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1–5 April 2024 (Sess. 2)



## General Assembly First Committee Background Guide 2024

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Lilia Aguilar, and Cameron Carre



# NATIONAL MODEL UNITED NATIONS



# NATIONAL MODEL UNITED NATIONS

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Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the 2024 National Model United Nations New York Conference (NMUN•NY)! We are pleased to introduce to you our committee, the General Assembly First Committee (GA1). Your committee's work is facilitated by volunteer staffers. This year's committee staff are: Director Gamaliel Perez and Assistant Director Lilia Aguilar (Session 1), and Director Aemin Becker and Assistant Director Cameron Carre (Session 2). Gamaliel Perez graduated with dual degrees in Political Theory and International Relations from the University of California, San Diego. He has also worked as a Political Campaign Advisor and Consultant for State Assembly members and City Council members. Lilia studied Law and International Relations at the University San Francisco de Quito and currently works at the National Court of Justice of Ecuador. Aemin holds a Master's degree in International Security from Sciences Po and two Bachelor's degrees from the University of New Haven. She currently works in consulting at Booz Allen Hamilton. Cameron is studying Political Science and has worked for a Mayoral Office and on a mayoral campaign. Currently, Cameron is an Intern through the Washington Internship Institute in Washington, D.C.

A portion of these materials was authored by Sejal Tiwari. Sejal works as a Foreign Policy Analyst for the Government of Canada and has a Master's Degree in International Development from the University of Ottawa. The preparation of these materials was supported by Under-Secretaries-General Eileen Austin (Session 1) and Danielle Curtis (Session 2).

The topics on the agenda for this committee are:

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

This Background Guide serves as an introduction to the topics for this committee. However, it is not intended to replace individual research. We encourage you to explore your Member State's policies in depth and use the bibliography to further your knowledge on these topics. In preparation for the conference, each delegation should submit a Position Paper by 11:59 p.m. ET on 1 March 2023 in accordance with the guidelines in the [Position Paper Guide](#) and the [NMUN•NY Position Papers website](#).

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

- The [NMUN Delegate Preparation Guide](#), which explains each step in the delegate process, from pre-conference research to the committee debate and resolution drafting processes. Please take note of the information on plagiarism, and the prohibition on pre-written working papers and resolutions.
- The [NMUN Rules of Procedure](#), which includes the long and short form of the rules, as well as an explanatory narrative and example script of the flow of procedure.

In addition, please review the mandatory [NMUN Conduct Expectations](#) on the NMUN website. They include the conference dress code and other expectations of all attendees. We want to emphasize that any instances of sexual harassment or discrimination based on race, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, age, or disability will not be tolerated. If you have any questions concerning your preparation for this committee, please contact the Deputy Secretaries-General at [dsg.ny@nmun.org](mailto:dsg.ny@nmun.org).

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

Gamaliel Perez, Director  
Lilia Aguilar, Assistant Director  
Session 1

Aemin Becker, Director  
Cameron Carre, Assistant Director  
Session 2



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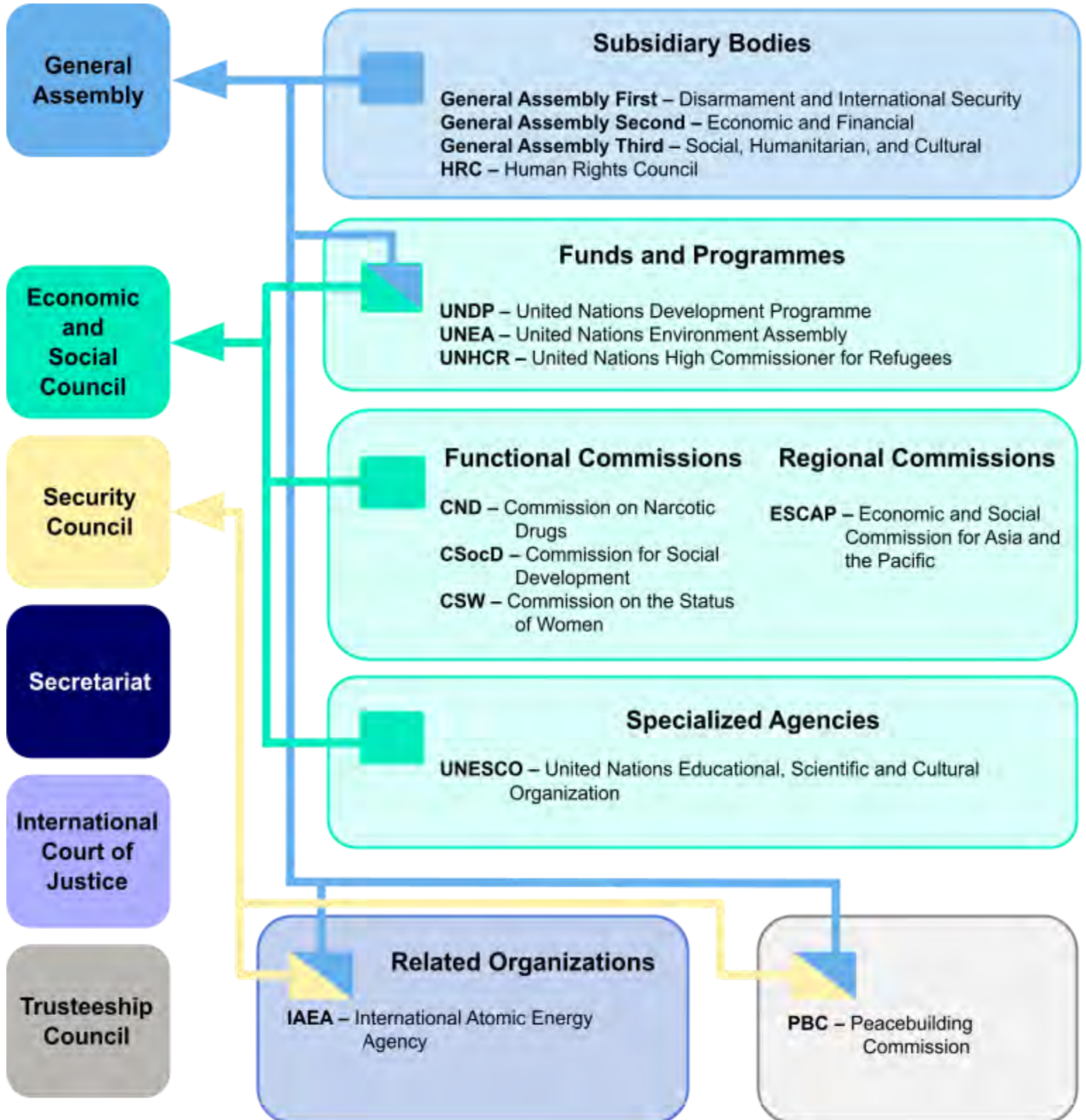
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## United Nations System at NMUN·NY

This diagram illustrates the United Nations system simulated at NMUN·NY. It shows where each committee “sits” within the system to demonstrate the reportage and relationships between entities. Examine the diagram alongside the Committee Overview to gain a clear picture of the committee’s position, purpose, and powers within the United Nations system.





## Committee Overview

### **Introduction**

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

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

### **Mandate, Function, and Powers**

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

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

- The General Assembly **will generally**: make recommendations to Member States, the Security Council, other United Nations bodies and organs, United Nations specialized agencies, and other international actors; initiate studies and advance efforts to promote international cooperation in the economic, social, cultural, educational, and health fields and in the realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms; consider or request reports from other United Nations bodies and specialized agencies; establish United Nations observance days, create expert groups or commissions, formulate mechanisms for treaty negotiation, or refer an issue to the International Court of Justice.<sup>10</sup>
- The General Assembly **will not generally**: dictate the specific actions required for the implementation of policies it recommends, allowing Member States and other bodies to determine operational details; create new bodies, except for in those rare instances where ubiquitous international demand requires the consolidation of existing bodies or a concept and mandate have been fully developed, typically through years of negotiations; make

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. pp. 37, 52.

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



recommendations on situations under consideration by the United Nations Security Council.<sup>11</sup>

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

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

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

The First Committee's procedures are managed by its Secretariat and an elected Bureau.<sup>20</sup> The committee's Bureau assists with opening and closing each meeting, managing the discussions, pronouncing decisions, assisting with drafts and documents, and ensuring compliance with the rules of procedure.<sup>21</sup> The United Nations Secretariat assists the First Committee by delivering substantive and logistical support.<sup>22</sup> The First Committee receives substantive and organizational support from three entities: the General Committee, the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, and the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management.<sup>23</sup>

The First Committee also works in close cooperation with the Conference on Disarmament (CD) and the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC).<sup>24</sup> The CD is an independent entity and the only recognized "multilateral disarmament negotiating forum of the international community."<sup>25</sup> UNDC is a subsidiary organ of the First Committee and makes recommendations on various issues in the field of

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

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

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

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

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

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

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

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

<sup>19</sup> New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. *United Nations Handbook 2023-24*. 2022. p. 412.

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

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

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

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

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

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



disarmament and following up on past decisions.<sup>26</sup> Both the CD and UNDC report to the First Committee.<sup>27</sup> The General Assembly also jointly oversees the Peacebuilding Commission with the Security Council and the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

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

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



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## 1. Relationship Between Disarmament and Development

*“The proliferation of various types of weapons has tremendous impacts on many spheres of human life and nature, relating to multiple SDGs, including those relating to peace, justice and strong institutions, reduced inequalities, economic growth, health, gender equality, and safe cities and communities.”<sup>29</sup>*

### **Introduction**

Disarmament refers to the reduction or limitation of weapons, weapon materials, and weapon delivery systems in order to enhance security, peace, and the survival of humanity.<sup>30</sup> Development is a process that aims to reduce poverty, satisfy human needs, and steadily improve quality of life for all individuals through sustained effort.<sup>31</sup> Disarmament policies and programs generally decrease military spending over time, which can improve stability and free up financial resources for other uses, such as economic and social development.<sup>32</sup>

The relationship between disarmament and development refers to the international acknowledgment of this reality.<sup>33</sup> Government funds used to make, maintain, and use weapons could otherwise be used to improve infrastructure and access to services or advance other efforts to raise living conditions and advance welfare.<sup>34</sup> Despite this acknowledgment, lack of transparency in armaments and non-compliance with established frameworks has inhibited disarmament efforts and led governments to increase military spending.<sup>35</sup> The United Nations Secretary-General has described the world as suffering from a “confidence deficit disorder” that has paralyzed or blocked the multilateral disarmament machinery.<sup>36</sup> Globally, the amount spent on the military grew to \$2.1 trillion in 2021, the highest level to date.<sup>37</sup>

### **International and Regional Framework**

Article 26 of the *Charter of the United Nations* states that arms regulations should be established such that “the least diversion to armaments of the world’s economic and human resources” is achieved.<sup>38</sup> Throughout its history, the United Nations has been central in the development of multilateral treaties and instruments that aim to regulate, restrict, and eliminate certain categories of weapons.<sup>39</sup> In 1968, the *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons* (NPT) was adopted.<sup>40</sup> The NPT seeks to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons and to promote nuclear disarmament.<sup>41</sup> The 1972 *Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction*, also known as the *Biological Weapons Convention*, was the first multilateral disarmament treaty to prohibit an entire category of weapons of mass destruction.<sup>42</sup> The convention

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<sup>29</sup> United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Disarmament and Sustainable Development*. N.d.

<sup>30</sup> Reaching Critical Will. *Disarmament and Development*. 2023.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Disarmament Study Series: No. 31. The Relationship between Disarmament and Development in the Current International Context*. 2004. p. 11.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Nakamitsu, I. United Nations Chronicle. *Advancing Disarmament within the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. 2018.

<sup>36</sup> United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Secretary-General’s message on the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons*. 2016.

<sup>37</sup> United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Report of the Secretary-General on the Work of the Organization*. 2022. p. 105.

<sup>38</sup> United Nations Conference on International Organization. *Charter of the United Nations*. 1945.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (A/RES/2373 (XXII))*. 1968.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Conference of the Committee on Disarmament. *Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on their Destruction*. 1972.



complemented the 1925 *Geneva Protocol*, which had only prohibited the use of biological weapons.<sup>43</sup> The 1993 *Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction*, also known as the *Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC)*, similarly banned a category of weapons and sought to ensure international verification of their destruction.<sup>44</sup> A special element of the CWC is the “challenge inspection,” which allows States parties with doubts about the compliance of another State party to request a surprise review to validate their allegations.<sup>45</sup> The *Declaration on the Attainment of a Nuclear-Weapon-Free World* (2013) emphasized the relationship between nuclear disarmament and international peace and security and reaffirmed the support of the international community in achieving a world free of nuclear weapons by 2045.<sup>46</sup>

Other treaties address large categories of weapons, including the *Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat, and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects* (PoA), which was adopted by the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects in 2001.<sup>47</sup> The PoA emphasizes the importance of achieving complete disarmament in order to promote development and stabilize society.<sup>48</sup> The *Convention on Cluster Munitions* (2008) prohibits the use, manufacture, storage, and transfer of cluster munitions, which have destructive effects on the civilian population and can hamper development efforts in affected regions.<sup>49</sup> The *Arms Trade Treaty* (ATT) was adopted in 2013 with the purpose of providing the highest possible common international standards for regulating or improving the regulation of the international trade in conventional arms.<sup>50</sup> While the ATT was being negotiated, at least 35 states proposed the inclusion of transfer criteria that would limit transfers capable of obstructing, weakening, or negatively impacting sustainable development.<sup>51</sup> Several states highlighted the importance of considering sustainable development within the context of arms trade and others emphasized that inherent to development is the principle of minimizing the diversion of human and economic resources towards armaments.<sup>52</sup> Negotiators recognized that the proliferation of small arms contributed to the destruction of life and could undermine stability and economic growth, but the final text of the treaty more narrowly focused on eliminating exports that would facilitate violations of international human rights law or otherwise undermine international peace and security.<sup>53</sup>

The international community has also created numerous development frameworks, including the *Declaration on the Right to Development* (1986), which recognized development as a fundamental human right and highlighted the importance of disarmament as a means to achieve sustainable development.<sup>54</sup> Building on the core right to development, the *Copenhagen Declaration and Program of Action* was adopted at the World Summit for Social Development in 1995.<sup>55</sup> The *Copenhagen Declaration* highlighted

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. *Chemical Weapons Convention*. 1993.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Universal Declaration on the Achievement of a Nuclear-Weapon-Free World (A/RES/73/57)*. 2018. p. 2.

<sup>47</sup> United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. *Draft Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (A/CONF.192/L.5/Rev.1)*. 2001. p. 4.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. p. 10.

<sup>49</sup> Diplomatic Conference for the Adoption of a Convention on Cluster Munitions. *Convention on Cluster Munitions*. 2008.

<sup>50</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *The Arms Trade Treaty*. 2013.

<sup>51</sup> Parker, S. *Implications of States' Views on an Arms Trade Treaty*. 2008. p.32.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Human Cost of Illicit Flow of Small Arms, Light Weapons Stressed in Security Council Debate*. 2015.

<sup>54</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Declaration on the Right to Development (A/RES/41/128)*. 1986.

<sup>55</sup> United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *World Summit for Social Development held in Copenhagen 1995*. 1995.



the need to place people at the center of development and committed governments to the goals of overcoming poverty, achieving full employment, and fostering stable, secure, and just societies.<sup>56</sup>

The current driving force behind development efforts is the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2015).<sup>57</sup> The 2030 Agenda includes a global framework to combat poverty, safeguard the environment, and ensure that all individuals experience peace and prosperity by 2030.<sup>58</sup> It also established the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), an interconnected set of targets that recognize that actions taken in one area will have repercussions in others and emphasizes that development must strike a balance between social, economic, and environmental sustainability.<sup>59</sup> The SDGs are directly connected to disarmament, especially SDG 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions), which promotes peace, security, and sustainable development, in part through arms control.<sup>60</sup> Progress on disarmament and arms control has also been highlighted as advancing efforts to achieve other goals, including SDG 3 (good health and well-being), SDG 4 (quality education), SDG 5 (gender equality), SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth), SDG 10 (reduced inequalities), and SDG 11 (sustainable cities and communities).<sup>61</sup>

While the 2030 Agenda is a development framework that incorporates disarmament goals, the General Assembly has directly addressed the specific link between disarmament and development.<sup>62</sup> In 1983 the General Assembly adopted resolution 38/71 on the “Relationship between disarmament and development,” its first resolution on the subject, in which it proposed the creation of an international disarmament fund for development.<sup>63</sup> The aim was that the resources freed up by the reduction of arms expenditure would contribute to and be used for the growth and stability of the world economy, especially the economies of developing countries.<sup>64</sup>

### ***Role of the International System***

The General Assembly First Committee, also known as the Disarmament and International Security Committee, is responsible for addressing disarmament and security matters.<sup>65</sup> The committee regularly examines measures to reduce arms proliferation and militarization or otherwise minimize the use of resources for armaments.<sup>66</sup> The 1983 General Assembly resolution on the subject was developed in its First Committee and it has regularly discussed the topic ever since, with subsequent resolutions addressing new and emerging realities.<sup>67</sup> Resolution 62/48, adopted in 2008, noted the importance of the symbiotic relationship between disarmament and development and the important role of security in this connection and is concerned with increasing global military expenditure, which could otherwise be spent on development needs.<sup>68</sup> Subsequently, in resolution 74/57, adopted in 2019, the General Assembly encouraged the international community to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and the

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. 2015. p. 6.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid. p. 8.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid. p. 4.

<sup>60</sup> Nakamitsu, I. *Advancing Disarmament within the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. 2018.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Relationship between disarmament and development (A/RES/38/71)*. 1983.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Disarmament and International Security (First Committee)*. N.d.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Relationship between disarmament and development (A/RES/38/71)*. 1983.

<sup>68</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Relationship between disarmament and development (A/RES/62/48)*. 2008. p. 2.



contribution that disarmament could make in doing so.<sup>69</sup> The resolution also urged Member States to integrate disarmament considerations into their development policies.<sup>70</sup> General Assembly resolution 75/43, adopted in 2020, emphasized the link between disarmament and sustainable development, highlighting the need to redirect resources from arms spending towards development initiatives.<sup>71</sup>

The Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) also worked to advance disarmament policy by providing support to various disarmament conferences, conventions, and initiatives while promoting arms control, disarmament education, and conflict prevention.<sup>72</sup> Transparency and confidence-building are two of UNODA's key functional areas.<sup>73</sup> Confidence-building methods aim to eliminate or reduce the appearance of uncertainty and mistrust, allowing for disarmament efforts to progress.<sup>74</sup> When states are transparent about their military capabilities and plans, including sharing information bilaterally, regionally, or internationally, trust increases between governments.<sup>75</sup> UNODA's operational arm, the Regional Disarmament Branch, coordinates and implements programs with specific components tailored to each region and country.<sup>76</sup> Other institutions, such as the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), conduct research on the challenges addressing disarmament to assist states and United Nations bodies and programs.<sup>77</sup> The United Nations Secretariat is also involved in pushing disarmament efforts and, in 2018, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres published *Securing our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament*.<sup>78</sup> One of the priorities is disarmament that saves lives by reducing and mitigating the impact of conventional weapons.<sup>79</sup> The Agenda builds on previous disarmament education efforts and addresses elements such as the importance of non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and small arms.<sup>80</sup>

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are also involved in advancing disarmament policy, including the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN).<sup>81</sup> ICAN is a comprehensive and all-encompassing initiative that brings together numerous NGOs and other actors and focuses on rallying global civil society support to achieve the total prohibition and eradication of nuclear weapons.<sup>82</sup>

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), established in 1966, helps to develop and coordinate efforts in promoting development worldwide.<sup>83</sup> While UNDP does not directly engage in disarmament efforts, it acknowledges the interdependence between disarmament and development.<sup>84</sup> UNDP's initiatives often intersect with conflict prevention, peacebuilding, and inclusive development,

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<sup>69</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Relationship between disarmament and development (A/RES/74/57)*. 2019.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Relationship between disarmament and development (A/RES/75/43)*. 2020.

<sup>72</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Resolution adopted on the report of the Ad Hoc Committee of the Tenth Special Session (A/RES/S-10/2)*. 1978. p. 14.

<sup>73</sup> United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Confidence-Building Measures Supporting Arms Control Extremely Critical, Secretary-General Tells Security Council Meeting on Non-proliferation*. 2018.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Military Confidence-building*. 2023.

<sup>76</sup> United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Regional Disarmament Overview*. 2023.

<sup>77</sup> United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research. *About UNIDIR*. 2023.

<sup>78</sup> United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Disarmament Education Dashboard*. 2023.

<sup>79</sup> Guterres, A. United Nations Department of Global Communications. *Remarks at the University of Geneva on the launch of the Disarmament Agenda*. 2018.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons. *People and structure*. N.d.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> United Nations Development Programme. *About Us*. 2023.

<sup>84</sup> United Nations Development Programme. *UNDP in Action 2009/2010: Delivering on Commitments*. 2013.





which can be affected positively by disarmament measures.<sup>85</sup> UNDP is also one of the bodies responsible for monitoring and advancing efforts to achieve the SDGs.<sup>86</sup>

Regionally, the African Union (AU) is dedicated to fostering stability, security, and peace throughout the African continent.<sup>87</sup> Its Peace and Security Architecture, which strives to avoid and end conflicts and provide a climate favorable to development, regularly addresses disarmament challenges.<sup>88</sup> The AU's *Agenda 2063* serves as Africa's guiding vision and comprehensive strategy to reshape the continent into a leading global force.<sup>89</sup> It represents Africa's strategic roadmap, designed to achieve the objective of inclusive and sustainable development.<sup>90</sup> One of its pillars is Aspiration 4: An Africa of Tranquility and Security.<sup>91</sup> The aim is to find effective mechanisms for preventing and resolving conflicts that will be in place across all levels.<sup>92</sup> The AU has developed several frameworks and engaged in numerous activities to achieve its aspirations, including a campaign called "Silencing the Guns" that aimed to silence illegal guns across the continent.<sup>93</sup> The Organization of American States (OAS), a group that brings together the countries of North America, Latin America, and the Caribbean, is dedicated to promoting peace, democracy, and human rights.<sup>94</sup> While disarmament is not its core focus, OAS addresses security concerns and collaborates with Member States on measures that contribute to development and its Committee on Hemispheric Security works to combat trafficking in arms, the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, and address issues related to conventional weapons.<sup>95</sup>

### **Disarmament Challenges**

Even when Member States accede to a disarmament framework, there are often significant challenges before the implementation of the framework can be actualized.<sup>96</sup> The act of disarming often requires political will, technical know-how, and significant financial resources.<sup>97</sup> The United Nations Secretariat has also identified that some of its own disarmament efforts could be streamlined or otherwise improved.<sup>98</sup>

As many governments lack the monetary resources to enable effective disarmament programs, several disarmament treaties have included financial assistance provisions.<sup>99</sup> The *Mine Ban Treaty* (1997), *Convention on Cluster Munitions* (2008), and *Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons* (2017) all contain finance assistance clauses aimed to enable disarmament efforts and full implementation of included frameworks.<sup>100</sup> Some disarmament efforts also receive funding from development finance institutions (DFIs), which refers to international financial institutions, regional and other development banks, and non-governmental finance organizations that provide loans or grants.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> United Nations Development Programme. *About Us*. 2023.

<sup>86</sup> United Nations Development Programme. *SDGs in action*. 2023.

<sup>87</sup> African Union. *About African Union*. 2002.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> African Union. *Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want*. 2002.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>94</sup> Organization of American States (OEA). *Who We Are*. 2023.

<sup>95</sup> Organization of American States (OEA). *What We Do*. 2023.

<sup>96</sup> Humanitarian Disarmament. *Money Matters: Ensuring Financial Assistance Advances Humanitarian Disarmament*. 2019.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

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

<sup>99</sup> Humanitarian Disarmament. *Money Matters: Ensuring Financial Assistance Advances Humanitarian Disarmament*. 2019.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>101</sup> Yaron, J et al. World Bank Group. *Development Finance Institutions*. 2013.



There are also many instances where Member States accede to a disarmament framework but remain non-compliant with its provisions, often facing little or no consequences.<sup>102</sup> In some cases, States parties do not actively report military expenditures or provide transparency in arms as needed and in other cases, they don't implement national legislation to be compliant with the framework due to a lack of domestic political will.<sup>103</sup> Many United Nations programs assist with compliance efforts, including UNODA, which has included in its efforts training workshops for the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms (UNROCA), the global registry of arms trade for Members to report annual international transfers of conventional arms.<sup>104</sup> CSOs have also played a role in enabling governments to be able to implement disarmament efforts fully.<sup>105</sup> One example, the Cluster Munition Coalition, launched a "Stop Explosive Investment Campaign" in 2009, through which it encouraged States parties to the *Convention on Cluster Munitions* (COCM) to enact legislation that prohibits investment in cluster munitions.<sup>106</sup> Since its launch, 11 States parties have included such prohibitions in legislation.<sup>107</sup> Overall, two-thirds of States parties to COCM have ended investment in cluster munitions, resulting in several manufacturers ceasing production altogether.<sup>108</sup>

At the multilateral level, the Secretary-General published his disarmament agenda, *Securing Our Common Future*, in 2017.<sup>109</sup> The agenda sought to re-establish disarmament efforts at the forefront of the work of the United Nations and aimed to address the new reality of armed conflict and its effect on civilian life.<sup>110</sup> It discussed the major objectives of disarmament policy, laid out a path towards the elimination of nuclear weapons, and even suggested the Security Council to take more action on the reduction of arms and the combatting of impunity.<sup>111</sup> In addition, the agenda emphasizes the importance of conventional weapon disarmament as these are the weapon systems that most affect civilians in armed conflict zones.<sup>112</sup> Directly addressing the relationship between disarmament and development, the agenda acknowledges that the continuous development of new weapon systems increases spending, often at the cost of sustainable development.<sup>113</sup> It also encourages further youth empowerment and engagement in disarmament policy worldwide and involvement in policy discussions alongside CSOs.<sup>114</sup>

*Securing Our Common Future* also included several specific recommendations, such as strengthening the First Committee by expanding the number of working groups addressing the various complexities of disarmament.<sup>115</sup> It outlines how several United Nations disarmament institutions have converging areas of interest and could operate more effectively through increased synergy in areas of overlapping interest.<sup>116</sup> Some suggestions in the agenda include increasing the relationship between the First Committee and UNIDIR by further coordinating studies and advisory efforts.<sup>117</sup> Other suggestions include further direct collaboration between Member States and UNODA in assisting disarmament policy development and implementation.<sup>118</sup> Drafting action plans and policy recommendations in efforts with UNODA increases

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<sup>102</sup> Nuclear Threat Initiative. *Non-Proliferation Treaty, Module 4: Current Issues and Challenges*. N.d.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> United Nations, Office of Disarmament Affairs. *Dozens of States Join Training Workshops to Promote Transparency in Armaments*. 2023.

<sup>105</sup> Humanitarian Disarmament. *Money Matters: Ensuring Financial Assistance Advances Humanitarian Disarmament*. 2019.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> United Nations, Office of Disarmament Affairs. *Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament*. 2017.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.



regional partnerships and initiatives that contribute to the disarmament process.<sup>119</sup> Regional initiatives such as the “Africa Amnesty Month,” during which residents were encouraged to freely relinquish light weapons that were later destroyed.<sup>120</sup>

### **Disarmament and the SDGs**

Disarmament efforts directly contribute to the achievement of some SDGs and can have indirect effects on many, especially as evidence has shown that arms accumulation diverts resources away from development and leads to further conflict.<sup>121</sup> The fourth target of SDG 16 specifically seeks to reduce illicit arms trade in an effort to reduce the number of arms in circulation in local communities and unregistered weapons.<sup>122</sup> Goal 3 (good health and well-being), is also directly impacted by disarmament as armed violence is the leading cause of premature death.<sup>123</sup> Disarmament also helps reduce the overall impact of armed conflict and violence on mental health leading to a healthier society.<sup>124</sup> Goal 4 (quality education), is improved by redistributing resources from arms accumulation to more funding of education programs and initiatives and decreasing the susceptibility of youth to be exposed to violence.<sup>125</sup> Disarmament efforts also help promote Goal 5 (gender equality) as women are the most affected group by violence during armed conflict.<sup>126</sup> This principle also extends to Goal 10 (reduced inequalities) as similar to resource allocation from arms accumulation reinvestment can be made in social and economic initiatives aimed to reduce inequality if resources are available.<sup>127</sup>

In line with other efforts to reduce conflict and advance the SDGs, 83 countries convened to adopt the *Political Declaration on Explosive Weapons In Populated Areas (EWIPA)* in 2022.<sup>128</sup> The declaration calls for greater transparency and collaboration between states to reduce civilian casualties during urban warfare by improving policies for the use and development of conventional weapons.<sup>129</sup> The declaration has also recommended arms reductions and greater compliance with other disarmament treaties.<sup>130</sup> One year later, the Secretary-General published a report on the “Relationship Between Disarmament and Development,” which discussed current efforts to achieve development targets.<sup>131</sup>

UNODA has continued to support states in data collection for combating illicit arms trade and has reported a consistent global increase in weapons collected and destroyed from 2018 to 2021.<sup>132</sup> UNODA and UNDP collaborated to launch the Saving Lives Entity Fund aimed at assisting states in arms reduction programs that promote sustainable development.<sup>133</sup> The plan has expanded to assist six states and continues to assist in violence reduction and arms removal alongside development policies to ensure successful implementation.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Relationship Between Disarmament and Development: Report of the Secretary-General (A/78/128)*. 2023.

<sup>121</sup> Nakamitsu, I. United Nations Chronicle. *Advancing Disarmament within the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. 2018.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Ireland Department of Foreign Affairs. *EWIPA Dublin Conference 2022*. 2023.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Relationship Between Disarmament and Development: Report of the Secretary-General (A/78/128)*. 2023.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.



### **Conclusion**

Disarmament of nuclear, conventional, and light weapons not only contributes to peace and stability but also helps to promote sustainable development.<sup>135</sup> The United Nations and States parties to disarmament frameworks have responsibilities to reduce the number of arms and expenditures in order to promote more disarmament policies.<sup>136</sup> Despite these commitments and repeated calls by the international community, military and armament spending has continued to increase, inhibiting governments from allocating those resources more effectively.<sup>137</sup>

### **Further Research**

As delegates conduct further research and consider how to address this topic, they should consider: What are the barriers to disarmament and reducing arms accumulation? What other incentives for sustainable development need to be present to increase the redirection of resources? Where can the United Nations system improve on fulfilling the obligations of disarmament treaties? What new conventions or provisions are needed to achieve disarmament and prevent the buildup of future weapons systems?

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<sup>135</sup> United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Making Economic Case for Disarmament, First Committee Delegates Issue Calls to Trim Soaring Military Budgets Reinvest Funds in Vital 2030 Agenda*. 2018.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.





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

### Introduction

International security refers to the collective efforts to safeguard peace and stability among nations, and disarmament involves the deliberate reduction or elimination of weapons and military capabilities.<sup>138</sup> While international security and disarmament have been addressed by the General Assembly since 1945, the role of science and technology in this context was not formally addressed until 1988, with the adoption of General Assembly resolution 43/77A on “Scientific and Technological Developments and their Impact on International Security.”<sup>139</sup> In 1990, the General Assembly agreed that the international community must position itself to manage the challenges and opportunities presented by science and technology.<sup>140</sup>

Technological advancements have resulted in a plethora of innovations, including information communication technologies (ICTs).<sup>141</sup> ICTs play a crucial role in international security, particularly in disarmament areas such as nuclear verification, monitoring, and preventing terrorism threats in cyberspace.<sup>142</sup> At the same time, high reliance on ICTs poses a significant threat to international security due to the increased risk and impact of data breaches, attacks on critical infrastructure (CI), and, cyber espionage.<sup>143</sup> CI is especially vulnerable to cyberattacks due to its reliance on digital technology.<sup>144</sup> CI’s essential role in maintaining government functions makes it a prime target for malicious actors.<sup>145</sup> Such actors could cause widespread damage and disruption by exploiting vulnerabilities in nuclear reactors, data storage centers, weapon facilities, and crucial sectors like healthcare, transportation, and finance.<sup>146</sup>

Rapidly advancing technologies lead to new challenges for international security and disarmament, with the World Economic Forum noting that widespread cybercrime and cyber insecurity are likely to increase in the next two years due to emerging technologies.<sup>147</sup> Emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence (AI), have the potential to fundamentally change warfare, making it more difficult to mitigate conflict.<sup>148</sup> For example, AI has the potential to impact monitoring compliance with disarmament treaties through data analysis, autonomous drone monitoring systems, and autonomous weapon systems.<sup>149</sup> Emerging technologies can contribute to international security and disarmament but also bear the risk of

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<sup>138</sup> Conference on the Statute of the International Atomic Energy Agency. *Statute of the International Atomic Energy Agency*. 1956.

<sup>139</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Scientific and Technological Developments and their Impact on International Security (A/RES/43/77A)*. 1988.

<sup>140</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Scientific and Technological Developments and their Impact on International Security (A/RES/45/60)*. 1990.

<sup>141</sup> Roztock et al. Taylor and Francis Online. *The role of information and communication technologies in socioeconomic development: towards a multi-dimensional framework*. 2019.

<sup>142</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Current Developments in Science and Technology and their Potential Impact on International Security and Disarmament Efforts - Report of the Secretary-General (A/77/188)*. 2022.

<sup>143</sup> Maurer et al. International Monetary Fund. *The Global Cyber Threat: Cyber threats to the financial system are growing, and the global community must cooperate to protect it*. 2021.

<sup>144</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Current Developments in Science and Technology and their Potential Impact on International Security and Disarmament Efforts - Report of the Secretary-General (A/77/188)*. 2022.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Allianz. *Cyber attacks on critical infrastructure*. 2016.

<sup>147</sup> World Economic Forum. *The Global Risks Report 2023*. 2023.

<sup>148</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Current Developments in Science and Technology and their Potential Impact on International Security and Disarmament Efforts - Report of the Secretary-General (A/77/188)*. 2022.

<sup>149</sup> United Nations, Security Council. *International Community must Urgently Confront New Reality of Generative, Artificial Intelligence, Speakers Stress as Security Council Debates Risks, Rewards*. 2023; United States Department of Energy. Office of Nuclear Energy. *Could AI-Powered Drones Make Nuclear Power Plant Operations more Efficient?* 2021.



being used for military applications.<sup>150</sup> The General Assembly First Committee stands at a critical juncture, grappling with safeguarding international security and promoting disarmament in a world where technological vulnerabilities are deeply intertwined.<sup>151</sup>

### ***International and Regional Framework***

Article 1 of the *Charter of the United Nations* (Charter) (1945) explicitly highlights the role of the United Nations in maintaining international peace and security.<sup>152</sup> Article 11 emphasizes cooperation among Member States to maintain international security and peace.<sup>153</sup> The Charter also establishes the General Assembly, tasked to pursue Article 11.<sup>154</sup> Since its creation, the General Assembly has passed multiple resolutions in the context of international security and disarmament.<sup>155</sup> In 1988, the General Assembly adopted its first resolution explicitly on the role of science and technology in international security and disarmament.<sup>156</sup> General Assembly resolution 43/77A on "Scientific and technological developments and their impact on international security" set out to raise awareness of the powerful impact of scientific and technological developments in international security.<sup>157</sup> It underscores the paramount importance of preventing military exploitation and instead harnessing advancements in science and technology for the betterment of humanity.<sup>158</sup> The resolution calls upon Member States to establish national panels dedicated to monitoring technological developments and steering their use toward peaceful endeavors.<sup>159</sup> Additionally, it implores the Secretary-General to monitor forthcoming scientific and technological breakthroughs, particularly those that may have military applications, and to evaluate their potential impacts on international security.<sup>160</sup> Subsequently, the General Assembly adopted resolution 53/70 on "Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security" in 1998, highlighting how ICTs are pivotal to fostering transparency, monitoring, and understanding among Member States while recognizing the potential risks of such technologies.<sup>161</sup>

In international security and disarmament, several pivotal treaties have emerged that highlight technology's crucial role in disarmament.<sup>162</sup> These treaties serve a dual purpose: preventing the spread of destructive capabilities while leveraging technological advancements for peace.<sup>163</sup> The 1970 *Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty* (NPT) focuses on ensuring nuclear resources are used for peaceful means and emphasizes safeguards that utilize ICTs for monitoring and verification.<sup>164</sup> Additionally, collective efforts to control small arms and light weapons (SALW) to ensure global safety and security, with advanced technology playing a pivotal role in monitoring and tracking these weapons, have led to agreements like

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<sup>150</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Current Developments in Science and Technology and their Potential Impact on International Security and Disarmament Efforts - Report of the Secretary-General (A/77/188)*. 2022.

<sup>151</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Current Developments in Science and Technology and their Potential Impact on International Security and Disarmament Efforts - Report of the Secretary-General (A/77/188)*. 2022.

<sup>152</sup> United Nations Conference on International Organization. *Charter of the United Nations*. 1945.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> United Nations, Office for Disarmament Affairs. *The Role of Science and Technology in the context of International Security and Disarmament*. N.d.

<sup>156</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Scientific and Technological Developments and their Impact on International Security (A/RES/43/77A)*. 1988.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

<sup>161</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security (A/RES/53/70)*. 1999.

<sup>162</sup> United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Global Issues: Disarmament*. N.d.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

<sup>164</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (A/RES/2373 (XXII))*. 1968.



the *Arms Trade Treaty* (ATT).<sup>165</sup> The ATT has a strong emphasis on the non-proliferation of SALW but does not include a strong oversight over emerging technologies.<sup>166</sup> Finally, the 2001 *Convention on Cybercrime* acknowledged that while ICTs have a positive impact, they also create cybersecurity vulnerabilities in the context of critical infrastructure and civilian sectors such as finance.<sup>167</sup> The convention proposes harmonizing national laws to ensure that non-state actors committing cybercrimes, such as data breaches against private and public industries, are prosecuted under a global standard.<sup>168</sup>

In 2015, the General Assembly adopted resolution 70/1 on "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" (2030 Agenda), emphasizing the pivotal role of science and technology in disarmament, peace, and achieving the broader sustainable development goals by 2030.<sup>169</sup> In 2018, the Secretary-General further exemplified the role of science and technology in accelerating the 2030 Agenda, facilitating the values enshrined in the Charter, and international security with the 2018 *Strategy on New Technologies*.<sup>170</sup> The strategy establishes five core principles: champion global values; facilitate inclusivity and transparency; forge collaborative partnerships; sustain core values; and embrace humility and mutual learning.<sup>171</sup> These principles collectively guide the United Nations efforts to navigate the challenges and harness the opportunities presented by new technologies within the broader context of the 2030 Agenda.<sup>172</sup> Notwithstanding this development, the Secretary-General 2022 report on Current Developments in Science and Technology and their Potential Impact on International Security and Disarmament Efforts (A/77/188) notes that while science and technology can assist in the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, it is essential that efforts to regulate new weapon technologies do not stifle the technological or economic growth of any Member State.<sup>173</sup>

### **Role of the International System**

The General Assembly has adopted multiple resolutions on the role of science and technology in international security since 1988.<sup>174</sup> In 2017, the General Assembly adopted resolution 72/28 on the "Role of science and technology in the context of international security and disarmament."<sup>175</sup> It emphasized the importance of transparency and confidence-building measures in developing and using new weapon technologies and called upon Member States to cooperate in developing international norms and standards for the responsible use of these technologies.<sup>176</sup> In 2019, the General Assembly adopted resolution 74/35 on the same topic, emphasizing the need for Member States to deter and monitor the misuse of science and technology for military purposes and further encouraging the transfer of technologies for peaceful purposes.<sup>177</sup> This resolution reflects the growing recognition of the importance of

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<sup>165</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *The Arms Trade Treaty*. 2013.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> European Union, Council of Europe. *The Convention on Cybercrime (Budapest Convention)*. 2001.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. 2015.

<sup>170</sup> United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *UN Secretary-General's Strategy on New Technologies*. 2018.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

<sup>173</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Current Developments in Science and Technology and their Potential Impact on International Security and Disarmament Efforts - Report of the Secretary-General (A/77/188)*. 2022; United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. 2015.

<sup>174</sup> United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *The Role of Science and Technology in the context of International Security and Disarmament*. 2023.

<sup>175</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Role of science and technology in the context of international security and disarmament (A/RES/72/28)*. 2017.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

<sup>177</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Role of science and technology in the context of international security and disarmament (A/RES/74/35)*. 2019.



science and technology for international security and disarmament.<sup>178</sup> In 2020, the General Assembly adopted resolution 75/240 on “Developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security,” which created an Open-ended Working Group (OEWG).<sup>179</sup> The OEWG is still ongoing, making progress in developing a shared understanding of the threats posed by new weapon technologies and identifying potential norms for developing and using said technologies.<sup>180</sup> In a 2023 report to the General Assembly, the OEWG noted that a holistic approach to capacity-building in the context of ICT security is essential for capacity-building and the protection of CI.<sup>181</sup>

In 2017, the Security Council adopted resolution 2341 on “On the Protection of Critical Infrastructure against Terrorist Acts,” which noted the crucial role science and technology have in safeguarding CI against non-state actors and proposed strengthening existing technologies through collaboration and assistance.<sup>182</sup> In 2021, the Security Council met to discuss the growing threat related to emerging technology, and while opinions differed on the role of governments in shaping a standard policy, there was consensus on the potential for emerging technologies to destabilize and promote peace.<sup>183</sup>

The United Nations Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) also addresses the use of emerging technologies, focusing its efforts on promoting peace and security through international cooperation in education, science, culture, and communication while advocating for freedom of expression and access to information.<sup>184</sup> In 2021, UNESCO unanimously adopted the “Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence,” the world’s first-ever global standard on AI ethics.<sup>185</sup> It established a framework for AI integration that emphasizes the importance of responsible AI practices.<sup>186</sup>

The United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) focuses on international security and disarmament, placing a strong emphasis on research to solve evolving challenges by looking at direct outside variables that pose a threat to international security and disarmament such as the rise of cyberwarfare.<sup>187</sup> A notable implementation by UNIDIR to assist in transparency and collaboration is its AI Policy Portal.<sup>188</sup> This database highlights work and recommendations by Member States and illustrates policy recommendations and their impact on international security.<sup>189</sup> This was further supported by General Assembly resolution 77/96 (2022) on “Promoting international cooperation on peaceful uses in the context of international security,” which reaffirms the importance of global disarmament to promote international security and notes the impacts emerging technology could have.<sup>190</sup>

Another specialized organization active in this area is the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), created in 1997 by the Secretary-General.<sup>191</sup> UNODA is dedicated to reinforcing nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regimes, acknowledging the pivotal role of emerging technology in

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<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

<sup>179</sup> United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Open-ended Working Group on security of and in the use of information and communications technologies*. 2021.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

<sup>181</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security - Note by the Secretary-General (A/78/265)*. 2023.

<sup>182</sup> United Nations, Security Council. *On the Protection of Critical Infrastructure against Terrorist Acts (S/RES/2341)*. 2017.

<sup>183</sup> Council on Foreign Relations. *The UN Security Council Tackles Emerging Technologies*. 2021.

<sup>184</sup> United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Mission*. N.d.

<sup>185</sup> United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence*. 2021.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

<sup>187</sup> United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research. *About UNIDIR*. 2023.

<sup>188</sup> United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research. *Artificial Intelligence Policy Portal*. 2022.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

<sup>190</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Promoting international cooperation on peaceful uses in the context of international security (A/RES/77/96)*. 2022.

<sup>191</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform (A/51/950) - Report of the Secretary-General*. 1997.



international security and disarmament, promoting best practices, and identifying potential risks.<sup>192</sup> UNODA also serves as the Secretariat of the Conference on Disarmament (CD), which has 65 members and facilitates dialogue and cooperation with Member States on current and emerging threats to international security and disarmament.<sup>193</sup> UNODA also oversees multiple regional organizations known as the United Nations Regional Centers for Peace and Disarmament (UNRCPD), which address challenges, including emerging technologies, and develop mechanisms related to disarmament and security.<sup>194</sup> For instance, the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament, and Development in Latin America (UNLIREC), the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa (UNREC), and the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific (UNRCPD) cater to the distinct needs of their respective regions with an emphasis on regional security and peace.<sup>195</sup>

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), established in 1956, promotes nuclear disarmament and international security, among others by using innovative technology to monitor and ensure NPT compliance.<sup>196</sup> For example, IAEA monitors nuclear facilities using satellite imagery and other technologies to ensure nuclear resources are not diverted from peaceful to military uses.<sup>197</sup> Furthermore, IAEA provides Member States with technical assistance to develop physical protection measures against cyberattacks against nuclear facilities, highlighting risks posed by emerging technology.<sup>198</sup> In 2016, IAEA implemented the Additional Protocol (AP) due to concerns from the NPT Review Conference, stressing the need for more monitoring and data sharing to prevent the military application of nuclear resources.<sup>199</sup> The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) is similar to IAEA in its focus on collaboration, disarmament, and regional stability.<sup>200</sup> The OSCE leads in collaborative disarmament efforts with its *Treaty on Open Skies*, allowing members to monitor other nations' military facilities by utilizing Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs).<sup>201</sup>

Non-governmental organizations, such as the Ploughshares Fund, address the peaceful use of science and technology in international security and disarmament.<sup>202</sup> The Ploughshares Fund, created in 1981, funds organizations and think tanks that address challenges for disarmament and international security such as the Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI) and the Arms Control Association (ACA).<sup>203</sup> NTI primarily focuses on tackling potential risks through analysis, while ACA is dedicated to disarmament efforts to reduce risks associated with the use and spread of nuclear, chemical, biological, and conventional weapons.<sup>204</sup> Both NTI and ACA propose frameworks and collaboration with governments to raise awareness and implement creative solutions involving ICTs.<sup>205</sup>

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<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

<sup>193</sup> United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Conference on Disarmament*. N.d.

<sup>194</sup> United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Regional Disarmament Overview*. N.d.; United Nations, General Assembly. *United Nations Regional Centers for Peace and Disarmament (A/RES/69/70)*. 2014.

<sup>195</sup> United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Regional Disarmament Overview*. N.d.

<sup>196</sup> International Atomic Energy Agency. *Basics of the IAEA Safeguards System*. 2023.

<sup>197</sup> International Atomic Energy Agency. *IAEA Safeguards Overview: Comprehensive Safeguards Agreements and Additional Protocols*. 2023.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid.

<sup>199</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Final Report of the Preparatory Committee for the 2015 Review of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT/CONF.2015/1)*. 2014; International Atomic Energy Association. *Department of Safeguards*. 2022.

<sup>200</sup> Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. *Who we are*. N.d.

<sup>201</sup> Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. *Treaty on Open Skies*. 1992.

<sup>202</sup> The Ploughshares Fund. *About Us*. 2023.

<sup>203</sup> The Ploughshares Fund. *What we Fund*. 2023.

<sup>204</sup> The Nuclear Threat Initiative. *About Us*. 2023; Arms Control Association. *50 Years of Accomplishments*. N.d.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid.





### ***Role of Technology in Nuclear Disarmament***

Since the advent of nuclear weapons, nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation have been critical global concerns.<sup>206</sup> ICTs have played a pivotal role in nuclear verification and monitoring, advancing the non-military use of nuclear energy, and promoting cybersecurity to prevent terrorist acts against nuclear facilities.<sup>207</sup> The high socioeconomic cost associated with the development and maintenance of ICTs results in access discrepancies among Member States.<sup>208</sup> This ties directly into Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target 17.7, which aims to promote the development, transfer, dissemination, and diffusion of environmentally sound technologies to developing countries.<sup>209</sup> Fostering dialogue, collaboration, and data sharing at multilateral forums will help close the technological and financial gap.<sup>210</sup>

Technological innovation has contributed to the demilitarization of international security in recent years and promoted disarmament by improving the regulation of stockpile management and promoting the limitation of nuclear weapons through arms-control agreements.<sup>211</sup> It is now possible to verify nuclear disarmament commitments more accurately and reliably due to technological advances, including satellite imagery, remote sensing, and advanced sensors.<sup>212</sup> IAEA uses sophisticated verification and monitoring systems to increase technology integration, provide live data, and ensure NPT compliance.<sup>213</sup> ICTs have reduced the need for physical inspections of nuclear facilities, improving transparency by allowing real-time data collection and analysis through remote monitoring systems.<sup>214</sup> Since 2023, IAEA actively monitors live data on the release of treated water from the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station to ensure impartial, independent, and objective safety reviews of approaches to safeguard nuclear plants.<sup>215</sup> To ensure safe and effective methods of implementing disarmament agreements, AI-powered UAVs are equipped with high-resolution cameras and sensors that can efficiently monitor nuclear facilities.<sup>216</sup> UAVs enable transparent and vigilant monitoring of compliance with disarmament treaties, exemplified by the 1992 *Treaty on Open Skies*, which permits Member States to conduct unarmed, short-notice observation flights over each other's territories.<sup>217</sup> Enhancing transparency and enabling real-time data assessment to address treaty noncompliance can be achieved through strengthened cooperation with Member States and United Nations agencies such as UNODA, UNRCPD, and UNIDIR.<sup>218</sup>

The disarmament agenda has become increasingly complex due to the current technological landscape.<sup>219</sup> Commercial access to technology for malicious use can increase the risk of nuclear

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<sup>206</sup> United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. *Securing our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament*. 2018.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 4-6.

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>209</sup> United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Goal 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development - Targets and Indicators*. N.d.

<sup>210</sup> Nash. SUR-International Journal of Human Rights. *The technologies of violence and global inequality*. 2015.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.* p. 10.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 591-595.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.* 2020. p. 5.

<sup>214</sup> United States Department of Energy, Office of Nuclear Energy. *Could AI-Powered Drones Make Nuclear Power Plant Operations More Efficient?* 2021.

<sup>215</sup> International Atomic Energy Agency. *IAEA Presents Monitoring Data from Japan on Treated Water Release from Fukushima Daiichi*. 2023.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>217</sup> Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. *Treaty on Open Skies*. 1992.

<sup>218</sup> Patton, T. *The 2017 Nuclear Ban Treaty. An international monitoring system for verification to support both the treaty on the prohibition of nuclear weapons and the nonproliferation treaty*. 2020. pp. 173-193.

<sup>219</sup> Lowther et al. *Wild Blue Yonder. Future Technology and Nuclear Deterrence*. 2020.



proliferation.<sup>220</sup> Non-state actors can take advantage of technology and the digitization of information that allows transferring militarized technology electronically, disrupt channels of communication, breach data, and destroy entire monitoring facilities electronically.<sup>221</sup> For this reason, there have been strides to combat cybercrimes through several treaties, frameworks, and conventions, such as the 2001 *Convention on Cybercrime* and Security Council resolution 2341 (2017) "On the Protection of Critical Infrastructure against Terrorist Acts," but solid foundational means to hold non-state actors accountable is still lacking.<sup>222</sup>

The General Assembly advocates for integrating technology into existing policies, safeguards, and mechanisms to ensure a swift adaptation to evolving threats.<sup>223</sup> For example, IAEA drafted the AP on top of existing safeguarding principles in 2016 to ensure effective and efficient monitoring through technology.<sup>224</sup> The AP ensures that declared nuclear materials are used for peaceful purposes and that no undeclared nuclear materials or activities exist.<sup>225</sup> The AP allowed IAEA to extend its safeguarding mechanism to Member States that do not possess nuclear weapons by deploying advanced and remote verification, monitoring, and inspection technology.<sup>226</sup> It also allowed IAEA to gather information on where and how Member States supply nuclear energy.<sup>227</sup> The AP aims to detect undeclared activities, deter nuclear material from being used for military purposes, and identify illicit nuclear missile trade.<sup>228</sup> It has enabled further compliance with the NPT's "principle of access to peaceful nuclear technology," allowing the transfer and sharing of disarmament technology between Member States for civilian use.<sup>229</sup> As a result of the AP, every Member State has a stake in scrutinizing nuclear weapon development, transfer, and use, regardless of socioeconomic levels.<sup>230</sup>

### ***Risk of Emerging Technology in International Security***

Between 2018 and 2023, the projected industry growth rate for emerging technologies stood at 104%.<sup>231</sup> The World Economic Forum defines emerging technology as technology that can rapidly develop new capabilities, create new opportunities for addressing global issues, and potentially disrupt or create entire industries.<sup>232</sup> Among others, OEWG recognizes that weaponizing emerging technologies threatens state sovereignty, economic development, and the well-being of individuals.<sup>233</sup> The OEWG recommends 11 voluntary and non-binding norms of responsible state behavior to mitigate emerging technology threats.<sup>234</sup> Emerging technologies, like autonomous weapons and AI, present significant opportunities to strengthen

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<sup>220</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Current developments in science and technology and their potential impact on international security and disarmament efforts - Report of the Secretary-General (A/75/221)*. 2020. p. 25

<sup>221</sup> Ibid.

<sup>222</sup> European Union, Council of Europe. *The Convention on Cybercrime (Budapest Convention)*. 2001; United Nations, Security Council. *On the Protection of Critical Infrastructure against Terrorist Acts (S/RES/2341)*. 2017.

<sup>223</sup> International Atomic Energy Agency. *The Modernization of Safeguards Information Technology: Completing the picture*. 2018.

<sup>224</sup> World Nuclear Association. *Liability for Nuclear Damage*. 2021.

<sup>225</sup> International Atomic Energy Association. *Department of Safeguards*. 2022

<sup>226</sup> World Nuclear Association. *Liability for Nuclear Damage*. 2021.

<sup>227</sup> World Nuclear Association. *Safeguards to Prevent Nuclear Proliferation*. 2021.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid.

<sup>229</sup> Cotta Ramusino, P. United Nations Chronicle. *Next steps to universal nuclear disarmament*. N.d.

<sup>230</sup> Nash. SUR-International Journal of Human Rights. *The technologies of violence and global inequality*. 2015.

<sup>231</sup> Statista. *Information technology (IT) industry growth rate forecast worldwide from 2018 to 2023, by segment*. 2023.

<sup>232</sup> World Economic Forum. *Top 10 Emerging Technologies of 2023*. 2023.

<sup>233</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Open-ended working group on developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security (A/AC.290/2021/CRP.2)*. 2021.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid.



defense systems and intelligence analysis while posing substantial challenges to international security and disarmament.<sup>235</sup>

There is a growing concern that emerging technologies are misused in nuclear programs and for cyberattacks on CI.<sup>236</sup> The 2018 Fragile States Index indicated that 125 out of 177 countries were in a perpetual state of risk due to the weaponization of emerging technologies.<sup>237</sup> For example, in case physical weapons would target cyberinfrastructures or UAVs would attack civilian CI.<sup>238</sup> Due to the increasing number of cyberattacks on civilian CI, the stability of global financial, healthcare, nuclear programs, and security defense systems is increasingly at risk.<sup>239</sup> Member States have implemented several national strategies for CI protection.<sup>240</sup> For example, France and Sweden adopted a “whole-of-society” approach to CI protection, wherein specific guidelines are provided to citizens responding to cyber terrorism attacks caused by emerging technologies, such as hacking energy grids or the use of AI in healthcare systems.<sup>241</sup> The focus is laid on revealing technical and behavioral vulnerabilities and re-organizing systems to manage cybersecurity risks and protect civilian CI.<sup>242</sup> Similarly, Member States can adopt a “whole-of-society” approach to communication strategies, education programs, and public awareness campaigns to protect military and civilian CI against threats posed by emerging technologies.<sup>243</sup>

There is an additional layer of risk from emerging technology for developing countries.<sup>244</sup> For example, many African countries have seen a surge in data-driven services.<sup>245</sup> Due to limited data storage and processing capabilities within their borders, they often rely on data centers or cloud services located in other states.<sup>246</sup> Reliance on foreign data infrastructure leaves developing countries open to threats such as espionage, cyberterrorism, and data breaches.<sup>247</sup> This vulnerability jeopardizes data security and the security of weaponry and sensitive information in developing states, thus challenging non-proliferation and disarmament efforts.<sup>248</sup> Moreover, hosting data outside national borders raises concerns about data sovereignty, governance, and control.<sup>249</sup> Developing countries actively advocate for robust domestic data infrastructures and enhanced AI expertise to mitigate cybersecurity threats that challenge regional security, disarmament, and nuclear resources.<sup>250</sup>

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<sup>235</sup> Garcia. Science & Diplomacy. *The United Nations' Focal Point for Diplomatic Engagement on Emerging Technologies*. 2022.

<sup>236</sup> The Select Committee on Artificial Intelligence of the National Science and Technology Council. *National Artificial Intelligence Research and Development Strategic Plan 2023 update*. 2023. p. 3.

<sup>237</sup> European Union, European Commission. *Developments and Forecasts on Changing Security Paradigm: Global Outlook*. 2018.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid.

<sup>239</sup> Basu et al. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. *The UN Struggles to Make Progress on Securing Cyberspace*. 2021.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid.

<sup>241</sup> United Nations, Office of Counter-Terrorism et al. *The protection of critical infrastructures against terrorist attacks: Compendium of good practices*. 2018. p. 50

<sup>242</sup> Ibid.. pp. 51-64

<sup>243</sup> Ibid. pp. 51-64.

<sup>244</sup> Wu. Harvard Kennedy School of Government. *Sovereignty and Data Localization*. 2021.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid.

<sup>247</sup> Chatham House. *The Application of International Law to State Cyberattacks Sovereignty and Non-Intervention*. 2019.

<sup>248</sup> Ibid.

<sup>249</sup> Fadia et al. McKinsey & Company. *Follow the leaders: How governments can combat intensifying cybersecurity risks*. 2020.

<sup>250</sup> African Union. *The AU Data Policy Framework*. 2022. p.13.



The General Assembly and UNESCO are uniquely positioned to promote ethical, human-centered, and peaceful uses of AI systems by utilizing ongoing multilateral efforts.<sup>251</sup> Member States should work collaboratively through confidence-building measures such as communication, transparency, and verification to avoid conflict, strengthen cooperation, and increase transparency.<sup>252</sup> For example, in 2019, the European Union (EU) adopted a Council decision that supports UNIDIR in implementing confidence-building measures in the Middle East and establishes zones that are free from nuclear weapons and weaponized emerging technologies.<sup>253</sup>

As a result of the Secretary-General's Strategy on New Technologies, efforts are being made to adopt emerging technologies peacefully.<sup>254</sup> This strategy aims to build on the historical work of the United Nations to understand possible challenges and opportunities of new technologies, and as such, provides four strategic commitments: deepen the United Nations' internal capacities for multilateralism; increase understanding, advocacy, and dialogue among Member States; update normative and cooperation frameworks; and enhance national government capacities.<sup>255</sup>

### **Conclusion**

To maintain international security and further the disarmament agenda, science and technology must be understood as both a benefit and a detriment.<sup>256</sup> Advanced technologies, like satellite imagery and remote sensing, have revolutionized the verification of disarmament commitments.<sup>257</sup> Despite progress in the use of technology for international security and disarmament, a heightened need to regulate emerging technologies and safeguard CI remains.<sup>258</sup> However, unequal access to information and communication technologies among Member States hinders equitable participation in disarmament efforts and the protection of CI.<sup>259</sup> Furthermore, emerging technologies, such as AI and autonomous weapons, pose complex challenges to global security.<sup>260</sup> Organizations and working groups like UNESCO and OEWG are essential to fostering cooperation and transparency in emerging technologies and providing ethical guidance and norms.<sup>261</sup> The challenges resulting must be addressed by strengthening existing frameworks and mechanisms through collaboration.<sup>262</sup> Despite its complexity, the intersection of science,

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<sup>251</sup> Garcia. Social Science Research Network. *Multilateralism and Artificial Intelligence: What Role for the United Nations?* 2020.

<sup>252</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Group of Governmental Experts on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security (A/70/174)*. 2015.

<sup>253</sup> European Union, External Action. *EU Statement - United Nations 1st Committee: Thematic Discussion on Nuclear Weapons*. 2019.

<sup>254</sup> United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *UN Secretary-General's Strategy on New Technologies*. 2018.

<sup>255</sup> Ibid. pp. 13-18.

<sup>256</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Current Developments in Science and Technology and their Potential Impact on International Security and Disarmament Efforts - Report of the Secretary-General (A/77/188)*. 2022.

<sup>257</sup> International Atomic Energy Agency. *IAEA Safeguards Overview: Comprehensive Safeguards Agreements and Additional Protocols*. 2023.

<sup>258</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Comprehensive test-ban treaty (A/RES/50/245)*. 1996; United Nations, General Assembly. *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (A/RES/2373 (XXII))*. 1968.

<sup>259</sup> Wu. Harvard Kennedy School of Government. *Sovereignty and Data Localization*. 2021.

<sup>260</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Current Developments in Science and Technology and their Potential Impact on International Security and Disarmament Efforts - Report of the Secretary-General (A/77/188)*. 2022.

<sup>261</sup> Garcia. Social Science Research Network. *Multilateralism and Artificial Intelligence: What Role for the United Nations?* 2020.

<sup>262</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security - Note by the Secretary-General (A/78/265)*. 2023.



technology, international security, and disarmament offers unprecedented opportunities for building a safer, more peaceful, and more secure world.<sup>263</sup>

### ***Further Research***

In conducting further research and considering how to approach this topic, delegates should regard the following questions: How can technology transfer and capacity-building initiatives address access disparities among Member States in adopting advanced disarmament technologies? How can emerging technologies misuse by state and non-state actors be hindered? What can be done to encourage Member States to adopt a global approach to CI protection? What capacity-building initiatives can be initiated at the national and regional levels to enhance expertise in emerging technologies and foster knowledge sharing among Member States? How can technology application be guided for the betterment of society and to safeguard international security?

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<sup>263</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Current Developments in Science and Technology and their Potential Impact on International Security and Disarmament Efforts - Report of the Secretary-General (A/77/188)*. 2022.





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