universalization of relevant legal instruments and advancing relevant international cooperation.

The European Union and its member States continued to rank among the largest contributors to the IAEA Technical Cooperation Programme, an important tool for enabling the safe, secure and peaceful use of nuclear technology and for meeting the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In that regard, the European Union and its member States made substantial contributions to both the IAEA Technical Cooperation Fund and the IAEA Peaceful

Uses Initiative. Together with its member States, the European Union also remained the second-largest donor to the IAEA Nuclear Security Fund.

The entry into force and universalization of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty remained important objectives for the European Union in 2023. In addition to participating in the tenth ministerial meeting of the Friends of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, in September, the European Union provided financial support under Council decision (CFSP) [2023/2064](#) for a new project to strengthen the monitoring and verification capabilities of the Treaty's Preparatory Commission for the period 2023–2026. In addition, by providing technical support and advice to the Preparatory Commission's Working Group on verification issues (Working Group B) and to participants of various workshops and seminars, the European Union and its member States reinforced their commitment to maintaining and strengthening the Treaty's verification regime.

Under Council decision (CFSP) [2023/1187](#), the European Union undertook a new project to further promote the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism as fundamental elements of the global nuclear security and anti-terrorism architecture. UNODC and the Office of Counter-Terrorism were tasked with implementing the project.

The High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy continued to coordinate the joint commission overseeing implementation of the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action,^[16] designed to provide international assurances that the nuclear programme of the Islamic Republic of Iran is exclusively peaceful.

The European Union maintained its support for Security Council resolution [1540 \(2004\)](#) on the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery through a new project under Council decision (CFSP) [2023/654](#), covering the period 2023–2026. The initiative aims to enhance national and regional efforts and capabilities to implement resolution 1540 (2004), primarily through training, capacity-building and assistance coordinated internally and with other stakeholders.

The European Union continued its strong support for The Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation. Through a new project funded under Council decision (CFSP) [2023/124](#) and implemented by the [Fondation pour la recherche stratégique](#), the bloc continued to support targeted outreach and other activities to promote the universalization and full implementation of the Code.

The European Union maintained its strong commitment to global biosafety and security through various initiatives. It continued to support the Biological Weapons Convention's full and effective implementation, as well as its universalization and confidence-building mechanisms, through dedicated projects under Council decisions (CFSP) [2019/97](#) and

[2021/2072](#). Furthermore, the bloc provided additional funding for projects to enhance biosafety and biosecurity in Ukraine and several Latin American States. The bloc also sustained its support for the Secretary-General's Mechanism for Investigation of Alleged Use of Chemical and Biological Weapons, allocating €3.4 million to the Mechanism through Council decision [\(CFSP\) 2023/654](#).

The European Union continued to support the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) under relevant Council decisions. It provided €2.1 million to support OPCW cyber security, resilience and business continuity ([2021/1026](#)), and €1.6 million to enhance the organization's operational effectiveness through satellite imagery ([2021/2073](#)).

In addition, the European Union allocated another €5.3 million under Council decision (CFSP) [2023/1344](#) to support the full implementation and universalization of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction (Chemical Weapons Convention). The funds were intended to strengthen the OPCW Technical Secretariat's capacity to facilitate and improve States parties' implementation of the Convention and fulfil the OPCW mandate. Specific objectives included verifying the elimination of chemical weapon stockpiles and production facilities, preventing the re-emergence of chemical weapons, responding effectively to chemical weapons use and allegations, and enhancing States parties' preparedness to provide assistance and protection in an emergency.

Activities related to conventional weapons

Throughout 2023, the European Union continued its long-standing support for the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons, including through investments in cooperation and assistance to third countries under Council decision (CFSP) [2022/1965](#).

The bloc collaborated with regional organizations on various projects relating to small arms and light weapons control, focusing on voluntary civilian disarmament campaigns, surplus material collection and destruction, strengthening physical security and stockpile management, and capacity-building for marking, record-keeping and tracing. Under Council decision (CFSP) [2022/847](#), the European Union continued its cooperation with OAS on countering the proliferation of and illicit trafficking in firearms and munitions.

Additionally, the European Union continued to support the development of an internationally recognized arms and ammunition management validation system to prevent illicit proliferation under Council decision (CFSP) [2022/2275](#). It also extended further assistance in implementing the [Roadmap for a Sustainable Solution to the Illegal Possession, Misuse and](#)

Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) and Their Ammunition in the Western Balkans by 2024 through Council decision (CFSP) [2022/2321](#).

Furthermore, the European Union continued to pursue small-arms-control activities under the following legislation:

- Council decisions (CFSP) [2019/2009](#) and [2021/2133](#) to support Ukraine and the Western Balkans, respectively, in countering trafficking in weapons, ammunition and explosives with support from the South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons;
- Council decision (CFSP) [2018/1789](#) to help to combat the illicit trade in and proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the member States of the League of Arab States;
- Council decision (CFSP) [2019/2191](#) in support of iTrace, a global reporting mechanism on illicit small arms and light weapons, as well as other illicit conventional weapons and ammunition in conflict-affected areas.

The European Union promoted the universalization and effective implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty through various activities. Under Council decision (CFSP) [2021/2309](#), it maintained financial support for the Treaty's implementation support programme, providing technical assistance to countries in Africa, Latin America, Central and South-East Asia, Eastern Europe and the Caucasus. The European Union approved funding for a new phase in its support for the Arms Trade Treaty secretariat under Council decision (CFSP) [2023/2296](#). It also continued to promote effective arms export controls in Southern and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, the Middle East and North Africa, and Central Asia through Council decision (CFSP) [2023/2539](#).

The European Union sustained its support for the Oslo Action Plan 2020–2024 for implementing the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention under Council decision (CFSP) [2021/257](#).

Activities in the area of emerging technologies and arms control

In 2023, the European Union continued to support capacity-building and knowledge-sharing on new and emerging technologies related to arms and arms control. The bloc provided that support primarily via two projects:

- "Promoting responsible innovation in artificial intelligence for peace and security", implemented by the Office for Disarmament Affairs and the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, and funded through Council decision (CFSP) [2022/2269](#);

- “Unlocking innovation: enabling technologies and international security”, implemented by UNIDIR and financed under Council decision (CFSP) [2022/2320](#).

Other relevant activities or institutional developments

The European Union Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Consortium of think tanks received further support within the framework of Council decision (CFSP) [2022/597](#), covering the period 2022–2025. The [twelfth European Union Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Conference](#) took place in Brussels on 4 and 5 December.

North Atlantic Treaty Organization

At the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Summit in Vilnius on 11 July, Heads of State and Government reaffirmed the collective determination of NATO Allies to uphold and support existing disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control agreements and commitments. They [pledged](#) to further strengthen arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation as key elements of Euro-Atlantic security, taking into account the prevailing security environment and the security of all Allies.

The Allies reiterated their strong and enduring commitment to the NPT and its full implementation across its three pillars. In 2023, the Allies continued to actively support progress towards the Treaty's universalization and full implementation in the context of its review process. They sought to create the security environment for a world without nuclear weapons, including by supporting the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the voluntary cessation of fissile material production for use in nuclear weapons. However, on 2 November, the Russian Federation withdrew its ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Meanwhile, China remained the only one of the five nuclear-weapon States recognized under the NPT without a voluntary moratorium on fissile material production.

NATO continued to work with Allies, partners and other international organizations to combat the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and to deter and defend against chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear threats. The Allies sustained their support for the full implementation and strengthening of the Biological Weapons Convention and the Chemical Weapons Convention, viewing those treaties as pillars of the rules-based international order.

The eighteenth iteration of the annual NATO Conference on Arms Control, Disarmament and Weapons of Mass Destruction Non-Proliferation, held in Washington, D.C. in April, provided a venue for the Allies and partners to discuss upholding multilateral regimes against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, as well as current challenges to arms control and disarmament.

The Russian Federation's war of aggression against Ukraine continued to undermine Euro-Atlantic security and further erode the conventional arms control architecture in Europe. Throughout 2023, the Allies pursued efforts to implement their conventional arms control obligations and commitments in the Euro-Atlantic area, despite the Russian Federation's withdrawals from the Treaty on Open Skies in December 2021 and the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe in November 2023.

On 7 November, the North Atlantic Council [condemned](#) the Russian Federation's decision to withdraw from the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, and its war of aggression against Ukraine, which contravenes the Treaty's objectives. Noting that the withdrawal from the Treaty was the latest in a series of Russian actions systematically undermining Euro-Atlantic security, the Allied States parties decided, with the full support of all NATO Allies, to suspend the Treaty's operation for as long as necessary, in accordance with their rights under international law. However, the Allies reiterated their continued commitment to reducing military risk and preventing misperceptions and conflicts.

NATO and the Allies continued to support the implementation of the Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons. Specifically, they supported States in managing weapons and ammunition stockpiles and destroying surplus material. Beneficiary States also developed their capacities through tailored projects to combat illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons and their ammunition.

NATO, together with Jordan, hosted the first international conference on the challenges of small arms and light weapons control in the Middle East and North Africa. Held in Amman on 3 and 4 October, the event provided a venue for identifying synergies, exchanging information on best practices and networking.

In 2023, NATO also focused on raising awareness about the scale of contamination from mines and unexploded remnants of war on the territory of Ukraine as a result of the Russian war of aggression.

In the context of the women, peace and security agenda, NATO launched an online training course on the [NATO Guidelines for Gender Mainstreaming in Small Arms and Light Weapons Projects](#), designed for use in member and partner countries.

Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

Non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction

In 2023, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) continued to assist participating States in implementing Security Council resolution [1540 \(2004\)](#). With funding

from the European Union, OSCE progressed in implementing a biological safety and security project in Ukraine, as well as providing ongoing technical assistance related to, and raising awareness about, resolution 1540 (2004). It carried out its efforts jointly with the Office for Disarmament Affairs, and in close cooperation with the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004) and its Group of Experts.

Small arms and light weapons and stockpiles of conventional ammunition

The OSCE participating States pursued stronger controls on small arms and light weapons, as well as improved safety and security of conventional ammunition stockpiles. They continued to exchange information, including about the implementation of relevant commitments, such as the Programme of Action. In addition, OSCE partnered with the Office for Disarmament Affairs in efforts to facilitate and increase national reporting. In 2023, 67 per cent of OSCE participating States exchanged information related to small arms and light weapons and stockpiles of conventional ammunition.

OSCE also supported participating States in fulfilling their commitments to mitigate security and safety risks from small arms and light weapons and stockpiles of conventional ammunition. To that end, it mobilized more than €50 million to develop and implement 20 assistance projects. That targeted aid involved destroying surplus conventional ammunition, explosive material and detonators; disposing of rocket fuel components, including hazardous waste; improving physical infrastructure, stockpile management and security practices; building capacity for mine action while clearing and disposing of explosive hazards; and combating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects.

Activities related to general security and disarmament

In 2023, OSCE continued to witness deep geopolitical tensions amid the region's unprecedented security situation. With the war in Ukraine negatively affecting the security architecture in and beyond Europe, the Forum for Security Cooperation maintained its "no business as usual" approach, and it remained an important platform for participating States to exchange information and views on political and military aspects of security, particularly with respect to the war in Ukraine and other conflicts in the region. Meanwhile, under its mandate, OSCE supported participating States through a wide range of programmatic activities.

Other relevant activities or institutional developments

The OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre continued to develop its new Information Management and Reporting System, designed to improve transparency, enhance situational awareness and support early warnings related to political and military issues through analysis of geographic

and military information exchanged among OSCE participating States. The platform is available to all participating States through the OSCE secure communications network.

The Centre conducted its [Scholarship for Peace and Security programme](#) on arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation in the OSCE area to promote women's and youth participation in related policymaking, planning and implementation. In total, 150 young professionals—86 per cent women—from 48 participating States and nine OSCE Partners for Cooperation enrolled in an updated version of its nine-week interactive online course. In cooperation with other international organizations,^[17] OSCE held a one-week in-depth training session in Vienna, attended by 42 women from 37 countries who had graduated from the scholarship programme. Participants reported that the course deepened their understanding of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control, as well as inspiring them to engage further in conflict prevention and resolution efforts.

South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons

Activities related to conventional arms

Throughout 2023, the South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SEESAC)^[18] maintained its support for authorities in South-East and Eastern Europe, working to build effective, accountable and inclusive security-sector institutions. It contributed to regional confidence and safety by facilitating regional cooperation at the strategic and operational levels, paired with targeted assistance on the ground.

SEESAC marked these achievements in small arms and light weapons control during the year:

- Supported [small arms and light weapons commissions](#) and the [South-East Europe Firearms Experts Network](#) in regularly convening local officials from the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and the Western Balkans;
- Engaged with authorities in the Western Balkans through tailored [workshops](#), meetings and technical advice on harmonizing small-arms legal frameworks with the European Union acquis;
- Enhanced capacities for firearms-related investigations, including by (a) helping to establish firearms focal points to provide expert advice and technical equipment, organizing tailor-made [training](#), and developing standard operating procedures, [study visits](#), [regional training](#) and [workshops](#); (b) developing standard operating procedures for authorities on detection, risk analysis, investigations and emergency situations, as well as conducting [training](#) programmes and providing equipment worth more than €2.7 million; (c) completing needs

assessments for crime scene investigators in four jurisdictions and organizing a [regional workshop on crime scene investigations](#); and (d) facilitating operational cooperation and building institutional capacities to combat arms trafficking, including through regional meetings of [border](#) and [criminal](#) police and an [annual workshop for firearms focal points](#) from the Republic of Moldova, the Western Balkans and the European Union;

- Raised awareness about the dangers of firearms misuse by (a) organizing two meetings of the [Regional Awareness-Raising Task Force](#), helping to create a standardized regional approach to communication with the media and the public; and (b) supporting regional and local awareness-raising campaigns that led to the unprecedented voluntary collection of [82,398 small arms and light weapons and 26,485 pieces of explosive ordnance](#) in Serbia, as well as greater public understanding about the dangers of [celebratory shooting](#) in Kosovo^[19] and the [misuse of pyrotechnics](#) in Serbia;
- Helped to further integrate gender considerations into small arms and light weapons control by (a) advancing the development of tools for emergency responders to [assess and address risks of firearms misuse in domestic violence](#) and for officials to [consider requests for firearms licences in a gender-sensitive manner](#); (b) [training journalists in the region to report ethically on incidents of gender-based violence involving small arms or light weapons](#); (c) finalizing an analysis of media reporting on firearms misuse by men against women in incidents of gender-based violence in the Western Balkans; and (d) drafting guidelines for interior and police ministries and directly training journalists and local officials on effective media communications about the use of small arms and light weapons in gender-based violence;
- Maintained the [Armed Violence Monitoring Platform](#), a resource to develop evidence-based, data-driven arms control policies;
- Published four quarterly issues of [Armed Violence Monitor](#) and four issues of *In Focus*, devoting the latter to discussions of [accidental shootings](#), [weapon seizures](#), [crimes involving small arms](#) and [the use of firearms in domestic violence](#);
- Bolstered transparency in arms exports by publishing the [sixteenth](#) regional report on the matter, covering the year 2021;
- Supported physical security and stockpile management of small arms and light weapons and ammunition, including by (a) helping authorities to destroy [1,314](#) small arms and light weapons in the Republic of Moldova in May, followed by [798](#) in Montenegro in June, [1,000](#) in Kosovo in July, and [820](#) in Bosnia and Herzegovina in October; (b) supporting ongoing upgrades to security infrastructure in a small arms and light weapons storage unit and 31 evidence rooms across the region; and (c) training [200 police officers in Serbia](#) and [dozens of officials from the wider region](#).

In addition, SEESAC coordinated and monitored the implementation of the *Roadmap for a Sustainable Solution to the Illegal Possession, Misuse and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) and Their Ammunition in the Western Balkans by 2024* through the following activities:

- Organized regular [regional coordination meetings](#) of relevant Governments, donors and international and regional organizations, as well as supporting [local coordination meetings](#) of small arms and light weapons commissions;
- Issued regular progress reports on the road map's implementation, including its [tenth](#) and [eleventh](#) regional assessments;
- [Oversaw](#) a comprehensive, independent [midterm review](#);
- Planned for a [high-level meeting](#) hosted in May by the European Commission on the implementation of specific elements of the European Union's action plan on firearms trafficking, including steps reflected in the Western Balkans Roadmap;
- Co-organized a [regional high-level meeting](#) in June with the Parliamentary Forum on Small Arms and Light Weapons, the Regional Cooperation Council and the Parliament of Albania on the importance of parliamentary engagement in peace and security;
- Initiated the development of an updated road map for the period 2025–2030, in line with recommendations from the road map's [midterm review](#) and following an agreement by Western Balkans authorities to continue implementing the existing version beyond 2024;
- Fulfilled its duties as the secretariat of the Western Balkans Small Arms and Light Weapons Control Roadmap [Multi-Partner Trust Fund](#), established in 2019 by UNDP and UNODC. In 2023, an independent [evaluation](#) of the Fund was completed, and its conclusions were presented to key stakeholders. The trust fund received new contributions during the year from France, Germany, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden, amounting to \$3.36 million, and bringing its total value to about \$27 million.

Activities related to peace, security and disarmament in general

In 2023, SEESAC supported further cooperation to incorporate a gender perspective into security-sector reform processes in the Western Balkans. With funding from Norway and Slovakia, SEESAC pursued the second phase of its "Gender equality in the military" project,^[20] marking the following achievements during the year:

- Collaborated with stakeholders through regional platforms to organize the [sixteenth regional meeting](#) of gender equality mechanisms in ministries of defence and armed forces in the Western Balkans, and the [first meeting](#) of gender advisers from ministries of defence and armed forces in the Western Balkans;

- Conducted two gender coach programmes, in the [Armed Forces of Montenegro](#) and at the Military Academy in Serbia, and organized the [first regional key leaders' seminar](#), further bolstering the understanding of gender-responsive leadership among high-level military personnel and decision makers;
- Aided in developing an [online gender-awareness course](#) and [tailor-made knowledge tools](#) to standardize internal gender training procedures within defence ministries and armed forces, as per the 2022 [regional baseline study on integrating a gender perspective in military education](#).

The final project [evaluation](#) highlighted the initiative's unique approaches to building internal capacities and expertise in support of gender equality within defence ministries and armed forces.

Regional Arms Control Verification and Implementation Assistance Centre – Centre for Security Cooperation

In 2023, the Regional Arms Control Verification and Implementation Assistance Centre (RACVIAC) – Centre for Security Cooperation^[21] organized 10 activities, including presentations, discussions, practical activities, exchanges of experience and tabletop exercises. More than 260 experts and participants took part.

On 1 May, Constantin Mihail Grigorie was elected to a three-year term as Director of RACVIAC.

Activities related to weapons of mass destruction

RACVIAC organized five activities for its Counter Weapons of Mass Destruction Network in 2023, four of them held in person in Rakitje, Croatia, and one conducted virtually.

The first activity, entitled "[Biological Weapons Convention workshop](#)", took place on 1 and 2 March in partnership with the Biological Weapons Convention's Implementation Support Unit. Participants discussed the implementation of the Convention's article X, including its role in fostering regional cooperation and contributing to preparedness and resilience among RACVIAC member States with respect to biological incidents, regardless of their origin. The workshop gathered 18 participants representing nine countries.

The second activity, "[Regional Nuclear Security Cooperation Project – Nuclear Security Cyber Roundtable](#)", was focused on applying lessons learned to the development of nuclear security policies in participating countries. The event was held from 27 to 30 March, bringing together 27 participants from 11 countries, with lecturers from Croatia and Slovenia, as well as the United States Department of Energy.

The third activity, "[Regional Workshop on Nuclear Security Detection Architecture Design, Strategy and Planning](#)", took place from 24 to 28 April. Its goals were to promote nuclear security detection architecture principles and concepts and to provide partner nations with knowledge and tools to develop, implement and sustain indigenous national-level detection capabilities. Four lecturers and 11 participants from six countries took part.

The fourth activity, the [Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction Network Conference](#), was held from 26 to 28 November under the theme "The impact of hybrid conflict on regional weapons of mass destruction proliferation". Nine lecturers and 23 participants from nine countries considered hybrid threats from the war in Ukraine and reviewed the status of the Network's four Phase II projects: developing a regional countering risk atlas, led by North Macedonia; creating a common approach to biosecurity and the malicious use of life sciences, led by Romania; establishing a regional dual-use and emerging technologies hub, led by Croatia, Montenegro and Kosovo; and holding the annual trends assessment conference, led by Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The fifth activity was a [virtual high-level strategy meeting](#) conducted on 14 December. The participants discussed progress under joint multi-year efforts to enhance regional cooperation in securing nuclear materials and facilities in South-East Europe, with a focus on establishing a common understanding among RACVIAC members and supporting a graded approach in developing and establishing related methodologies. The online meeting brought together four lecturers and 25 participants from nine countries.

Activities related to conventional arms control

RACVIAC organized its [orientation course](#) on the Agreement on Sub-regional Arms Control (Dayton Agreement, article IV), aimed at training participants to perform inspection or escort duties, while fostering mutual trust, confidence and transparency. The 2023 iteration of the course, funded by Croatia and Germany, took place in Serbia from 26 to 31 March. Conducted in the official languages of the parties to the Dayton Agreement, the course incorporated both theoretical and practical components. It had two main objectives: to inform and educate the participants on the Dayton Agreement, with a particular focus on article IV; and to train the participants in the role of inspectors and escorts within the framework of the Agreement. The course was attended by 36 participants, lecturers and speakers from 15 countries and organizations from the region and beyond.

In addition, RACVIAC held its [course on compliance and verification](#) under the Vienna Document 2011 on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures. Organized to facilitate the implementation of the Vienna Document and to increase confidence and security within South-East Europe, the course has been a regular feature of RACVIAC's programme since 2001. Germany and Hungary supported preparations for the 2023 iteration, which took place

from 18 to 21 September in Hungary. Through theoretical lectures conducted in Budapest and practical activities carried out in Kecskemé and Tata, participating stakeholders received a comprehensive overview of the Vienna Document, including theoretical and practical considerations in its implementation. The course gathered almost 40 participants and lecturers from 16 countries and organizations from South-East Europe and other European locations.

Activities related to peace, security and disarmament

The Verification Research, Training and Information Centre collaborated with RACVIAC to host a [course on non-proliferation and disarmament law](#) in Rakitje, Croatia, on 10 and 11 May, with financial support from Austria. Its aims were to enhance participants' understanding of international law in the context of non-proliferation and disarmament, develop their ability to analyse related topics from a legal perspective, and clarify how their professional roles intersect with this area of law. Drawing 22 participants from nine countries and organizations, the event brought together both military and civilian officials.

RACVIAC's [Arms Control Symposium](#) took place on 14 October in Rakitje, with financial support from Croatia and Germany. A cornerstone of the organization's calendar for over 15 years, the symposium aims to provide a regional platform for updating South-East Europe on pertinent developments related to arms control. The event brought together stakeholders to discuss and share ideas, taking into consideration recent developments in the subregion, the rest of Europe and beyond. Its 2023 iteration saw considerable engagement, with 43 individuals from 18 countries participating as speakers and attendees.

RACVIAC also co-organized the Conventional Ammunition Management Seminar with the Office for Disarmament Affairs and the Ammunition Management Advisory Team of the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining. Held in Rakitje from 28 to 30 November, the seminar was intended to build the capacity needed among technical personnel to manage weapons and ammunition safely and securely. The focus was on developing and implementing operational procedures, exchanging ideas to improve through-life management practices, and promoting international standards and guidelines. The seminar included presentations, group tabletop exercises and discussions. It attracted 16 participants and 12 distinguished speakers.

Middle East

League of Arab States

In 2023, the League of Arab States continued its efforts to coordinate and develop a unified regional and international position among its 22 member States on matters related to disarmament and arms control.

Activities related to weapons of mass destruction

Based on recommendations from the Arab Senior Officials Committee on Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, the League's Ministerial Council adopted resolutions 8877 of 8 March and 8941 of 6 September, both entitled "Establishing a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East". Through those resolutions, the Ministerial Council established the groundwork for the League's participation in the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2026 NPT Review Conference, the sixty-seventh regular session of the IAEA General Conference, and the fourth session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction. In addition, the Ministerial Council considered the risks from the Bushehr Nuclear Power Plant in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The League of Arab States partnered with Qatar, one of its 22 member States, to co-organize the second Arab Forum for Arms Control, Disarmament and Non-Proliferation, in Doha from 2 to 4 May. The event was attended by 70 participants from 21 Arab States, as well as high-ranking officials and experts, including representatives of the United Nations, the IAEA and various research centres.

Conventional arms

The League continued to implement the second phase of the joint project entitled "Combating the illicit trade in and proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the member States of the League of Arab States", with implementation support from the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) and the World Customs Organization, as well as Small Arms Survey, an independent research institute. The League also convened national training courses in Bahrain, the Comoros, Iraq, Jordan, Mauritania and Yemen.

Emerging, cross-cutting and other issues

The Council of the League of Arab States acted at the summit and ministerial levels to adopt resolutions 8935 of 19 May and 8955 of 6 September, both entitled "Strengthening Arab cooperation in the field of cybersecurity and information and communications technologies in

the context of international security". In the resolutions, the Council decided to establish a regional focal point to coordinate Arab efforts to develop a unified, common position in that field.

The League also joined the United Nations in September to host a consultation meeting on "Responsible State behaviour in the use of information and communications technologies in the context of international security", at its headquarters in Cairo. Experts from 13 Arab States attended.

Other relevant activities or institutional developments

To help to raise awareness and build capacities within the League of Arab States, the Office for Disarmament Affairs and the Department of Peace Operations held several online training courses on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration operations for staff of the League.

United Nations Development Programme

Saving Lives Entity: an innovative, comprehensive approach to sustainable security and development

UNDP and the Office for Disarmament Affairs continued to jointly manage SALIENT, a trust facility operating on the principle that small-arms control and armed violence reduction must be nationally led, people-centred, anticipatory and responsive. (For more information on SALIENT, see [chap. 3](#).)

In 2023, SALIENT pilot projects in Cameroon, Jamaica and South Sudan were completed. Those projects involved supporting legislative and policy frameworks (including for gender-mainstreaming), building law enforcement capacity, raising awareness and educating community members. Civil society actors, journalists and youths participated in and helped to coordinate the activities, particularly those related to attitudes and perceptions towards violence, guns and masculinity.

The proliferation of weapons fuels the systematic and widespread occurrence of sexual violence in conflict and violence against women in general, with firearms used in at least [70 per cent](#) of all incidents of conflict-related sexual violence. In response, by the end of 2023, SALIENT had contributed approximately \$940,000 towards meaningfully integrating gender considerations in its activities. As a requirement, 31.75 per cent of all project funding is allocated to activities in direct pursuit of gender equality or women's empowerment.

In Cameroon, SALIENT coordinators convened workshops with national experts, government actors, civil society representatives, media personnel, religious and customary leaders, and

residents to help communities to take stock of their vulnerabilities and resilience to violence induced by small arms and light weapons. Through its project in the country, SALIENT helped to establish a community of practitioners involved in countering the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, and it assisted those practitioners in framing small-arms control within Cameroon's national development agenda. SALIENT also supported the following activities: training and education of 50 women ex-combatants; gender-informed discussions among government representatives on regulating and controlling small arms and light weapons and their ammunition; and awareness-raising among 30 law enforcement and criminal justice officers about linkages between gender and small arms issues, the women, peace and security agenda, and efforts to track the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 16 on promoting peaceful, just and inclusive societies. Additionally, SALIENT supported the country in developing its first "gender and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration" strategy.

In Jamaica, SALIENT helped to strengthen the interdiction capacity of law enforcement officials at the nation's maritime and seaports, contributing to ongoing efforts to reduce access to firearms and ammunition. By the end of the year, officials could better analyse firearms and ammunition evidence at ports of entry, exit and transit. The funding facility also helped to lay the groundwork for Jamaica's first "violence audit", allowing the Government to incorporate data on community-level violence into its development planning and decision-making processes. SALIENT supported the development of guidelines to bolster the institutional framework for responding to school violence, while also assisting teachers in creating strategies to prevent conflict and violence in schools. Those efforts included after-school youth programmes, peer-to-peer conflict resolution discussions and mediated sessions on masculinity and gun culture.

In South Sudan, SALIENT coordinators worked with local authorities and communities to catalyse voluntary civilian disarmament efforts, while actively encouraging women's participation and building trust between police and security institutions and the people they serve. Activities included 11 senior leadership dialogues on the proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons and voluntary civilian disarmament, where participants learned to understand disarmament as a voluntary process, not one forced upon citizens by the security apparatus. The dialogues reached 454 leaders, including governors, deputy governors, mayors and heads of various ministries, as well as representatives of the organized forces and civil society. In addition, SALIENT supported local police officers in hosting their own radio talk shows, raising awareness among more than 2 million listeners. It also facilitated mentorship programmes and the establishment of 10 new women's professional networks, as well as the operationalization of existing ones, within the South Sudan National Police Service, increasing the quality of engagement and trust with community members, particularly women. The networks further connected women officers, helping them to share best practices and advocate for a gender-responsive police service that addresses the security needs of women

and children. At targeted community outreach events, officers heard first-hand accounts from women, youth and children of the harrowing impact of armed violence in South Sudan, including how illicit firearms use can aggravate crimes such as child trafficking, forced marriage, rape and domestic violence.

On 25 October, UNDP and the Office for Disarmament Affairs co-organized a high-level panel discussion on SALIENT, as an event on the margins of the meetings of the General Assembly, First Committee. Moderated by the Peacebuilding Support Office, the discussion showcased achievements from the three pilot projects, shared lessons learned and cultivated support for the innovative approach of SALIENT. Over 100 participants attended, including permanent representatives and United Nations resident coordinators from recipient and donor countries.

In 2023, the SALIENT Programme Coordination Team selected five new beneficiary countries: Ghana, Honduras, Kyrgyzstan, Panama and Papua New Guinea. Through a series of in-person and virtual scoping missions, the team identified national priorities on armed violence reduction and small arms and light weapons control in those States, engaging with civil society, government institutions and United Nations country teams. Implementation of the new projects was set to begin in 2024, contributing to a balanced regional distribution across the eight projects scheduled for completion in SALIENT's first phase (2020–2024).

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

In the second year since its establishment, the Firearms Trafficking Section of UNODC continued to support Member States in implementing the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition (Firearms Protocol), supplementing the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime. UNODC also provided technical assistance to countries in West and Central Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Central Asia, and Eastern and South-East Europe. Those efforts contributed to the implementation of the Firearms Protocol while also advancing target 16.4 of the Sustainable Development Goals on reducing illicit arms flows.

In 2023, UNODC support for intergovernmental processes included organizing the tenth meeting of the [Working Group on Firearms](#) in Vienna on 3 and 4 May. Participants focused on international and inter-agency cooperation in accordance with the Firearms Protocol, as well as national experiences with implementing the definitions set forth in that instrument.

As part of its legal and policy activities, UNODC provided legislative advice to strengthen firearms control regimes and criminal offences related to firearms criminality. That support included tailored legislative assessments, gap analyses and drafting workshops, helping to reinforce relevant legal frameworks in 13 States.^[22] UNODC also helped to promote the ratification of the Firearms Protocol in five States.^[23]

In the context of growing concern over the role of illicit firearms in transnational organized crime, terrorism and armed conflict, UNODC continued to assist Member States in implementing preventive and security measures envisaged in the Firearms Protocol and other relevant instruments. Notably, it finalized the development of record-keeping software for the integrated firearms registry system (goIFAR) to help States to track firearms throughout their life cycle, in line with commitments made under the Firearms Protocol, the Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons and the International Tracing Instrument, as well as other international and regional arrangements. After conducting a mission in Senegal in 2022, UNODC carried out a second mission in Honduras in July 2023 to customize the software to the country's needs. UNODC also provided six States^[24] with technical equipment, including X-ray scanners, to detect illegal firearms.

In the Western Balkans, the Firearms Trafficking Section prioritized the matter of small-arms trafficking through postal and express courier parcels. It developed a manual for X-ray detection and trained customs authorities and postal operators to analyse X-ray images of packages to detect firearms, with emphasis given to their parts, components and ammunition. UNODC supported the development of eight memorandums of understanding, signed during the year by customs administrations and designated postal operators, aimed at enhancing cooperation and information exchange on firearms trafficking. Furthermore, it helped to develop 10 standard operating procedures for countering firearms trafficking in postal parcels.

In its ongoing assistance to States in implementing relevant preventive and security measures against diversion and illicit trafficking of firearms, UNODC handed over a storage warehouse for seized arms and ammunition to the National Gendarmerie of the Niger.

UNODC also produced publications aimed at bolstering criminal justice responses against the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, their parts and components and ammunition. It launched a global capacity-building toolkit, the *Guidelines on the Investigation and Prosecution of Firearms Offences*, in an initial version customized for the Western Balkans and the Caribbean. In parallel, the Office developed the *Digest of Firearms Trafficking and Related Crimes Cases*, examining cases from around the world that illustrate challenges and opportunities in investigating, prosecuting and adjudicating such crimes.

In 2023, UNODC conducted more than 30 specialized workshops and training courses to participants from 31 countries.^[25] Those courses strengthened the capacities of 388 criminal justice practitioners in detecting, identifying and classifying firearms, managing crime scenes, handling electronic evidence, applying investigative techniques and firearms tracing practices, participating in joint investigation teams, collecting data, and engaging in international cooperation and information exchange.

UNODC maintained its mentoring support to countries related to investigating firearms trafficking cases, leading to the submission of several mutual legal assistance requests, as well as the formation of two joint investigation teams in Africa and two informal contact groups in Latin America. UNODC also assisted authorities in organizing two law enforcement operations tackling firearms trafficking and related crime in Africa and Latin America, involving more than 2,300 officers from 11 countries.^[26]

Meanwhile, UNODC continued to promote regular exchanges between small-arms-control and criminal justice practitioners. Its Firearms Trafficking Section organized a [regional meeting of practitioners](#) from 14 to 16 June in Ankara in coordination with the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre, part of the Office of Counter-Terrorism. Participants focused on data collection, information-sharing and practical approaches to addressing cases of small arms and light weapons trafficking and terrorism. The meeting brought together participants from the five Central Asian countries: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

In the context of its global initiative to monitor illicit arms flows, UNODC began to develop web-scraping technology to automatically collect and analyse information on firearms seizures. To strengthen national capacities for systematically collecting, analysing and submitting data on seizures, UNODC organized two workshops on data collection in the Caribbean, one for Central Asian countries and one for African countries. Data collected during those exercises were expected to directly support efforts to monitor global progress under target 16.4 of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Furthermore, UNODC worked on developing three subregional studies on firearms trafficking and related forms of crime in West Africa, Central Asia and the Western Balkans, scheduled for publication in 2024. It also developed three thematic issue papers, to be released in 2024, on the ways that illicit firearms trafficking and diversion are linked to drug trafficking and human trafficking. Additionally, the Firearms Trafficking Section continued to update its [dedicated firearms portal](#), which, by the end of 2023, contained information on 211 firearms trafficking cases and 341 pieces of firearms-related legislation.

Footnotes

[1] Founded in 1971, the Pacific Islands Forum is the Pacific region's premier political and economic policy organization comprising 18 Member countries. The pre-eminent decision-making body of the Forum is the Forum Leaders Meeting.

[2] Among others: Africa Energy Conference, in Kampala from 14 to 17 March; workshop for nuclear power newcomer States on the "Challenges and issues in capacity-building for ensuring nuclear energy sustainable development", at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory, United States, from 27 to 30 March; Joint Annual Meeting of the Institute of Nuclear Materials Management and the European Safeguards Research and Development Association, in Vienna from 26 to 30 May; Summit for a New Global Financial Pact, in Paris on 23 June; and African Energy Week, in Cape Town in October.

[3] Algeria, Botswana, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ghana, Malawi, Morocco, Namibia, Niger, Rwanda, South Africa, Tunisia, United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia.

[4] Center for Civilians in Conflict and West Africa Network for Peacebuilding.

[5] Ammunition Management Advisory Team, Small Arms Survey, Mines Advisory Group, and West Africa Action Network on Small Arms.

[6] Office for Disarmament Affairs (Conventional Arms Branch), UNIDIR, UNODC, Economic Community of Central African States, ECOWAS, West African Economic and Monetary Union, Ammunition Management Advisory Team, Institute for Security Studies, and Laboratoire d'analyse régionale et d'expertise sociale.

[7] Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Montserrat, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago.

[8] The SADC secretariat encouraged member States to report other activities they were pursuing in support of the Silencing the Guns initiative.

[9] By ethnic origin: 768 Afro-Colombians, 1,306 Indigenous people, 9,529 mestizos and 86 migrants.

[10] By ethnic origin: 542 Afro-Colombians, three Indigenous people, 2,577 mestizos and 29 migrants.

[11] Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay and Uruguay.

[12] Chile, Colombia, Dominican Republic and Panama.

[13] Australia, Cook Islands, Fiji, French Polynesia, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and United States.

[14] In pursuit of commitments made by Forum leaders at their ninth Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting with Japan and in view of the capacity gaps and constraints among the Pacific Islands, Forum members nominated and appointed in December 2021 a [panel of independent scientific experts](#) to independently assess and advise Forum members on the data and information provided by Japan.

[15] EU support for the IAEA Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship Programme; [Perspectives on the Middle East WMD-free zone](#), co-organized with UNIDIR; and [Uplifting nuclear safeguards in Africa – AFCONE, EU and Finland working together for sustainability](#), co-organized with Finland and AFCONE.

[16] The European Union continued to support the full and effective implementation of a restored Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and of Security Council resolution [2231 \(2015\)](#). The European Union continued its full support for the IAEA, which is tasked under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action with monitoring and verifying nuclear commitments by the Islamic Republic of Iran.

[17] Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO), IAEA, UNODC, the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs and others.

[18] SEESAC is a joint initiative of UNDP and the Regional Cooperation Council.

[19] References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council resolution [1244 \(1999\)](#).

[20] Strengthening of Regional Cooperation on Gender Mainstreaming in Security Sector Reform in the Western Balkans, Phase II (2018–2023).

[21] RACVIAC was established in 2000 as an initiative of the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe. At the end of 2023, it had nine members (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Romania, Serbia and Türkiye), as well as 14 associate members and six observers.

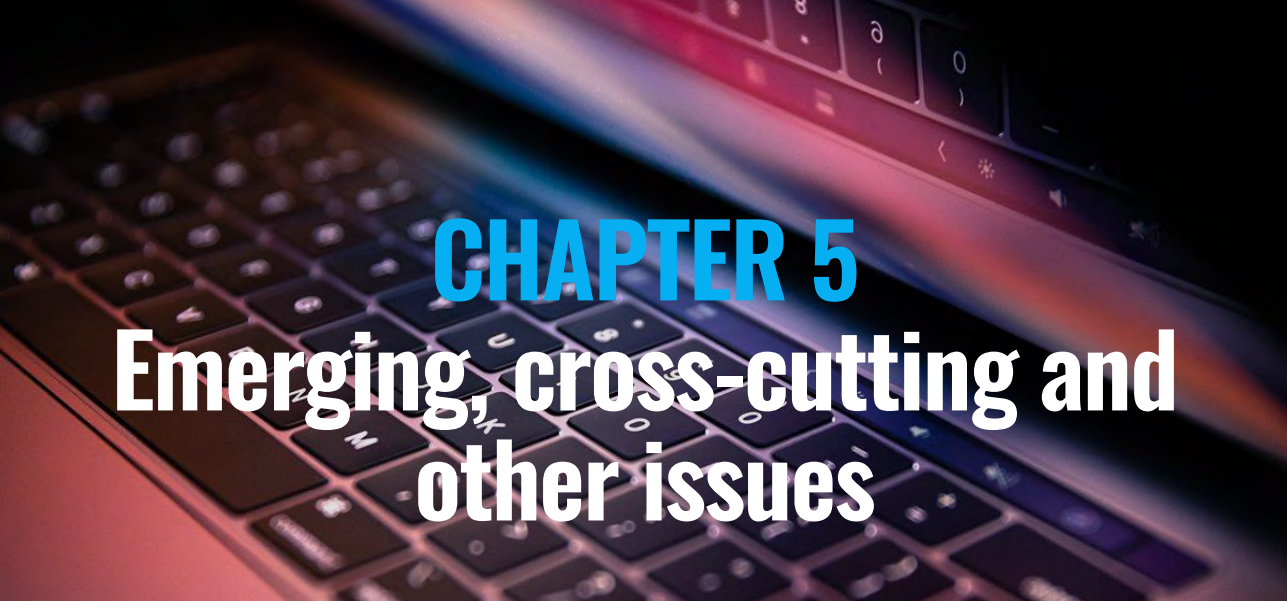
[22] Albania, Bahamas, Belize, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ghana, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Saint Lucia, Serbia, Trinidad and Tobago, and Turkmenistan.

[23] Australia, Malta, Saint Lucia, Somalia and South Sudan.

[24] Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Guyana, Saint Lucia, Trinidad and Tobago, and Ukraine.

[25] Argentina, Benin, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Ghana, Guinea, Guyana, Kyrgyzstan, Mali, Mauritania, Montenegro, Niger, North Macedonia, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Saint Lucia, Senegal, Serbia, Trinidad and Tobago, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of).

[26] [Operation KAFO IV](#) was conducted in Africa and involved Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad, Guinea, Mali and Mauritania. [Operation Armstrong](#), conducted in Latin America and co-organized with the European Union, involved Brazil, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador and Panama.



CHAPTER 5

Emerging, cross-cutting and other issues

Let us not only think about where we wish to be in the next twenty-five years, but also the many steps we must take along the way to get there. Information and communications technologies will not lie dormant, so neither should our collective efforts to address associated risks.

— *Izumi Nakamitsu* High Representative for Disarmament Affairs

Developments and trends, 2023

In the 2023 sessions of various United Nations bodies, the international community continued to make progress in addressing several emerging challenges related to developments in science and technology and their implications for international peace and security.



Next-generation artificial intelligence (AI) practitioners and students attend a two-day capacity-building workshop on responsible AI for peace and security. The training, held in Malmö, Sweden, in November, was organized by the Office for Disarmament Affairs and SIPRI.

On outer space, the Open-ended Working Group on Reducing Space Threats through Norms, Rules and Principles of Responsible Behaviours, established pursuant to General Assembly resolution [76/231](#), held its final two substantive sessions. Nevertheless, despite holding a wide-ranging discussion,^[4] the Working Group was ultimately unable to adopt a final report. The year also included the first substantive session of the Group of Governmental Experts on Further Practical Measures for the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space. Established pursuant to General Assembly resolution [77/250](#), the Group is mandated to consider and make recommendations on the substantial elements of an international legally binding instrument related to the prevention of an arms race in outer space. It is scheduled to hold an additional session in 2024.

In addition, the Disarmament Commission successfully concluded its discussions and adopted recommendations on the practical implementation of transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities (for more information, see [chap. 7](#)). Reflecting different views on the approach to prevent an arms race in outer space, the General Assembly approved two new open-ended working groups, one mandated to meet from 2024 to 2025 and the other from 2024 to 2028.

Meanwhile, the Open-ended Working Group on Security of and in the Use of Information and Communications Technologies 2021–2025 held its fourth, fifth and sixth substantive sessions and adopted its second annual progress report by consensus ([A/78/265](#)). The Working Group agreed, inter alia, to establish a global, intergovernmental directory of points of contact to facilitate State information-sharing and interaction in the event of an information and communications technologies incident, on a voluntary basis.

Member States also continued preparations to negotiate a global digital compact in support of the 2024 Summit of the Future. As the co-facilitators of the relevant intergovernmental process, Sweden and Zambia convened a series of informal consultations and thematic “deep dives” aimed at informing the discussions.

On autonomous weapons systems, the Group of Governmental Experts related to emerging technologies in the area of lethal autonomous weapons systems convened in accordance

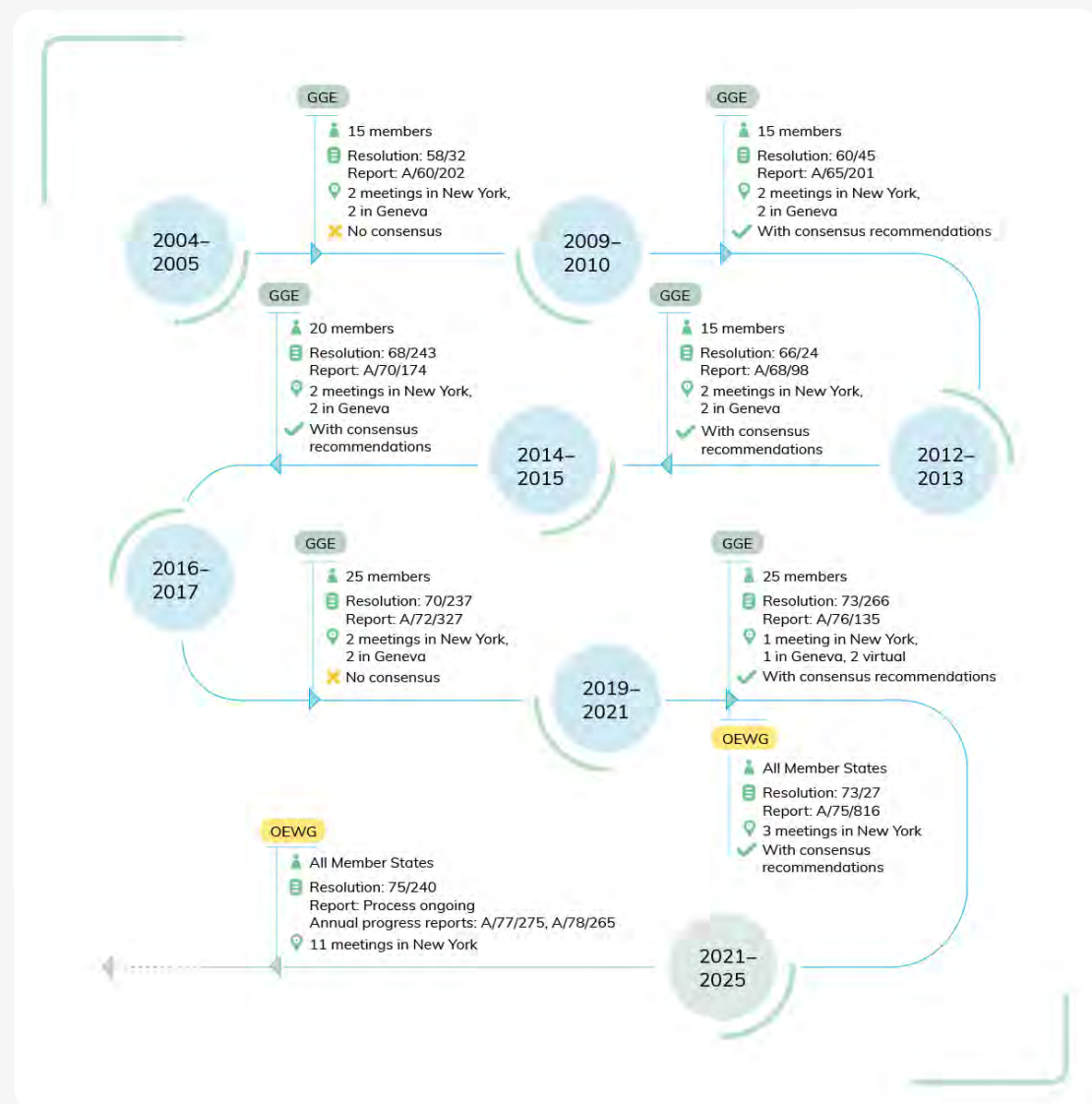
Interested in the intersection of #AI & peace & security? @UN_Disarmament and @SIPRIorg's new podcast series takes a deep dive into this evolving space and ways to promote responsible innovation.

*First episode⇒<https://t.co/uaX1A568n3>
Spotify⇒<https://t.co/jFJzGaB6SD>
pic.twitter.com/DSEOSYcEeD*

*— ODA
(@UN_Disarmament)
October 10, 2023*

with a decision of the 2022 Meeting of the High Contracting Parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. It adopted a report concluding, among other things, that States must ensure compliance with international law, in particular with international humanitarian law, throughout the life cycle of weapons systems in the area of lethal autonomous weapons systems. In the report, the Group also concluded that States should, when necessary, (a) limit the types of targets that those systems could engage; (b) limit the duration, geographical scope and scale of the operation of the weapon system; and (c) provide appropriate training and instructions for human operators ([CCW/GGE.1/2023/2](#)).

Figure 5.1.
Intergovernmental bodies addressing information and communications technologies security, 2004–present



Abbreviations: GGE, Group of Governmental Experts; OEWG, Open-ended Working Group.

On 20 July, the Secretary-General, António Guterres, [presented](#) to Member States his policy brief, [A New Agenda for Peace](#), outlining his vision for multilateral efforts for peace and security, based on international law, for a world in transition. Framed around the core principles of trust, solidarity and universality, the document contains 12 recommendations for action across five priority areas. The *New Agenda* characterizes disarmament as a powerful prevention tool that is connected to the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals. It offers forward-leaning recommendations to a world at crossroads, including for preventing the use and proliferation of nuclear weapons and accelerating their elimination; reducing the human cost of weapons and centring collective efforts on the imperative to save human lives; preventing weaponization of new technologies, including in cyber and outer space, as well as evolving risks linked to advances in biology; stepping up space diplomacy; and seeking ways to address the deadlock in some disarmament institutions. The Summit of the Future, to be held in September 2024, will deliberate “A Pact for the Future”, which will elaborate, among other issues, matters relevant to disarmament informed by *A New Agenda for Peace*.

Figure 5.2.
A New Agenda for Peace: recommendations for action



Emerging issues

Outer space

Discussions at the seventy-eighth session of the General Assembly

At its seventy-eighth session, the First Committee of the General Assembly adopted two draft resolutions introduced separately by the Russian Federation and the United Kingdom to establish open-ended working groups on outer space issues (for more information, see [chap. 7](#)). The Office for Disarmament Affairs, in consultation with Egypt, one of the main co-sponsors of the annual resolution on "Prevention of an arms race in outer space" ([78/19](#)), held informal discussions to determine the possibility of merging the two mandates. Ultimately, the General Assembly adopted the draft texts as resolutions [78/238](#) and [78/20](#), respectively.

Under the terms of the resolution introduced by the United Kingdom ([78/20](#)), the General Assembly decided to convene, in Geneva, a new open-ended working group. Building on the work of the 2022–23 open-ended working group and other relevant bodies and the existing international legal framework, including principles of international law, the new working group will aim to further elaborate the concept and to make recommendations on the prevention of an arms race in outer space through the development of norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours, including, but not exclusively, in the following areas: (a) intentional damage to and destruction of space systems; (b) threats to the safe operation of space objects; (c) rendezvous operations and proximity operations that could increase the risk of misunderstanding and miscalculation; (d) protecting critical space-based services to civilians as well as services that support humanitarian operations; and (e) other activities and measures that could reduce the risk of unintended escalation and conflict. The Assembly also decided to consider how the implementation of norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours could be monitored and verified, including through provision of capacity-building, cooperation on space situational awareness and the possible establishment of a mechanism for inter-State coordination and consultation on matters pertaining to space security.

Under the terms of the resolution introduced by the Russian Federation ([78/238](#)), the General Assembly decided, with a view to ensuring continuity and consistency in the consideration of issues pertaining to the prevention of an arms race in outer space, upon the termination of the activities of the Group of Governmental Experts on Further Practical Measures for the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space, to establish for the period 2024–2028 an open-ended working group to continue building on the work of the Group of Governmental Experts to consider and to make recommendations on substantial elements of an international legally binding instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, including, inter alia, on the prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space, as well as to consider various aspects of the prevention of an arms race in outer space in the context of an international legally binding instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

Separately, Panama ratified, and Croatia acceded to, the [Outer Space Treaty](#), bringing the total number of States parties to 114 as at the end of 2023.

Information technology and international security

In 2023, the malicious use of information and communications technologies by both State and non-State actors remained a pressing concern. A steady stream of destructive and disruptive incidents, including those impacting civilian infrastructure, continued in connection with ongoing conflicts. One of the most significant incidents occurred in December, when the largest mobile service provider in Ukraine, KyivStar, was subject to a [malicious attack](#). Reports indicated that, besides mobile connectivity, a regional air raid warning system and some banking services for Ukrainians were also disrupted by the incident.

In addition to State actors, there was an observable increase in civilians taking part in digital operations related to armed conflict. In October, the International Committee of the Red Cross [published](#) “8 rules for ‘civilian hackers’ during war, and 4 obligations for States to restrain them”, underscoring that cyberspace was not a lawless space.

Despite those challenges, 2023 saw steady progress in General Assembly discussions on information and communications technologies, with the dedicated Open-ended Working Group on Security of and in the Use of Information and Communications Technologies (2021–2025) adopting a second action-oriented and consensus progress report in July ([A/78/265](#)), including an agreement to establish a global points of contact directory to facilitate State interaction in the event of an information and communications technologies incident. The Open-ended Working Group, chaired by Burhan Gafoor (Singapore), continued its substantive work, holding three sessions, in March, July and December. Throughout the sessions, States continued to consider existing and emerging threats as a result of State use of information and communications technologies; how international law applied to the use of these technologies by States; rules, norms and principles of responsible State behaviour; confidence-building measures; and capacity-building. States also continued to debate the format of a permanent institutional dialogue on those issues under United Nations auspices.

In July, the Secretary-General launched his vision for [A New Agenda for Peace](#), acknowledging a proliferation of malicious cyber incidents impacting critical infrastructure, and recalling the affirmation of Member States that international law, including the Charter of the United Nations, applied to cyberspace ([A/77/275](#), para. 2). Underscoring the urgency of efforts to protect the safety and security of cyberspace, the Secretary-General called on States to take additional concrete measures to prevent the extension and further escalation of conflict to the cyber domain, including to protect human life from malicious activity.

In the first of two recommendations on information and communications technologies security contained in *A New Agenda for Peace*, the Secretary-General called on Member States to declare infrastructure providing services to the public and essential to the functioning of society as off limits to malicious cyber activity by both State and non-State actors. Second, the Secretary-General proposed establishing an independent multilateral accountability mechanism for the malicious use of cyberspace by States to reduce incentives for such conduct.

Meanwhile, preparations to negotiate a global digital compact continued throughout the year as part of planning under way for the 2024 Summit for the Future. The President of the General Assembly appointed Anna Karin Eneström (Sweden) and Claver Gatete (Rwanda) to lead that process. Throughout 2023, the co-facilitators convened a series of informal consultations and thematic in-depth discussions to inform States' further consideration of issues for the proposed global digital compact. In January and February, informal consultations took place with Member States, observer States and non-governmental stakeholders. From March through June, the co-facilitators organized eight thematic in-depth discussions on digital inclusion and connectivity, Internet governance, data protection, human rights online, artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies, digital trust and security, the global digital commons and the acceleration of progress on the Sustainable Development Goals.

In August, the General Assembly, through decision [77/568](#), requested its President to appoint, no later than 31 October, two pairs of co-facilitators, each comprising one from a developed country and one from a developing country, taking into account gender balance, to facilitate, as part of the preparatory process of the Summit of the Future, open, transparent and inclusive intergovernmental consultations on a global digital compact and a declaration on future generations, which would be annexed to the Pact for the Future if intergovernmentally agreed. To that end, on 10 October, the President of the General Assembly appointed Anna Karin Eneström (Sweden) and Chola Milambo (Zambia) to serve as co-facilitators of the Global Digital Compact negotiations process.

At the Security Council, Albania convened an Arria formula meeting on 25 May on the responsibility and responsiveness of States to cyberattacks on critical infrastructure ([S/2023/364](#)). The High Representative for Disarmament Affairs [briefed](#) the meeting participants, noting that the number of reported State-sponsored cyber incidents had increased fifteen-fold between 2005 and 2020, with threats posed to civilians and human life among the most worrisome occurrences. Recalling the broad acknowledgement that a number of States were developing information and communications technologies capabilities for military purposes, the High Representative warned of the growing likelihood that such technologies would be used in future conflicts. The meeting included statements by more than 25 States, in addition to the International Committee of the Red Cross and the European Union, with participants

reflecting on various challenges posed to international peace and security by State use of information and communications technologies. In their remarks, delegates devoted particular attention to the vulnerability of critical infrastructure such as health-care systems and transport services.

Open-ended Working Group on Security of and in the Use of Information and Communications Technologies 2021–2025

The Open-ended Working Group on Security of and in the Use of Information and Communications Technologies 2021–2025 held its fourth, fifth and sixth substantive sessions in March, July and December, respectively, supported by intersessional meetings in May.

At the fifth substantive session, the Open-ended Working Group adopted its second annual progress report by consensus ([A/78/265](#), annex), building on the first annual progress report ([A/77/275](#), annex). The 2023 report contained a road map for discussions over the following year, including a dedicated intersessional meeting on capacity-building, and focused deliberations on strengthening measures to protect critical infrastructure and ensure the integrity of the supply chain. The Working Group also adopted specific modalities for the operation of a global points of contact directory, which would be managed by the Office for Disarmament Affairs, to facilitate communication between diplomatic and technical authorities, including in the event of a significant cybersecurity incident. In addition to the directory, the report listed an initial set of confidence-building measures, covering areas such as information-sharing.

Throughout the year, the Open-ended Working Group saw increased participation by women delegates and growing attention to their role in cyber policymaking. Progress towards gender parity continued, with women delegates delivering 57 per cent of the interventions at the December session—a marked improvement over other disarmament forums, though remaining short of parity (see also [figure 6.1](#), “Percentage of women speakers in multilateral disarmament forums, 2021–2023”).^[2] The strong representation of women delegates was largely a result of dedicated initiatives such as the Women in Cyber Fellowship, financially supported by Australia, Canada, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the United States.

In December, the General Assembly adopted decision [78/541](#), endorsing the content of the second annual progress report and requesting the Secretariat to manage the global intergovernmental points of contact directory in accordance with elements elaborated by States through the Working Group.

Fourth substantive session

The fourth substantive session of the Open-ended Working Group took place from 6 to 10 March at United Nations Headquarters. This session marked the start of a new annual cycle for the Working Group, following the adoption of its first annual progress report in July 2022 ([A/77/275](#)).

The fourth substantive session saw increased attendance, both in person and from capitals, as travel restrictions related to COVID-19 eased globally. Delegates began by adopting the programme of work ([A/AC.292/2023/2/Rev.1](#)) and then engaged in lengthy discussions on working methods and logistical matters, including the participation of non-governmental stakeholders.

In addition to the six subagenda items, delegates discussed recent developments in information and communications technologies security, including issues related to the conflict in Ukraine, alleged malicious use of such technologies to target critical infrastructure, and illegal cryptocurrency diversions by State and non-State actors.

The session saw strong engagement from women delegates. Of the 296 total delegates in attendance, 121 were women. A total of 320 statements were delivered during the formal proceedings, 149 of them by women delegates.

Fifth substantive session

The fifth substantive session of the Open-ended Working Group took place in person from 24 to 28 July at United Nations Headquarters. The Working Group adopted its programme of work at the session's first meeting ([A/AC.292/2023/3](#)) and focused throughout the week on negotiating its second annual progress report for consensus adoption. A total of 388 delegates attended, including 177 women. Of the 301 statements delivered, 135 were made by women delegates.

Acknowledging the Open-ended Working Group's iterative progress in reaching consensual outcomes, delegates engaged in substantive discussions on the six subagenda items that would form the core of the second annual progress report. The deliberations proved particularly challenging on two topics: the applicability of international law to States' use of information and communications technologies; and the future of regular institutional dialogue on such matters under United Nations auspices. Regarding international law, delegations presented several working papers elaborating States' individual and joint positions, particularly on principles contained in the Charter of the United Nations. On institutional dialogue, Member States focused on two proposals put forward by France and the Russian Federation, each supported by a group of States. Those proposals outlined blueprints for a

future regular institutional mechanism to consider issues of information and communications technologies security at the United Nations. The Open-ended Working Group acknowledged both proposals in its second annual progress report and committed to considering options further.

On 28 July, the Working Group concluded the session with the consensus adoption of its second annual progress report ([A/78/265](#), annex). Concrete outcomes from the deliberations included detailed modalities for operationalizing a global, intergovernmental points of contact directory intended to facilitate voluntary communication between diplomatic and technical authorities on information and communications technologies issues and incidents. Furthermore, the Group recommended dedicated assistance in developing capacity-building resources. The Working Group also mandated the Secretariat to conduct a mapping exercise on the global landscape of capacity-building programmes and initiatives. The Group called for five intersessional meetings during 2024, including a global roundtable meeting on capacity-building. Additionally, the report encouraged States in a position to do so to support updates to the existing e-learning course entitled “Cyber Diplomacy”, previously developed by the Office for Disarmament Affairs and hosted on the Disarmament Education Dashboard.

Sixth substantive session

The Open-ended Working Group held its sixth substantive session from 11 to 14 December at United Nations Headquarters, following its adopted programme of work ([A/AC.292/2023/4](#)).

As in previous substantive sessions, Member States engaged in dialogue on the six subagenda items. Discussions included references to the malicious use of information and communications technologies in connection with the war in Ukraine. The session featured rich exchanges, demonstrating States' commitment to providing increasingly detailed interventions on various matters related to information and communications technologies security. Key topics included how international law applies to States' actions in the cyber domain and potential cooperative measures that could be elaborated to better prevent the risk of hostilities in that domain.

Efforts towards gender parity reflected significant progress: of 183 total participants, 70 were women. Notably, women delegates delivered 163 of the 287 statements, marking the first session of the Open-ended Working Group in which women gave the majority of the remarks.

Intersessional meetings

From 23 to 26 May, the Chair convened informal, intersessional meetings in New York, with a remote participation option. Participants followed up on the decisions of the Open-ended Working Group's first annual progress report, following a structure broadly aligned with the six

subagenda items. In addition, the intersessional meetings incorporated a dedicated virtual informal dialogue with stakeholders, as well as a dedicated meeting on the global intergovernmental points of contact directory.

The Open-ended Working Group also discussed proposals from individual Member States, including an initiative by India on establishing a global cyber security cooperation portal and a plan from Kenya for creating a global threat repository.

Programme of action to advance responsible State behaviour in the use of information and communications technologies in the context of international security

The year 2023 saw further discussions on a potential programme of action to advance responsible State behaviour in the use of information and communications technologies in the context of international security, in line with General Assembly mandates adopted in 2022. By its resolution [77/37](#), the Assembly had provided a broad overview of the structure and objectives of a potential permanent United Nations mechanism on information and communications technologies security issues, which would succeed the Open-ended Working Group on Security of and in the Use of Information and Communications Technologies 2021–2025.

Further to resolution [77/37](#), 37 Member States submitted written inputs for a compilation of national views on the structure, scope and content of the potential mechanism and modalities for its establishment ([A/78/76](#)).

In addition, from May to September, the Office for Disarmament Affairs partnered with relevant regional organizations^[3] to convene eight consultations on the proposed programme of action for their respective regions or subregions. A total of 185 States were invited to the meetings, which attracted more than 100 delegates. The Office later hosted an [event](#) held on the margins of the First Committee meetings to showcase key messages, priorities and perspectives of regional and subregional organizations. Representatives of the European Union, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the Organization of American States and the League of Arab States presented overviews of their consultative meetings.

In December, the General Assembly adopted the second iteration of its resolution on the proposed programme of action ([78/16](#)). By that text, Member States committed to discuss the proposal further under the auspices of the Open-ended Working Group.

United Nations-Singapore Cyber Fellowship

The Cyber Security Agency of Singapore partnered with the Office for Disarmament Affairs to launch the United Nations-Singapore Cyber Fellowship programme in 2022. Their aim was to equip high-level officials from Member States with a capacity-building programme tailored to the needs of decision makers, covering the areas of cyber and digital security governance, national cybersecurity strategy, legislation, operational capacity development, workforce and ecosystem development and international policy.

In 2023, two iterations of the Fellowship were held in May and August at the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Cybersecurity Centre of Excellence in Singapore. The sessions comprised briefings, panel and round-table discussions, laboratory visits and table-top exercises to promote discussion and application of the normative framework of responsible State behaviour in the use of information and communications technologies. A total of 56 participants representing 47 countries, with equal participation by men and women, joined the programmes.

Developments in science and technology and their potential impact on international security and disarmament efforts

In 2023, the Office for Disarmament Affairs prepared the sixth edition of the report of the Secretary-General on current developments in science and technology and their potential impact on international security and disarmament efforts ([A/78/268](#)). In the report, the Secretary-General addressed scientific and technological developments in the following areas: (a) artificial intelligence and autonomous and uncrewed systems; (b) digital technologies; (c) biology and chemistry; (d) space and aerospace systems; (e) electromagnetic technologies; and (f) materials technologies. The sixth edition of the report also included a cross-sectional analysis of gender considerations.

In the report's conclusions, the Secretary-General recommended that United Nations bodies and entities continue to encourage multi-stakeholder and geographically equitable engagement, including by industry and other private sector actors, through formal and informal platforms. He also highlighted the recommendations in his policy brief on *A New Agenda for Peace* related to emerging technologies and their impact on peace and security, which could inform the work of Member States to devise concrete actions in the lead-up to the Summit of the Future.

Missile-related issues

On 27 and 28 September in Berlin, the International Institute for Strategic Studies held the fifth meeting of its [Missile Dialogue Initiative](#), established in 2019 in partnership with Germany.

Officials from more than 20 States participated, discussing arms control, missile technology and their implications for European security, including opportunities and challenges.

Cross-cutting issues

Relationship between disarmament and development

In its annual resolution on the relationship between disarmament and development (78/23), the General Assembly reaffirmed the importance of that linkage, including within the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. As in previous years, it urged the international community to use resources made available through disarmament and arms limitation agreements in the service of economic and social development, and called on Member States to convey details on their relevant measures and efforts to the Secretary-General.

In his policy brief on *A New Agenda for Peace*, the Secretary-General highlighted the need to reinvest in the linkage between disarmament and arms control and development. Specifically, he called for States to reduce their military spending to strengthen sustainable peace and advance towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Meanwhile, the Office for Disarmament Affairs continued its efforts to strengthen and operationalize the linkages between disarmament and development by integrating small arms control into national development frameworks. It held bilateral consultations with the United Nations resident coordinators of 11 countries severely affected by the proliferation of illicit small arms, in accordance with advice from the Development Coordination Office, while also continuing to administer the Saving Lives Entity (SALIENT) trust fund and the United Nations Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation (UNSCAR).^[4]

Terrorism and disarmament

Work of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact

Under the leadership of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, the [United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact](#) continued working to strengthen coordination and coherence among United Nations entities to facilitate national-level implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, in addition to relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. In 2023, the Compact welcomed the International Monetary Fund as its forty-sixth member, further strengthening representation from within the United Nations system.

The Compact's [eight working groups](#) held 30 quarterly meetings and four thematic discussions throughout the year, facilitating information exchange, joint research and capacity-building activities.

The Working Group on Emerging Threats and Critical Infrastructure Protection held four quarterly meetings in 2023—on 22 March, 31 May, 6 November and 14 December—in support of Member States' efforts to prevent and respond to emerging terrorist threats, including those related to the misuse of chemical, biological, nuclear or radiological materials. Another aim was to enhance the protection of critical infrastructure against terrorist attacks, including infrastructure housing such materials, while upholding human rights and the rule of law.

During the year, several Working Group members and external entities briefed one another on their respective research and analytical findings. The briefing participants included the Office of Counter-Terrorism and the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), which introduced a project entitled "Interoperability in Response to Chemical and Biological Attacks", and the Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate, which briefed attendees on the development of guiding principles for uncrewed aerial systems and information and communications technology. Another presentation addressed a range of threat assessments from the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team pursuant to resolutions [1526 \(2004\)](#) and [2253 \(2015\)](#) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Daesh), Al-Qaida and the Taliban and associated individuals and entities. Additionally, the Special Rapporteur on Counter-Terrorism and Human Rights delivered remarks on the human rights implications of developing, using and transferring new technologies in the context of counter-terrorism and of countering and preventing violent extremism. Moreover, as it explored opportunities to further support the implementation of Security Council resolution [1540 \(2004\)](#), the Chair and various Vice-Chairs of the Working Group continued to engage with the Group of Experts of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution [1540 \(2004\)](#) (1540 Committee), as well as with the Office of Disarmament Affairs, another Vice-Chair.

In addition, the Working Group on Emerging Threats and Critical Infrastructure Protection received regular briefings on technical assistance and capacity-building initiatives implemented by its members. For example, it was briefed on an initiative aimed at protecting critical infrastructure against terrorist attacks in accordance with Security Council resolution [2341 \(2017\)](#), as well as soft targets in accordance with resolution [2396 \(2017\)](#). Chiefly focused on elaborating security arrangements for soft targets, the initiative represented a collaboration of the Office of Counter-Terrorism, the Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate and the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL). In addition, the Working Group was briefed on OPCW support of interoperability and communications related to chemical attacks, as well as capacity-building efforts to prevent trafficking of radiological and nuclear material.

In March, the Working Group on Border Management and Law Enforcement Relating to Counter-Terrorism successfully completed its development of "Technical guidelines to facilitate the implementation of Security Council resolution [2370 \(2017\)](#) and related international standards and good practices on preventing terrorists from acquiring weapons". The technical guidelines—a specialized review of measures for preventing terrorists from acquiring weapons, in particular small arms and light weapons, improvised explosive devices and unmanned aircraft systems—benefited from the expertise of various entities within the Working Group. They were expected to serve as a practical tool to support the implementation of resolution [2370 \(2017\)](#), as well as relevant subsequent resolutions, good practices, and international standards and guidelines.

The Office of Counter-Terrorism collaborated with the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre, the Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate and the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) to jointly organize two workshops to promote the technical guidelines in the Maghreb, Sahel and Caribbean subregions. Developed with expert support from entities across the United Nations system,^[5] the workshops took place alongside other regional events aimed at promoting the technical guidelines, facilitating discussion on the development of practices to prevent terrorists from acquiring weapons, and identifying opportunities to strengthen relevant national and regional measures. Another aim of the workshops was to establish a foundation for further modifications, revisions and updates of the technical guidelines, which were designed as a living document.

Meanwhile, the Office of Counter-Terrorism continued to maintain the online Counter-Terrorism Coordination Platform. In 2023, more than 1,050 personnel representing 46 entities of the Compact, 137 Member States and 14 regional organizations used the system to collaborate and share information.

Work of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism and its Counter-Terrorism Centre

Beyond its role as the Compact's secretariat, the Office of Counter-Terrorism implemented global, regional and national outreach and capacity-building activities. Those efforts enhanced capacities and awareness among 800 officials from over 70 Member States related to countering the terrorist use of weapons. The activities took place through the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre's multi-year programme on "Countering the Terrorist Use of Weapons", an effort covering weapons of mass destruction, small arms and light weapons, improvised explosive devices and unmanned aircraft systems.

The Office's work included organizing two high-level events on the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism: a side event of the third [Counter-Terrorism Week](#) (19 June); and the [launch](#) of an awareness-raising project, implemented jointly with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, on the importance of universalizing and effectively

implementing the Convention (17 October). Furthermore, the Office engaged with legislators in the Philippines on 24 May and in [Togo](#) on 14 June, advocating for the Convention's ratification as a means to reinforce and promote adherence to regional nuclear security.

Additionally, the Office convened a [regional table-top exercise and workshop](#) for the Sahel from 14 to 16 March, covering nuclear detection and links to traditional national security, with a focus on cooperation to implement the Convention; a [table-top exercise and workshop](#) for Central Asia and the Caucasus from 30 May to 1 June, which addressed legal frameworks and nuclear forensics; and a [capacity-building course](#) for Nigeria from 12 to 15 December, intended to help protect critical infrastructure against radiological and nuclear threats. Those activities took place with the support of Finland, France, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Romania, Tajikistan, the United States and the European Union.

As part of the Office of Counter-Terrorism, the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre also engaged in activities focused on preventing and responding to biological and chemical terrorism. It cooperated with OPCW to conduct three inter-agency workshops, covering the topics of information exchange (March), emergency response cooperation (May) and deployments (June). In addition, the Centre partnered with OSCE to co-organize the "Regional Workshop on Preventing Bioterrorism Attacks" on 5 and 6 June.

Together with the United States, the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre held two virtual seminars, in September and November, aimed at strengthening State capacities in sub-Saharan Africa to develop exercises for countering potential acts of terrorism involving weapons of mass destruction, including chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear arms. The Counter-Terrorism Centre also convened an in-person regional workshop from 3 to 6 October in Nairobi, hosted by the Government of Kenya. In addition, Indonesia benefited from a national, strategic-level table-top exercise on countering chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear terrorist threats against vulnerable targets.

To address the nexus between terrorism, arms and crime, the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre joined the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime to hold a series of training courses, workshops and community-of-practice meetings on preventing the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons and their supply to terrorists in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Furthermore, the Counter-Terrorism Centre convened a regional workshop to support East African Member States in addressing terrorist use of various weapons, outlining the separate upstream and downstream measures applied towards small arms and light weapons, improvised explosive devices and uncrewed aircraft systems. Representatives from 13 international and regional organizations attended the workshop.^[6]

The Counter-Terrorism Centre also supported the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact through two main initiatives. In the first initiative, its Working Group on Emerging Threats and Critical Infrastructure Protection engaged with OPCW and the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute to co-organize a meeting of functional focal points for a project on ensuring inter-agency interoperability in response to chemical and biological attacks. In the second initiative, the Working Group on Border Management and Law Enforcement Relating to Counter-Terrorism coordinated with the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate and UNIDIR to support Member States in applying the above-mentioned technical guidelines for preventing terrorists from acquiring weapons, in line with Security Council resolution [2370 \(2017\)](#). Specifically, the three entities held regional workshops for the Maghreb, Sahel and Caribbean subregions in support of the guidelines.

The United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre maintained its coordination and close cooperation with numerous United Nations entities, international organizations and initiatives, including the 1540 Committee, the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the International Civil Aviation Organization, INTERPOL, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, OPCW, OSCE, the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute, UNIDIR, the United Nations Mine Action Service, the Office for Disarmament Affairs, the Office of Legal Affairs, the World Customs Organization and the World Health Organization, as well as the Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction, the Nuclear Threat Initiative and the Counter-Terrorism Preparedness Network.

Work of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime on the prevention and suppression of chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear terrorism

In 2023, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) continued to promote adherence to and effective implementation of the international legal instruments against chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear terrorism in accordance with its relevant mandate ([78/226](#)). The Office carried out technical assistance activities within the framework of projects funded by Canada, the United States and the European Union.

UNODC activities included organizing a [regional workshop](#) in Vienna to support South-Eastern European Member States in strengthening the capacities of their criminal justice systems to effectively implement the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism. In addition, the Office promoted the Convention's universalization and effective implementation by convening two regional workshops: for [Pacific](#) countries in Nadi, Fiji, from May 6 to 10; and for [South-East Asian](#) countries in Bangkok on 21 and 22 June. It also conducted workshops in Botswana, Panama and Zambia, considering Security Council resolution [1540 \(2004\)](#) in the context of border security.

In May and June, UNODC co-organized—together with the Netherlands, Romania, Tajikistan and the United States, as well as the Office of Counter-Terrorism—a [table-top exercise](#) aimed at identifying and demonstrating effective regional and international cooperation mechanisms, including the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism, as well as the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material and its 2005 Amendment, for investigating and prosecuting radiological and nuclear crimes. To further support the universalization and effective implementation of the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism, the Office organized national workshops for officials in [Maldives](#) and in [Brunei Darussalam](#) while also conducting country visits to [Mauritius](#), the Philippines, [Sierra Leone](#), Togo and [Zimbabwe](#).

At events held in [Vienna](#) in September and New York in October, UNODC collaborated with the Office of Counter-Terrorism and the European Union to kick off a new project entitled “Union Support for the Universalisation and Effective Implementation of the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism”. As part of the European Union-funded initiative, the Office carried out two webinars in October for countries not yet party to the Convention, focusing separately on [English](#)- and [French](#)-speaking African countries. Furthermore, to ensure sustainability in its efforts to promote the Convention's universalization and effective implementation, the Office conducted two follow-up virtual events for previous beneficiary countries not yet party to the agreement, focusing on countries in the [Pacific](#) and [South-East Asia](#). In December, UNODC held a [national training seminar](#) on the Convention in Montenegro, the first in a series for States parties' judicial and prosecutorial training centres. In September, the Office partnered with the IAEA to conduct a [high-level side event](#) during the sixty-seventh IAEA General Conference to examine synergies for global nuclear security among three international legal instruments—the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism, as well as the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material and its 2005 Amendment.

The Office continued to promote tools and resources related to the international legal framework against chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear terrorism. In its [Manual on Fictional Cases related to Offences under the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism](#) and an [e-learning module](#) on the Convention's key provisions, the Office aimed to promote awareness of the need to adhere to the Convention and incorporate its requirements into national legislation. All of those materials appeared on the Office's regularly updated website for the Convention (www.unodc.org/icsant) in all six United Nations official languages, with some also translated into Portuguese. Regarding other resources, at the end of 2023, the UNODC website contained submissions from 51 States parties on their [legislation](#) to implement the Convention's criminalization provisions. The Office also continued to offer its [e-learning module](#) on the international legal framework against chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear terrorism, available in all United Nations official languages

and Portuguese. Since its launch in 2019, the module had been completed by over 2,600 practitioners from 128 Member States.

The Office also contributed to several IAEA events during the year. Those activities included two regional workshops on the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material and its 2005 Amendment, held in [Zimbabwe](#) in March and in the Dominican Republic in May; a regional workshop to coordinate the implementation of integrated nuclear security sustainability plans, held in Togo in August; national workshops for officials in [Mauritius](#) and [Sierra Leone](#) to promote the universalization of the Convention and its 2005 amendment, held in February and April, respectively; a technical meeting of the points of contact for integrated nuclear security sustainability plans in October; the sixty-seventh IAEA General Conference in September; programme committee meetings for the [2024 International Conference on Nuclear Security](#); and other technical meetings and seminars related to nuclear and radiological security.

Throughout 2023, UNODC cooperated regularly with many other organizations and initiatives. It contributed to workshops organized by the Office of Disarmament Affairs in Cameroon, [Kenya](#),^[7] the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Nigeria and Thailand on implementing resolution [1540 \(2004\)](#). In October, it participated in a regional workshop for the Caribbean, hosted by OPCW, on the role of national legislation in implementing provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention concerning threats arising from non-State actors. In November, the Office presented at the [twenty-fifth Annual Meeting of National Authorities](#) to the OPCW. Furthermore, it contributed to an [international air law treaty](#) event organized by the International Civil Aviation Organization and hosted by the Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore in December. Additionally, UNODC contributed to the first European Union Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) Centres of Excellence-African Union Forum on Reducing CBRN Risks, held in [Ethiopia](#) in December.

UNODC also took part in a number of civil society initiatives, including workshops by Parliamentarians for Global Action to foster solution-oriented dialogue and engagement on nuclear security concerns in [Cameroon](#), Gambia, Trinidad and Tobago, Seychelles and Suriname. Moreover, the Office delivered a [presentation](#) on the Convention at a regional meeting of the African Center for Science and International Security, held in Ghana in February. UNODC also contributed to the Nuclear Threat Initiative's [Global Dialogue on Nuclear Security Priorities](#) in April, as well as the [Latin American Dialogue on Nuclear Security Priorities](#) in November.

Contribution of the International Atomic Energy Agency to global anti-terrorism efforts

The Agency plays a central role in strengthening the nuclear security framework globally and in coordinating international activities in the field of nuclear security, while avoiding

duplication and overlap of such activities. Nuclear security focuses on the prevention and detection of and response to criminal or intentional unauthorized acts involving or directed at nuclear material, other radioactive material, associated facilities or associated activities. Responsibility for nuclear security within a State rests entirely with that State, in accordance with its respective national and international obligations.

The Agency continued to assist States upon request in their national efforts to establish and maintain effective and comprehensive nuclear security of all nuclear and other radioactive material at all times. These activities assist States' efforts to establish effective and sustainable national nuclear security regimes and, where appropriate, to fulfil their obligations, including under the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material and its Amendment, as well as the relevant United National Security Council resolutions, such as resolution [1540 \(2004\)](#).

Implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004)

In resolution [1540 \(2004\)](#), the Security Council decided that all States shall refrain from providing any form of support to non-State actors that attempted to develop, acquire, manufacture, possess, transport, transfer or use nuclear, chemical or biological weapons and their means of delivery, in particular for terrorist purposes. The Council required all States to adopt and enforce appropriate laws to that effect, as well as other effective measures to prevent the proliferation of those weapons and their means of delivery to non-State actors, in particular for terrorist purposes.

In 2023, the Committee established pursuant to resolution [1540 \(2004\)](#) (1540 Committee) was chaired by Hernán Pérez Loose from 31 January to 28 November, by Andrés Montalvo from 29 November to 14 December, and by José De La Gasca from 15 to 31 December. In accordance with resolution [2663 \(2022\)](#), by which the Council extended the 1540 Committee's mandate for 10 years, until 30 November 2032, the Committee adopted its twentieth programme of work, covering the period from 1 February 2023 to 31 January 2024 ([S/2023/117](#), annex). The programme of work organized the Committee's work around four pillars: (a) monitoring and implementation; (b) assistance; (c) cooperation with international, regional and subregional organizations; and (d) transparency and outreach. The Office for Disarmament Affairs, the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, and the 1540 Committee's Group of Experts continued to support the Committee in implementing its programme of work.

National implementation

By paragraph 4 of resolution [1540 \(2004\)](#), the Security Council mandated States to submit a first report on the steps they had taken or intend to take to implement the resolution. By the end of 2023, 185 of the 193 Member States had submitted their first report, while 8 States had

yet to do so.^[8] Furthermore, 124 Member States had submitted at least one additional report. As of the end of the year, Member States had submitted a total of 537 first and additional national reports on steps taken to implement resolution 1540 (2004).

The Security Council encouraged States in resolution 1977 (2011) and its successors to provide additional information on their implementation efforts, including, voluntarily, on their laws and regulations and on States' effective practices. In 2023, India, Türkiye and Uruguay submitted additional information, bringing the number of States that had done so to 115.

To facilitate dialogue with the 1540 Committee on implementing resolution 1540 (2004), States are encouraged to submit up-to-date information on national points of contact, preferably both in their capitals and at their respective permanent missions in New York. In 2023, responding to renewed calls from the 1540 Committee, 43 States either named new or updated existing points of contact, bringing the total number of States with designated points of contact for resolution 1540 (2004) to 146.

The Security Council encouraged States, by resolution 1977 (2011) and subsequent resolutions, to prepare, on a voluntary basis, national implementation action plans to map out their priorities and plans for implementing key provisions of resolution 1540 (2004). In 2023, Madagascar submitted such a plan, bringing the total, as at 31 December, to 47 voluntary national implementation action plans, which were adopted by 38 States.

The Office for Disarmament Affairs supported several additional Member States in initiating processes to adopt voluntary national implementation action plans. In 2023, the Office organized workshops in Phnom Penh from 25 to 27 April, in Yaoundé from 12 to 14 September, in Bangkok from 10 to 12 October, in Abuja from 16 to 18 October, and in Vientiane from 28 to 30 November. Those workshops convened various national ministries and agencies responsible for implementing resolution 1540 (2004). The aim was to raise their awareness about the resolution's objectives and obligations, review the status of national implementation, identify areas needing improvement, and establish priorities and targets for the action plans.

Assistance

In its resolution 2663 (2022), the Security Council reiterated that many Member States still required assistance in implementing resolution 1540 (2004) and emphasized the importance of improving the 1540 Committee's matchmaking mechanism to ensure effective, timely and tailored assistance. The 1540 Committee initiated a review of its current assistance mechanism, established in 2018, including by conducting periodic reviews of pending assistance requests. In 2023, Iraq, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan and Madagascar submitted new

assistance requests to the Committee. Additionally, Mexico and Zambia updated their previously submitted requests from 2019 and 2020, respectively.

Cooperation with international, regional and subregional organizations

In resolution [1540 \(2004\)](#) and its successors,^[9] the Security Council recognized the need to enhance the coordination of efforts at the national, subregional, regional and international levels to strengthen a global response to the threat from non-State actors. Likewise, the Council recognized the role and efforts of international, regional and subregional organizations, including United Nations bodies, in supporting Member States in their implementation of resolution [1540 \(2004\)](#), and called for continued cooperation in that regard.

Accordingly, the Office of Disarmament Affairs engaged States and regional organizations to foster and facilitate cooperation, coordination and exchanges at the subregional level. On 7 and 8 March, in cooperation with Japan, a stakeholders meeting in Tokyo brought together representatives from 14 States in the Asia-Pacific region.^[10] In Africa, the Office collaborated with Kenya and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development to convene a subregional workshop on 14 and 15 March in Nairobi, drawing representatives from 7 States in the region.^[11] Members of the 1540 Committee also attended the regional workshops, which were intended to enrich States' understanding of their obligations under resolution [1540 \(2004\)](#) and the status of its implementation in the respective subregions. The workshop offered States a platform to share their experiences in implementing the resolution and discuss opportunities for cross-border cooperation. Furthermore, Brazil, Chile and Mexico conducted, with the support of the Organization of American States, a peer-review exercise on the implementation of resolution [1540 \(2004\)](#), which was held on 28 and 29 September in Mexico City.

At the level of the Security Council, the 1540 Committee continued to explore opportunities to enhance ongoing cooperation with the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolutions [1267 \(1999\)](#), [1989 \(2011\)](#) and [2253 \(2015\)](#) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities. In particular, the two Committees jointly briefed the Security Council in November ([S/PV.9478](#)).

Transparency and outreach

In resolution [1540 \(2004\)](#), the Security Council calls upon States to develop appropriate ways to work with and inform industry and the public regarding their obligations under national laws and regulations adopted pursuant to the resolution and the key multilateral non-proliferation treaties. In support of those efforts, and within the context of the "Wiesbaden process" for industry outreach, the Office for Disarmament Affairs and Germany co-organized a series of three global and regional conferences to engage and inform industry and the private sector. The conferences took place in Wiesbaden on 8 and 9 February, in Bangkok on

6 and 7 September for Asian States, and in Santiago on 5 and 6 October for Latin American States.

Furthermore, in resolution [2663 \(2022\)](#), the Security Council calls upon States to take into account developments on the evolving nature of the risk of proliferation and rapid advances in science and technology in their implementation of resolution [1540 \(2004\)](#). To support those efforts, the Office for Disarmament Affairs partnered with Germany to launch the [Erlangen Initiative](#), aimed at raising awareness within the scientific and academic community about the risks associated with the misuse of scientific and technological developments, as well as fostering dialogue between government regulators and academia regarding effective means to control intangible technology transfers. The inaugural conference of the Erlangen Initiative was held on 8 and 9 November in Nuremberg, Germany.

On 18 July, the Office for Disarmament Affairs published a policy brief entitled [Resolution 1540 and the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement: Policy Options to Strengthen Non-Proliferation Controls and Secure Trade](#). Developed with the South African Institute of International Affairs, the brief explores intersections between resolution [1540 \(2004\)](#) and the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement. It highlights opportunities to enhance the implementation of export and border control measures required by resolution [1540 \(2004\)](#) in a manner that contributes to safeguarding the Agreement against the risk of illicit trafficking in chemical, biological and nuclear materials and dual-use items. The authors propose several pathways to support a reliable and secure regional trading system and economic development.

In 2023, the 1540 Committee, including through its Chair and Group of Experts, participated in 33 outreach events organized by States, international and regional organizations, and civil society organizations to support transparency and help foster greater cooperation and awareness among States; parliamentarians; relevant international, regional and subregional organizations; and civil society (including academia and industry) regarding the obligations set out in resolution [1540 \(2004\)](#) and their implementation.

With support from the Office for Disarmament Affairs, the 1540 Committee also continued to maintain its [website](#) both as a tool to raise public awareness and as a key source of information related to resolution [1540 \(2004\)](#).

Footnotes

[1] The discussions are reflected in the Chairperson's summary ([A/AC.294/2023/WP.22](#)).

[2] Women delivered 135 out of 301 total interventions during the week-long December session. On average, women in disarmament forums typically deliver only one in four statements.

[3] African Union, European Union, OSCE, Organization of American States, Association of Southeast Asian Nations, Pacific Islands Forum, League of Arab States and Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

[4] For more information on UNSCAR and SALIENT, see [chap. 3](#).

[5] The participants were the International Civil Aviation Organization, INTERPOL, United Nations Mine Action Service, UNODC and the World Customs Organization.

[6] Counter-Terrorism Committee and its Executive Directorate, International Civil Aviation Organization, INTERPOL, UNIDIR, United Nations Mine Action Service, United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs and its Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, World Customs Organization, Anti-Terrorism Centre of the Commonwealth of Independent States, Intergovernmental Authority on Development and Regional Centre on Small Arms and Light Weapons.

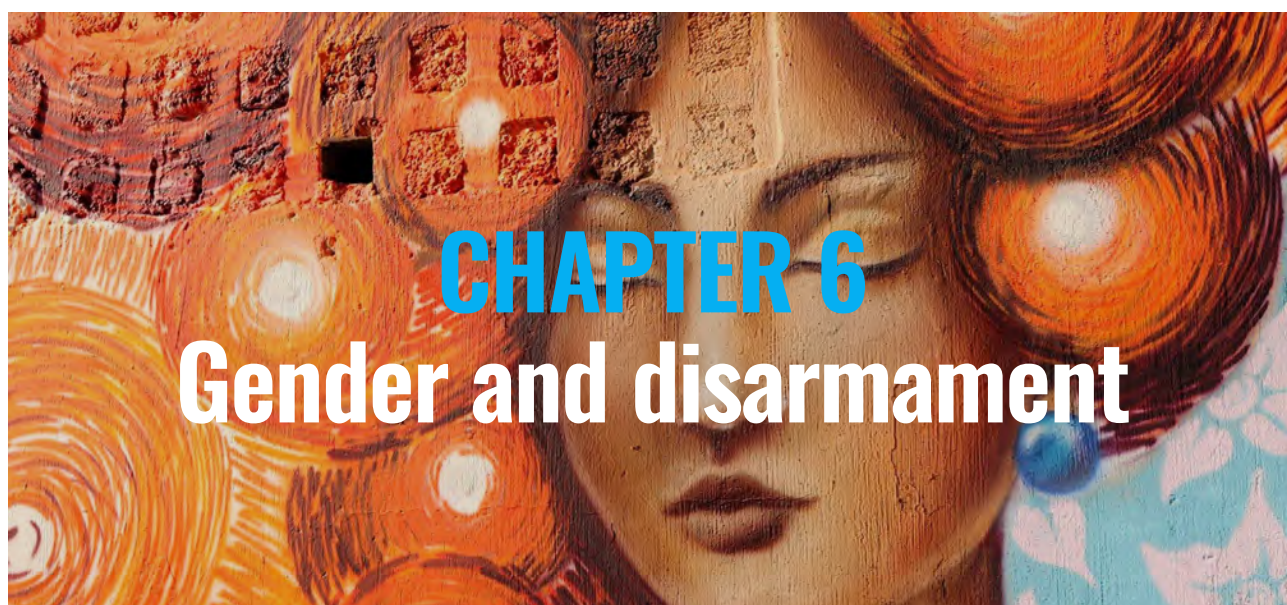
[7] The workshop held in Kenya was intended for member States of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development: Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Uganda.

[8] Chad, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Eswatini, Gambia, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania and Somalia.

[9] Resolutions [1673 \(2006\)](#), [1810 \(2008\)](#), [1977 \(2011\)](#), [2325 \(2016\)](#) and [2663 \(2022\)](#).

[10] Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Timor-Leste.

[11] Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Uganda.



One in three women experiences physical and sexual violence in their lifetime. This is more than a social concern; it is an international security crisis. The illicit proliferation and misuse of arms exacerbate this violence.

— Izumi Nakamitsu High Representative for Disarmament Affairs

Developments and trends, 2023

In his policy brief [A New Agenda for Peace](#), launched in 2023, the Secretary-General recognized inequalities and patriarchy as root causes of conflict and highlighted how transforming gendered power dynamics sustained peace and prevented violence (action 5). Noting a rising backlash against women's rights, the Secretary-General recommended that States commit to eradicating all forms of gender-based violence through robust and comprehensive legislation, as well as introducing concrete measures to secure women's meaningful participation in peace and security at all levels of decision-making.

In the policy brief, the Secretary-General also recognized the need to foster human-centred disarmament by reducing military expenditures and increasing investments in prevention and social infrastructure, with a strong focus on redressing gender inequalities. In that connection, he asked States to consider allocating 15 per cent of their official development assistance specifically for gender equality, emphasizing the need for sustained, predictable and flexible financing. The Secretary-General also encouraged Governments to devote a minimum of 1 per cent of assistance directly to women's organizations, especially grass-roots groups mobilizing for peace.

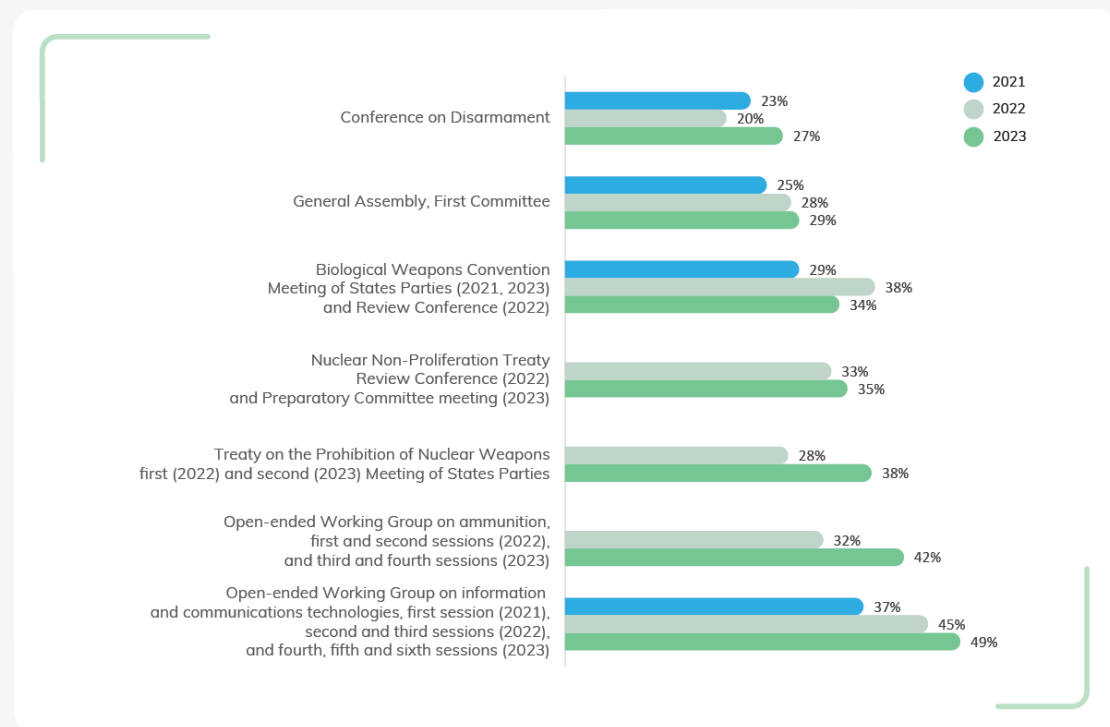
In 2023, global military expenditure continued to increase. According to estimates by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women ([UN-Women](#)), the total amount spent in 2022 was already enough to fund the global implementation of all the gender-related Sustainable Development Goals and targets nearly three times over. Meanwhile, the Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters called for a more holistic appreciation of security, with more resources spent on gender equality and other global priorities and less spending on weapons ([A/78/287](#)).

In 2023, [Chile](#) and [Colombia](#) declared “feminist foreign policies”. During the General Assembly's seventy-eighth session, the 18 States of the Feminist Foreign Policy Plus group^[1] reaffirmed their commitment to taking “feminist, intersectional and gender-transformative approaches to ... foreign policies” in the [Political Declaration on Feminist Approaches to Foreign Policy](#).

In some intergovernmental disarmament processes, including for the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and the Convention on Cluster Munitions, dedicated focal points continued to coordinate the integration of a gender perspective and related matters into relevant political processes. Meanwhile, in the seventy-eighth session of the General Assembly, First Committee, 78 States signed a [joint statement](#) on gender. Of the 61 disarmament resolutions adopted by the General Assembly in 2023, 38 per cent included language on gender dimensions or women's participation—an increase of 8 per cent from the previous session.

Figure 6.1.

Percentage of women speakers in multilateral disarmament forums, 2021–2023



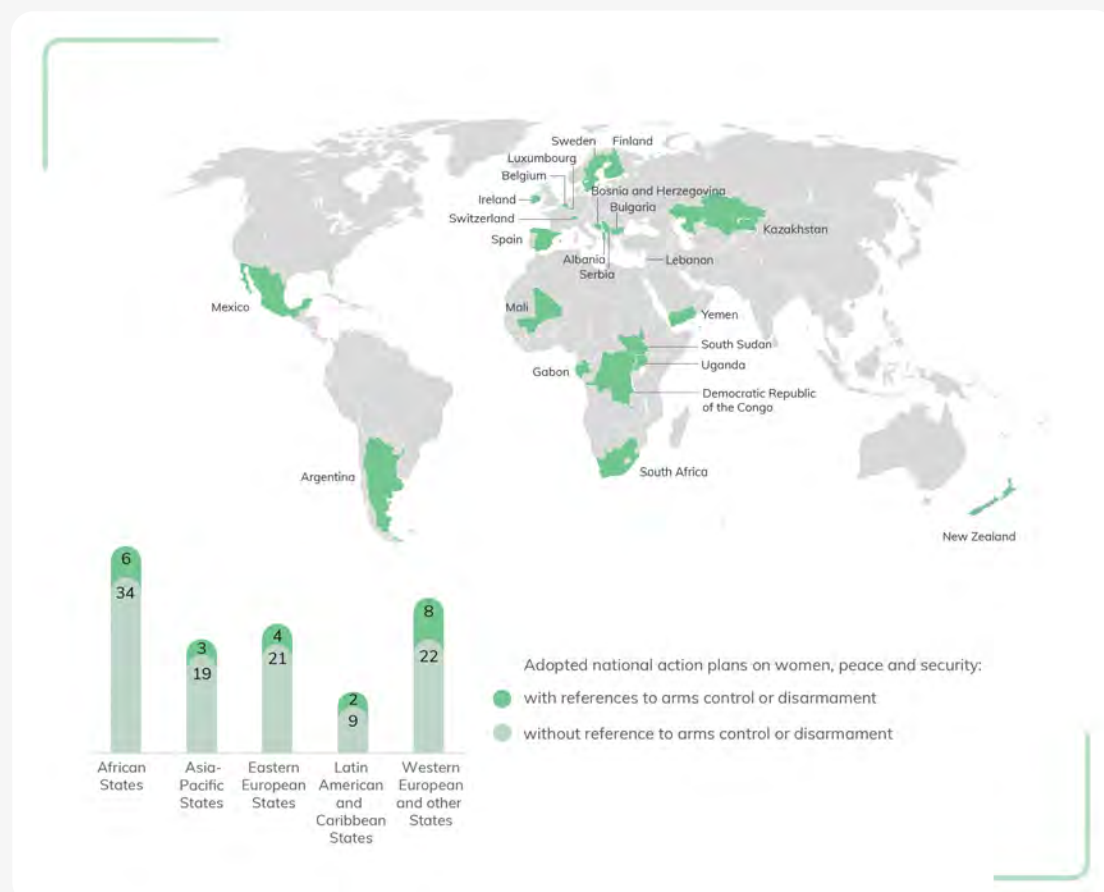
Member States have agreed, through the General Assembly's biennial resolution on women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control (A/RES/77/55), as well as other commitments, to achieve women's equal, full and effective participation in disarmament decision-making. The Office for Disarmament Affairs collects data on speakers in most forums, usually through daily summaries, as a way to measure effective participation. In 2023, the proportion of women representing States providing statements on disarmament increased in some forums.

During the Security Council's open debate on small arms and light weapons, held in December under Ecuador's presidency, the Council focused particularly on the linkages between the women, peace and security agenda and the control of small arms and light weapons ([S/PV.9509](#)). In briefing the Council, the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs and the Deputy Director of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) both urged States to support the systematic collection of sex- and age-disaggregated data on the impacts of weapons, among other recommendations. On the margins of the debate, the Council members that were signatories^[2] of the Shared Commitments on Women, Peace and Security delivered a [joint statement](#) in which they emphasized the impact of small arms and light weapons on women and girls.

Gender-responsive disarmament and arms control also featured as a central topic in the Secretary-General's annual report to the Security Council on women, peace and security ([S/2023/725](#)). The Council touched on related concerns during debates on women, peace and security, which it held in March ([S/PV.9276](#) and [S/PV.9276 \(Resumption 1\)](#)) and October ([S/PV.9452](#), [S/PV.9452 \(Resumption 1\)](#) and [S/PV.9452 \(Resumption 2\)](#)).

Figure 6.2.

Disarmament in national action plans on women, peace and security



The 23 countries indicated in the map above have adopted national action plans on women, peace and security with references to arms control or disarmament in the monitoring framework. The bar chart shows the number of countries by region.

The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. A dotted line represents approximately the line of control in Jammu and Kashmir agreed upon by India and Pakistan. The final status of Jammu and Kashmir has not yet been agreed upon by the Parties. Final boundary between the Sudan and South Sudan has not yet been determined. A dispute exists between the Governments of

Argentina and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland concerning sovereignty over the Falkland Islands (Malvinas).

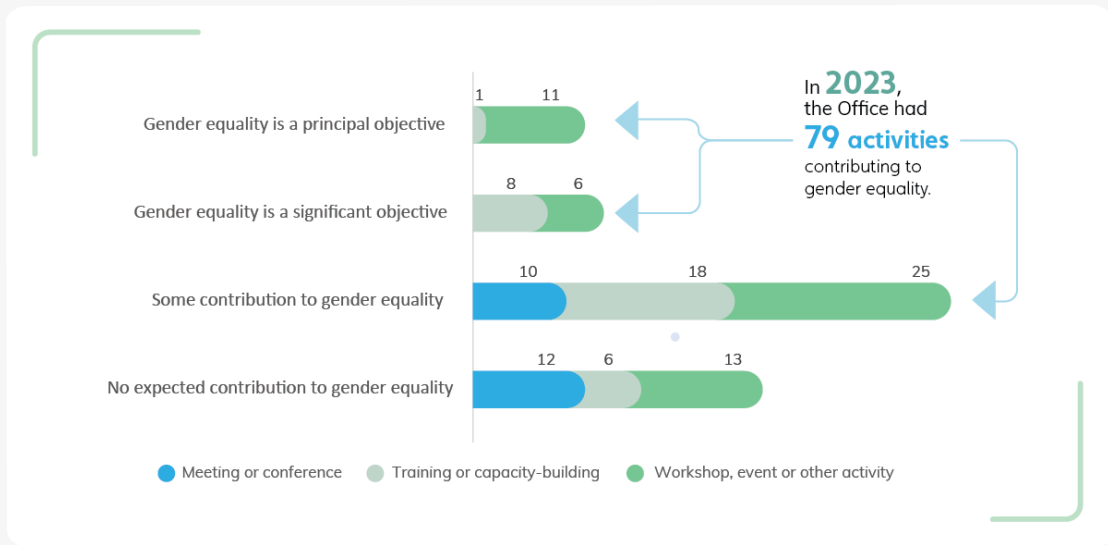
Base map source: United Nations Geospatial.

The Women and Peace and Security Focal Points Network—chaired by Romania and the United States in 2023—[recommended](#) increased investment in arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament, among other human security interventions aimed at “creating economic opportunities for women and championing gender equality and women's leadership in all sectors of society, fostering social inclusion, preventing and responding to gender-based violence, and protecting and promoting women's and girls' human rights”.

A number of actors further explored the role of arms control in preventing sexual and gender-based violence. In the annual report to the Security Council on conflict-related sexual violence ([S/2023/413](#)), the Secretary-General outlined military spending and arms proliferation as key aspects in the prevention of sexual violence in conflict. In the annual Security Council debate on sexual violence in conflict, in July, several States underscored the need to curb the illicit flow of weapons ([S/PV.9378](#) and [S/PV.9378 \(Resumption 1\)](#)). Furthermore, in the biennial report to the Security Council on small arms and light weapons ([S/2023/823](#)), the Secretary-General encouraged the Council to mandate United Nations entities to systematically collect gender- and age-disaggregated data on the impact of weapons and ammunition, both in recording casualties and when monitoring incidents of conflict-related sexual violence.

on the role of arms control in preventing sexual violence. Focused on the situation in the Sudan, the event took place during the “16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence” annual global campaign, held under the theme “Invest to prevent violence against women and girls”. In addition to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs delivering a [video message](#), the Office for Disarmament Affairs joined its regional centres and partners, including the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA), to publicly highlight the role of arms control in preventing gender-based violence. For example, the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean participated in the Gun Free Valentine campaign organized by IANSA. While the Regional Centre issued Spanish- and English-language social media posts in support of the campaign, IANSA showcased three legal studies in which the Centre cross-referenced firearms legislation and norms on preventing violence against women in States within the [Caribbean Community](#), in or around [Central America](#) and in [South America](#).

Figure 6.3.
Activities of the Office for Disarmament Affairs with a gender perspective



Another central theme in 2023 was the online dimension of gender-based violence and the use of new technologies. The impact of innovation and technologies on gender equality in the digital age was in focus during International Women's Day, on 8 March, and throughout the sixty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women, from 6 to 17 March. Through the Commission's agreed conclusions (E/2023/27), States recognized that violence, including sexual and gender-based violence and abuse, could occur in digital and online spaces; that the use of artificial intelligence (AI) could have negative impacts on women and girls; and that "targeted measures" should be used to counteract all forms of discrimination against women and girls, including those exacerbated by the use of new and emerging technologies. The Commission brought together more than 7,000 participants in New York, with more than 900 events held on the margins of the session. The High Representative for Disarmament Affairs participated in several related panel discussions, including an event on "Increasing Women's Representation in Cyber and Tech". In 2023, the High Representative also engaged with States at a plenary meeting on "Women in Cyber" during the Singapore International Cyber Week and at the annual Breaking Barriers event on women in science and security, hosted by the Civilian Research and Development Foundation (CRDF Global).

Meanwhile, in the Secretary-General's report on current developments in science and technology and their potential impact on international security and disarmament efforts (A/78/268), particular focus was placed on gender considerations in relation to various types of weapons systems, as well as the equal participation of women and men in related intergovernmental discussions. The report reflected a recognition that the integration of increasingly advanced technologies into the military domain could be used to reinforce, intentionally or not, gender and other social inequalities. The Secretary-General also outlined opportunities and risks in the development of several types of technologies, including AI, which could exacerbate gender bias and discrimination in outcomes based on imbalanced or non-representative data.

Happy International Women's Day! #IWD2023! It is finally here! Online self-paced course on #gender-mainstreaming #SALW control is live on @unodavienna's #DisarmamentEducation Dashboard►<https://t.co/26A6AWpNMx>.

The course will also be available in AR, FR, PR and SP!! 1/2 pic.twitter.com/il1VOxFx7w

— ODA (@UN_Disarmament) March 8, 2023

Multilateral forums

General Assembly

In the General Assembly, First Committee, States delivered a [joint statement](#) on gender, in which they highlighted key developments and initiatives for integrating a gender perspective into the field of disarmament. They emphasized the differential impacts of armed conflict and weapons on women, men, girls and boys and noted efforts to achieve gender balance among the office holders of various disarmament-related intergovernmental processes. The States also welcomed the significant work carried out in recent years to implement decisions taken on gender and gender-based violence within the frameworks of the Arms Trade Treaty and the Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons. Likewise, they welcomed recent efforts in support of fellowships and other opportunities to enhance women's participation in disarmament-related intergovernmental processes. Ireland delivered the remarks on behalf of 78 countries.^[3]

In addition, several First Committee delegations delivered or endorsed statements in which they expressed support for the full participation of women in all disarmament discussions;^[4] emphasized the need for gender equality and inclusivity in disarmament processes;^[5] or noted the importance of the women, peace and security agenda.^[6] Notably, Kazakhstan, in its function as Chair of the Disarmament Commission, [called](#) for the Commission's future work to incorporate a gender perspective.

In 2023, the General Assembly integrated gender-related language into more of its disarmament resolutions than in the past, maintaining the upward trajectory of recent years. Of the 61 resolutions proposed by the First Committee and adopted by the General Assembly, 23 featured provisions calling for women's participation or highlighting other gender perspectives.

For the first time, the General Assembly added a paragraph to its resolution on the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty ([78/66](#)), welcoming the sustained efforts within the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization for the equal participation of both men and women in its staff and its capacity-building programmes, and encouraging the continuation of such efforts. Similarly, in its resolution on reducing space threats through norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours ([78/20](#)), the Assembly requested the Chair of the Open-ended Working Group on Reducing Space Threats through Norms, Rules and Principles of Responsible Behaviours to provide the Working Group with a list of qualified representatives who might participate with due regard for gender parity. Regarding its resolution on through-life conventional ammunition management ([78/47](#)), the Assembly expressed grave concern over the risks of armed violence, including gender-based armed violence, posed by the diversion of conventional ammunition. By the same text, the

General Assembly called for relevant policy and practice to address the differential impacts of the safety and security aspects of conventional ammunition on men, women, boys and girls. Furthermore, the body recognized the need for the full, equal, meaningful and effective participation of women in decision-making and implementation processes related to through-life conventional ammunition management.

The General Assembly also devoted attention to other forms of diversity and inclusion beyond women's participation in disarmament forums. By its resolution on prohibiting the use of radiological weapons (78/51), the Assembly reaffirmed the need to ensure the equal, full and meaningful participation of under-represented groups, and to reflect gender perspectives and diverse participant perspectives in the negotiation process.

Conference on Disarmament

On 16 March, States members of the Conference on Disarmament commemorated International Women's Day during a plenary meeting (CD/PV.1663). Sweden, on behalf of the European Union, recalled the importance of bringing women and girls to the forefront of peace and security discussions. France, Mexico, Nigeria and the United States voiced their support for efforts to strengthen gender equality in disarmament initiatives. France also reiterated its support for resuming discussions on updating the rules of procedure with gender-neutral language. The Russian Federation and the Syrian Arab Republic recalled the loss of women and children in regional conflicts, including in Libya, Serbia and the Syrian Arab Republic.

On 23 May, Finland convened a thematic plenary on disarmament and gender in the context of women, peace and security, including participation by a panel of experts (CD/PV.1670). The Secretary-General of the Conference, Tatiana Valovaya, noted in her keynote speech the convergence of disarmament with all four pillars of the women, peace and security agenda: participation, prevention, protection, and relief and recovery. She further stressed how the Conference was uniquely placed to connect human rights to disarmament in support of a shift towards a stronger human-centred approach to peace and security.

Small arms and light weapons

In the latest resolution of the General Assembly on small arms and light weapons (78/46), States reaffirmed the need to mainstream gender dimensions into their implementation processes related to the Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons and the International Tracing Instrument. Through that resolution, they also decided to convene the fourth Review Conference on the Programme of Action in New York in June 2024.

In addition, the connection between gender equality and small arms and light weapons featured prominently in the Secretary-General's 2023 report to the Security Council on small arms and light weapons ([S/2023/823](#)). In the report, the Secretary-General emphasized how such firearms were strongly linked with gender, including through the differential impacts that their proliferation and illicit circulation had on women, men, girls and boys. He further noted their role in perpetrating and facilitating gender-based violence, including conflict-related sexual violence. Recognizing the relevance of efforts to regulate small arms and light weapons in advancing the women, peace and security agenda, the Secretary-General called on the Security Council to explore ways to further strengthen the linkages between the women, peace and security agenda and disarmament. In particular, he encouraged Member States to ensure greater harmonization between national strategies for implementing the women, peace and security agenda and for regulating small arms and light weapons, as well as to strengthen coordination between national focal points for women, peace and security and their counterparts for the Programme of Action. Noting the continued underrepresentation of women in the field of small arms and light weapons control, he called for further action to foster women's participation at the international, regional and national levels. In addition, the Secretary-General underscored the need to collect and analyse sex- and age-disaggregated data on the impact of small arms and light weapons, both for developing evidence-based prevention and protection strategies and for pursuing gender-responsive policymaking and programming. Accordingly, he encouraged the Council to mandate United Nations entities to systematically collect such data, including when recording casualties and monitoring incidents of conflict-related sexual violence.

In December, during the presidency of Ecuador ([S/PV.9509](#)), the Security Council conducted an open debate under the agenda item "Small arms", particularly on addressing the threat posed by diversion, illicit trafficking and misuse of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition to peace and security. In organizing the meeting, Ecuador placed particular emphasis on the need to strengthen the linkages between the women, peace and security agenda and small arms and light weapons control ([S/2023/954](#)). Following the opening remarks by the President of the Security Council and the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, UNIDIR briefed the Council on the findings of its report entitled "[Addressing weapons in conflict-related sexual violence: the arms control and disarmament toolbox](#)". During the open debate, several States expressed support for integrating arms control considerations into the Council's work on country-specific situations and in other thematic areas, such as children in armed conflict, and women, peace and security. The deliberations reflected a shared recognition of the need to integrate the women, peace and security agenda into efforts to control small arms and light weapons. Many States highlighted the differential impact of small arms and light weapons on women and girls and the need to promote women's participation in disarmament and arms control.

Ahead of the open debate on small arms, Ecuador delivered a [joint statement](#) on behalf of the Security Council signatories of the Shared Commitments on Women, Peace and Security, comprising Albania, Brazil, Ecuador, France, Gabon, Japan, Malta, Switzerland, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom and the United States, as well as the Council's incoming members, Guyana, the Republic of Korea, Sierra Leone and Slovenia. In the prepared remarks, those States highlighted the disproportionate impact of small arms and light weapons on women and girls; underscored the need for evidence-based, gender-responsive policymaking and programming for controlling such firearms; and reiterated the Security Council's call for women's full, equal, meaningful, safe and effective participation in all levels of decision-making and in the design and implementation of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control efforts. They also expressed the view that more could be done to integrate women, peace and security into Council decisions related to small arms and light weapons, adding that gender-responsive arms control was essential to transforming gendered power dynamics in peace and security.

Ammunition

In 2023, States finalized the new Global Framework for Through-life Conventional Ammunition Management ([A/78/111](#), annex), in which gender considerations play a central role. Developed by a dedicated [open-ended working group](#) in 2022 and 2023 and adopted by the General Assembly in December, the Global Framework contains a dedicated objective on strengthening gender mainstreaming and the full, equal, meaningful and effective participation of women in through-life conventional ammunition management. Through the Global Framework, States committed to further assessing and considering a gender perspective with respect to through-life conventional ammunition management, aiming, in part, to inform gender-sensitive policies and practices; promote full, equal, meaningful and effective participation and leadership by men and women in conventional ammunition management policy, practice and decision-making; and increase understanding of the differentiated impact and humanitarian consequences of unplanned explosions at conventional ammunition sites, as well as the diversion of conventional ammunition, on women, men, girls and boys. The Global Framework also contains gender-related measures intended both to promote supply chain transparency and to enhance data collection and analysis in the context of diversion. For example, it includes a recommendation for States authorizing ammunition transfers to consider (a) the risk of diverted ammunition being used to commit gender-based violence; and (b) the differential impacts of diverted ammunition on men, women, boys and girls. Under the Global Framework, States also committed to recording information on victims, including sex- and age-disaggregated data, to allow for an assessment of the role of diverted ammunition in different types of armed violence, including gender-based violence.

The General Assembly adopted the Global Framework by its resolution [78/47](#) of 6 December 2023. In the resolution, the Assembly expressed grave concern over the contribution of diverted conventional ammunition to gender-based armed violence; recognized the need for women's full, equal, meaningful and effective participation in decision-making and implementation processes related to through-life conventional ammunition management; and encouraged mainstreaming a gender perspective into policy and practice to address the differential impacts of the safety and security aspects of conventional ammunition on women, men, girls and boys.

Landmines

In their ongoing implementation of the decisions reached by the fourth Review Conference on the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, held in 2019, the four substantive [Committees](#) of the Convention continued to consider, in every aspect of their work, matters related to gender and the diverse needs and experiences of people in affected communities. Specifically, focal points designated by the Committees in line with the 2019 Oslo Action Plan ([APLC/CONF/2019/5/Add.1](#)) maintained their efforts to provide advice on gender mainstreaming and to ensure that the diverse needs and experiences of people in affected communities were taken into account in the Plan's implementation.

In 2023, Germany, as the President of the twenty-first Meeting of the States Parties, underscored the importance of gender considerations in the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention by holding an intersessional thematic plenary meeting^[7] on gender and the diverse needs of mine-affected communities, in particular the lessons learned and the way forward. The event allowed participants to begin considering possible commitments and enabling actions to support gender mainstreaming in the next Action Plan for the Convention.

As the Oslo Action Plan was considered a solid base for considering gender and diversity throughout its 2020–2024 implementation period, UNIDIR carried out an in-depth analysis of progress under the Plan's action points covering gender, diversity and inclusion. In the resulting report, entitled "[Beyond Oslo: taking stock of gender and diversity mainstreaming in the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention](#)", UNIDIR assessed the impact of those action points and reflected on the way forward. To mark the launch of the paper, its authors presented and discussed their findings during an event held on the margins of the twenty-first Meeting of the States Parties in Geneva in November. In the report, they recommended taking new actions regarding women's employment in mine action, funding for gender mainstreaming, and synergies with the women, peace and security agenda, among other areas. They encouraged States parties to carry forward many indicators from the Oslo Action Plan, including metrics to monitor gender components in national workplans and strategies, gender balance at meetings, delivery of mine risk education programmes, and collection of data disaggregated by sex, age and disability status.

Information and communications technologies

In 2023, States acted to strengthen their consideration of the gender dimensions of cybersecurity. The Open-ended Working Group on Security of and in the Use of Information and Communications Technologies 2021–2025 continued to address gender perspectives in the context of its mandate, including through a steady focus on enhancing women's participation in related intergovernmental discussions. At the substantive sessions of the Working Group, in March, July and December, many States and non-governmental stakeholders welcomed efforts undertaken to promote participation by women in cyber diplomacy, as well as the mainstreaming of gender considerations in decision-making, policymaking and outcomes. States and stakeholders noted the positive contribution of the [Women in Cyber Mentorship Programme](#), designed to support the participation of women experts in the Working Group, provide training sessions and workshops on cyberfocused negotiation, and foster a network of women engaged in cyber diplomacy.

In July, the Open-ended Working Group adopted a second annual progress report ([A/78/265](#)) containing strengthened language on gender. For example, the Working Group affirmed the need to pursue efforts towards gender-responsive cyber capacity-building, integrate a gender perspective into national policies on information and communications technologies and on capacity-building, and use checklists or questionnaires in support of relevant policymaking. In the progress report, the Working Group also recognized the impact of the "gender digital divide" and the importance of promoting the full, equal and meaningful participation and leadership of women in related decision-making processes. Furthermore, the Working Group referenced its discussions on the need to include gender perspectives in addressing related threats involving information and communications technologies. The language was built upon previous discussions and agreed language endorsed by the Working Group, demonstrating a continued interest among participants in developing consensual language on gender aspects going forward.

Meanwhile, UNIDIR launched translations of several previous reports on gender and cybersecurity, in collaboration with the Organization of American States. In particular, it presented and discussed two reports ("[Enfoques de género en la ciberseguridad: diseño, defensa y respuesta](#)" and "[Actualización del sistema: hacia una agenda de mujeres, paz y ciberseguridad](#)") at an [event](#) held on the margins of the fourth substantive session of the Open-ended Working Group, as well as a [webinar](#) held in April.

Furthermore, the Secretary-General, in his report on current developments in science and technology and their potential impact on international security and disarmament efforts ([A/78/268](#)), reiterated past calls for Member States to scale up protection for women and girls from escalating forms of online violence. In that connection, he recalled that the Human

Rights Council had acknowledged the risks of gender-based violence and abuses of women's rights online ([A/HRC/RES/53/29](#)).

At the Singapore International Cyber Week, in October, the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs delivered [keynote remarks](#) to a signature plenary on women in the cyber workforce, considering the topic in the context of cybersecurity. The High Representative stressed the need to overcome the "gender digital divide", noting that women were 19 per cent less likely than men to have access to mobile Internet and that, in low- and middle-income countries, 900 million women lacked Internet connection. She also referenced the barriers faced by women pursuing employment in the cybersecurity workforce and other fields related to science and technology. Throughout her statement, the High Representative underscored the urgency of working towards women's equal representation and participation, reducing gender biases in digital technology, and ensuring that new technologies, including tools using AI, were adequately gender responsive.

Outer space

The Open-ended Working Group on Reducing Space Threats through Norms, Rules and Principles of Responsible Behaviours, established pursuant to resolution [76/231](#), held its third and fourth substantive sessions in 2023. Canada, with the concurrence of other States participating in the Working Group, issued a working paper ([A/AC.294/2022/WP.7](#)) in which it expressed support for the full involvement and equal participation of men and women in discussions on reducing space threats through responsible behaviours. It also recognized the need to assess the possible differentiated impacts of such threats.

Meanwhile, in his sixth report on current developments in science and technology and their potential impact on international security and disarmament efforts ([A/78/268](#)), the Secretary-General highlighted the General Assembly's first affirmation, in 2020, of the need to assess possible differentiated impacts of space threats on women and men ([75/36](#)).

Nuclear weapons

In the declaration of the second Meeting of States Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons ([TPNW/MSP/2023/14](#), annex I), States reaffirmed the gender provisions of the Treaty and that the equal, full and effective participation of both men and women was essential in nuclear disarmament. The States parties also reaffirmed their long-standing concern about the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons, noting the disproportionate impact of such weapons on women and girls.

At the second Meeting, participants discussed progress in implementing the Treaty's gender provisions and actions 47 to 50 of the Vienna Action Plan ([TPNW/MSP/2022/6](#), annex II, para.

13). Chile, as the Treaty's gender focal point, presented for the second Meeting a report on the activities carried out between the first and second Meetings. It organized three informal meetings during that period, with presentations by eight experts ([TPNW/MSP/2023/4](#), paras. 7–9).

In the report, the gender focal point also highlighted various exchanges held with States parties and signatory States during the intersessional period. Participants in the discussions, *inter alia*, reaffirmed the need for women's full, equal, meaningful and effective participation and leadership in the decision-making under the Treaty in order to abolish nuclear weapons and achieve nuclear disarmament. In addition, they considered the importance of integrating gender perspectives into international cooperation and assistance in areas such as medical care (sexual and reproductive health rights), rehabilitation and psychological support (early detection and intervention), as well as ensuring social and economic inclusion (loss of ancestral lands)—priorities seen as particularly relevant in implementing the Treaty's provisions relating to victim assistance and environmental remediation (article 6) and international cooperation and assistance (article 7). States also acknowledged the varying impacts of ionizing radiation on people of different ages and genders, including its disproportionate impact on women and girls.^[8] Additionally, the gender focal point expressed appreciation for the collaboration of States parties in preparing and sharing national action plans and disaggregated and evidence-based statistics; and encouraged data collection and analysis based on gender, age and other relevant categories. The second Meeting of States Parties appointed Mexico to serve as the gender focal point for the following intersessional period.

During the Meeting, numerous States continued to stress that the equal, full and effective participation of women in nuclear disarmament diplomacy was important to fully implementing the Treaty's gender provisions. In her opening [remarks](#) at the second Meeting, the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs acknowledged that the Treaty's States parties and signatory States had dealt with some of the most salient topics in nuclear disarmament in their intersessional exchanges, including the field's gender-related aspects.

During a thematic discussion on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons, held on 27 and 28 November, States discussed the need to involve affected communities to address the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons and the disproportionate impact of nuclear weapons on women and girls. Notably, many of the representatives of affected communities who spoke at that thematic discussion and during the broader Meeting were women.

In a related development, UNIDIR joined Chile and Ireland to organize an event, held on the margins of the Meeting, entitled "[Rising together: gender-responsive disarmament and the TPNW](#)". The event brought together State delegations, civil society representatives and other

experts to discuss the progress and challenges of integrating gender perspectives into the Treaty's implementation.

Meanwhile, at the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2026 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), numerous States parties emphasized the importance of promoting the equal, full and effective participation of both women and men in the process of nuclear non-proliferation, nuclear disarmament and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Participants also noted the need to integrate gender perspectives and gender analysis across all discussions during the current review process, and to consider the disproportionate, gendered impact of exposure to ionizing radiation.

UNIDIR joined 11 States parties^[9] to the Treaty in submitting a working paper on taking forward gender mainstreaming efforts in the NPT ([NPT/CONF.2026/PC.I/WP.25](#)). In the paper, the authors stated that improving gender equality in participation in the Treaty review process would enhance the effectiveness of that process and its outcomes. Additionally, they argued that gender roles were relevant across the three pillars of the Treaty, as gender could affect exposure to nuclear risk, the impact of ionizing radiation resulting from nuclear-weapon use, the ability to benefit from the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, and access to education and training in nuclear science and engineering. Such considerations, they said, highlighted the importance of gender analysis in designing and implementing policies in a gender-responsive way, making sure both men and women benefited from policy development and were equitably involved in the development, implementation and review of policymaking.

Separately, the Group of Governmental Experts to Further Consider Nuclear Disarmament Verification Issues concluded its work in Geneva after conferring at length on issues of equality between women and men. The Group, established pursuant to General Assembly resolution [74/50](#), concluded in its consensually adopted final report that equal opportunities for men and women should be provided in education, training and capacity-building efforts intended to support nuclear disarmament verification ([A/78/120](#)). Furthermore, the Group recommended that Member States take appropriate measures to ensure equal opportunities for women and men to enable their full and meaningful engagement in nuclear disarmament efforts, including those related to nuclear disarmament verification.

Biological weapons

During the 2023 sessions of the Working Group on the Strengthening of the Biological Weapons Convention, several delegations stressed the need for equitable gender representation in the Convention. The topic of gender featured prominently in the second session of the Working Group, with Argentina, Mexico, Panama and Samoa highlighting the importance of incorporating a gender perspective into national measures to implement the

Convention. As the participants focused on proposed mechanisms to facilitate and support international cooperation and assistance and to review developments in science and technology, countries including Austria, El Salvador, Mexico, Norway, Panama and Uruguay emphasized the importance of applying a gender lens to any such mechanisms. At the third session of the Working Group, several States parties again raised the issue of enhancing gender equality and women's empowerment within the framework of the Convention.

Panama took a leading role in advocating for the inclusion of gender equality and women's empowerment in the discussions of the Working Group. Building on earlier proposals ([BWC/CONF.IX/WP.48](#), [BWC/CONF.IX/PC/WP.8](#), [BWC/MSP/2020/MX.5/WP.6](#) and [BWC/MSP/2020/WP.6](#)), Panama emphasized the need to integrate gender perspectives within the Convention's implementation support framework, presenting several proposals for doing so in two working papers ([BWC/WG/2/WP.23](#) and [BWC/WG/3/WP.14](#)). The country's proposals were aimed at enhancing confidence-building and transparency, bolstering compliance and verification processes, and refining organizational, institutional and financial frameworks. The key recommendations included ensuring women's participation in the preparation of annual national reports on confidence-building measures under the Convention, promoting gender balance within verification mechanisms and integrating a gender perspective throughout the agreement's operational structure. The proposals were intended to champion a more inclusive and equitable approach to global security and disarmament challenges.

Women's participation in disarmament

The year saw slight progress towards women's equal, full and effective participation in some multilateral disarmament forums (see [figure 6.1](#) for a chart showing the percentage of women speakers in multilateral disarmament forums from 2021 to 2023.).

In the First Committee of the General Assembly, there was a slight narrowing of the gender gap in the composition of Member State delegations: 38 per cent of the delegates were women, according to titles in the list of participants, and 29 per cent of the delegations were headed by a woman. Furthermore, 29 per cent of the delegates who took the floor were women—1 per cent more than in 2022.

During the 2023 Meeting of the States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention, women comprised 34 per cent of the representatives of States parties who took the floor,^[10] compared with 38 per cent of speakers in the Convention's ninth Review Conference, in 2022.

In the Conference on Disarmament, the proportion of statements delivered by women representing States members increased in 2023, to 27 per cent. Overall, women comprised 46 per cent of delegates to the Conference and 32 per cent of heads of delegation during the year.

In each of the six meetings related to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, women represented between 33 and 40 per cent of all registered participants, and the proportion of women heads of delegation ranged between 23 and 35 per cent.

During the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2026 NPT Review Conference, 35 per cent of the speakers representing Member States were women. That figure represented a slight increase compared with the tenth NPT Review Conference, held in 2022, where women comprised 33 per cent of speakers.

At the second Meeting of States Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, held in 2023, 31 per cent of heads of delegation were women. Moreover, 38 per cent of speakers were women, up from 28 per cent at the first Meeting, in 2022.

In the fourth session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, convened in November 2023, 27 per cent of delegates and 11 per cent of speakers were women.

In the Open-ended Working Group on Conventional Ammunition, women accounted for 39 per cent of Member State delegates who took the floor in the third substantive session and 46 per cent of speakers in the fourth substantive session.

The Open-ended Working Group on Security of and in the Use of Information and Communications Technologies 2021–2025 continued to approach gender parity, with women constituting 38–46 per cent of all registered participants of the three sessions in 2023. Furthermore, women accounted for 57 per cent of speakers at the last session of the year, held in December.

In 2023, UNIDIR launched an upgraded version of the [Gender and Disarmament Hub](#), providing the latest data on gender balance and gender perspectives in arms control and disarmament. Additionally, UNIDIR produced a report entitled "[Best practices for gender equality in conventional arms control: survey results](#)", analysing submissions it had received from 40 organizations around the world and examining current practices for supporting women's participation and promoting gender diversity, equality and inclusion in conventional arms control. In particular, the report showcased five practices driving inclusive workplace cultures: equality directives in public administration; flexible work arrangements; SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound) goals and indicators; panel parity pledges; and gender-sensitive communication.

Meanwhile, the Office for Disarmament Affairs continued to promote targeted efforts for women's capacity-building, empowerment and networking in the field of ammunition management. In the framework of the Women Managing Ammunition Network (WoMA-

Network), established in 2022, the Office partnered with the Ministry of Defence of Austria and the Ammunition Management Advisory Team to hold an international [training session](#) on the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines for women ammunition technical experts. The two-week programme in Austria brought together 11 women working in technical ammunition management roles in their national military and security forces, enabling them to strengthen their knowledge on a wide range of technical ammunition management topics, including the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines and the United Nations SaferGuard Programme. Participants further familiarized themselves with the issues of gender and gender equality, both generally and within the specific context of ammunition management. They discussed how to identify gender bias; how gender can influence access to resources, choices and opportunities; and how women can overcome barriers they face in the field of ammunition management. In addition, the training course supported the expansion of the WoMA-Network, which was established both to promote gender equality and diversity in ammunition management and to increase women's visibility and leadership in technical ammunition management roles. On the margins of the training session, the Office for Disarmament Affairs hosted a [round-table discussion](#) in Vienna where the training participants joined representatives from Vienna-based organizations—including the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe and the Wassenaar Arrangement secretariat—to consider important areas of through-life conventional ammunition management, including transfer controls, criminal justice responses and investigations into illicit ammunition trafficking, and regional approaches.

The Office also promoted gender parity in expert groups, in line with the commitment made by the Secretary-General in his 2018 Agenda for Disarmament to “achieve gender parity on all panels, boards, expert groups and other bodies established under his auspices in the field of disarmament”. In 2023, the Group of Governmental Experts to Further Consider Nuclear Disarmament Verification Issues remained composed of 15 men and 10 women.

Furthermore, the Office continued to promote women's equal participation and diversity in disarmament fellowships, scholarships, training activities and workshops. Specifically, it supported opportunities for women in the United Nations Programme of Fellowships on Disarmament, which helps to train officials to hold multilateral and disarmament-related posts within their respective Governments.^[11] Additionally, the 2023 sessions of the United Nations–Singapore Cyber Fellowship achieved equal representation, with 14 women and 14 men participating both in May and in August. The Office also supported opportunities for women in the training of experts under the Secretary-General's Mechanism for Investigation of Alleged Use of Chemical and Biological Weapons.^[12]

Regarding the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, States parties continued the Treaty's sponsorship programme for the second Meeting of States Parties in recognition of the need to promote inclusivity and broad representation at their meetings. The sponsorship

programme supported the participation of 25 delegates, 8 of whom were women. Additionally, Kazakhstan and Kiribati jointly initiated an independent sponsorship programme, which enabled the participation of delegates from communities affected by nuclear testing; that initiative supported 16 delegates from Kiribati, 7 of whom were women.

The International Atomic Energy Agency, through its Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship Programme, continued to annually provide scholarships to more than 100 women students entering nuclear-related fields.

Overall, of the more than 250 people who participated in various in-person training and capacity-building activities organized by the Office for Disarmament Affairs in 2023, 60 per cent were men, and 40 per cent were women. Women comprised 44 per cent of the 1,300 people who participated in meetings, events, workshops and other activities organized by the Office, and they occupied 46 per cent of the 461 speaking roles in those meetings.^[13] The United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa strengthened efforts towards women's equal participation in its events by requesting Member States and partners to consider the nomination of at least one woman to attend its activities. Notably, in line with the Office's [Gender Policy](#), the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific strove to ensure gender-balanced speakers and/or panellists in all its programmes, while strongly encouraging Member States of the Asia-Pacific region to nominate women participants to regional events as their representatives. Meanwhile, to mark International Women's Day, the Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean published a [video](#) that highlighted the important contributions of women in Latin America and the Caribbean to disarmament.

Gender mainstreaming

In addition to promoting gender-balanced participation, the United Nations continued to support the operationalization of policy decisions to mainstream a gender perspective in disarmament and arms control. Of 110 meetings, conferences, training courses, workshops and events organized or co-organized by the Office for Disarmament Affairs in 2023, 48 per cent incorporated some contribution to gender equality, 13 per cent included gender equality as a significant objective, and 11 per cent had gender equality as a principal focus. (See [figure 6.3](#) for a chart on activities of the Office with a gender perspective.)

The United Nations Saving Lives Entity fund (SALIENT), jointly managed by the Office for Disarmament Affairs and the United Nations Development Programme in partnership with the Peacebuilding Fund and relevant United Nations country teams, continued to support local implementation efforts in armed violence reduction with a gender perspective in Cameroon, Jamaica and South Sudan. SALIENT channels at least 30 per cent of its programme funds to gender-related activities. The topics of gender and of women, peace and security also

continued to be thematic priorities of the United Nations Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation (UNSCAR).

In 2023, the informal coordination mechanism on gender and small arms and light weapons continued to meet to share relevant updates between United Nations agencies and civil society organizations. The Office for Disarmament Affairs implemented a multi-year, extrabudgetary [project](#) in support of the Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons, of which gender mainstreaming is one of three pillars, building on a thematically similar [initiative](#) completed previously.

In March, the Office for Disarmament Affairs launched the online self-paced course "Gender-mainstreaming small arms control", available on the Office's [Disarmament Education Dashboard](#). The objectives of the course are to enhance participants' understanding of the need to include gender perspectives in measures for small-arms control, demonstrate ways to prevent arms-related gender-based violence, examine relevant international policy frameworks and converging agendas, and introduce entry points for gender-responsive small-arms policies.

Regional activities in Africa

Throughout 2023, the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa, based in Lomé, continued to comprehensively mainstream a gender perspective in its activities. On 11 December, it launched the first webinar in a series on integrating gender-responsive actions into measures to control small arms. Organized in support of the Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons, the webinar was attended by officials from Burundi, Cameroon and Sierra Leone, States that had worked with the Office for Disarmament Affairs over the previous three years to incorporate gender considerations into their small-arms policies. The participants discussed progress made and best practices in adopting and implementing gender-sensitive initiatives in disarmament and arms control in their countries, as well as challenges faced in advancing the integration of small-arms control into gender equality and women, peace and security efforts.

During the exchange, Burundi noted the adoption of a target to increase women's representation and participation in decision-making processes relating to arms control initiatives, calling that target instrumental in advancing gender mainstreaming and in combating the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. Burundi, Cameroon and Sierra Leone also carried out a series of capacity-building programmes to advance and integrate gender-sensitive initiatives, including through awareness-raising activities involving women- and youth-led civil society organizations, local authorities and other stakeholders within communities. Participants in those activities identified key challenges, such as the widespread proliferation of small arms and light weapons, the limited integration of gender considerations

into broader arms control policies, inadequate financial and technical resources to conduct large-scale capacity-building and awareness-raising activities, and the absence of effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Furthermore, to achieve progress towards gender-responsive policies concerning small arms and light weapons, attendees highlighted the need to involve women and young people in developing national action plans and sustained awareness-raising campaigns for policymakers, including parliamentarians and stakeholders in the defence and security sectors.

In September, UNIDIR collaborated with the Commission of the Economic Community of West African States to convene a [seminar](#) in Ghana for the region, as well as disarmament experts, to discuss gender perspectives in arms control and disarmament. Over 50 participants from more than a dozen West African countries engaged in panel discussions and brainstorming sessions covering gender-sensitive arms control and related topics.

Regional activities in Latin America and the Caribbean

The United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, based in Lima, developed a course on small arms and gender that it piloted in Colombia in November. The new course was expected to enable the Regional Centre to provide capacity-building across the region in four areas: introduction to key concepts on gender and small arms; policy frameworks and the convergence of agendas; data collection and gender analysis; and integrating a gender perspective into small-arms control initiatives.

Preventing firearms-related femicides and other gender-based violence remained a top priority across Latin America and the Caribbean, where violent death remained alarmingly common among women. Femicides in the region were often preceded by other types of physical, sexual, psychological, economic or patrimonial violence, which occurred frequently in both the public and private spheres.

Building on efforts from previous years, the Regional Centre conducted several iterations of a specialized course on firearms investigations from a gender perspective, intended to help prevent impunity for violent crimes against women. For example, the Regional Centre held a virtual course in Barbados from 11 to 20 April, reaching 13 women and 16 men from the Barbados Police Service and the Barbados Defence Force. It also conducted a virtual course in Suriname from 20 to 29 June for representatives of the Korps Politie Suriname, the Attorney General's Office, the Directorate of National Security and the Corps Military Police, drawing 13 men and 11 women as participants. In addition to providing relevant national authorities with technical expertise for investigating firearms-related crimes, the course enabled exchanges among relevant national authorities on addressing the issue collaboratively.

Furthermore, as part of its ongoing support for gender-related meetings and initiatives across the region, the Regional Centre supported the Organization of American States in the development of regional guidelines on the prevention of gender-based violence using firearms.

Regional activities in Asia and the Pacific

Based in Kathmandu, the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific continued its active efforts to integrate gender perspectives into disarmament and arms control initiatives across the Asia-Pacific region. To help achieve this aim, it incorporated the issue of gender mainstreaming into its programmes as a cross-cutting component. Together with the Prajnya Trust, a non-governmental organization, the Regional Centre organized a lecture in February on gender mainstreaming in disarmament and arms control, as part of the Peace and Gender Lunchtime Lecture Series, attracting around 50 students from South Asia. Discussions centred on the critical role of gender perspectives in peace, security and regional stability. In June, the Regional Centre and the Prajnya Trust dedicated one day of the jointly organized "Disarmament Toolkit 2023" online learning course to the topic of gender and disarmament, engaging a diverse student body from South Asia and South-East Asia on the convergence of global agendas on disarmament, sustainable development, and women, peace and security.

Furthering its commitment, the Regional Centre moderated an event held in Geneva in August on the margins of the ninth Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty. The event, co-organized by Small Arms Survey and UNIDIR, emphasized integrating considerations related to gender-based violence into national arms export and transfer assessments. Furthermore, it encouraged refreshed approaches to enhance the application of article 7.4 of the Arms Trade Treaty, focusing on preventing arms-related gender-based violence.

During its regional seminar of national points of contact for the Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons, held in October, the Regional Centre encouraged participants to promote, assess and report on their progress in integrating gender considerations into the implementation of the Programme of Action, including at the policy, legal and operation levels. The seminar was attended by more than 50 participants from 25 States in the Asia-Pacific region, as well as experts from the United Nations, academia and civil society organizations.

Additionally, in December, the Regional Centre and the Implementation Support Unit of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons organized a regional workshop on achieving the universalization of the Convention in the Pacific. In the workshop, the trainers highlighted the importance of applying a gender lens in implementing the Convention and explored how disarmament and security issues were interlinked with the rights of women and girls.

Footnotes

[1] Albania, Argentina, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, France, Germany, Israel, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Liberia, Luxembourg, Mexico, Mongolia, Rwanda, Spain and Tunisia.

[2] Albania, Brazil, Ecuador, France, Gabon, Japan, Malta, Switzerland, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United States and the incoming members of the Security Council, Guyana, Republic of Korea, Sierra Leone and Slovenia.

[3] Albania, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Cabo Verde, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kingdom of the Netherlands, Kiribati, Latvia, Lebanon, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Mauritius, Mexico, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Namibia, New Zealand, Norway, Palau, Peru, Philippines, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Samoa, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Türkiye, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United States and Uruguay.

[4] Bangladesh, Canada, Italy and United States.

[5] Albania, Australia and Uruguay.

[6] Australia, Slovenia and Uruguay.

[7] The meeting was chaired by Thomas Göbel (Germany) and facilitated by Renata Hessmann Dalaqua of UNIDIR, with presentations from the representatives of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the Regional Mine Action Center and the HALO Trust.

[8] The unique impacts of nuclear weapons on women and girls were also a focus of the Treaty's Scientific Advisory Group ([TPNW/MSP/2023/8](#)).

[9] Australia, Canada, Ireland, Mexico, Namibia, Norway, Panama, Philippines, Spain, Sweden and Thailand.

[10] Women represented 41 per cent of all delegates and 25 per cent of heads of delegation.

[11] At the start of the 2023 Fellowship, the participants comprised 12 women and 13 men.

[12] At the training course on biological crime scene management, held in New York in February, 16 of the 28 participating experts were women; at the training course on transportation of infectious substances, held in Germany in September, 7 of the 14 participating experts were women; at the training course on safe and secure approaches to field environments, held in Thailand in November, 10 of the 20 participating experts were women; at the basic training course in South Africa in June, 7 of the 19 participating experts were women; and at the basic training course in France in September, 10 of the 24 participating experts were women.

[13] According to the Gender Mainstreaming Tracking Tool of the Office for Disarmament Affairs.



Lamenting the persistent deadlock in parts of the disarmament machinery has become a common refrain ... but the time for lamentation must end. Instead, we must turn our attention to concrete, sensible solutions. We must ensure that the machinery is fit for purpose so that it can facilitate the management of threats in traditional and new domains and identify solutions.

— *Izumi Nakamitsu* High Representative for Disarmament Affairs

Developments and trends, 2023

While components of the disarmament machinery remained stagnant in 2023, the year saw some positive developments, particularly around the Disarmament Commission's achievement of consensus recommendations for the first time since 2017. Those recommendations, concerning the practical implementation of transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities, came six years after the Commission submitted a substantive report to the General Assembly on confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms. On another encouraging note, the Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters concluded its two-year programme of work on the topic of global military spending, presenting a set of practical proposals aimed at curbing and reversing the upward trend of expenditure.

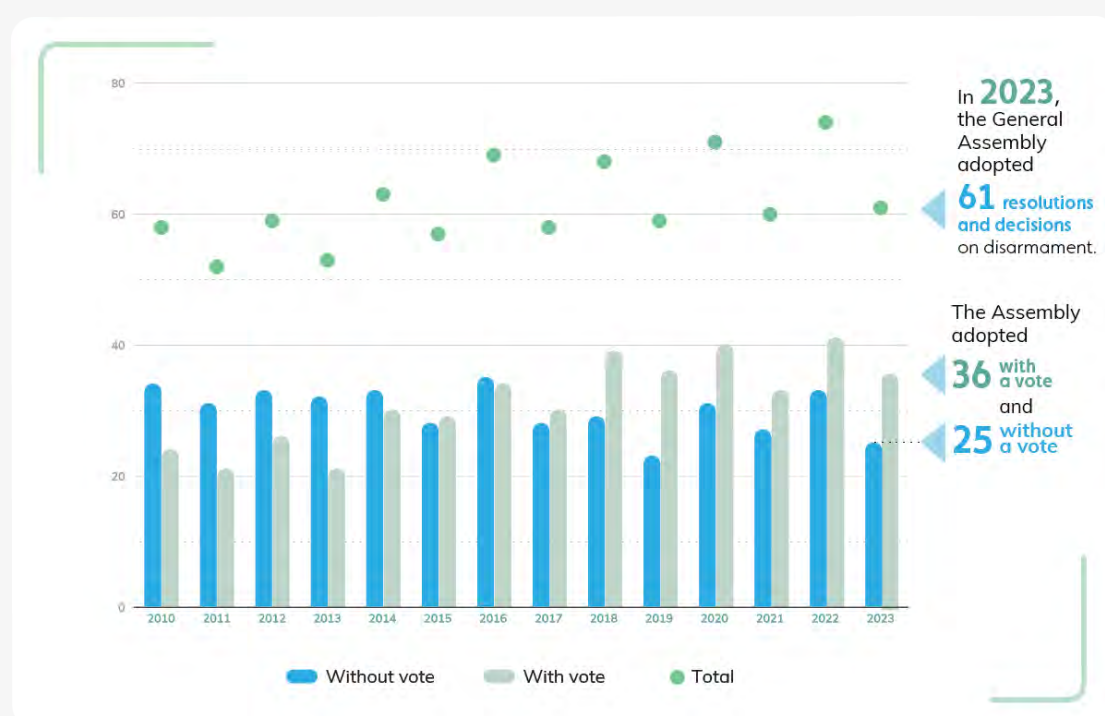
With respect to the First Committee of the General Assembly, the year saw record-high levels of participation, a growing number of votes on resolutions—148 in total—and a consistent trend of competing draft resolutions being tabled under the same agenda item. Discussions in the Committee were tense, with heated exchanges on the conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza, as

well as other hotspots, such as the Korean Peninsula and Nagorno-Karabakh. Many States lamented the deteriorating international security environment, which was partly reflected in heightened nuclear weapons-related rhetoric, security challenges emanating from new domains in cyber and outer space, and the negative consequences of the proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons.

Figure 7.1.

From consensus to contention: tracking shifts in the General Assembly's disarmament decision-making over the years

Number of resolutions and decisions by type of adoption as a whole, 2010–2023



When the General Assembly cannot unanimously agree to adopt a proposed resolution or decision, Member States can instead do so by a vote. The graph shows that, since 2017, the General Assembly has voted on the majority of its disarmament-related resolutions and decisions each year, reversing a prior trend of collective agreement on most of its adopted texts. The graph also reveals that the General Assembly has adopted more disarmament texts in recent years, partly due to States tabling competing resolutions on the same issue.

Overall, the First Committee considered a total of 60 draft resolutions and one decision, a decrease from the previous session. The First Committee also voted on two draft amendments, which the sponsors of the respective resolutions deemed “hostile”. Three new resolutions were adopted by vote, namely those on the topics of radiological weapons, the

legacy of nuclear weapons and related victims' assistance and remediation, and lethal autonomous weapons systems.

Meanwhile, States continued to express deep frustration over the ongoing stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament. That body once again remained unable to agree to a programme of work, despite efforts towards consensus undertaken by the first three presidencies of the 2023 session under Egypt, Ethiopia and Finland. In the absence of a programme of work, the presidencies convened formal and informal thematic plenaries under the agenda items of the Conference, enabling States members to discuss a variety of specific topics, including nuclear-weapon-free zones, disarmament and gender in the context of the women, peace and security agenda, the responsible use of AI in the military domain and the disarmament aspects of the vision presented in *A New Agenda for Peace*. Those States also considered "the improved and effective functioning of the Conference" after taking up the matter at an informal retreat organized by UNIDIR, held in June, with support from the presidencies of France and Germany. Later in the year, the Hungarian presidency secured consensus on a comprehensive final procedural report, as well as a return to consensus on the annual resolution adopted at the seventy-eighth session of the General Assembly, First Committee. However, in an unprecedented development, the Conference was not able to take any decision on the participation of non-States members, due to disagreements on the procedure for approving such requests.



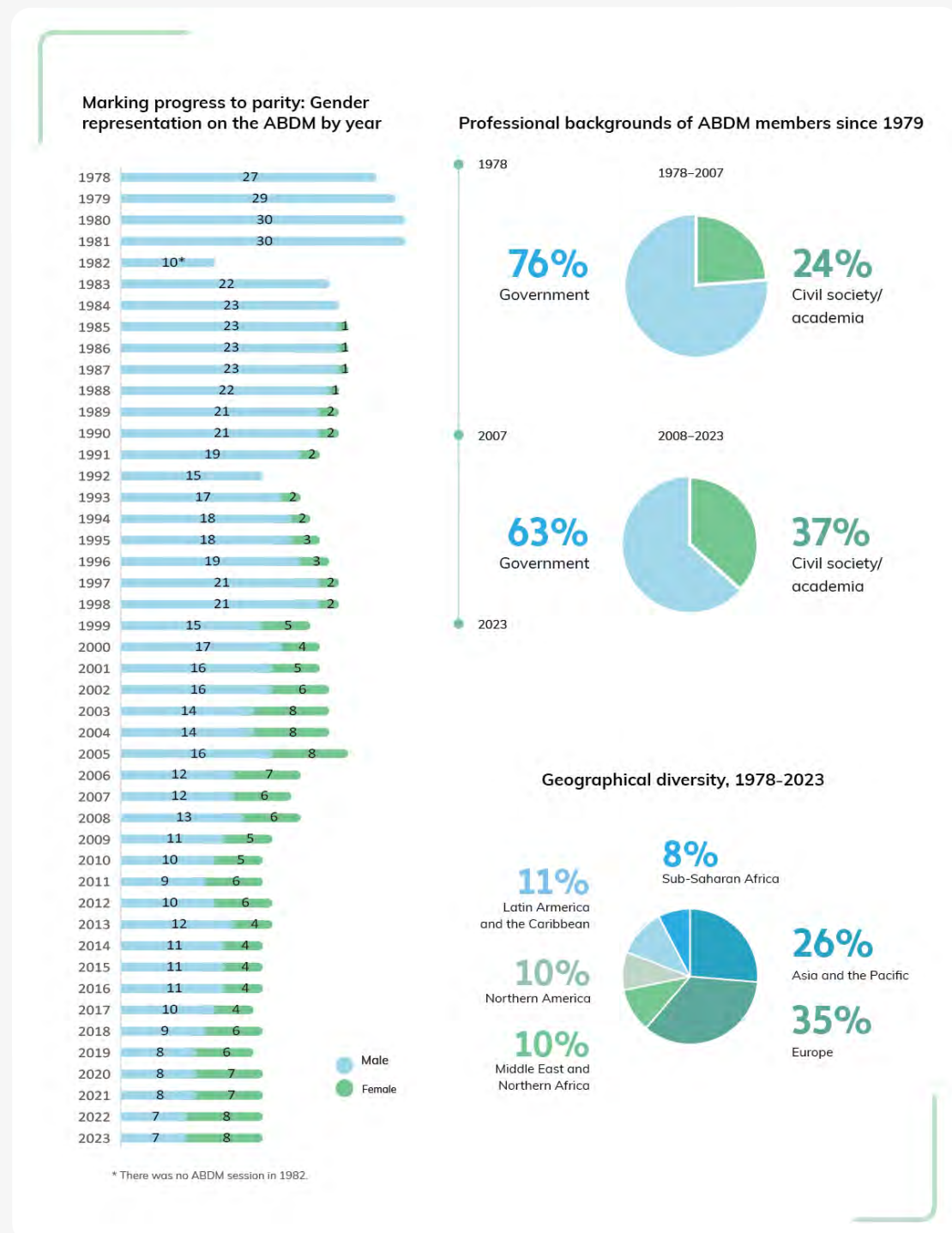
The Conference on Disarmament meets in Geneva, on 28 February (Credit: UN Photo/Violaine Martin).

A bright spot of 2023 was the Disarmament Commission's submission of a substantive report to the General Assembly at its seventy-eighth session ([A/78/42](#)). Based on discussions in its Working Group II, the Commission adopted, by consensus, recommendations to promote the practical implementation of transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities with the goal of preventing an arms race in outer space, in accordance with the recommendations set out in the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-Building Measures in Outer Space Activities. Unfortunately, for the nineteenth consecutive year, there were no consensus recommendations put forward for the agenda item "Recommendations for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons", allocated to Working Group I of the Commission.

In its final report ([A/78/287](#)), the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters provided a set of practical and concrete proposals to curb and reverse the upward trend in military spending,^[1] centred around the belief that a more holistic conception of security is needed. To achieve that vision, the Board sought to identify three complementary pathways with associated actions at a time when new insights and energy were sorely needed. Those three pathways were centred on (a) encouraging critical, innovative and transformative thinking about military spending; (b) lessening threat perceptions and risk escalation and reducing military spending; and (c) strengthening analysis, data collection and public awareness.

Figure 7.2.

Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters: a diverse body of experts



Since its inception in 1978, the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters (ABDM) has made steady progress towards gender parity. As of 2023, there are eight women and seven men on the Board. The Secretary-General chooses the members of the Board from all regions of the world for their knowledge and experience in the field of disarmament and international security. Members serve in their personal capacity and are active in various fields—diplomacy (whether

active or retired), civil society and academia. Sustained efforts are ongoing to ensure broad and equitable geographical representation.

First Committee of the General Assembly

Organization of work

The General Assembly First Committee (Disarmament and International Security) held its seventy-eighth [substantive session](#) from 2 October to 3 November.

On 28 September, the Committee held an [organizational meeting](#), electing without a vote Rytis Paulauskas (Lithuania) as its Chair. The body approved its programme of work at the same meeting ([A/C.1/78/CRP.1](#) and [A/C.1/78/CRP.2/Rev.1](#)).

In addition to the Chair, the Bureau comprised Heidar Ali Balouji (Islamic Republic of Iran) as Rapporteur and three Vice-Chairs: Matias Andrés Eustathiou (Uruguay); Yaseen Lagardien (South Africa); and Christine Nam (New Zealand).

Following the organizational meeting, the First Committee convened 29 in-person meetings, 3 fewer than the previous year. For the second consecutive year, 1 meeting was dedicated to discussions on programme planning and working methods.

The Committee maintained very high participation by delegations while streamlining its schedule; thanks in large part to strict time limits decided by the Bureau and imposed by the Chair, only one meeting was needed beyond those initially planned. That figure marked a significant improvement from 2022 when four additional meetings were necessary.

In addition to briefings from Chairs of disarmament bodies and components of the disarmament machinery, the First Committee held a high-level exchange on [13 October](#) with the Director and Deputy to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs. Additionally, on 11 October, the Committee held an informal segment devoted to [interventions by representatives of civil society](#), as per past practice.

The Committee structured its discussions in line with previous sessions, dividing its work into three stages: (a) general debate; (b) discussions on seven thematic clusters (nuclear weapons, other weapons of mass destruction, conventional weapons, regional disarmament and security, outer space (disarmament aspects), other disarmament issues and international security, and disarmament machinery); and (c) action on all draft resolutions and decisions. Eight meetings were dedicated to the general debate, followed by 13 meetings for thematic discussions and 6 meetings for action on all draft resolutions and decisions.

Interest among Member States in the First Committee remained high: 151 delegations delivered [statements](#) during the general debate, 3 more than in the previous year. The thematic discussion segment included 375 interventions, breaking the previous record of 365 interventions set in 2022. During the 30 meetings of the Committee, delegations exercised the right of reply at least 144 times (excluding second interventions), compared with 134 in the previous year. Additionally, women constituted 29 per cent of the speakers in the general debate—a slight increase from the previous session, demonstrating incremental progress by the Committee towards gender parity.

The First Committee's 2023 session once again reflected the continuing deep divisions among Member States. Tensions were evident between nuclear and non-nuclear-weapon States, between the Russian Federation and the United States along with its Western allies, and between developing and developed States. The war in Ukraine remained a notable focus. The conflict in Gaza also featured prominently, with States frequently exercising the right of reply. Further heated exchanges centred on other regional issues, including tensions on the Korean Peninsula and in Nagorno-Karabakh.

The High Representative for Disarmament Affairs [opened](#) the substantive proceedings on 2 October. Noting that it was her seventh year addressing the Committee in her current capacity, the High Representative referred to rising geopolitical tensions and unprecedented strain on the peace and security architecture. She emphasized several priorities from the Secretary-General's policy brief [A New Agenda for Peace](#), published in July: preventing the use and proliferation of nuclear weapons and accelerating their elimination; reducing the human cost of weapons, including by centring peace and security on the imperative to save human lives; addressing the potential risks emanating from emerging domains, including cyberspace and outer space; tackling evolving risks linked to advances in biology; and seeking ways to address the ongoing deadlock in some disarmament institutions.

On the same day, the President of the seventy-eighth session of the General Assembly, Dennis Francis (Trinidad and Tobago), also delivered [opening remarks](#). He reflected on pervasive challenges to international security, including the war in Ukraine, the situation in Haiti, and other threats to peace and security spanning Africa to the Middle East. The President emphasized the existential threat posed by nuclear weapons and underscored the urgent need to counteract the misuse, illicit transfer and accumulation of conventional weapons.

Overall, the First Committee considered 61 draft texts (60 draft resolutions and one decision)—down from 74 the previous year—as well as two draft amendments introduced by the Islamic Republic of Iran. Of the drafts adopted, only 25 (41 per cent) were adopted as a whole without a recorded vote.^[2] Furthermore, Member States requested 110 separate paragraph votes, including 17 in one resolution alone.^[3] The Committee voted 146 times in total. (See [figure 7.1](#) for an infographic showing adoption statistics from 2010 to 2023.)

The body adopted three new resolutions: a United States-sponsored text on prohibiting the use of radiological weapons (78/51), a joint text from Kazakhstan and Kiribati on the legacy of nuclear testing and related victims' assistance and remediation (78/240), and an Austria-led resolution on lethal autonomous weapons systems (78/241). The resolution on lethal autonomous weapons systems garnered significant overall support, with 164 votes in favour, but the text faced scrutiny: States took 11 separate paragraph votes, both in the First Committee session and again during the General Assembly plenary.

In line with past practice, throughout the thematic debate, the Committee heard briefings from Chairs of disarmament bodies and expert groups whose sessions were ongoing or recently concluded, including the following: the Chair of the Group of Governmental Experts to Further Consider Nuclear Disarmament Verification Issues, Jørn Osmundsen (Norway); the Chair of the ninth Review Conference of the Biological Weapons Convention, Leonardo Bencini (Italy); the Chair of the Open-ended Working Group on Conventional Ammunition, Albrecht von Wittke (Germany); and the Chair of the Open-ended Working Group on Security of and in the Use of Information and Communications Technologies 2021–2025, Burhan Gafoor (Singapore).

The Committee also heard briefings from the Directors of the regional centres of the Office for Disarmament Affairs for Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Asia and the Pacific. The traditional panel session on disarmament machinery, held on 26 October, included the President of the Conference on Disarmament, Margit Szücs (Hungary); the Chair of the Disarmament Commission, Akan Rakhmetullin (Kazakhstan); the Chair of the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters, Elissa Golberg (Canada); and the Director of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, Robin Geiss.

On 13 October, at the Committee's eleventh meeting, the Director and Deputy to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs engaged in a high-level exchange alongside other officials nominated by the General Assembly regional groups. The Director underscored concerns raised by States during the general debate, particularly around the deteriorating international security landscape and the associated pressures on disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control mechanisms. The Director also emphasized the importance of connecting disarmament to broader objectives, such as the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, human rights and women's empowerment. He outlined key focus areas for States in the session, such as reinforcing the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime, recommitting to the humanitarian aspect of disarmament efforts and tackling challenges related to the weaponization of emerging technologies. Turning to the resolutions and decisions adopted at the Committee's previous session, as well as relevant reports of the Secretary-General, the Director noted the low rate of response to requests for national views on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. In that context, he urged States to consider what types of reports could best facilitate substantive discussions.

As in 2022, the only organization represented on the First Committee's panel of high-level disarmament officials was the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL), nominated by the Group of Latin America and the Caribbean. Flávio Damico (Brazil), speaking on behalf of OPANAL, stressed the importance of multilateralism and international law in global nuclear disarmament efforts. He called on nuclear-weapon States to engage in dialogue with members of all nuclear-weapon-free zones and to resolve outstanding issues related to the ratification of the respective protocols and interpretative declarations. In the remarks, OPANAL also underscored the potential value of a comprehensive study on nuclear-weapon-free zones, both to advance the objectives of the underlying treaties and to support the establishment of new zones. Although a resolution on such a study was not tabled during the Committee's seventy-eighth session, OPANAL encouraged the Committee to continue pursuing consensus on the proposal in future sessions.

On 4 December, the General Assembly took action on 55 of the 61 draft resolutions and decisions on substantive items approved by the First Committee. The Assembly did not take action on six texts owing to associated programme budget implications requiring review by the Fifth Committee (Administrative and Budgetary Questions): "Developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security" (L.11); "Open-ended working group on security of and in the use of information and communications technologies 2021–2025 established pursuant to General Assembly resolution 75/240" (L.13 (decision)); "Nuclear disarmament verification" (L.31); "Addressing the legacy of nuclear weapons: providing victim assistance and environmental remediation to Member States affected by the use or testing of nuclear weapons" (L.52); "Further practical measures for the prevention of an arms race in outer space" (L.55); and "Lethal autonomous weapons systems" (L.56).

In presenting the reports of the First Committee to the General Assembly, the Rapporteur, Heidar Ali Balouji (Islamic Republic of Iran), noted that the seventy-eighth session had required only one additional plenary meeting beyond those originally scheduled, despite featuring the highest level of participation by delegations to date. He acknowledged that, despite the challenging geopolitical circumstances, the Committee's high level of professionalism had enabled it to efficiently conclude its work.

On 22 December, the General Assembly adopted the six outstanding proposals approved by the First Committee following consideration of their budget implications by the Fifth Committee.

Exchange with civil society and meeting on working methods and programme planning

On 11 October, the First Committee held its traditional exchange with members of civil society, hearing [interventions](#) from 16 organizations.^[4] The representatives reflected on a range of matters under the Committee's purview, from the imperative of eliminating nuclear weapons to the need for enhanced efforts to combat the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. The interventions also addressed various cross-cutting matters, including gender mainstreaming and integrating the voices of youth into disarmament discussions.

On [12 October](#), at its tenth meeting, the First Committee held a debate on working methods and programme planning, in accordance with General Assembly resolution [77/254](#) and the First Committee's adopted programme of work and timetable ([A/C.1/78/CRP.1](#)). The Committee Chair opened the meeting by inviting interventions from States on the topics at hand. The body heard from 14 States, 2 of them speaking on behalf of groups of States. At the meeting's outset, the Chair announced his intention to prepare a summary of the discussion under his own responsibility for subsequent transmittal to the Fifth Committee Chair for further consideration.

Several delegations expressed regret that the Committee for Programme and Coordination could not reach consensus on conclusions and recommendations for "Programme 3: Disarmament", among nine other programmes in the proposed 2024 programme plan ([E/AC.51/2023/L.4/Add.3](#)). Noting that guidance to the Secretariat on mandate implementation was lacking in the absence of such agreements, several States called for the Committee to redouble its efforts to reach consensus and fulfil its functions. At the same time, speakers emphasized the need to avoid increasing the workload of the General Assembly's Main Committees.

Several delegations expressed concern about the First Committee's working methods, lamenting both the declining rate of consensus on its resolutions and the proliferation of draft proposals on similar topics under the same agenda items. They noted an emerging trend of competing resolutions, including those establishing parallel intergovernmental processes, which had placed a considerable new burden on delegations, especially smaller ones. States also questioned the frequency of certain recurring resolutions, with some calling for less frequent introduction of annual texts that had incorporated only technical changes in recent years. One delegation suggested introducing such resolutions once every two to three years instead. Additionally, several delegations emphasized the importance of the meaningful participation by women in the Committee as well as the principle of multilingualism.

Overview of key substantive issues

Nuclear weapons

The Committee took action on 22 resolutions related to nuclear weapons, adopting 20 of them by vote. The annual text on the “African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty” (78/14) and the biennial measure entitled “Prohibition of the dumping of radioactive wastes” (78/49), both introduced by the Africa Group, were the only resolutions that garnered consensus.^[5]

Continued acrimony between non-nuclear-weapon States and the nuclear-weapon States was starkly evident throughout the deliberations. Non-nuclear-weapon States continued to lament the gap in the implementation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), especially its article VI, while nuclear-weapon States continued to assert that the long-term objective of nuclear disarmament could only be achieved under the “right” conditions. A vast majority of States welcomed a new resolution tabled by Kiribati and Kazakhstan, entitled “Addressing the legacy of nuclear weapons: providing victim assistance and environmental remediation to Member States affected by the use or testing of nuclear weapons” (78/240), but the text was still subjected to many paragraph votes. While China and the United States abstained on the resolution’s adoption, the Russian Federation, France and the United Kingdom voted against it, arguing that the text was inconsistent with their national positions on the legacy of nuclear testing.

The general debate reflected widespread concern among States about the implementation gap in the NPT. That dissatisfaction was heightened by a lack of progress at the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2026 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and at various working group meetings held in 2023. Many non-nuclear-weapon States observed a notable shift away from disarmament goals, while multiple countries expressed concern over plans by nuclear-weapon States to modernize and extend the lifespans of their arsenals. The humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons remained a recurring topic, with delegations stressing the need for victim assistance and environmental remediation and, in many cases, linking their concerns to appeals for increased membership in the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

Many States voiced support for establishing a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction, welcoming the successful outcome of the first three sessions of the conference dedicated to that goal. However, Israel maintained its objection to the process, arguing that it contravened the principles and guidelines on establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones outlined in the 1999 guidelines of the United Nations Disarmament Commission (A/54/42, annex).

Other weapons of mass destruction

The First Committee adopted four resolutions under its cluster on other weapons of mass destruction. A new resolution introduced by the United States, entitled "Radiological weapons" (78/51), was adopted by vote, with a large majority of States voting in favour. However, it faced a paragraph vote on language advocating for the equal, full and meaningful participation of underrepresented groups and the incorporation of gender and diverse perspectives in future treaty negotiations, with four States voting against.^[6] The large majority of States rejected an oral amendment from the Islamic Republic of Iran, which sought to expand the resolution's focus from "use" to include "development, production and stockpiling". Several States criticized that amendment as "hostile", arguing that it changed the resolution's intention and objective.

The Committee voted for a tenth consecutive year on the resolution entitled "Implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction" (78/29). The need for a vote stemmed from contentious language on the possession and use of chemical weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic.

During the general debate and the thematic discussion, numerous States expressed regret over the inability of the fifth Review Conference of the Chemical Weapons Convention to adopt an outcome document. Some delegations specifically called upon the Syrian Arab Republic to increase transparency and fully cooperate with the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. Several States emphasized the importance of ensuring the Convention's continued effectiveness, particularly following the milestone destruction of the final declared chemical weapon stockpiles in 2023.

The First Committee maintained its past practice regarding biological weapons, achieving consensus on its annual resolution dedicated to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction (78/67). States welcomed the outcome of the ninth Review Conference of the Convention, including the agreement by States parties to establish a working group on strengthening the Convention. However, tensions persisted in discussions about the instrument. The Russian Federation continued to accuse the United States of the development of biological weapons and conducting military activities in Ukraine in violation of the Convention, while the United States rejected the Russian claims as disinformation.

Outer space (disarmament aspects)

The First Committee took action on five resolutions under this cluster. Two annual resolutions, “Prevention of an arms race in outer space” (78/19) and “Transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities” (78/52), were adopted without a vote.

Stark divisions on addressing security issues in outer space were evident in the proliferation of proposals for related intergovernmental processes. Many States expressed regret that the Open-ended Working Group on Reducing Space Threats through Norms, Rules and Principles of Responsible Behaviours could not agree on either a substantive or procedural final report due to one State's objections. While a new group of governmental experts on the prevention of an arms race in outer space was set to begin in November, the First Committee also mandated two additional open-ended working groups with overlapping timelines, one from 2024 to 2028 and another from 2025 to 2027.

By a decision introduced by the United Kingdom on “Reducing space threats through norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours” (78/20), the Committee voted to establish a new open-ended working group that would convene from 2025 to 2027. Building on its 2022–2023 predecessor of the same name, the working group would make recommendations on preventing an arms race in outer space through the development of relevant norms, rules and principles.

Separately, in adopting a text sponsored by the Russian Federation entitled “Further practical measures for the prevention of an arms race in outer space” (78/238), the Committee called for a new open-ended working group to convene from 2024 through 2028 to consider and to make recommendations on substantial elements of an international legally binding instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, including, inter alia, on the prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space, as well as to consider various aspects of the prevention of an arms race in outer space in the context of an international legally binding instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

Conventional weapons

The First Committee adopted eight resolutions under the conventional weapons cluster, including annual resolutions on treaties such as the Convention on Cluster Munitions (78/32), the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction (78/45), the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects (78/64) and the Arms Trade Treaty (78/48).

The Committee's deliberations on conventional weapons largely mirrored those of previous years, with States variously expressing support or opposition to weapons-specific treaties. The Committee adopted a new resolution on "Through-life conventional ammunition management" (78/47) with overwhelming support and only five States abstaining.^[7] The resolution advanced the agreements contained in the Global Framework on Conventional Ammunition, which was adopted earlier in the year (A/78/111, annex). Those agreements included initiating a regular follow-up process involving meetings and reports of the Secretary-General.

Other disarmament measures and international security

The First Committee adopted seven resolutions and one decision under this cluster, including three resolutions on the security of information and communications technologies. Its exchanges on information and communications technologies security proved notably fraught due to the ongoing divergence of views concerning the future format of a regular institutional dialogue on the matter under United Nations auspices.

In their interventions, States addressed various ongoing challenges to peace and security in the information and communications technologies domain. Many welcomed the recent consensus adoption of the second annual progress report by the Open-ended Working Group on Security of and in the Use of Information and Communications Technologies 2021–2025. However, while there was broad agreement among States on the importance of that consensus process, discussions on steps beyond the mandate of the Working Group, set to end in 2025, remained divisive.

Three separate texts were tabled on information and communications technologies. They included a draft decision from Singapore to endorse the latest progress report of the Open-ended Working Group on those matters (78/541). Separately, the Russian Federation tabled a text to commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the first resolution under the agenda item in 1998, asserting the centrality of the ongoing Open-ended Working Group (78/237). In addition, France tabled a second iteration of the text on a proposed programme of action on responsible State use of information and communication technologies (78/16). France's proposal received support from European and other Western States seeking to establish such a mechanism immediately following the conclusion of the current working group.

Under the same cluster, the Committee adopted the third iteration of the biennial resolution on "Youth, disarmament and non-proliferation" (78/31). Consistent with its predecessor, the resolution included a request for the Secretary-General to seek and report on the views of States, the United Nations, other relevant international and regional organizations, and civil society regarding the promotion of youth engagement and empowerment in disarmament and non-proliferation activities. Technical updates included acknowledgements of the

Secretary-General's first such report (A/78/164), as well as the General Assembly's 2022 establishment of the United Nations Youth Office by its resolution 76/306.

The Committee also adopted a new resolution on "Lethal autonomous weapons systems" (78/241). Although supported by a large majority of States, the text was subject to 11 separate paragraph votes, targeting all 4 operative paragraphs. The resolution requested the Secretary-General to collect and report on the views of Member States, international organizations and civil society concerning ways to address the challenges and concerns raised by lethal autonomous weapons systems from humanitarian, legal, security, technological and ethical perspectives, as well as their views on the role of humans in the use of force.

With regard to gender and diversity, the Committee continued to hear a growing number of calls for the inclusion of more diverse voices, particularly those of women. For a second consecutive year, Ireland delivered a joint statement on behalf of 78 countries advocating for the integration of a gender perspective in the work of the First Committee and across the disarmament machinery. The statement addressed the differential gendered impacts of armed conflict on women, men, boys and girls, as well as the persistent underrepresentation of women in disarmament forums, especially in leadership roles.

Disarmament machinery

The Committee adopted nine resolutions under this cluster, including those dedicated to the regional centres of the Office for Disarmament Affairs.^[8] The annual resolutions on the reports of the Conference on Disarmament (78/61) and Disarmament Commission (78/62) were adopted without a vote.

Discussions on the disarmament machinery were once again dominated by expressions of concern over the prolonged stagnation in the Conference on Disarmament. States called for launching negotiations in the Conference on a range of topics, including a fissile material cut-off treaty, a comprehensive nuclear weapons convention, and a legally binding prohibition on the use of radiological weapons. Regarding the annual resolution on the report of the Conference, which returned to consensus, informal consultations revolved around finding compromise language on the issue of observer States. Many non-member States of the Conference, especially European delegations, expressed a preference for stronger language, reflecting disappointment over the lack of a decision on allowing observers to participate in the Conference throughout the year, the responsibility for which they placed on the Russian Federation.

United Nations Disarmament Commission

The [United Nations Disarmament Commission](#) held its 2023 session at United Nations Headquarters from 3 to 21 April, completing its three-year cycle of deliberations. It adopted recommendations relating to transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities—the first substantive outcome of the Commission's work since 2020 (for further details, see “Working Group II” below).

At its organizational session on 3 April ([A/CN.10/PV.383](#)), the Disarmament Commission elected Akan Rakhmetullin (Kazakhstan) as its Chair for 2023. The Commission also elected the following Vice-Chairs: Hugo Emmanuel Guerra (Argentina); Timothy O'Sullivan (Australia); Landry Sibomana (Burundi); Helena Ndapewa Kuzee (Namibia); Anna Shestopalova (Russian Federation); Jatuchatra Chommai (Thailand); and Anatolii Zlenko (Ukraine).

The Commission decided at its organizational session to consider the same substantive agenda items as in 2022: (a) recommendations for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons; and (b) preparation of recommendations to promote the practical implementation of transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities with the goal of preventing an arms race in outer space, in accordance with the recommendations set out in the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-Building Measures in Outer Space Activities ([A/CN.10/L.90](#)).

The Disarmament Commission opened its substantive session on 3 April ([A/CN.10/PV.384](#)). In his opening remarks, the Chair recalled the previous work done in the two working groups in 2022 and noted developments in multilateral disarmament forums since the Commission's 2022 session. He noted that, even during the cold war, the Disarmament Commission had been able to agree on seven sets of recommendations. The Chair emphasized that this history demonstrated the Commission's capability to contribute to global security and multilateral diplomacy, even in the most challenging political environments. He further stressed that a successful outcome of the year's disarmament work would be important in efforts to revitalize the disarmament machinery.

In her [opening statement](#), the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs expressed grave concern over the current state of nuclear disarmament. She noted that the risk of nuclear weapons use was now higher than at any time since the depth of the cold war, citing the erosion of the disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control regime. The High Representative called for immediate de-escalation and risk reduction measures, emphasizing that the complete elimination of nuclear weapons remained the only way to definitively remove their associated risks. Reflecting on recent developments, she voiced regret at the failure of the tenth NPT Review Conference to reach a consensus outcome. Looking ahead, she called for the pursuit of a successor framework to New START and noted the declaration

and action plan adopted at the first Meeting of States Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

Turning to transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities, the High Representative called on the Disarmament Commission to consolidate and further elaborate on the measures agreed by the Group of Governmental Experts. She noted the importance of space to everyday life and referenced two other relevant intergovernmental processes: the [Open-ended Working Group on Reducing Space Threats](#) and the [Group of Governmental Experts on Further Practical Measures for the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space](#). She added that successfully implementing and further developing measures to build trust and confidence could provide building blocks for more ambitious measures in space security, including proposals for legally binding obligations.

At the same meeting, the Commission elected Kurt Davis (Jamaica) as Chair of Working Group I and Szilvia Balázs (Hungary) as Chair of Working Group II ([A/CN.10/PV.384](#)). The Commission then began its general exchange of views on all agenda items, holding four plenary meetings for that purpose on 3 and 4 April ([A/CN.10/PV.384](#), [A/CN.10/PV.385](#), [A/CN.10/PV.386](#), and [A/CN.10/PV.387](#)). Thereafter, the two working groups commenced their work on their respective agenda items. Working Group I held 10 meetings from 5 to 20 April. Working Group II held 9 meetings from 4 to 20 April.

Following three weeks of deliberations in plenary meetings and its respective working groups, the Disarmament Commission concluded its 2023 substantive session at its 389th meeting on 20 April ([A/CN.10/PV.389](#)), adopting a final report containing the consensus reports of its two working groups for submission to the General Assembly at its seventy-eighth session ([A/78/42](#)). The final report contains, in its annex, recommendations under the agenda item relating to transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities. No recommendations were put forward under the agenda item on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

General exchange of views

During the four meetings held for the general exchange of views on 3 and 4 April, 70 Member States, two observer States and two observer organizations addressed the Commission ([A/78/42](#), para. 11).

Many NPT States parties voiced regret that the Treaty's tenth Review Conference had failed to adopt a substantive outcome document. As in previous years, nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States expressed starkly different views: while the former emphasized the need to prioritize risk reduction in light of the international security situation, the latter rejected any conditionality for fulfilment of legal obligations related to nuclear disarmament,

highlighting the lack of progress amid efforts by nuclear-weapon States to expand and modernize their nuclear arsenals. Arab States underscored the vital importance of establishing a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, in particular the urgent need for the implementation of the Middle East resolution adopted at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference (NPT/CONF.1995/32 (Part I), annex).

Member States underscored the importance of adopting recommendations to the General Assembly on transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities. Many States noted such recommendations would support the work of other multilateral processes on outer space security. Nevertheless, a divergence of views was apparent on the approach to securing outer space and preventing an arms race. The United States, the United Kingdom and other Western States stressed the importance of achieving political outcomes in the short term, while China and the Russian Federation, supported by many other States, stressed the need for a legally binding instrument to prevent the weaponization of outer space, referring to the updated draft treaty on the prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space and the threat or use of force against outer space objects proposed by China and the Russian Federation ([CD/1985](#)).

Working Group I

Working Group I based its discussions on agenda item 4, "Recommendations for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons", on the Chair's non-paper from the previous year's session (A/CN.10/2022/WG.I/CRP.1). Following robust exchanges among Member States, the Chair circulated successive drafts of proposed recommendations on 12 and 14 April. At the Working Group's final meeting on 20 April, delegations considered a further iteration circulated the previous day (A/CN.10/2023/WG.I/CRP.1/Rev.2). However, significant divergences persisted on key issues, leading the Chair to conclude that no consensus could be reached. His subsequent proposal to issue the 19 April draft as a working paper under his own responsibility was withdrawn due to lack of full support from Member States.

The deep division between nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States continued to shape discussions. Non-nuclear-weapon States further articulated their opposition to any language that could be construed as setting preconditions for nuclear disarmament. Furthermore, they viewed attempts to narrow the deliberation to focus on nuclear risk reduction as a diversion from disarmament obligations and a justification for delays in implementation.

Delegations also differed over how to categorize States in relation to their nuclear weapons status. The Arab Group and the Islamic Republic of Iran opposed the proposed terminology

for NPT non-States parties possessing nuclear weapons, arguing that such language would create an unrecognized category of States beyond the Treaty's established framework. Concurrently, "umbrella States" in extended nuclear deterrence arrangements with nuclear-weapon States firmly rejected South Africa's proposal to label them as "States that continue to rely on nuclear deterrence". The issue of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction also remained contentious. The Arab Group and the Islamic Republic of Iran advocated for including references to the Treaty process, particularly the 1995 resolution on the Middle East. In contrast, the United States and the United Kingdom, along with Israel and several other States not party to the Treaty, pushed for language acceptable to the Commission's full membership, which includes all United Nations Member States, extending beyond NPT States parties.

For the fifth consecutive cycle since 2006, the Disarmament Commission failed to achieve consensus on recommendations for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Despite the Chair's best efforts, many States remained entrenched in their national positions and showed little willingness to make concessions or find a middle ground. Nonetheless, the Chair's iterative approach to revising the initial proposals did yield some progress in narrowing gaps on a few contentious issues. While that incremental advance proved insufficient to achieve consensus in 2023, it laid important groundwork for future discussions both in the Commission and other disarmament forums.

Working Group II

Proceedings

Working Group II of the Disarmament Commission engaged in extensive deliberations to achieve a consensus outcome on agenda item 5, "Preparation of recommendations to promote the practical implementation of transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities with the goal of preventing an arms race in outer space, in accordance with the recommendations set out in the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-Building Measures in Outer Space Activities."

The Working Group opened its proceedings on 4 April by hearing a presentation from the Chair of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, Juan Francisco Facetti (Paraguay). On 5 April, it received a briefing from the Chair of the Open-ended Working Group on Reducing Space Threats through Norms, Rules and Principles of Responsible Behaviours, Hellmut Lagos (Chile). Delegations also began a discussion that day on the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-building Measures in Outer Space Activities ([A/68/189](#)), an exchange that continued over the following two days and concluded on 11 April. Member States exchanged views on the report's provisions as follows: sections IV.A ("Information exchange on space

policies" and "Information exchange and notifications related to outer space activities") on 6 April; section IV.C ("Risk reduction notifications") on 6 April; and sections IV.D, V and VI ("Contact and visits to space launch sites and facilities", "International cooperation" and "Consultative mechanisms") on 11 April. At those meetings, States introduced various proposals and reacted to those of other delegations. The Non-Aligned Movement and the United Kingdom also submitted working papers ([A/CN.10/2023/WG.II/WP.1](#) and [A/CN.10/2023/WG.II/WP.2](#)).

The Chair circulated a draft outcome document on 12 April ([A/CN.10/2023/WG.II/CRP.1/Rev.1](#)), which the Working Group discussed the following day. Based on those discussions and written comments from delegations, the Chair circulated a revised draft on 15 April ([A/CN.10/2023/WG.II/CRP.1](#)), which the Group considered on 17 and 18 April. Subsequent revisions were circulated and discussed on 18 and 19 April ([A/CN.10/2023/WG.II/CRP.1/Rev.2](#)) and on 19 and 20 April ([A/CN.10/2023/WG.II/CRP.1/Rev.3](#)). The final revision, reflecting the latest discussions among delegations, was prepared and adopted, as orally revised, on 20 April ([A/CN.10/2023/WG.II/CRP.1/Rev.4](#)).

Entitled "Recommendations to promote the practical implementation of transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities with the goal of preventing an arms race in outer space, in accordance with the recommendations set out in the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-Building Measures in Outer Space Activities", the outcome of Working Group II was subsequently adopted by the Disarmament Commission as a whole and annexed to its report to the General Assembly ([A/78/42](#)).

Recommendations

The substantive outcome of the Disarmament Commission's 2023 session ([A/78/42](#), annex) consisted of an introduction, conclusions and recommendations on promoting the practical implementation of transparency and confidence-building measures for preventing an arms race in outer space. In its introduction, the Commission noted its previous consideration of the agenda item at its 2018, 2022 and 2023 sessions.

Under "Conclusions", the Disarmament Commission reaffirmed the basic principle of free exploration and peaceful use of outer space by all States, while emphasizing the essential need to prevent an arms race in that domain. It stressed the importance of concluding negotiations on an international legally binding instrument or instruments to that end. It noted recent initiatives as well as current and future United Nations processes related to outer space security.

The Commission also underscored the importance of continuing and promoting the practical implementation of voluntary transparency and confidence-building measures, as recommended in the 2013 report of the Group of Governmental Experts ([A/68/189](#)). It recalled the criteria for transparency and confidence-building measures from that report, and that such measures could also complement and contribute to, but not be a substitute for, an international legally binding instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. Furthermore, the Commission stressed the importance of universal participation in, implementation of and full adherence to the existing legal framework for outer space activities. It also acknowledged that some transparency and confidence-building measures for outer space activities had already been implemented at the multilateral and/or national level.

In its “Recommendations” section, the Disarmament Commission recommended 12 voluntary measures, subject to national security considerations, to promote the practical implementation of the transparency and confidence-building measures contained in the 2013 report. Those recommended measures included engaging in regular dialogues about national space policies and activities, as well as sharing space situational awareness data and information to the extent practicable. The Commission also recommended that States consider designating points of contact to facilitate notification, in a timely manner and to the greatest extent practicable, of potentially affected States of scheduled manoeuvres that may result in risks to the flight safety of space objects of other States.

Furthermore, the Commission put forward several recommendations related to strengthening international cooperation: that States with significant space technologies consider providing assistance and training and transferring technology, data and material to requesting States; that States participate in, implement and fully adhere to the existing international legal framework relating to outer space activities; that States strengthen the supervision of private sector actors under their jurisdiction; and that States further advance and regularly review transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities with the goal of preventing an arms race in outer space, as appropriate, in relevant standing United Nations bodies.

Conference on Disarmament

In 1978, at the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, United Nations Member States recognized the continuing need for a single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum ([S-10/2](#), paras. 120–124). The [Conference on Disarmament](#) assumed that role the following year, succeeding other Geneva-based negotiating forums that included the Ten-Nation Committee on Disarmament (1960), the Eighteen-Nation Committee on Disarmament (1962–1968), and the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament (1969–1978).

The Conference on Disarmament opened its 2023 session on 24 January, presided over by Ahmed Ihab Abdelahad Gamaleldin (Egypt). At the second plenary meeting on 26 January (CD/PV.1646), the Secretary-General of the Conference and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations to the Conference, Tatiana Valovaya, emphasized the need to modernize the Conference to address contemporary disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control challenges.

The first President presented a draft decision based on the previous year's proposal for a programme of work, which would have established five ad hoc committees without explicit negotiating mandates. However, despite consultations carried out under the first three presidencies, the Conference could not reach a consensus on the 2023 programme of work. Additionally, the Conference could not agree on a procedure for accepting requests for participation by non-member States, leading to their exclusion from the 2023 session. The first President also convened two formal plenary meetings under the Conference's agenda items, focusing on thematic discussions about nuclear-weapon-free zones and negative security assurances.

The second President, Yanit Abera Habtemariam (Ethiopia), convened the high-level segment from 27 February to 2 March (CD/PV.1656–1661). The segment featured over 50 ministerial-level statements. On the opening day, the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs urged States to work together and rebuild trust despite ongoing global tensions. She highlighted the Secretary-General's policy brief on *A New Agenda for Peace* as an opportunity to propose innovative ideas for achieving sustainable peace and security. The armed conflict in Ukraine remained a prominent topic throughout the high-level discussions.

In the absence of a programme of work, the next three presidencies coordinated with one another to ensure that the Conference addressed all agenda items throughout the remainder of the session. The third President, Kirsti Kauppi (Finland), convened formal plenary meetings under the agenda items of the Conference, in which the Conference held thematic discussions on the following: cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament, including on the specific topic of nuclear risk reduction; prevention of an arms race in outer space; new types of weapons of mass destruction and new systems of such weapons, radiological weapons; comprehensive programme of disarmament, including on the specific topic of disarmament and gender in the context of women, peace and security; and transparency in armaments. The Conference also held informal meetings on disarmament and gender in the context of women, peace and security.

The fourth President, Camille Petite (France), convened formal plenary meetings under the agenda items of the Conference, in which the Conference held thematic discussions on transparency in armaments, including on the specific topic of transparency on nuclear doctrines and arsenals and on a comprehensive programme of disarmament, which included

discussion on education and research in disarmament. The Conference also held an informal discussion on revitalizing the work of the Conference on Disarmament, at which the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) presented an illustrative compendium of proposals submitted to the Conference on Disarmament. Subsequently, UNIDIR, with the support of the French and German presidencies, organized a high-level retreat on revitalizing the work of the Conference at Montreux, Switzerland, on 22 and 23 June.

The fifth President of the Conference, Thomas Göbel (Germany), convened formal plenary meetings under the agenda items of the Conference, during which the Conference held thematic discussions on the cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament, including on the specific topic of nuclear disarmament verification. One of the plenary meetings featured briefings by representatives of disarmament youth programmes. The Conference also convened informal meetings on the disarmament aspects of the Secretary-General's vision for *A New Agenda for Peace*, which featured a briefing by the Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference, as well as discussions on the improved and effective functioning of the Conference. Furthermore, the German presidency hosted a demonstration of a nuclear disarmament verification virtual reality training tool for inspectors developed by the University of Hamburg as part of the nuclear disarmament verification initiative sponsored by France and Germany.

The sixth President of the Conference, Margit Szűcs (Hungary), facilitated negotiations on the consideration and adoption of the annual report of the Conference to the General Assembly. Her efforts succeeded in returning the Conference to the adoption of a comprehensive procedural report ([CD/2380](#)), avoiding the same outcome as 2022. Hungary also led the consultations on the annual draft resolution submitted to the First Committee on the report of the Conference on Disarmament. The updated draft resolution included new language on the importance of multilateralism and the principle of inclusivity in the work of the Conference, noting with regret that the latter had not always been sufficiently ensured, while recalling in that regard the Conference's rules of procedure. A new operative paragraph called upon the Conference on Disarmament to undertake efforts to ensure inclusivity and multilateralism in its work, including through participation in its sessions, in accordance with its rules of procedure. Those new paragraphs were in reference to the fact that the Conference was unable to reach any decision on accepting requests for participation by States not members of the Conference. The General Assembly adopted the resolution without a vote ([78/61](#)), returning to consensus following a vote on the resolution in 2022.

Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters

The Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters was established in 1978 pursuant to paragraph 124 of the final document of the tenth special session of the General

Assembly (resolution [S-10/2](#)) and received its current mandate pursuant to General Assembly decision [54/418](#) of 1 December 1999. The Board issues recommendations to the Secretary-General on matters within the area of arms limitation and disarmament, including on studies and research under the auspices of the United Nations or institutions within the United Nations system. Additionally, it advises on the implementation of the United Nations Disarmament Information Programme and serves as the UNIDIR Board of Trustees. (See [figure 7.2](#) for an infographic on trends in the composition of the Advisory Board over the years.)

The Advisory Board held its [seventy-ninth session](#) from 1 to 3 February in Geneva and its eightieth session from 21 to 23 June in New York. It convened informal intersessional meetings in October 2022 and January, April and May 2023.

Following two years of in-depth discussions, the Board concluded a programme of work on the topic of global military spending. Its aim was to offer a fresh perspective on ways to manage and eventually reverse the upward trajectory of such spending, limit its negative impacts and contribute to a constructive conversation that could foster meaningful, transformative shifts. The Board also considered obstacles to past efforts to reduce military spending, aiming to determine which initiatives might remain relevant and what new avenues could be explored.

Noting that military spending had reached an all-time high of \$2.24 trillion in 2022, the Board centred its report ([A/78/287](#)) and final recommendations on a belief in the need for a more holistic approach to security. According to the Board, such an approach should be built on dialogue and diplomacy, respect for international law, a recommitment to the elements that made up the contemporary peace and security architecture, and the design of new strategies, as means to both improve the wider security climate and meet the needs of peoples and the planet, such as by mitigating climate change and reducing socioeconomic inequalities. By doing so, the Board believed, States could get on track towards achieving “the least diversion to armaments of the world's economic and human resources”, as envisaged in the United Nations Charter.

*Introducing
@UN_Disarmamen
t's latest
Occasional Paper
'Celebrating 45
years of the
Secretary-General's
Advisory Board on
Disarmament
Matters'. A
compilation of
reflections by
several Board
members on their
experiences & the
challenges facing
disarmament.*

*[https://t.co/
tY2ZvfCmmD](https://t.co/tY2ZvfCmmD)
[pic.twitter.com/
X3txKqtaEf](https://pic.twitter.com/X3txKqtaEf)*

*— ODA
(@UN_Disarmament)
December 29, 2023*

To achieve that vision, the Advisory Board identified three complementary pathways, each with associated actions: (a) encouraging critical, innovative and transformative thinking about military spending; (b) lessening threat perceptions and risk escalation and reducing military expenditure; and (c) strengthening analysis, data collection and public awareness on such spending. Designed for use by States, the United Nations system, academia, regional and civil society actors, and others, the pathways involve recommitting to the contemporary international peace and security architecture, including the United Nations Charter and international law, with the primary purpose of cultivating a climate more conducive to achieving greater human security.

Under the first pathway, the Board acknowledged the persistent difficulty of balancing national security needs with social and economic progress, a key disarmament goal in the Charter of the United Nations. Its members agreed that in the current environment, realizing that objective would require a renewed focus on diplomacy and a broader understanding of “security”. That expanded view would consider not just real and perceived military threats but also risks and threats related to climate change, gender inequality, crime and poverty. The Board found that such a holistic approach would enable countries to address a wide range of threats while mitigating risks associated with excessive military spending. Furthermore, the Board envisioned a key role for the United Nations system in stimulating and promoting multilateral and multi-stakeholder discussions, including with civil society, to enable that shift in perspective and resource allocation.

Regarding the second objective, the Advisory Board emphasized that focused dialogue, enhanced transparency and confidence-building measures could help prevent and reduce the ambiguities and tensions among States that often drive military spending. That approach could encourage restraint, decelerate military build-ups and increase trust, leading to greater stability, according to the Board. In the present moment of heightened geopolitical risk, the Board felt that disarmament and arms control measures should be areas of urgent attention, as cooperative arms control could help mitigate threat perceptions used to justify increases in military spending while allowing Governments to reallocate resources to other concerns. In addition, the Board underscored the need to promote a better understanding of the implications of emerging fields—such as outer space, cyberspace and artificial intelligence—on perceptions of military threats and their influencing impacts on military discussions.

The report's third pathway stressed the need to revitalize research and reporting so that comprehensive data on military spending and impacts that reflected twenty-first-century realities could be secured. In that regard, the Board recommended several studies. First, it called for an updated study on the social, cultural, economic and environmental consequences of military spending, as well as separate research into the elements of a more comprehensive and cooperative approach to global, State, and human security, and what it meant for various levels and types of military spending. Additionally, the Board advocated for

practical and applied research that enabled Governments to put in place or optimize internal checks and balances to prevent misuse and wasteful spending. The Board noted that its proposals to encourage a transformative approach to security necessitated more robust public education and engagement, akin to what had been achieved with climate action, because fostering greater accountability and positive actions for peace required citizens across the globe to be actively informed about the principles of disarmament and arms control and their vital contributions to a safer, sustainable, equitable and just world. The Board also acknowledged the vital role of the United Nations system in that regard and encouraged specific capacity-building and awareness-raising activities to enhance its outreach.

In its capacity as the UNIDIR Board of Trustees, the Board reviewed and provided strategic advice on the Institute's consolidated programme of work, activities and finances. The Institute's unique position as a bridge-builder and convenor in the disarmament field led to several achievements in 2023, including the following: (a) a substantial increase in events and publications; (b) new digital policy portals on artificial intelligence and space security; and (c) influential expert technical support to States, regional organizations and multilateral bodies, including through signature events on innovation, outer space and cyberstability. The Board was briefed on the evolving global disarmament research network of UNIDIR and the UNIDIR Academy, as well as on improvements made to the website and research dissemination that enabled cost optimization and enhanced outreach.

The Board approved the Director's report on UNIDIR activities from January to December 2022 and the proposed programme of work and financial plan for 2023 and 2024.

Footnotes

[1] Global military expenditure reached an all-time high of \$2.4 trillion in 2023, according to an [analysis](#) by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute.

[2] Four of the 25 drafts adopted without a vote as a whole had separate paragraph votes (resolutions [78/31](#), [78/39](#), [78/46](#) and [78/54](#)).

[3] Japan's annual resolution on nuclear disarmament, "Steps to building a common roadmap towards a world without nuclear weapons" ([78/40](#)).

[4] Action on Armed Violence, Cluster Munitions Coalition, Control Arms, Human Rights Watch, ICT4Peace Foundation, King's College London, International Action Network on Small Arms, International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, International Campaign to Ban Landmines, International Human Rights Clinic (Harvard Law School), International Network on Explosive Weapons, International Disarmament Institute (Pace University), PAX; Project Ploughshares, Stop Killer Robots and Women's International League for Peace and Freedom.

[5] The resolution "Treaty on the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone (Bangkok Treaty)" (78/39) was adopted as a whole without a vote, but a separate vote was held for operative paragraph 2.

[6] Belarus, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Russian Federation and Syrian Arab Republic.

[7] Belarus, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia and Syrian Arab Republic.

[8] Resolutions 78/56, 78/57, 78/58 and 78/60.



We need critical and empowered citizens who are equipped with the knowledge and skills to make informed decisions, meaningfully participate in disarmament efforts and contribute to policymaking processes. The disarmament community of the future is being built today.

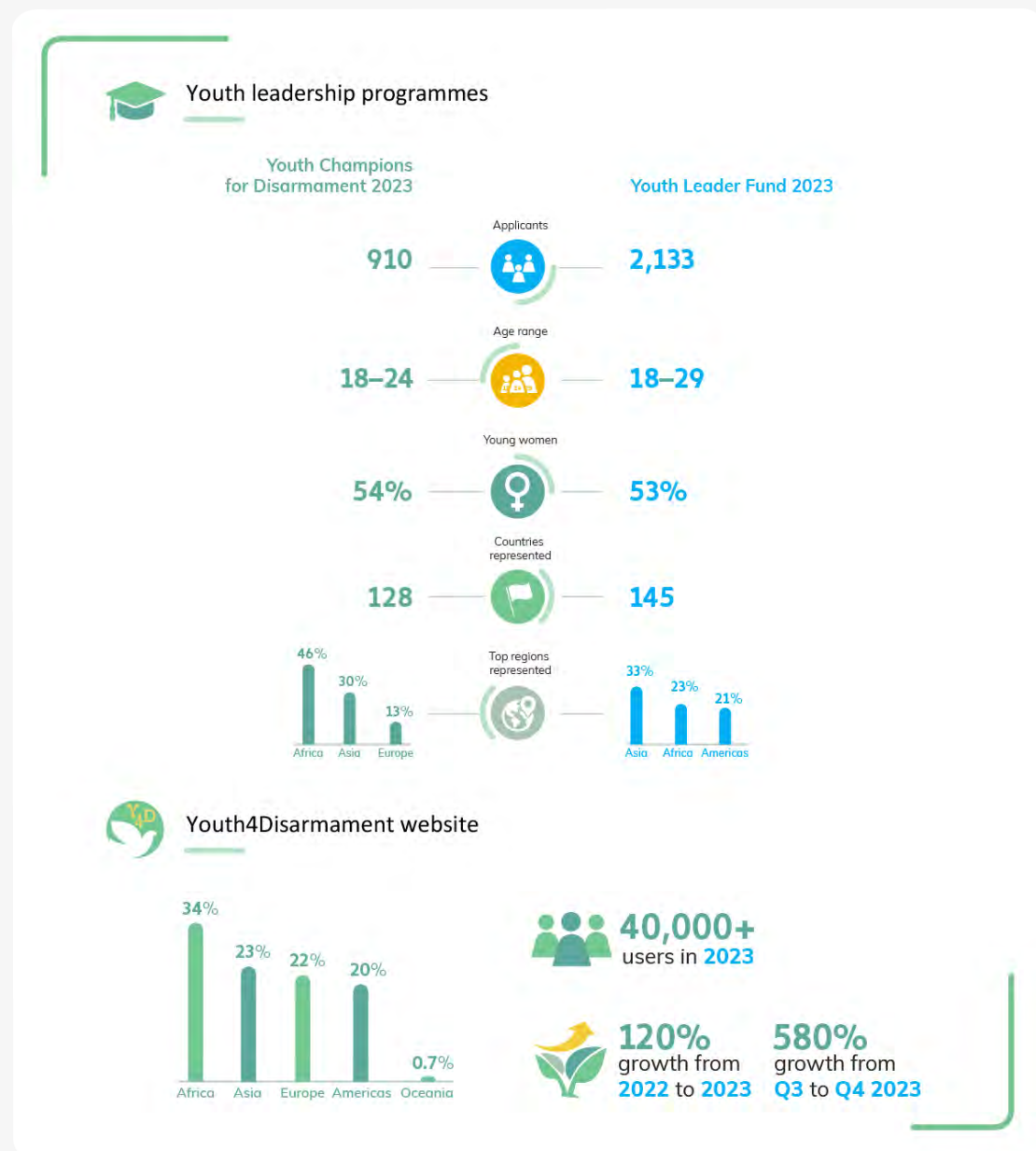
— *Izumi Nakamitsu* High Representative for Disarmament Affairs

Developments and trends, 2023

In 2023, the General Assembly adopted its biennial resolution on youth, disarmament and non-proliferation (resolution [78/31](#)), reaffirming the important and positive contribution that young people could make to the promotion and attainment of sustainable peace and security.

Meanwhile, the Office for Disarmament Affairs launched a new and innovative programme called the “[Youth Leader Fund for a World without Nuclear Weapons](#)”, offering 100 scholarships [to young people from 63 countries](#). In December, those participants set out on a journey designed to hone their knowledge, skills and networks as nuclear disarmament advocates, through online courses on nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control, as well as practical skills training. The scholarship programme focused on lessons that the hibakusha—survivors of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki—have long shared with the world about the unimaginable suffering that nuclear weapons caused.

Figure 8.1.
Empowering global youth: disarmament outreach by the United Nations in numbers



The key youth leadership programmes of the Office for Disarmament Affairs have successfully attracted and resonated with a diverse range of young individuals across regions. In line with the Office's commitment to demystifying disarmament, the programmes have also encouraged participation from youth with creative and non-traditional skillsets, thereby broadening access to the field.

The effectiveness of the Office's youth outreach efforts is evident through the diverse user base of the Youth4Disarmament website. For instance, in the last six months of 2023, the website reached individuals from over 192 countries, accessing content in more than 64 languages. The website has also been

instrumental in garnering greater visibility and awareness regarding disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control among its audience.

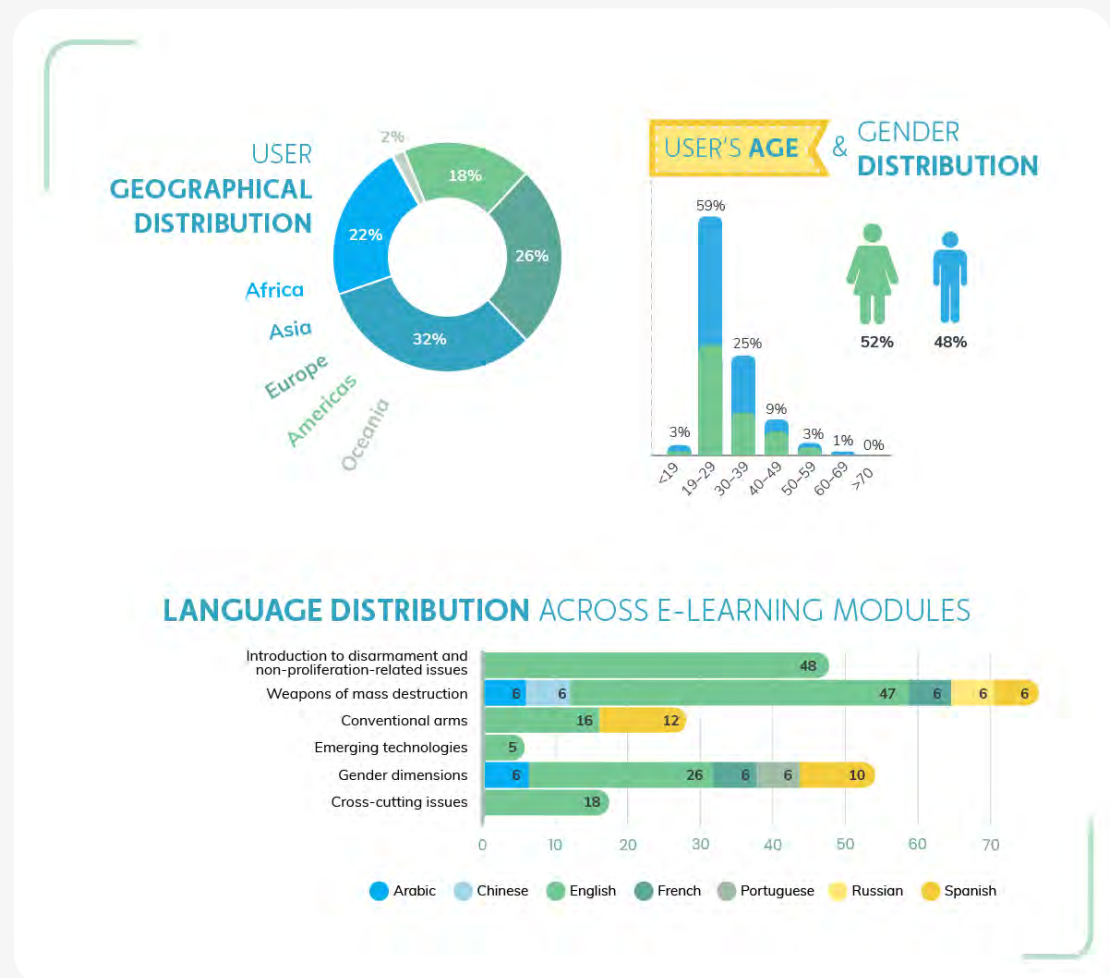
Note: Locations sourced from the website have been matched to [UN M49 Standard Country Codes for Statistical Use](#).

For the forty-seventh consecutive year since 1976, the Office for Disarmament Affairs published the [United Nations Disarmament Yearbook](#), a comprehensive source of information on global disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control efforts. A new, graphically enhanced preview edition was made available in July, while a comprehensive account of developments and issues in the field of disarmament was issued later in the year. For the first time, the *Yearbook* was made available in its entirety in [website](#) form. Moreover, the Office launched the revamped [Disarmament Resolutions and Decisions Database](#), a user-friendly online tool with disarmament resolutions, decisions and voting patterns of the General Assembly. Likewise, the latest details on current disarmament treaties and agreements were made available in the redesigned [Disarmament Treaties Database](#).

Seeking to strengthen the sustainability and impact of its disarmament education efforts, the Office held a global launch of its first formal Disarmament Education Strategy, in March. In line with the Strategy, the Office prioritized partnerships in its educational activities throughout the year, working with diverse United Nations entities, civil society partners and think tanks to conduct outreach and education activities. For example, the Office organized interactive exhibitions and movie screenings at various moments of the year to showcase disarmament and its linkages to human rights and development. Specifically, it held events marking the occasions of the thirtieth anniversary of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (25 June), the Disarmament Week (24–30 October) and the International Human Rights Day (10 December). In addition, the Office's [Disarmament Education Dashboard](#), featuring self-paced short courses on salient disarmament issues, achieved an all-time high of 25,774 registered users.

Figure 8.2.

Charting progress: the global reach of online disarmament education



In 2023, the first year of the implementation of the Disarmament Education Strategy, the Vienna Office supported efforts to mainstream disarmament within broader educational initiatives and to connect with audiences where they are and on what matters most to them. For example, the [Disarmament Education Dashboard](#), further reinvigorated by the Strategy, has registered almost twice as many users as in 2022, reaching all geographical regions of the United Nations.

The Disarmament Education Dashboard is an online learning platform providing free courses on disarmament to diverse audiences. It offers interactive, self-paced, instructor-led and blended courses, webinars and workshops, globally accessible from various devices.

Disarmament Education Strategy

In December 2022, the Office for Disarmament Affairs launched its first [Disarmament Education Strategy](#), which provides a common framework for the Office's disarmament education efforts, guided by an "inform, engage, educate

and empower" approach. The objective of disarmament education is to impart knowledge and skills to individuals and to empower them to make their contributions, as informed national and world citizens, to the achievement of concrete disarmament and non-proliferation measures. Disarmament education prepares the next generation of leaders by enhancing knowledge and skills needed for young people to become agents of change.



In January, the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific organized a workshop to strengthen disarmament education in Nepal, inviting educators in secondary and tertiary educational institutions across Nepal.

The Office also produced a new edition of its Civil Society and Disarmament collection, entitled *The Historical Impact of Parliamentary Diplomacy on Disarmament*. In the publication, the authors examined the key role of parliamentary diplomacy in foreign affairs, in particular its influence in the field of disarmament. They also outlined good practices and effective strategies with respect to parliamentary diplomacy, concluding with a set of specific policy recommendations.

In 2023, the Office redesigned the yearly publication *Programmes Financed from Voluntary Contributions*, with the 2022–2023 edition published in December as a web-only publication with an improved, easy-to-read format. The report showcased concrete results of its partnerships with donors and underscored the essential role of extrabudgetary support in attaining important disarmament goals.

Over the course of the year, the Office produced three titles under its Occasional Papers series. The first, *The Global Reported Arms Trade: Transparency in Armaments Through the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms – A Guide to Assist National Points of Contact in Submitting Their National Reports* (No. 39), was released in April on the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. The next Occasional Paper, *The United Nations and Disarmament amid COVID-19: Adaptation and Continuity* (No. 40), explored how the COVID-19 outbreak posed an unprecedented challenge to intergovernmental disarmament institutions and processes. In December, the Office published Occasional Paper No. 41, *Celebrating 45 Years of the Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters: Creative, Inclusive, and Cooperative Diplomacy at Work*, highlighting the Board's contributions to advancing multilateral disarmament, its distinctive features and strengths, and its potential role in addressing the pressing challenges of today's world.

A range of other practical disarmament publications were also launched, including the *Report of the Scientific Advisory Group on the Status and Developments Regarding Nuclear Weapons, Nuclear Weapon Risks, the Humanitarian Consequences of Nuclear Weapons, Nuclear Disarmament and Related Issues*, presented by the Advisory Group at the second Meeting of States Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

The main website of the [Office for Disarmament Affairs](#) recorded over 634,000 unique visits in 2023. During the year, the Office upgraded the website to help improve its security, performance and reliability. Meanwhile, the Office launched its new [Meetings Place](#) portal, which provides a one-stop shop for documents and statements for multilateral disarmament meetings.

Regarding media outreach, the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs participated in press briefings and more than 30 interviews with international television, radio and print reporters. She also featured in a new Netflix documentary, *Unknown: Killer Robots*, on lethal autonomous weapons systems. The show explored the potential impacts of artificial intelligence (AI) on the future of warfare and spotlights potential measures that could be taken to mitigate crucial risks to international peace and security.

The Office for Disarmament Affairs continued efforts to facilitate the diverse and inclusive engagement of young people in the disarmament and non-proliferation field through its #Youth4Disarmament outreach initiative. The Office launched the [Leaders to the Future](#)

workshop series, empowering 55 young advocates to explore how disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control were linked with other topics related to the maintenance of international peace and security. Meanwhile, young people around the world participated in the annual [#StepUp4Disarmament youth campaign](#) by completing a distance of 8.29 km, a symbolic number that corresponds with the date of the International Day against Nuclear Tests, on 29 August.



Leaders to the Future visit the Vienna International Centre to present youth insights for strengthening the nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime, during an event held on the margins of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Preparatory Committee session from 31 July to 11 August.

On 14 September, Michael Douglas, United Nations Messenger of Peace, delivered [remarks](#) at the youth event for the International Day of Peace. Celebrating his twenty-fifth anniversary as a United Nations Messenger of Peace, he shared his personal motivation for supporting the United Nations' work on nuclear disarmament.

The United Nations Programme of Fellowships on Disarmament trained diplomats and other officials from 24 States.^[1] Additionally, the United Nations–Singapore Cyber Fellowship was held again in 2023 to equip national authorities working on cyber strategy, policy, technology and operations, with practical knowledge and skills drawing upon the United Nations-developed normative framework.

The United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), an autonomous research institute within the United Nations, undertook research activities under five multi-year programmes, on conventional arms and ammunition; weapons of mass destruction; gender and disarmament; security and technology; and space security. It produced a total of 96 publications. UNIDIR also deployed a redesigned website during the year, further boosting the reach and impact of its work, as well as expanding its offering of digital confidence-building tools through the launch of the [Artificial Intelligence Policy Portal](#), the [Space Security Portal](#), the [Lexicon for Outer Space Security](#) and the [Biological Weapons Convention National Implementation Measures Database](#). Furthermore, UNIDIR pursued its bridge-building function by engaging in and facilitating dialogue between disarmament stakeholders through 148 conferences, workshops and events, which attracted over 11,000 participants.

Disarmament Information Programme

Publications

The *United Nations Disarmament Yearbook* remained the flagship publication of the Office for Disarmament Affairs. In July 2023, the Office published the 2022 *Yearbook* in a new, graphically enhanced preview edition, developed with a collection of explanatory graphics and charts to share key findings from the previous year in a concise and accessible format. In October, the

Yearbook was, for the first time, made available in its entirety as a website (<https://yearbook.unoda.org>), allowing diplomats, technical experts, journalists and other readers to effortlessly navigate the comprehensive overview of developments and trends from 2022 in the area of multilateral disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control.

In December, the Office issued the 2022–2023 edition of *Programmes Financed from Voluntary Contributions*, showcasing concrete results of its partnerships with donors and underscoring the essential role of extrabudgetary support in attaining important disarmament goals. Issued in a new web-only format, the publication featured activities that included supporting the development of the Secretary-General's policy brief *A New Agenda for Peace*; engaging 55 young advocates in discussions on disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control through the newly launched Leaders to the Future workshop series; and equipping the next generation of AI practitioners with the tools and understanding needed to engage in responsible innovation and ensure that the use of civilian AI remains peaceful.

For the 2023 edition of the Civil Society and Disarmament series, the Office published *The Historical Impact of Parliamentary Diplomacy on Disarmament*. In the paper, the authors examined the key role of parliamentary diplomacy in foreign affairs, focusing specifically on its influence in the field of disarmament, and analysed ways for parliamentarians to effectively contribute to debates in that area. Furthermore, they offered specific policy recommendations and highlighted resources available to strengthen the capacity of parliaments and other stakeholders to enhance and expand their influence in promoting effective disarmament agreements at the international level.

In April, the Office issued Occasional Paper No. 39, entitled *The Global Reported Arms Trade: Transparency in Armaments Through the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms*. Intended to support participation by Member States, the paper contained an overview of the Register, along with original material to guide national points of contact in preparing and submitting reports. The paper also included the report of the 2022 Group of Governmental Experts on the continuing operation of the Register.

In July, the Office for Disarmament Affairs launched its second Occasional Paper for the year, *The United Nations and Disarmament amid COVID-19: Adaptation and Continuity*, examining the unprecedented challenge that the COVID-19 outbreak had posed to intergovernmental disarmament institutions and processes. After exploring relevant developments at the United Nations—particularly in the General Assembly and the Security Council, as well as in the disarmament machinery and other disarmament bodies and processes—the author considered whether the outbreak should serve as a catalyst for rethinking and changing multilateral working methods or rules of procedure.

Occasional Paper No. 41, *Celebrating 45 Years of the Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters: Creative, Inclusive, and Cooperative Diplomacy at Work*, became available in December. Drawing on the insights and experiences of current and former Advisory Board members, the publication highlighted the Board's contributions to advancing multilateral disarmament, its distinctive features and strengths, and its potential role in addressing the pressing challenges of today's world.

In addition, the Office for Disarmament Affairs released five stand-alone publications during the year. They included *Resolution 1540 and the African Continental Free Trade Area*, published in July in collaboration with the South African Institute of International Affairs to examine the interplay between Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) and the 2018 Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area. Highlighting the importance of ensuring that the benefits from removing barriers to trade are not overshadowed by the risk of illicit transfers of chemical, biological and nuclear weapons and related materials by and to non-State actors, the publication identifies a range of opportunities for ensuring that export and border control measures required by the resolution contribute to setting a reliable, secure and predictable regional trading system.

In August, the Office issued the *Guide to Implementing the Biological Weapons Convention*, developed with the support of the European Union and Norway. It provided States parties with an overview of the national implementation process and obligations stemming from the Convention. Also in August, the Office published *Scientific and Technological Developments: Benefits and Risks for the Biological Weapons Convention*, which recorded the discussions during the International Science and Technology Conference held in preparation for the ninth Review Conference of the Convention. It provided expert insights on the evolving science and technology landscape in the context of the Convention, including in the fields of synthetic biology, public health responses, neurotechnology and digitalization.

In November, the Office issued an enhanced version of the *Report of the Scientific Advisory Group on the Status and Developments Regarding Nuclear Weapons, Nuclear Weapon Risks, the Humanitarian Consequences of Nuclear Weapons, Nuclear Disarmament and Related Issues*, with maps and infographics not published in the parliamentary version (TPNW/MSP/2023/8).

In December, the Office issued *Supporting the Full and Effective Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540 (2004) in Africa*, highlighting the activities it undertook in 2023 to support African States in implementing resolution 1540 (2004).

In 2023, the Office also published two issues of the *Newsletter for Nominated Experts and Analytical Laboratories for the Secretary-General's Mechanism for Investigation of Alleged Use of Chemical and Biological Weapons*: No. 5 (February 2023) and No. 6 (September 2023). The biannual newsletter contained updates for the nominated experts and laboratories relating to

recent or planned activities and provided an informal forum for sharing experiences and knowledge related to the Mechanism.

Throughout the year, the Office for Disarmament Affairs continued to produce the “[UNODA Update](#)”, an online of events and activities of the Office and various disarmament forums. In 2023, the Office posted 66 updates, collated by quarter.

For a list of the Office's 2023 publications, including those of its regional centres, see the [annex](#) to the present *Yearbook*.

Websites

The Office for Disarmament Affairs continued to utilize its websites as the key medium for communication with delegates, civil society, staff members and the public. Its main website (<https://disarmament.unoda.org>) recorded over 634,000 unique visits in 2023 and remained the Office's main source for sharing updates, speeches, remarks and news on multilateral disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. The Office regularly updated the website's “Spotlight”, “Updates” and “Statements and press releases” sections, which featured the latest statements, articles, stories and events. As in previous years, the Office made every possible effort to offer content in all six official languages of the United Nations.

In 2023, the Office achieved further progress in a significant upgrade of the main website. By transitioning to a more modern content management system and realigning content with the current organizational structure, the Office continued to improve the website's security, performance and responsiveness in line with best practices for change management.

The Office also continued to enhance its [Meetings Place](#) website, building on improvements initiated in 2022 to allow faster and more efficient data entry, as well as more standardized metadata for meetings and documents. The revamped, database-driven system fulfilled its intended use as a streamlined platform for organizers and internal users to share information with the public, including through a simplified process for creating meeting entries. In addition, the Office added a feature to the website for generating document and statement pages automatically, with certain configurable options. Users can upload new documents and statements using a simple form, and revisions of existing documents can be reflected online with ease. The website also offers advanced analytics and visualization tools, providing valuable insights into meetings and documentation.

For the first time, the Office published the complete *United Nations Disarmament Yearbook* as a website (<https://yearbook.unoda.org>). That change not only enhanced the publication's interactivity and visual appeal, but also allowed easier use of browser-based tools for

automatic translation of its contents. The intuitive design allowed users to seamlessly navigate chapters and explore highlights through a visual timeline and integrated graphics.

Databases

In 2023, the Office for Disarmament Affairs achieved a significant milestone in upgrading its databases, a project aimed at integrating each of them into a unified portal that would serve as a comprehensive repository of disarmament-related data. The year saw the deployment of the following systems:

- The [Documents Library](#) database, a specialized archive of United Nations disarmament-related documents, providing access to disarmament documents in tandem with the Office's Meetings Place website.
- The [Treaties Database](#), a redesigned platform housing information on disarmament-related treaties, as well as their parties and signatories; new features include a list of the latest treaty actions on the home page with a filter by date range, a compilation of key information on the treaties in one page, and search boxes.
- The [Disarmament Resolutions and Decisions Database](#), which was also redesigned in 2023 to introduce improvements such as search and filter capabilities, summary cards featuring voting summaries and other key information, and a page to view voting and sponsorship by State across treaties; the database will be continually updated to cover ultimately every disarmament-related resolution adopted by the General Assembly since its fifty-second session.

Meanwhile, three additional databases remained under development with planned launches in 2024:

- The Gender Database will support the equal, full and effective participation of women in discussions and decision-making concerning disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control, through access to sex-disaggregated data on delegates, heads of delegations and speaking roles in multilateral disarmament forums.
- The [Military Expenditures Database](#), cataloguing the national military expenditure reports received from Member States, has been undergoing a two-phase upgrade. First, the development of a new reporting tool that will enable Member States to easily transmit information on their military expenditure. The second phase, also slated for completion in 2024, will culminate in the launch of the revamped database.
- The [United Nations Register of Conventional Arms](#), an interactive platform presenting data provided by Member States on their arms transfers within several categories of weapons, has also been undergoing a two-phase upgrade (development of a new reporting tool, and database deployment); they are scheduled to conclude in 2024.

International Days

International Day for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Awareness

The world marked the first International Day for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Awareness on 5 March, three months after the General Assembly proclaimed the new annual observance by its resolution [77/51](#). In the resolution, which was adopted without a vote, the Assembly observed that “the need has never been greater for disarmament and non-proliferation education, especially regarding weapons of mass destruction”. In that connection, it invited United Nations entities, civil society, academic institutions, the media and individuals to commemorate the new International Day through “all means of educational and public awareness-raising activities”.

In a [statement](#) for the International Day, the Secretary-General stressed the importance of awareness-raising activities in efforts to counter threats from nuclear, chemical, biological and unpredictable autonomous and other indiscriminate weapon systems: “On this important day, I call on all partners—from Governments and academia, to media, civil society groups, industry, and young people—to turn up the volume on this collective emergency and raise awareness about the critical importance of disarmament and non-proliferation to humanity's future.”

In addition, Kyrgyzstan and the Office for Disarmament Affairs co-hosted a [virtual launch event](#) in celebration of the International Day, which attracted more than 190 representatives of Member States, the United Nations, civil society organizations and youth groups. The moderator, Aida Kasymalieva (Permanent Representative of Kyrgyzstan to the United Nations), opened the event by expressing hope that the new International Day would deepen the global public's understanding of how disarmament efforts enhanced peace and security, prevented and ended armed conflicts, and reduced human suffering caused by weapons. Three high-level keynote speakers—Zheenbek Kulubaev (Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kyrgyzstan), [Csaba Körösi](#) (President of the seventy-seventh session of the General Assembly) and [Izumi Nakamitsu](#) (High Representative for Disarmament Affairs)—each stressed the importance of educating the public on disarmament,

Check out the highlights of the virtual launch of the new International Day for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Awareness, hosted by
[@UN_Disarmament](#) and [@KyrgyzMissionUN!](#)

Music credit: Ms. Irene Huang

Stay tuned for the full recording of the event.[#IDDNPA](#)
[#5March](#)
[pic.twitter.com/8KWPdoAmZu](#)

— ODA
([@UN_Disarmament](#))
[March 4, 2023](#)

as well as the need for continued efforts towards disarmament and non-proliferation. They also highlighted the central role of the United Nations, Governments, civil society, the media and academia in achieving concrete progress. Their remarks were followed by a substantive panel discussion and a question-and-answer session with the audience on a range of issues relating to disarmament education.

In the lead-up to the new International Day, the Office coordinated a global [social media campaign](#) that generated engagement from Member States, United Nations bodies, academia and civil society, including through the support of United Nations Messenger of Peace [Michael Douglas](#). Furthermore, under the #Youth4Disarmament initiative, the Office launched the [#ClickDISARM](#) campaign, highlighting the various ways for young people to help raise awareness in support of disarmament.

International Day against Nuclear Tests

The International Day against Nuclear Tests,^[2] on 29 August, was observed at a [high-level plenary session](#) of the General Assembly at United Nations Headquarters, in New York. The commemorative event included [statements](#) from 26 Member States, six of which were delivered on behalf of regional organizations or groups of States. The meeting also included statements from two observer entities^[3] and one civil society organization.^[4]

In his [opening remarks](#) to the session, the President of the seventy-seventh session of the General Assembly stated the following: "The [[Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty](#)] is a key part of the international disarmament structure. It has created a powerful norm against nuclear testing. Yet, its failure to enter into force—27 years after its adoption—is a serious loophole in our global framework. A stark reminder that we have unfinished business. I call on the remaining Annex 2 countries to finally sign and ratify the [Treaty]. To follow the lead of the 34 Annex 2 nations that have already done so. To join the overwhelming majority supporting the [Treaty]. It is our duty to ensure that the ban on nuclear testing is legally binding for all States."

The High Representative for Disarmament Affairs also addressed the meeting, quoting a written [message](#) in which the Secretary-General warned of an alarming rise in global mistrust and division. The High Representative added, "The rising tide of nuclear risk threatens to engulf the hard-won gains in nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation achieved over the last three decades. This includes the gains made against any testing of nuclear weapons".

Those concerns were [echoed](#) in remarks by the Executive Secretary of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization, Robert Floyd, who urged nuclear-weapon possessor States to "clearly and publicly" recommit to their moratoriums against testing. While he welcomed the ratification of the Treaty by [eight States](#)

since 2022, he urged the eight remaining Annex 2 States^[5] to also ratify the agreement, establishing the conditions for its entry into force.

International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons

The International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons^[6] was marked on 26 September at a high-level plenary meeting convened by the President of the seventy-eighth session of the General Assembly, Dennis Francis (Trinidad and Tobago). The commemorative event included statements from 72 Member States,^[7] four observers^[8] and two civil society organizations.^[9]

In his [opening remarks](#) to the meeting, the President of the General Assembly expressed dismay that “the threat of nuclear force is once again being implied, to our collective shock and horror”. He continued: “This is not just concerning; it is downright terrifying. There is a domino effect to a nuclear-armed multipolar world, and the more agitated people and nations become, the higher the risk of stumbling mistakenly into a nuclear nightmare.”

The Secretary-General delivered a [message](#) in which he called on nuclear-weapon States to meet their disarmament obligations and to commit to never using nuclear weapons under any circumstances; underscored the need to reinforce and recommit to the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime; and urged States to redeploy the tools of dialogue, diplomacy and negotiation to ease tensions and end the nuclear threat. He [continued](#): “This dialogue must extend to all categories of nuclear weapons, and it must address the increasing interplay between strategic and conventional weapons and the nexus between nuclear weapons and emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence. Humans must always be in control of and responsible for any decision to use nuclear weapons ... Disarmament and conflict prevention are at the heart of the recently launched [policy brief on a 'New Agenda for Peace'](#). The Agenda represents a fresh opportunity for the world to usher in a world free of nuclear weapons.”

Commemoration of Hiroshima and Nagasaki

On 6 and 9 August, the international community marked the seventy-eighth anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In messages during the [Hiroshima Peace Memorial](#) and the [Nagasaki Peace Memorial](#) ceremonies, the Secretary-General paid tribute to the hibakusha, the survivors of the atomic bombings, for sharing their stories and working for peace and disarmament throughout their lives.

In [remarks](#) delivered on his behalf by the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, the Secretary-General stated: “We will not sit idly by as nuclear-armed States race to create even more dangerous weapons. That's why disarmament is at the heart of the recently launched

[policy brief on a New Agenda for Peace](#). The Agenda calls on Member States to urgently recommit to pursuing a world free of nuclear weapons and to reinforce the global norms against their use and proliferation. Pending their total elimination, States possessing nuclear weapons must commit to never use them. The only way to eliminate the nuclear risk is to eliminate nuclear weapons. The United Nations will continue working with global leaders to strengthen the global disarmament and non-proliferation regime, including through the [Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons](#) and the [Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons](#)."

Media

In 2023, the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs promoted disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control via international television, radio and print outlets, conducting dozens of interviews and participating in several press conferences and media briefings.

For example, in the lead-up to the G7 Hiroshima Summit in Japan, which took place in May, the High Representative [spoke](#) to *Economist Impact* about the opportunity for that meeting to gather global momentum towards a world without nuclear weapons. In an increasingly complicated international security picture, she argued that the risk of nuclear weapons being used was at its highest level since the depth of the cold war, calling for countermeasures to reduce nuclear risks and ensure that those destructive weapons would never be used again.

In August, the High Representative was featured in a special edition [article](#) for *Foreign Policy Analytics* on the responsibilities of the United Nations in the digital age. In the article, she outlined the challenges posed by malicious cyber activity to international peace and security, as well as steps that the United Nations was taking to adapt to the evolving nature of conflict in the digital age.

The High Representative for Disarmament Affairs also appeared in a new Netflix documentary on lethal autonomous weapons systems, [Unknown: Killer Robots](#), launched in July. Part of a series, the documentary explores the potential impacts of AI on the future of warfare, spotlighting potential measures that could be taken to prevent crucial risks for international peace and security.

Additionally, other officials of the Office for Disarmament Affairs participated in a briefing on disarmament-related matters for young international media representatives and journalists participating in the Reham Al-Farra Memorial Journalism Fellowship.

The Office also issued [eight press releases](#) in 2023 to communicate about key issues and activities.

Exhibits

On the occasion of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Vienna Office of the Office for Disarmament Affairs held several public exhibitions on the linkages between disarmament and human rights. On 5 and 6 June, the Vienna Office showcased disarmament at the [Open Air Human Rights Fair](#), convened in Vienna in connection with the thirtieth anniversary of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action. During [Disarmament Week](#), in October, it organized an interactive exhibition at the Vienna International Centre—home to various international organizations relevant to the Office's work—examining how disarmament relates to broader global issues, such as sustainable development. Furthermore, to mark Human Rights Day, on 10 December, the Vienna Office participated in an infoscreen campaign, featuring quizzes, facts and figures on the linkages between disarmament and human rights, in a series of digital screen displays developed for Austrian public buses and subways.

Youth and disarmament

In 2023, Member States continued their efforts with United Nations entities, relevant specialized agencies and regional and subregional organizations to promote the meaningful and inclusive participation and empowerment of youth in disarmament and non-proliferation efforts, as the General Assembly had encouraged since 2019 in its biennial resolution entitled “Youth, disarmament and non-proliferation”. The Assembly adopted a new iteration of the resolution on 4 December 2023 (resolution [78/31](#)). (See also [figure 8.1](#) for statistics on the Office's youth leadership programmes and the Youth4Disarmament website.)

#Youth4Disarmament

Throughout 2023, the Office for Disarmament Affairs continued to achieve significant headway in engaging with, educating and empowering young people in the disarmament and non-proliferation field through its #Youth4Disarmament outreach programme.

Under the programme's Advocates in Motion (AIM) campaign, five young leaders participated in a [panel discussion](#) held by the Conference on Disarmament relating to the agenda items on the cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament, as well as the prevention of nuclear war, including all related matters.

The Office also launched the [Leaders to the Future](#) series. Under this programme, a cohort of 55 young advocates previously involved in the Office's youth engagement and empowerment efforts took part in nine training sessions to explore how disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control are linked with other topics related to maintaining international peace and security.

As part of the training sessions, the participants formed working groups in which they developed recommendations to advance progress across the different issues explored. Sixteen selected representatives of the cohort later presented perspectives and insights from the group to Member States and other stakeholders in briefings held in Vienna on the margins of the meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the 2026 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), as well as the seventy-eighth session of the General Assembly, First Committee, at United Nations Headquarters, in New York. In addition, those 16 youth leaders—from Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, and North America—attended a series of informative briefings with experts from think tanks, civil society organizations and the diplomatic field, held at United Nations Headquarters and the United Nations Office at Vienna.

In October, the Office for Disarmament Affairs opened a call for applications to the [second iteration of the Youth Champions for Disarmament training programme](#), an innovative learning initiative to empower youth to work for disarmament in their communities. The Office planned to bring together a group of 15 geographically diverse young disarmament advocates to share and discuss their specific regional perspectives and connect them to global conversations on disarmament.

Meanwhile, young people around the world participated in the annual [#StepUp4Disarmament youth campaign](#) by completing a distance of 8.29 km, a symbolic number that corresponds with the date of the International Day against Nuclear Tests, on 29 August. As part of the 2023 campaign, several high-level officials from the United Nations—most notably the President of the seventy-seventh session of the General Assembly, Csaba Kőrösi—joined representatives of Member States and civil society to participate in a symbolic walk at United Nations Headquarters to raise awareness about the campaign and the devastating impact of nuclear testing.

The Office also carried out an array of activities to highlight opportunities for young people of diverse interests, knowledge and backgrounds to contribute to disarmament efforts, including through storytelling and peer-to-peer engagement. Those outreach initiatives included the following:

- [#ClickDISARM](#), a campaign highlighting unique activities and information featured in the [#Youth4Disarmament](#) website to encourage young people to participate in and contribute to disarmament efforts and awareness-raising initiatives; the campaign was held in commemoration of the first International Day for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Awareness, on 5 March.
- ["The power of storytelling: voices of youth for disarmament"](#), a virtual round-table discussion held on 20 March in celebration of World Storytelling Day and the International Day of Happiness, during which contributors to the Office's [B Flat, B Sharp, Be Inspired](#):

Voices of Youth publication highlighted the importance of storytelling as an avenue to engage with and empower young people, enabling them to contribute to disarmament efforts.

- [#YouthInAction for Disarmament 2023](#) campaign, in which 13 young advocates reflected on their experiences with diverse disarmament education initiatives and the impact of the training programmes on their lives and career paths, in celebration of the fourth anniversary of the biennial General Assembly resolution on youth, disarmament and non-proliferation (resolution [74/64](#)).

Youth Leader Fund for a World without Nuclear Weapons

In 2022, at the tenth NPT Review Conference, the Prime Minister of Japan [announced](#) the establishment of a fund for the United Nations to support educational and youth outreach activities promoting a world without nuclear weapons. The Office for Disarmament Affairs, in collaboration with Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, developed a programme structure that was finalized in March 2023. The programme, called the [Youth Leader Fund for a World without Nuclear Weapons](#), aims to bring youth leaders to Hiroshima and Nagasaki to learn the lessons of nuclear weapons use, empowering them to take those lessons to the world. The activities would engage and develop the capacities of a diverse cross section of future leaders from both nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon States—representing sectors such as government, civil society, academia, the media and industry—to advocate for a world without nuclear weapons, thus continuing the lifelong work of the hibakusha. The programme was scheduled for implementation from 2023 to 2030 in four phases of two years each, during which participants would deepen their understanding of nuclear disarmament issues, expand their professional networks and develop skills for addressing those issues.

In the programme's inaugural year, the Office received over 2,200 applications from young people in 155 countries, including every nuclear-weapon State. A rigorous evaluation process involving both internal and external reviewers led to the selection of a diverse first cohort of [100 youth leaders](#) from over 60 countries worldwide and representing different academic and professional backgrounds.

The 100 youth participants began the programme's online learning component in December. Its curriculum included self-paced courses on a wide range of substantive issues relating to nuclear weapons and other relevant topics; live webinars with diverse experts on policymaking and advocacy in the field; practical skills-building workshops focused on leadership, negotiation, problem-solving, ideation and creativity, conducted in partnership with the United Nations System Staff College; and ongoing interactive exchange through online forums.

The Youth Leader Fund for a World Without Nuclear Weapons [#YLF](#) is live!

Last December, the [100 #YLF](#) participants joined for a virtual kick-off, featuring a spectacular turn out & speakers incl. Hibakusha & messages from [@antonioguterres](#) and [@JPN_PMO](#).

► <https://t.co/glRxMjW5OOpic.twitter.com/oCVXMCE1Eb>

— ODA
([@UN_Disarmament](#))
February 13, 2024

In 2024, 50 selected participants will take part in a study tour to Hiroshima and Nagasaki, to be delivered in partnership with the Hiroshima office of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research. Their study tour will culminate in a youth-led conference, after which alumni are expected to participate in regional activities, mentorship opportunities and other initiatives designed to expand their impact as advocates for nuclear disarmament.

Strategic priorities and Vienna Office education hub

Throughout 2023, the Office for Disarmament Affairs continued to implement its 2022 [Disarmament Education Strategy](#) through a range of initiatives that further strengthened the sustainability and impact of its disarmament education work. At a [global launch event](#) held for the Strategy on 30 March, speakers reiterated the need for authoritative, far-reaching and inclusive disarmament education amid an increasingly challenging disarmament and international security landscape. In line with the Strategy, the Office prioritized partnerships in its educational activities throughout the year, pursuing collaborative outreach and educational initiatives with diverse United Nations entities, civil society partners and think tanks.

In addition to fulfilling its liaison responsibilities, the Vienna Office continued acting as the Office's disarmament education hub, providing support for the strategic prioritization, development and execution of educational efforts throughout the year.

Education and outreach activities

In 2023, the Office for Disarmament Affairs conducted outreach activities worldwide to enhance understanding of its work, promote broad and active engagement in disarmament efforts, and bolster recognition of the ways such efforts support other global agendas.

In Vienna, the recurring [Vienna Conversation Series](#) provided a platform for fruitful and inclusive discussions on timely issues among various stakeholders. An event entitled "[Advancements in science and technology: Leveraging disarmament education towards greater diversity and inclusion](#)" took place in the context of the International Day for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Awareness, on 5 March, bringing together speakers from Governments, academia, civil society organizations and the private sector. Another exchange, which focused on the [role of networks in advancing inclusive disarmament processes](#), took place in conjunction with the Vienna study visit of the Programme of Fellowships on Disarmament. In 2023, the Office built on the success of its Vienna Conversation Series by launching a comparable initiative at its Geneva branch. Topics of the events under the new [Geneva Disarmament Conversation Series](#) included coordination in addressing biorisks, the New Agenda for Peace, human-centred disarmament and developments in AI.

Moreover, the Office facilitated in-person and online visits by high school and university student groups, among others, introducing them to its mandate and activities. In Vienna, for example, the Office took part in the [United Nations Shadowing Programme](#). Meanwhile, in New York, the Office briefed a delegation of students and their teacher from Nagasaki Higashi High School who visited from Japan in March. In addition to learning about the Office's mandate and work, the visitors received guidance on planning and implementing a disarmament-focused international initiative. Furthermore, the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs joined her colleagues in an interactive exchange with the delegation, encouraging its members to continue to support and contribute their insights to the field of disarmament.

On activities at the regional level, the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific conducted a workshop for educators in Nepal, seeking to strengthen disarmament education at the secondary and tertiary levels. During the round-table discussion, high school teachers and university professors shared their views on incorporating disarmament into their regular and extracurricular activities. While the aim was to identify needs and challenges in integrating disarmament into broader educational frameworks, their discussion also touched on the humanitarian impacts of weapons, the significance of disarmament in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the role of civil society in peacebuilding.

E-learning and educational resources

The [Disarmament Education Dashboard](#), a global online learning platform managed by the Office for Disarmament Affairs, offers free courses on disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. In 2023, the Dashboard attracted learners from around the world, nearly doubling its base of registered users to a record 25,774 online learners (see [figure 8.2](#) for more statistics). Simultaneously, the system underwent upgrades to remain aligned with the latest technological advancements. Those improvements focused on optimizing the tools for creating and managing online training courses, catering to the growing use of the Dashboard within the Office and its three regional centres. The Office also prioritized enhancing the learning experience by promoting interactivity and active engagement with content.

In 2023, the Office added two new self-paced e-learning courses—“[Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons](#)” and “[Gender-mainstreaming small arms control training course](#)”—expanding the Dashboard's course catalogue to a total of 25 self-paced programmes. Additionally, the Office developed several new instructor-led capacity-building courses at both introductory and technical levels through its Regional Centre in Lima, making them available for use across Latin America and the Caribbean. Furthermore, the Office created new learning modules and updated existing ones within the context of the “Youth Leader Fund for a World without Nuclear Weapons”, launched in December.

In June, the Office's Regional Centre in Kathmandu led a second edition of its [Disarmament Toolkit online course](#). Co-organized with the Prajnya Trust, an India-based non-governmental organization, the comprehensive programme was designed to be accessible to a diverse audience, including students, educators and representatives of various organizations. The course covered key topics such as international disarmament efforts and their interplay with the women, peace and security agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Programme of Fellowships on Disarmament

In 2023, diplomats and other officials from 24 States^[10] participated in the United Nations Programme of Fellowships on Disarmament, a capacity-building initiative established by the General Assembly at its tenth special session, in 1978.^[11] The Programme is intended to promote greater expertise and train officials from Member States, in particular developing countries, to participate more effectively in international disarmament deliberations and negotiations. The Office for Disarmament Affairs implements the Programme each year, selecting about 25 Fellows nominated by their Governments. By the end of 2023, 1,100 public officials—mostly diplomats or military experts—from 170 States had completed the Programme.^[12]

The 2023 Programme was organized into four segments, combining theoretical activities and practical exercises. Its components included lectures and round-table debates with high-level diplomats and senior representatives of international organizations, regional bodies and civil society groups. Additionally, the Programme featured an ambassadorial-level panel discussion on nuclear disarmament, a simulated negotiation centred on lethal autonomous weapons systems and a series of case studies on conventional weapons. Beyond the classroom, the Fellows embarked on field visits to nuclear reactors, disarmament-related and arms-control-related laboratories, a former nuclear test site, a nuclear security centre of excellence, a controlled materials centre and other relevant locations.

Before beginning the formal, in-person component of the Programme, the Fellows completed an initial segment that comprised several introductory online training modules on disarmament and arms control. Through that mandatory, self-paced e-learning segment, the Office aimed to enhance the Fellows' understanding of the multilateral disarmament architecture, intergovernmental disarmament forums and the evolution of international regulations related to weapons. It also introduced the Fellows to key substantive themes in disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control.

The second segment of the Fellowship Programme, which began in Geneva on 21 August, exposed the Fellows to the work of the Conference on Disarmament and various treaty regimes. Specifically, they devoted attention to the [Biological Weapons Convention](#) (1972), the [Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons](#) (1980), the [Anti-Personnel Mine Ban](#)

[Convention](#) (1997), the [Convention on Cluster Munitions](#) (2008) and the [Arms Trade Treaty](#) (2013). The participants received background information on weapons systems and their effects, focusing on international humanitarian law and international human rights law, and they took part in relevant case-study exercises. In addition, the participants attended briefings on topics such as challenges in international security and arms control arising from emerging technologies, including their impacts on the means and methods of warfare, security threats and challenges in outer space, and considerations related to engaging with non-State armed groups on their legal obligations during armed conflict. Furthermore, the Fellows learned about the vital work of civil society organizations in the field of disarmament and arms control, as well as the activities of the three “Geneva centres”—namely, the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining, the Geneva Centre for Security Policy, and the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces.

During the third segment of the Programme, the Fellows participated in study visits to several international organizations, and structures or arrangements related to disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. In Switzerland, they visited the Spiez Laboratory (the Swiss Federal Institute for NBC-Protection).^[13] In Vienna, the Fellows visited the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization, including a seismic station of its International Monitoring System and an on-site inspection base of operations. Engaging with the International Atomic Energy Agency, they toured the Incident and Emergency Centre and the safeguards equipment laboratory in Vienna, as well as the Nuclear Sciences and Applications Laboratories in Seibersdorf, Austria. Additionally, the Fellows visited the offices of the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, and export control regimes such as the Wassenaar Arrangement. They attended briefings on various arms control topics hosted by the Vienna Center for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation and participated in a Vienna Conversation Series discussion entitled “Bridging the divide: The role of networks in advancing inclusive disarmament processes”. In The Hague, the Fellows visited the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and its laboratory and equipment store. The Fellows also participated in country-specific study visits to Argentina and Brazil ([Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials](#)), as well as China, Germany, Japan, Kazakhstan and the Republic of Korea, all at the invitation of their respective Governments. They also visited European Union institutions in Brussels with support from the European Union Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Consortium.^[14]

In October, during the fourth segment of the Programme, the Fellows convened at United Nations Headquarters, in New York, where they followed the work of the General Assembly, First Committee, monitoring developments related to key issues in disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. The Fellows also participated in a simulation exercise and attended an ambassadorial-level panel discussion on nuclear disarmament. In addition, they researched and discussed various disarmament and arms control topics.

After completing the Programme at United Nations Headquarters on 25 October, the 2023 Fellows received certificates of participation from the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs and the Chair of the First Committee.

Education and empowerment initiatives

Promoting responsible innovation in artificial intelligence for peace and security

Under its “[Promoting responsible innovation in artificial intelligence for peace and security](#)” programme, funded by the European Union, the Office for Disarmament Affairs continued its outreach to educators, civil society, industry, students and young AI practitioners as an audience not traditionally engaged in disarmament and non-proliferation issues. Through the programme, the Office aimed to support greater engagement from the civilian AI community in mitigating the risks that the misuse of civilian AI technology could pose to international peace and security. With 2023 being the first year of the three-year effort, the Office partnered with the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, technical experts, leading universities, industry actors and civil society organizations to deliver a series of four multi-stakeholder dialogues, an in-person capacity-building workshop for AI practitioners from around the world, an educator round-table discussion, an expert blog, two educational podcasts and the project website.

Youth for biosecurity

The Youth for Biosecurity Fellowship for 2023 was convened from March to August, connecting 20 up-and-coming biosecurity leaders from 17 States parties in the global South to take part in activities to address international biosecurity issues within the scope of the Biological Weapons Convention. Over three months, participants in the capacity-building programme engaged in online educational sessions, a joint research initiative and a week-long visit to Geneva coinciding with the second session of the Working Group on the Strengthening of the Biological Weapons Convention. In the inaugural year of its newly adopted format, the Fellowship attracted over 800 candidates from 84 nations, more than six times the level of interest of prior years.

United Nations–Singapore Cyber Fellowship

In 2022, the Cyber Security Agency of Singapore and the Office for Disarmament Affairs launched the United Nations–Singapore Cyber Fellowship, a capacity-building programme for high-level national officials focusing on decision-making in areas such as cyber and digital security governance, national cybersecurity strategy, legislation, operations capacity development, workforce and ecosystem development, and international policy.

In 2023, two iterations of the Fellowship took place, in May and August, at the Association of Southeast Asian Nations centre for excellence in Singapore. They comprised a series of briefings, panel sessions, round-table discussions, laboratory visits and table-top exercises promoting discussion and application of the normative framework of responsible State behaviour in the use of information and communications technologies. Both sessions were attended by 56 participants from 51 countries, with equal participation by men and women.

Campaigns

16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence

From 25 November to 10 December, the Office for Disarmament Affairs participated in the United Nations annual [campaign](#) “16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence”, held with the theme “UNITE! Invest to prevent violence against women and girls”. Using the #NoExcuse hashtag, the Office and its regional centres posted messages across their X (Twitter), Instagram and LinkedIn platforms relating to solutions to prevent gender-based violence through disarmament and arms control measures. During the campaign, the Office amplified [messaging](#) from the International Action Network on Small Arms on the same theme. On the first day of the campaign, which coincided with the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs shared a [video message](#) in which she called for better data and collaborative action to end armed violence against women.

On 6 December, UNIDIR and the United Nations Action network against Sexual Violence in Conflict, of which the Office for Disarmament Affairs is a member, hosted an online [event](#) on the role of weapons in conflict-related sexual violence, with a focus on the Sudan.

Furthermore, during the campaign the Office's Regional Centre for Africa hosted a [webinar](#) featuring lessons from Sierra Leone, Burundi and Cameroon on gender mainstreaming in small-arms control. Meanwhile, in Colombia, the Regional Centre for Latin America and the Caribbean piloted a course on gender perspectives in arms control.

United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research

UNIDIR is an autonomous institution within the United Nations that conducts independent research on pressing global challenges related to disarmament, arms control and international security. With armed conflict further exacerbating grave socioeconomic and environmental challenges, demand for the institute's knowledge-generating and analytical work, capacity-building on traditional and emerging issues, and accessible tools to help all Member States to implement their disarmament commitments has grown in 2023.

Under its strategic research framework for 2022–2025, UNIDIR conducts research and provides advice on enabling and converging technologies, biological risks, space security, gender and inclusion, conflict prevention, and weapons and ammunition management. It also focuses on advancing nuclear dialogue, capacity-building and developing foresight on global security matters.

UNIDIR is organized around five multi-year programmes—on [conventional arms and ammunition](#), [weapons of mass destruction](#), [gender and disarmament](#), [security and technology](#) and [space security](#)—as well as two special projects on [managing exits from armed conflict](#) and the [proposed Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction](#). In 2023, UNIDIR considered new issues relating to the security concerns of the twenty-first century; integrated them with relevant peace, security and development priorities; and produced research and events accessible to global audiences, increasingly in multiple languages and targeting a diverse range of stakeholders worldwide.

During the year, UNIDIR accomplished the following:

- Experienced the strongest demand for its independent research and impartial convening role in a difficult political environment, with an all-time high of [37 donors from all continents](#).
- Expanded its offering of digital confidence-building tools by launching the [Artificial Intelligence Policy Portal](#), the [Space Security Portal](#), a [Lexicon for Outer Space Security](#) and the [Biological Weapons Convention National Implementation Measures Database](#). The well-established [Cyber Policy Portal](#) was also equipped with advanced filtering and full-text search capabilities through the creation of the complementary [Cyber Policy Portal Database](#).
- Developed and launched a revamped website that further boosts the reach and impact of UNIDIR work, bringing in the inventive visual interpretations of local and international artists, photographers and researchers—from [generative AI pioneer Refik Anadol](#) to the [field-leading Robotics and Perception Group at the University of Zurich](#)—to connect with audiences in new ways and remind them of the crucial relevance of disarmament in today's global security environment.
- Produced 96 publications and conducted research on a [wide range of crucial topics](#).
- Pursued its bridge-building function by engaging in and facilitating dialogue between disarmament stakeholders through 148 conferences, workshops and events, which attracted over 11,000 participants. Those included annual flagship events such as the [Innovations Dialogue](#), the [Cyber Stability Conference](#) and the [Outer Space Security Conference](#), as well as the first [Global Symposium on weapons and ammunition management](#) and a first-of-its-kind retreat looking at ways to [revitalize the work of the Conference on Disarmament](#). UNIDIR also expanded its offering of seminars in countries

outside the membership of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development; held major events on countering improvised explosive devices in South-East Asia and [preventing violent extremism in West Africa](#); and launched [participatory research pilots with conflict-affected young people in Iraq](#).

- Offered policy and technical advice to States, regional organizations and intergovernmental forums on a wide range of disarmament issues, including on verification under the Biological Weapons Convention and on the development of the [Global Framework for Through-life Conventional Ammunition Management](#) adopted in late 2023 by the General Assembly.
- Expanded its sizeable digital footprint, with a total social media audience growing to over 50,000 followers and more than a million visits to its website coming from all Member States.

The following subsections include 2023 highlights from UNIDIR research programmes, all of which supported the implementation of the Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament.^[15]

Weapons of mass destruction

In 2023, under its programme on weapons of mass destruction, UNIDIR undertook research in three main areas: nuclear risk reduction; new approaches to transparency and verification in nuclear disarmament; and strengthening the norm against chemical and biological weapons. UNIDIR produced 26 publications as part of the programme, covering a range of topics, including preparations for the [fifth Review Conference of the Chemical Weapons Convention](#), a [field exercise](#) testing practical procedures for verifying nuclear disarmament, [verification under the Biological Weapons Convention](#), and the [past and future of bilateral nuclear arms control](#). Moreover, a new digital tool, the [Biological Weapons Convention National Implementation Measures Database](#), was launched.

UNIDIR also organized or co-organized 25 workshops and events on weapons of mass destruction to facilitate discussion around arms control and disarmament-related issues across borders in a period of considerable geostrategic tension. Those events included a [high-level retreat](#) on revitalizing the Conference on Disarmament, a retreat on nuclear risk reduction and a [joint event](#) between the World Health Organization, the Office for Disarmament Affairs and UNIDIR on biorisks and biosecurity. Programme experts also delivered presentations at 88 external events worldwide and undertook more than 60 media engagements.

Over the year, UNIDIR research supported work in various multilateral forums, particularly through expert input for the Working Group on the Strengthening of the Biological Weapons Convention, the fifth Review Conference of the Chemical Weapons Convention, the second

Meeting of States Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, the Preparatory Committee for the 2026 NPT Review Conference, the Group of Governmental Experts on nuclear disarmament verification and the First Committee of the General Assembly.

Conventional arms and ammunition

UNIDIR research on conventional arms and ammunition has three priority areas: strengthening weapons and ammunition management; preventing armed conflict and armed violence; and addressing global development and security challenges. It also supports the further development and implementation of multilateral instruments.

In 2023, UNIDIR provided technical advisory support to the Open-ended Working Group on Conventional Ammunition, contributing to the successful adoption of the [Global Framework for Through-life Conventional Ammunition Management](#). UNIDIR also supported the presidency of the ninth Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty and that of the twenty-first Meeting of the States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, as well as preparations for the fourth Review Conference of the Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons, in 2024.

In November 2023, UNIDIR convened the first [Global Symposium](#) on “Weapons and ammunition management: frameworks, policies and practices”, bringing together 200 participants to examine challenges and effective measures for countering the diversion and misuse of conventional arms, as well as mitigating risks posed by unplanned ammunition explosions. That followed the first informal strategic dialogue on weapons and ammunition management, held in September, which identified pathways for enhancing United Nations efforts to strengthen weapons and ammunition management around the globe. UNIDIR continues to report annually on progress made to strengthen [weapons and ammunition management in Africa](#). Throughout 2023, UNIDIR supported national and regional efforts in South-East Asia and West Africa to counter the threat posed by improvised explosive devices, as well as convened [five online regional briefings](#) on that subject for 500 participants.

In 2023, UNIDIR released a [publication](#) examining the experiences of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) in addressing the threat posed by illicit arms, ammunition and improvised explosive devices. The publication provides lessons for other peacekeeping operations in hostile environments. In December, UNIDIR, in collaboration with the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa and the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, organized the first multi-stakeholder [regional seminar on preventing violent extremism and conventional weapons management in West Africa](#), held in Lomé. The seminar aimed to help to identify different approaches, best practices and responses at both national and regional levels in Western Africa.

In cooperation with the Flemish Peace Institute and as part of the project on countering the diversion of arms using technology tools, UNIDIR developed a [new framework](#) for identifying and assessing technologies that could strengthen efforts to counter the diversion of conventional arms and related components. Moreover, in November, in cooperation with the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, UNIDIR launched an [initiative](#) to support increased oversight and accountability of national security priorities and spending and established the [UNIDIR Expert Network on Security Priorities and Public Spending](#) to exchange best practices in that regard.

Security and technology

Throughout 2023, the UNIDIR security and technology programme contributed to advancing the multilateral agenda on new and emerging technologies, particularly in the fields of cybersecurity and AI. Its activities were aligned with its objectives: supporting policy and decision-making; reducing the knowledge gap on issues about new technologies and international security; and bridging communities.

The programme focused on two broad priority areas—cyber stability and AI (which includes autonomous systems and their weaponization). Within each area, UNIDIR aimed to build knowledge, advance multilateral discourse and convene stakeholders that could develop new thinking on addressing international security implications and risks. In addition, UNIDIR started two new workstreams, focusing on key enabling technologies and strategic foresight.

UNIDIR continued to advance the international cyber debate by (a) facilitating the operationalization of norms of responsible State behaviour through research activities and multi-stakeholder dialogues; (b) further developing the [UNIDIR Cyber Policy Portal](#); (c) supporting intergovernmental processes established by the General Assembly;^[16] (d) providing research reports and events on key issues, such as the [application of international law to the cyber domain](#), [foundational cyber capabilities for the implementation of the framework of responsible State behaviour](#) and [Internet fragmentation](#); and (e) convening in March the annual Cyber Stability Conference with a focus on the application of the Charter of the United Nations to the digital domain.^[17]

Following the programme's workstream on AI, UNIDIR carried out original research projects exploring the broad impact that AI might have on international peace and security, with a specific focus on the military domain. The subject was further unpacked in the 2023 [Innovations Dialogue](#), a UNIDIR flagship conference, which brought together over 2,000 participants to discuss the application and impacts of AI across all domains of warfare. In addition, UNIDIR released two research reports that offered a different perspective on the impacts of AI. The first focused on mapping [AI's impact on military tasks and capabilities beyond weapon systems](#). The second introduced a new framework for [conceptualizing AI](#)

[risks to international peace and security](#) as part of a larger study to develop a first set of confidence-building measures for States to mitigate the unique risks posed by AI. In May, UNIDIR launched the [Artificial Intelligence Policy Portal](#), a one-stop shop for information on national AI policy and regulatory frameworks applicable to the military and defence context.

Space security

In 2023, UNIDIR experienced considerable interest in its work on space security, which included launching a new [Space Security Portal](#) and producing 13 publications, including [A Lexicon for Outer Space Security](#). Under the programme, UNIDIR organized 13 events, covering topics ranging from national space policies to industry perceptions on space security governance, and programme experts also delivered presentations on space security at more than 25 events around the world.

UNIDIR supported the 2023 meetings of both the Open-ended Working Group on Reducing Space Threats through Norms, Rules and Principles of Responsible Behaviours and the Group of Governmental Experts on Further Practical Measures for the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space, providing multiple presentations and working papers through the meeting secretariat.

In 2023, the annual [Outer Space Security Conference](#) of UNIDIR had over 1,000 participants and hosted diverse cross-sectoral representatives. Building on the regional outreach work initiated in 2022, UNIDIR also organized a series of regional workshops on space security, including an in-person [regional event for African States](#).

Gender and disarmament

In 2023, an area of significant progress for gender mainstreaming was ammunition management, with the adoption of the landmark [Global Framework for Through-life Conventional Ammunition Management](#), which recognizes the role of conventional ammunition in facilitating gender-based violence. Building on recommendations put forward by UNIDIR and other stakeholders, the Global Framework includes an objective on gender mainstreaming, which encompasses an increased understanding of the differentiated impact of unplanned explosions at conventional ammunition sites, as well as the diversion of conventional ammunition. It also seeks to promote the full, equal, meaningful and effective participation and leadership of both women and men in conventional ammunition management policy, practice and decision-making.

To advance knowledge on the linkages between the availability of weapons and ammunition and the occurrence of gender-based violence, UNIDIR launched the report [Addressing Weapons in Conflict-related Sexual Violence: The Arms Control and Disarmament Toolbox](#). It

showed that, in countries where disaggregated data on weapons were available, between 70 and 90 per cent of incidents of conflict-related sexual violence were reported to involve weapons, particularly firearms. The research authors proposed options to leverage arms control and disarmament measures in efforts to prevent such violence, including by integrating arms-related risks into early warning mechanisms, collecting and sharing data on conflict-related sexual violence disaggregated by the presence of weapons, and considering the risk when making decisions about arms transfers.

In December, UNIDIR presented that study to the Security Council during the [open debate on small arms and light weapons](#), convened by Ecuador. On that occasion, UNIDIR urged Security Council members to support systematic data collection on the impacts of weapons and ammunition, disaggregated by sex and age, including when recording casualties and conflict-related sexual violence.

Another important area of work involved the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, a disarmament regime in which States parties have agreed to practical steps to integrate gender perspectives into the implementation of the Convention. As the Convention's current Action Plan entered its final year, UNIDIR launched the publication *[Beyond Oslo: Taking Stock of Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming in the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention](#)*, an in-depth analysis of the implementation of action points covering gender, diversity and inclusion.

As part of a new research project, UNIDIR began work with a diverse group of experts pursuing innovative research connecting gender issues with nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. UNIDIR also coordinated the submission of an [official working paper](#) on taking forward gender mainstreaming efforts in the context of the NPT. The paper was co-sponsored by a cross-regional group of 11 States parties at the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2026 NPT Review Conference.

Managing exits from armed conflict

The UNIDIR project on [managing exits from armed conflict](#) is a multi-year collaboration to develop a unified, rigorous approach that can examine how and why individuals exit armed conflict, while also assessing the efficacy of programmes designed to support their transition away from the battlefield, thereby contributing to the institute's insights on "micro-disarmament". The project is supported by the German Federal Foreign Office, Global Affairs Canada, the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs and the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs. It is run in partnership with the International Organization for Migration; the United Nations Children's Fund; the United Nations Development Programme; the Department of Peace Operations; the World Bank; the secretariat of the Regional Strategy for the Stabilization, Recovery and Resilience of the Boko Haram-affected Areas of the Lake Chad Basin Region; and the United Nations University Centre for Policy Research.

In 2023, multi-method research for the project took place across six countries: Cameroon, Chad, Colombia, Iraq, Nigeria and the Niger. The activities included seven different surveys with over 5,000 respondents, [participatory research with young people](#), and focus groups and interviews with hundreds of key informants. Follow-up surveys were conducted with panel members recruited from 2020 to 2022 to understand the challenges and sources of resilience for ex-combatants, former associates and respondents with a perceived armed-group association who returned or were returning to their communities. Survey results, in turn, enabled improvements in intervention design and implementation. In each country of operation, practitioners leading disarmament, demobilization and reintegration efforts received real-time support through quantitative, qualitative and experimental evidence and analysis produced through the project.

Throughout 2023, UNIDIR produced 11 publications and launched two new research series under the project. The [Fieldwork Note](#) series focuses on research processes, lessons learned and practical insights from field research; the [Research into Action](#) series centres on bridging academia and practitioners by interviewing scholars on key findings and policy implications of their otherwise difficult-to-access work. Furthermore, UNIDIR organized or participated in 32 events, with over 1,400 participants, including orchestrating a [multi-day conference](#) in New York in March that brought together experts, senior United Nations officials and high-level diplomatic representatives to enhance cross-sectoral approaches to conflict prevention and reintegration. Project experts also briefed Member States on key findings at various high-level international forums, including the [Lake Chad Basin Governor's Forum](#), the [Oslo International Conference on Protecting Children in Armed Conflict](#) and the [Geneva Peace Week](#).

Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction

In 2023, UNIDIR completed the first phase of its project on a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction (launched in 2019). In the first phase, the project aim was to fill significant gaps in research concerning the Middle East zone, build analytic capacity to support new thinking on regional security issues and the zone, develop proposals on how to move forward, and foster dialogue between experts and policymakers on regional security issues and the zone, which could then contribute to ongoing multilateral processes.

Activities focused on conducting dialogues and producing research on topics that could enhance regional security and improve the prospects for establishing a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction. In that vein, a [regional workshop](#) in Manama was co-organized with the Bahrain Centre for Strategic, International and Energy Studies. UNIDIR also continued to promote a better understanding of past and current efforts by releasing a report discussing the various [narratives on the Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction](#) and a series by the negotiators on the [consultations held in Glion and Geneva in 2013 and 2014](#). In addition, UNIDIR produced analyses on cutting-edge issues relevant to

ongoing and potential negotiations, such as the peaceful use of [nuclear energy](#) in the context of the proposed zone, modalities for nuclear disarmament and the challenges of chemical and biological weapons. The project's main findings were discussed in an expert workshop in Prague and published in the [final report](#) on the project.

Throughout 2023, UNIDIR continued to support existing processes and inform any future ones by drafting reports, summarizing States' positions and helping to bridge diverging views during regional conferences. UNIDIR also supported the fourth session of the [Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction](#) and the intersessional meetings of the Conference's working committee.

The second phase of the project, again fully funded by the European Union, was launched in July. Its main objectives include (a) assisting in mitigating regional trends concerning the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; (b) encouraging regional security arrangements and arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament norms and processes; (c) developing a more in-depth understanding of the relationship between the zone and current regional and international developments; and (d) promoting an effective, verifiable, inclusive and sustainable zone.

Footnotes

[1] Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Chile, China, Côte d'Ivoire, Czechia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Germany, Japan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malawi, Maldives, Mexico, Morocco, Nepal, North Macedonia, Peru, Philippines, Romania, South Africa, the Sudan and Switzerland.

[2] By resolution [64/35](#) of 2 December 2009, introduced at the initiative of Kazakhstan, the General Assembly declared 29 August as the International Day against Nuclear Tests, to commemorate the closure of the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site on 29 August 1991. The Assembly invited Member States and others to use the International Day to raise awareness about the effects of nuclear weapon test explosions and the need to strengthen the international norm against all nuclear tests as a valuable step towards achieving a world free of nuclear weapons.

[3] European Union and Holy See.

[4] Reverse the Trend: Save our People, Save our Planet.

[5] China, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Egypt, India, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Israel, Pakistan and United States. The Russian Federation revoked its ratification of the Treaty in November, increasing the number of Annex 2 States whose ratifications are needed for the Treaty's entry into force to nine.

[6] The International Day was established in 2013 through an initiative of the Non-Aligned Movement following the first high-level meeting of the General Assembly on nuclear disarmament. Through its resolutions [68/32](#) of 5 December 2013, [69/58](#) of 2 December 2014, [70/34](#) of 7 December 2015, [71/71](#) of 5 December 2016, [72/251](#) of 24 December 2017, [73/40](#) of 5 December 2018, [74/54](#) of 12 December 2019, [75/45](#) of 7 December 2020, [76/36](#) of 6 December 2021, [77/47](#) of 7 December 2022 and [78/27](#) of 4 December 2023, the General Assembly called for immediately commencing negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on a comprehensive convention on nuclear weapons, as well as for enhancing public awareness and education about the threat of nuclear weapons and the necessity of their total elimination.

[7] For the written statements, see Journal of the United Nations, "High-level plenary meeting to commemorate and promote the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons" ([Part 1](#) and [Part 2](#)), 26 September 2023. For all statements as delivered, see United Nations Web TV, "General Assembly: High-level plenary meeting to commemorate and promote the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons" ([Part 1](#) and [Part 2](#)), video, 26 September 2023.

[8] Holy See, International Committee of the Red Cross, League of Arab States and State of Palestine.

[9] International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons and Marshallese Educational Initiative.

[10] Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Chile, China, Côte d'Ivoire, Czechia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Germany, Japan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malawi, Maldives, Mexico, Morocco, Nepal, North Macedonia, Peru, Philippines, Romania, South Africa, Sudan and Switzerland.

[11] The Programme was established pursuant to paragraph 108 of the Final Document of the Tenth Special Session of the General Assembly ([S-10/2](#)), and the first special session devoted to disarmament: "In order to promote expertise in disarmament in more Member States, particularly in the developing countries, the General Assembly decides to establish a programme of fellowships on disarmament."

[12] Through specialized training, the Programme helped Fellows to further develop their expertise in disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation issues, as well as their understanding of the challenges and opportunities in the field of multilateral disarmament and international security. It enabled former Fellows to participate more effectively in regional and global disarmament efforts and, by creating an informal world-spanning network, to work cooperatively and constructively in pursuit of disarmament and non-proliferation goals. Many former Fellows went on to hold important disarmament-related positions or responsibilities within their own Governments or in international organizations.

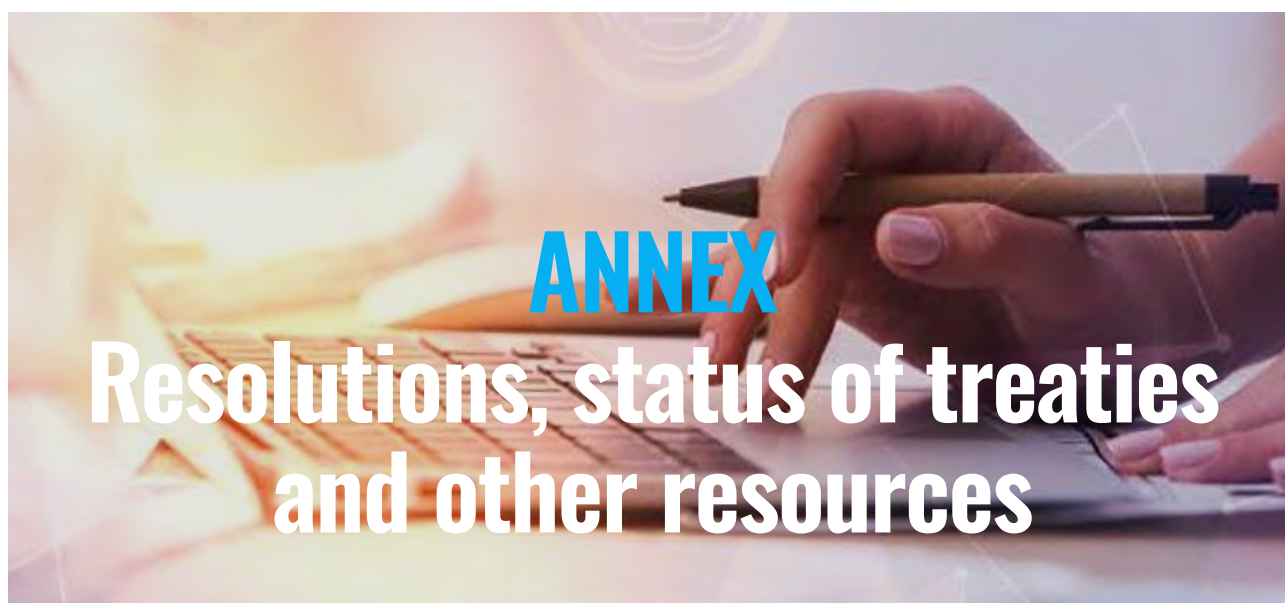
[13] "NBC" is an abbreviation for "nuclear, biological and chemical".

[14] Pursuant to European Union Council Decision [2018/299/CFSP](#).

[15] UNIDIR provided a full account of its activities, as well as its proposed programme of work and financial plan for 2023, in the annual report of its Director to the General Assembly ([A/78/163](#)). Detailed information about specific programmes and projects of the institute, as well as on all its research and activities, is posted on its [website](#).

[16] In 2023, UNIDIR provided that support, pursuant to General Assembly resolution [75/240](#), in establishing the Open-ended Working Group on Security of and in the Use of Information and Communications Technologies 2021–2025. Support included advising the Chair of the Working Group during formal and informal meetings, consolidating relevant national inputs, positions and comments, and preparing draft texts.

[17] Notably, the Conference was convened in a [hybrid format](#), combining in-person attendance in New York with virtual participation of speakers and audiences from around the world.



Disarmament resolutions and decisions of the seventy-eighth session of the United Nations General Assembly

Disarmament Resolutions and Decisions Database (<https://resolutions.unoda.org>)

The revamped database's improved features make it simple to pinpoint specific votes and track State voting patterns. Data for previous sessions are forthcoming.

Status of multilateral arms regulation and disarmament agreements

Disarmament Treaties Database (<https://treaties.unoda.org>)

The redesigned database is easy to search with new filters and a user-friendly interface.

Publications and other information materials in 2023

United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs

Publications

- *United Nations Disarmament Yearbook* 2022, vol. 47 (condensed and full versions): (Sales No. E.23.IX.3)
- *The Global Reported Arms Trade: Transparency in Armaments Through the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms – A Guide to Assist National Points of Contact in Submitting Their National Reports*, Occasional Papers, No. 39 (Sales No. 23.IX.1)

- *The United Nations and Disarmament amid COVID-19: Adaptation and Continuity*, Occasional Papers, No. 40 (Sales No. E.23.IX.2)
- *Celebrating 45 Years of the Secretary-General's Advisory Board On Disarmament Matters: Creative, Inclusive, and Cooperative Diplomacy at Work*, Occasional Papers, No. 41 (Sales No. E.24.IX.1)
- *The Historical Impact of Parliamentary Diplomacy on Disarmament*, Civil Society and Disarmament 2023 (Sales No. E.24.IX.2)
- *Programmes Financed from Voluntary Contributions, 2022–2023*
- *Guide to Implementing the Biological Weapons Convention* (in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, Spanish and Portuguese)
- *Resolution 1540 and the African Continental Free Trade Area: Policy Options to Strengthen Non-proliferation Controls and Secure Trade*
- *Scientific and Technological Developments: Benefits and Risks for the Biological Weapons Convention* (conference report on supporting the full and effective implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) in Africa)
- *Report of the Scientific Advisory Group on the Status and Developments Regarding Nuclear Weapons, Nuclear Weapon Risks, the Humanitarian Consequences of Nuclear Weapons, Nuclear Disarmament and Related Issues* (TPNW/MSP/2023/8)
- *Supporting the Full and Effective Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540 (2004) in Africa*
- Newsletter for nominated experts and analytical laboratories for the Secretary-General's mechanism for investigation of alleged use of chemical and biological weapons ([No. 5](#) (February 2023) and [No. 6](#) (September 2023))
- [UNODA^{\[1\]} Updates](#) (online news updates)

E-learning courses

- ["Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons \(NPT\)"](#) (self-paced)
- ["Gender-mainstreaming Small Arms Control Training Course"](#) (self-paced, available in English, French, Spanish and Portuguese)
- ["Youth Leader Fund for a World Without Nuclear Weapons"](#) (instructor-led)
- ["Disarmament Toolkit"](#) (2023 edition)
- ["Interdicting Small Arms, Ammunition, Parts and Components Course"](#) (instructor-led; in English and Spanish)

- “Course on Combating Trafficking in Arms and Ammunition (CTAM)” (instructor-led; in Spanish)
- “Specialized Course on Firearms Investigations from a Gender Perspective” (instructor-led)

Podcasts

- [“Explosive Weapons In Populated Areas”](#), Disarmament Today, 21 June
- [“Bridging the divide: the role of networks in advancing inclusive disarmament processes”](#), Vienna Conversation Series, 6 September
- [“Not so peaceful technology? What risks may civilian AI pose to peace and security?”](#), Responsible AI for Peace Podcast (episode 1), 10 October
- [“With Emily Bender, on risks of large language models and generative AI”](#), Responsible AI for Peace Podcast (episode 2), 14 December

Videos

- Various video-recorded remarks of Izumi Nakamitsu, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, available from the [Office for Disarmament Affairs YouTube channel](#)
- [Highlights of the virtual launch event of International Day for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Awareness](#), 4 March
- Video to mark International Women's Day 2023: [“ODA celebrates the many women contributing to a more secure and peaceful cyberspace”](#), 8 March
- [Video to launch the online self-paced course on gender-mainstreaming small arms control](#), 8 March
- [“International Day for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Awareness | Launch”](#), 9 March
- [Opening remarks of United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres at the fifth Review Conference of the Chemical Weapons Convention](#), 15 May
- [United Nations Messenger of Peace Michael Douglas calls on young people to become changemakers for a world free of nuclear weapons](#), 18 May
- [Video on the adoption of the Global Framework on Through-Life Conventional Ammunition Management](#), 9 June
- [“What is the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs?”](#), 14 June
- [Video featuring United Nations Messenger of Peace Michael Douglas on human rights and disarmament](#), 27 June
- [Video to call for applications to the Youth Leader Fund training programme](#), 7 July

- [Video on civilians as casualties of explosive weapons in populated areas](#), 18 July
- ["What is the Disarmament Yearbook?"](#), 24 July
- ["What is the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons?"](#), 25 July
- [Video on chapter 1 \(Nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation\) of the 2022 Disarmament Yearbook](#), 26 July
- [Video on chapter 2 \(Biological and chemical weapons\) of the 2022 Disarmament Yearbook](#), 27 July
- [Video on chapter 3 \(Conventional weapons\) of the 2022 Disarmament Yearbook](#), 28 July
- ["What happens at the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons First Preparatory Committee meeting?"](#), 30 July
- [Video on chapter 4 \(Regional disarmament\) of the 2022 Disarmament Yearbook](#), 30 July
- ["Young people as contributors to a safer, more secure and equitable world through disarmament"](#), 12 August
- ["Side event on youth insights to first Preparatory Meeting for the 2026 NPT Review Conference"](#), 24 August
- ["Congratulatory message to participants of the #StepUp4Disarmament Youth Campaign 2023"](#), 30 August
- ["Leaders to the Future participate in #StepUp4Disarmament Youth Campaign 2023"](#), 8 September
- ["United Nations Messenger of Peace, Michael Douglas delivers remarks to International Day of Peace Youth Event"](#), 15 September
- ["Michael Douglas, Messenger of Peace, message on the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons"](#), 26 September
- ["Michael Douglas, Messenger of Peace - Disarmament Week 2023"](#), 25 October
- [The 2023 Youth for Biosecurity Fellows share their experience of the Fellowship](#), 31 October
- [Naomi Ekpoki, a United Nations Youth Champion for Disarmament 2020-2022, talks about her experience with the 1st edition of the training programme](#), 2 November
- ["Michael Douglas reflects on the Political Declaration on Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas"](#), 18 November
- [Video to mark the first anniversary of the adoption of the Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences Arising from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas](#), 18 November (created by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and utilized by UNODA and other partner entities)

United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research

Conventional arms and ammunition

Publications

- [Weapons and Ammunition Management Country Insight: Central African Republic](#) (in English and French)
- [Strengthening Shared Understanding on the Impact of the ATT in Addressing Risks of Diversion in Arms Transfers: A Compendium of Key Resources and Tools](#) (in English, French and Spanish)
- [Weapons and Ammunition Management - Country Insight Series: Togolese Republic](#) (in English and French)
- [The Role of Industry in Responsible International Transfers of Conventional Arms](#)
- [Uncrewed Aerial, Ground, and Maritime Systems: A Compendium](#)
- [Peacekeeping in Hostile Environments: The Impact of Illicit Arms on MINUSMA](#)
- [The Role of Industry and Other Private Sector Actors in Efforts To Counter the Diversion of Conventional Arms](#)
- [Technologies to Counter the Diversion of Small Arms and Light Weapons, and Components of Conventional Weapons](#)
- [Towards a Comprehensive Security Approach to Military Spending](#)
- [Weapons and Ammunition Management in Africa Insight: 2023 Update](#)

Other publications

- ["Is it time to reassess national security spending?"](#), Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, April
- ["Can arms and ammunition flows data inform conflict early warning and early response?"](#), Medium, 5 May

Gender and disarmament

Publications

- [Enfoques de Género en la Ciberseguridad: Diseño, Defensa y Respuesta](#) (in Spanish)
- [Actualización del Sistema: Hacia una Agenda de Mujeres, Paz y Ciberseguridad](#) (in Spanish)

- [Best Practices for Promoting Gender Equality in Conventional Arms Control: Survey Results](#)
- [Addressing Weapons in Conflict-Related Sexual Violence: The Arms Control and Disarmament Toolbox](#) (in English and French)
- [Gender and Diversity in the Convention on Cluster Munitions \(CCM\)](#)
- [Gender and Diversity in the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention \(APMBC\)](#)
- [Beyond Oslo: Taking Stock of Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming in the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention](#)

Journal and working group papers

- ["Taking forward gender mainstreaming efforts in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty"](#), working paper submitted to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Preparatory Committee (NPT/CONF.2026/PC.I/WP.25)

Other publications

- ["5 ways that arms control and disarmament can help to prevent sexual violence in conflict"](#), Medium, 5 March
- ["Sexual violence in conflict and weapons: unpacking the links for better prevention"](#), International Committee of the Red Cross (blog), 28 September

Security and technology

Publications

- [Towards Responsible AI in Defence: A Mapping and Comparative Analysis of AI Principles Adopted by States](#)
- [Wading Murky Waters: Subsea Communications Cables and Responsible State Behaviour](#) (in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish)
- [Uncrewed Aerial, Ground, and Maritime Systems: A Compendium](#)
- [Towards a More Stable and Secure ICT Environment: Unpacking Inter-State Cooperation](#)
- [The 2022 Innovations Dialogue: AI Disruption, Peace and Security \(Conference Report\)](#)
- [Proposals Related to Emerging Technologies in the Area of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems: A Resource Paper \(Updated\)](#)
- [Operationalizing a Directory of Points of Contact for Cyber Confidence-Building Measures](#)

- *Unpacking Cyber Capacity-Building Needs: Part I. Mapping the Foundational Cyber Capabilities* (in English, Spanish and Portuguese)
- *Unpacking Cyber Capacity-Building Needs: Part II. Introducing a Threat-Based Approach* (in English, Spanish and Portuguese)
- *Use of ICTs by States: Rights and Responsibilities Under the UN Charter*
- *Drawing Parallels: A Multi-Stakeholder Perspective on the Cyber PoA Scope, Structure and Content*
- *Artificial Intelligence Beyond Weapons: Application and Impact of AI in the Military Domain*
- *AI and International Security: Understanding the Risks and Paving the Path for Confidence-Building Measures*
- *Exploring Synthetic Data for Artificial Intelligence and Autonomous Systems: A Primer*

Weapons of mass destruction

Publications

- *Preparing for Success at the Fifth Review Conference of the Chemical Weapons Convention: A Guide to the Issues* (in English, with executive summaries in Arabic, Chinese, French, Russian and Spanish available)
- *The Past and Future of Bilateral Nuclear Arms Control*
- *Menzingen Verification Experiment: Verifying the Absence of Nuclear Weapons in the Field*
- *Revitalizing the Conference on Disarmament: Workshop Report* (in English and French)
- *Verifying the BWC: A Primer*
- *Reflections on Review Conferences: the Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Biological Weapons Convention and the Chemical Weapons Convention*

Journal and working group papers

- "What's next? The ninth biological weapons Review Conference and beyond"
- "Consideration of Gender in the GGE on Nuclear Disarmament Verification" (GENDVF/2023/WP.10)
- "What we learned from recent calls for a Russian nuclear attack", Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 20 July
- "Verifying the absence of nuclear weapons – results of a field exercise", Institute of Nuclear Materials Management

- “Ядерная несдержанность. Что показал спор о превентивном ударе по Западу”, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 11 July (in Russian)
- “An illustrative compendium of proposals submitted to the Conference on Disarmament” (CD/2328, annex II) (in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, Spanish)
- *Strategic Stability in Outer Space After Russia's Invasion of Ukraine*, Center for Naval Analyses, October

Other publications

- “Biological Weapons Convention negotiations”<https://www.genevapolicyoutlook.ch/biological-weapons-convention-negotiations/>, Geneva Policy Outlook, 30 January
- “Developing a plan B for the Chemical Weapons Convention 5th Review Conference”, European Leadership Network, 9 May
- “Preparing for success at the fifth Chemical Weapons Convention Review Conference”, 28 April

Space security

Publications

- *2022 Outer Space Security Conference Report*
- *Commercial Actors and Civil Society Consultation Report: How Can Non-Governmental Entities Contribute to Reducing Threats to Outer Space Systems?*
- *African Perspectives for Advancing Space Security Through Norms, Rules and Principles of Responsible Behaviours: Workshop Summary Report*
- *Constant Vigilance? Verification and Monitoring for Space Security (Space Dossier 8)*
- *A Lexicon for Outer Space Security* (in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish)
- *To Space Security and Beyond: Exploring Space Security, Safety, and Sustainability Governance and Implementation Efforts*, Space Dossier 9
- *2023 Outer Space Security Conference Report*

Journal and working group papers

- “The role of norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviour for space security”, working paper submitted by UNIDIR (A/AC.294/2023/WP.3)

- [“Commercial Space Operators on the Digital Battlefield”](#), Centre for International Governance Innovation
- [“The Cyber Phantom Menace to Space Security”](#), Centre for International Governance Innovation
- [“Not a rose by any other name: Dual-use and dual-purpose space systems”](#), Lawfare, 5 June
- “Current trends and developments in outer space”, working paper for the Group of Governmental Experts on Further Practical Measures for the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space
- “Security, including vectors of threats”
- [“The open-ended working group on reducing space threats through norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours: The Journey so far, and the road ahead”](#), *Air and Space Law*, vol. 48, special issue

Middle East weapons of mass destruction-free zone

Publications

- [Examining Modalities for Nuclear Disarmament in the Middle East WMD-Free Zone Treaty](#)
- [The Consultations in Glion and Geneva: A View from the Negotiating Table](#) (editions by [Jeremy Issacharoff](#), [Wael Al Assad](#), [Jaakko Laajava](#), [Angela Kane](#), [Mikhail Ulyanov](#) and [Thomas Countryman](#))
- [Development and Cooperation on Nuclear Research and Energy in the Middle East: Workshop Report](#)
- [Middle East WMD Free Zone Project: Final Report](#)
- [Addressing Chemical and Biological Weapons Challenges Through the Middle East Weapons of Mass Destruction-Free Zone: Workshop Report](#)
- [Narratives of the Middle East WMD-Free Zone: Drivers, Themes and Historical Accounts](#)

Managing exits from armed conflict

Publications

- [How Rank Affects the Transition to Civilian Life: Lessons from the Reintegration Process in Colombia](#), Findings Report 27
- [Coming Home: The Return and Reintegration of Families with Perceived ISIL Affiliation in Iraq](#), Findings Report 28

- *The Prospects for Remote Assessment: A Comparison of Phone vs In-Person Interviews in Nigeria*, Findings Report 29
- *Understanding Receptivity to Returning Former Boko Haram Associates Through a Gender Lens*, Findings Report 30
- *Child Exits from Armed Groups in the Lake Chad Basin*, Findings Report 31
- *Return and Reintegration Prospects for Iraqis Coming Back From Al Hol*, Findings Report 32
- *Partners in Research: Participatory Research Training Pilot with Young People in Mosul, Iraq*
- *An Unfiltered View of Struggling to Find Peace: Photography Programme Pilot with Young People in Mosul, Iraq*
- *Factors Influencing Community Receptivity of Former Fighters in Somalia*
- *MEAC Conflict Exits Assessment Framework*
- *Understanding Factors Driving Weapons Holding in the North East of Nigeria*

Events held on the margins of the 2023 session of the First Committee

2 October

- Responsible artificial intelligence in the military domain (organized by the permanent missions of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the Republic of Korea)

5 October

- Creating an environment for nuclear disarmament (organized by the Permanent Mission of the United States)

10 October

- A declaration to prevent harm: strengthening the protection of civilians from explosive weapons in populated areas (organized by the permanent missions of Ireland and Norway, with the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs)
- Mapping and addressing the security risks arising from military uses of artificial intelligence (organized by the Permanent Mission of Pakistan)
- IEDs - What lessons can be learnt from other mass explosive incidents and be applied to hotspots where IEDs are prevalent? (organized by the Permanent Mission of France)

11 October

- [The International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification](#) (organized by the Permanent Mission of the United States)
- Explosive weapons and the Arms Trade Treaty (organized by the United Nations Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation, the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, and Action on Armed Violence)

13 October

- [Preparing for the future of international peace and security](#) (organized by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research)

16 October

- 10 years on from Syria's accession to the Chemical Weapons Convention (organized by the Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom)
- [Publication launch: *The Application and Impact of Artificial Intelligence Beyond Weapons*](#) (organized by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research)

17 October

- Addressing the threat posed by nuclear terrorism to international peace and security: EU support to the UN for the universalization and effective implementation of the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism (organized by the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre)
- Autonomous weapons systems and human control – What are the challenges and how to overcome them? (organized by the Permanent Mission of Austria)
- Establishing an international agency for biological safety and security (organized by the Permanent Mission of Kazakhstan)
- [Publication launch: *Risks of AI*](#) (organized by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research)

18 October

- Autonomous weapons: state positions and trends in weapons systems (organized by the Permanent Mission of Belgium)
- [Digital tools for disarmament: UNIDIR portals and databases](#) (organized by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research)

- [In the crosshairs? Addressing military drone use and proliferation](#) (organized by the Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, with PAX, the Stimson Center and the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research)
- [Preventing the re-emergence of chemical weapons in the 21st century \(concept note\)](#) (organized by the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs)

19 October

- Advocating for nuclear justice (organized by the permanent missions of Kazakhstan and Kiribati)
- Working to strengthen the NPT review process (organized by the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative)
- [Regional consultations on the programme of action to advance responsible State behaviour in the use of information and communications technologies in the context of international security pursuant to General Assembly resolution 77/37](#) (organized by the permanent missions of Egypt and France, with the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs)

20 October

- [Exploring the space-nuclear nexus](#) (organized by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute and the Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of the Netherlands)
- Reducing space threats through norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours: a new approach to preventing an arms race in outer space (organized by the Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom)
- [Military expenditures and arms transfers: from opacity to transparency](#) (organized by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs and the Stimson Center)
- [Water and conflict: addressing water insecurity issues in fragile and conflict-affected countries](#) (organized by the permanent missions of Slovenia, Spain and Switzerland, with PAX)

23 October

- The ATT Voluntary Trust Fund (VTF): How to apply for VTF funding (organized by the Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom and the Arms Trade Treaty Secretariat)

- 10 years of EU Support for ATT implementation and universalization: taking stock and moving forward (organized by the European Union, in cooperation with the Federal Office for Economic Affairs and Export Control of Germany and Expertise France)
- [Generation Z\(ero\): role of youth in achieving a world without nuclear weapons](#) (organized by the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs)

24 October

- Arms control and armed violence in island States: perspectives from the Caribbean (organized by the Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom)
- [Exploring the complementarity of existing approaches for the future of outer space security](#) (organized by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research and the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs)
- Achieving tangible cooperation and compliance to avert nuclear catastrophe (organized by the permanent missions of Austria and Kuwait)
- [The new Global Framework for Through-life Conventional Ammunition Management](#) (organized by the Permanent Mission of Germany and the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs)

25 October

- [Book launch: *It is Possible: A future Without Nuclear Weapons*](#) (organized by the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs and the Permanent Mission of Austria)
- SALIENT: the Saving Lives Entity trust facility (organized by the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs)

26 October

- [Remembering Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala, leader for disarmament](#) (organized by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research)

1 November

- Between tradition and the law: artisanal firearm production in West Africa (organized by Small Arms Survey and the Permanent Mission of France)

Footnotes

[\[1\]](#) United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs.

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