

The United Nations
DISARMAMENT
YEARBOOK



Volume 45 (Part II): 2020

Office for Disarmament Affairs
New York, 2021

The United Nations
**DISARMAMENT
YEARBOOK**



Volume 45 (Part II): 2020

Guide to the user

The *United Nations Disarmament Yearbook*, in print and electronic format, is designed to be 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.

Part I of the 2020 *Yearbook* was published in April this year. It contains all the resolutions and decisions of the seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly, as well as their sponsors, voting patterns and other related information.

Part II is divided among the main multilateral issues under consideration throughout the year. It includes developments and trends on the issues, a convenient issue-oriented timeline and, in chapter VII, short summaries of actions taken by the First Committee and General Assembly on resolutions and decisions.

Because much of the background information is condensed, it is helpful to consult previous editions for expanded historical knowledge. Factual information is provided in the appendix. 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 www.un.org/disarmament/publications/library.

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Contents

	<i>Page</i>
Foreword	xi
Acknowledgements	xiii
Multilateral disarmament timeline	
Highlights, 2020	xiv
Chapter I. Nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation	
Developments and trends, 2020	3
Issues related to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons ..	7
<i>Postponement of the tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons</i>	7
Issues related to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty	16
<i>Entry into force and universality</i>	16
<i>International Day against Nuclear Tests</i>	16
<i>Friends of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty</i>	17
<i>Group of Eminent Persons</i>	17
<i>Youth Group</i>	18
<i>Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization</i>	19
<i>Integrated capacity-building, education and training</i>	19
Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons	20
Bilateral agreements and other issues	20
<i>Implementation of the Treaty on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms</i>	20
<i>Proposed moratorium on the deployment by the United States and Russian Federation of missiles previously banned by the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty</i>	22
<i>Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and Security Council resolution 2231 (2015)</i>	22
Democratic People's Republic of Korea	28
Nuclear disarmament verification	31
<i>Implementation of General Assembly resolution 74/50 on nuclear disarmament verification</i>	31
International Atomic Energy Agency verification	31
<i>Nuclear verification</i>	32

<i>Safeguards conclusions</i>	32
<i>Safeguards agreements, additional protocols and small quantities protocols</i>	33
<i>Verification activities</i>	34
<i>Application of safeguards in the Middle East</i>	36
<i>Assurances of nuclear fuel supply</i>	37
<i>Nuclear security</i>	37
Export controls	41
<i>Nuclear Suppliers Group</i>	41
<i>Missile Technology Control Regime</i>	42
<i>Hague Code of Conduct Against Ballistic Missile Proliferation</i>	42
Political declarations and other initiatives	43
<i>Stockholm Initiative for Nuclear Disarmament</i>	43
<i>Creating an Environment for Nuclear Disarmament</i>	44
Fissile materials	44
Chapter II. Biological and chemical weapons	
Developments and trends, 2020	49
Chemical weapons	51
<i>Twenty-fifth session of the Conference of the States Parties</i>	51
<i>Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons</i>	51
<i>Project on Lessons Learned from the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism</i>	61
Biological weapons	62
<i>Informal webinars to prepare for the Meetings of Experts to the Biological Weapons Convention</i>	62
<i>Office holders of the Biological Weapons Convention</i>	66
<i>Work of the Implementation Support Unit</i>	66
<i>European Union Council decision 2019/97 in support of the Biological Weapons Convention</i>	68
Secretary-General's Mechanism for Investigation of Alleged Use of Chemical and Biological Weapons	69
Export controls	71
<i>Australia Group</i>	71

Chapter III. Conventional weapons

Developments and trends, 2020	75
Arms Trade Treaty	77
<i>Sixth Conference of States Parties</i>	77
Small arms and light weapons	79
<i>Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons</i>	79
<i>Silencing the Guns in Africa by 2020: Africa Amnesty Month</i>	82
<i>Security Council</i>	84
<i>Modular Small-arms-control Implementation Compendium</i>	89
<i>Coordinating Action on Small Arms mechanism</i>	90
<i>Firearms Protocol to the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime</i>	91
Ammunition	92
<i>Group of Governmental Experts on problems arising from the accumulation of conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus</i>	92
<i>International Ammunition Technical Guidelines and United Nations SaferGuard activities</i>	93
Improvised explosive devices	96
<i>Security Council</i>	96
<i>General Assembly</i>	97
<i>United Nations Mine Action Service and other United Nations entities</i> . .	99
Explosive weapons in populated areas	100
<i>Informal consultative process to develop a political declaration</i>	101
<i>Data collection and civilian casualty recording</i>	102
Transparency in conventional arms transfers and military expenditures	103
<i>United Nations Register of Conventional Arms</i>	103
<i>Objective information on military matters, including transparency of military expenditures</i>	104
Export controls	105
<i>Wassenaar Arrangement</i>	105
United Nations Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation	105
Confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms	108

Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons	108
<i>Group of Governmental Experts on Emerging Technologies in the Area of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems</i>	109
<i>Protocol V: Meeting of Experts and the fourteenth Conference of the High Contracting Parties</i>	112
<i>Amended Protocol II: Group of Experts and twenty-second Annual Conference of the High Contracting Parties</i>	112
<i>Meeting of the High Contracting Parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons</i>	115
<i>Work of the Implementation Support Unit of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons</i>	115
Cluster munitions	116
<i>Second Review Conference of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions</i>	116
Anti-personnel mines	118
<i>Intersessional activities and the eighteenth Meeting of the States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention</i>	118
Chapter IV. Regional disarmament	
Developments and trends, 2020	125
Nuclear-weapon-free zones.	128
<i>Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (Treaty of Tlatelolco)</i>	130
<i>South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty (Rarotonga Treaty)</i>	131
<i>Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone (Bangkok Treaty)</i>	132
<i>African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty (Pelindaba Treaty)</i>	133
<i>Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia</i>	135
Establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.	136
United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs regional centres	137
<i>United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa</i>	137
<i>United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean</i>	140
<i>United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific</i>	143

Disarmament and arms regulation at the regional level	145
<i>Africa</i>	145
<i>Americas</i>	152
<i>Asia</i>	155
<i>Europe</i>	158
<i>Middle East</i>	172
<i>United Nations Development Programme</i>	173
<i>United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime</i>	176
Chapter V. Emerging, cross-cutting and other issues	
Developments and trends, 2020	181
Emerging issues	182
<i>Current developments in science and technology and their potential impact on international security and disarmament efforts</i>	182
<i>Outer space</i>	182
<i>Developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security</i>	184
<i>Missiles, including developments in long-range conventional strike</i>	185
<i>Armed uncrewed aerial vehicles</i>	185
Cross-cutting issues	186
<i>Relationship between disarmament and development</i>	186
<i>Terrorism and disarmament</i>	187
<i>Promotion of multilateralism in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation</i>	194
<i>Observance of environmental norms in the drafting and implementation of agreements on disarmament and arms control</i>	194
Implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004)	194
<i>Status of implementation</i>	194
<i>National implementation</i>	195
<i>Assistance</i>	196
<i>Cooperation with international, regional and subregional organizations</i>	197
<i>Transparency and outreach</i>	197

Chapter VI. Gender and disarmament

Developments and trends, 2020	201
General Assembly First Committee	203
Conference on Disarmament	206
Women's equal participation in disarmament and arms control	206
<i>Gender and disarmament education</i>	212
<i>Regional outreach and capacity-building on gender and disarmament</i>	212
Connecting disarmament with the women, peace and security agenda	214
<i>Military expenditures</i>	215
Conventional weapons	218
<i>Small-arms control</i>	219
<i>Ammunition management</i>	224
<i>United Nations Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation</i>	225
Weapons of mass destruction	225
<i>Nuclear weapons</i>	225
<i>Other weapons of mass destruction</i>	226
Science and technology	228
<i>New and emerging weapons technologies</i>	228
<i>Information and communications technology</i>	228
Mine action	229
Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration	230
Security sector reform	233

Chapter VII. Disarmament machinery

Developments and trends, 2020	239
First Committee of the General Assembly	242
<i>Organization of work</i>	242
<i>Overview of key substantive discussions in the Committee</i>	244
United Nations Disarmament Commission	273
Conference on Disarmament	278
Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters	281

Chapter VIII. Information and outreach

Developments and trends, 2020	287
Disarmament Information Programme	290
<i>Print and e-publications</i>	290
<i>Websites</i>	296
<i>Databases</i>	296
<i>International days</i>	297
<i>Media</i>	301
Disarmament and non-proliferation education	303
Youth and disarmament	305
Disarmament fellowships	306
Vienna Office of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs	307
United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research	308
<i>Weapons of mass destruction and other strategic weapons</i>	309
<i>Conventional arms</i>	310
<i>Security and technology</i>	311
<i>Gender and disarmament</i>	312
<i>Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction</i>	313
<i>Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean</i>	315
<i>Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific</i>	317
<i>Conventional Arms</i>	317
<i>Gender and disarmament</i>	318
<i>Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction</i>	318
<i>Security and technology</i>	318
<i>Weapons of mass destruction and other strategic weapons</i>	319

Appendix. Status of multilateral arms regulation and disarmament agreements	325
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Tables

New START aggregate numbers of strategic offensive arms	21
Status of ratification of the protocols to the treaties establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones as at 1 December 2020	129

Infographics

The nuclear arms control architecture	8
Progress in the destruction of chemical weapons stockpiles, 1998–2020 . . .	52
The Biological Weapons Convention at 45	63
History of the Biological Weapons Convention	64
Participation in the Biological Weapons Convention confidence-building measures	67
Secretary-General’s Mechanism: Nominated expert consultants, qualified experts and analytical laboratories by region (as of 31 December 2020) . . .	70
Firearms marking locations	80
Voluntary handovers of firearms in African States	83
Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons	110
The Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons at 40	114
Some important regional disarmament efforts of the United Nations	138
Regional disarmament instruments	146
Monthly number of objects in low Earth orbit	183
Ten years of resolutions on women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control	204
Gender perspectives in General Assembly First Committee resolutions, 2010–2020	207
Gender balance in multilateral disarmament forums	208
Gender parity and women’s empowerment in disarmament	209
Disarmament and arms control in national action plans on women, peace and security	216
Humanitarian disarmament in the General Assembly	253
Timeline: Special sessions of the General Assembly on disarmament	272
Civil society participation in disarmament	280
Disarmament information and outreach: Selected highlights	292
Youth in the General Assembly	304

Maps

Nuclear modernization programmes	23
OPCW-designated laboratories, November 2020	54
The Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons: High Contracting Parties and signatories	110

Foreword

It is my pleasure to introduce Part II of the 2020 *United Nations Disarmament Yearbook*. Now in its forty-fifth consecutive year of publication, the *Yearbook* continues to be the pre-eminent source of objective information for diplomats, civil society advocates and members of the public on each year's developments in the field of multilateral disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control.

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted and challenged institutions of governance at every level, arriving as the world was preparing to commemorate, among many other pivotal milestones, the seventy-fifth anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. When the escalating public health crisis forced States to postpone the tenth Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in late March—just weeks before it was scheduled to begin—the lost opportunity was perhaps felt most keenly by the scores of atomic-bomb survivors who could no longer appear in person to plea, on behalf of humanity, for progress towards a nuclear-weapon-free world.

The impact of COVID-19 on our field was far broader, however, extending beyond the work of intergovernmental forums to reshape the harms that weapons cause in conflicts and homes. Illicit arms networks thrived as societies faced widespread unemployment and unrest, and firearms fuelled part of a devastating surge in gender-based, domestic violence. The Secretary-General pressed for a global ceasefire to support the international pandemic response; yet, despite his call receiving the unanimous support of the Security Council, fighting persisted around the world, and global military spending continued to climb.

Still, these and other challenges did not thwart the tireless, collaborative efforts of countless individuals and organizations to free future generations from the scourge of armed violence. The Office for Disarmament Affairs adapted its working methods and substantive activities to continue actively implementing its mandates in close consultation with Member States and regional and non-governmental organizations. In one example of our work in 2020, we launched a multi-year initiative in partnership with two key African regional organizations—the African Union Commission and the Regional Centre on Small Arms in the Great Lakes Region, the Horn of Africa and Bordering States—to support States across the continent in processing illicit firearms surrendered to authorities. My Office's "#Youth4Disarmament" initiative also inaugurated its very first group of "Youth Champions for Disarmament", equipping 10 promising young people to be lifelong advocates for peace through a rigorous programme of online training and live webinars.

Then, in October, the conditions were met for the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons to enter into force. That landmark accomplishment, reflecting the deeply held hopes of the States parties and other signatories, was only possible thanks to the dedicated advocacy of civil society, including decades of tireless work by the survivors of nuclear bombings and tests.

Now and in the years ahead, let us draw inspiration from those survivors, who were spurred by immense tragedy and personal suffering to carry forward, throughout their lives, the hope for a peaceful future for us all.

Izumi Nakamitsu
Under-Secretary-General
High Representative for Disarmament Affairs
August 2021

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Volume 45 (Part II) of the *United Nations Disarmament Yearbook*, like each earlier edition, was a collaborative effort to which the staff of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs devoted considerable time and effort. It was prepared under the overall direction of the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Izumi Nakamitsu, and the Director of the Office, Thomas Markram.

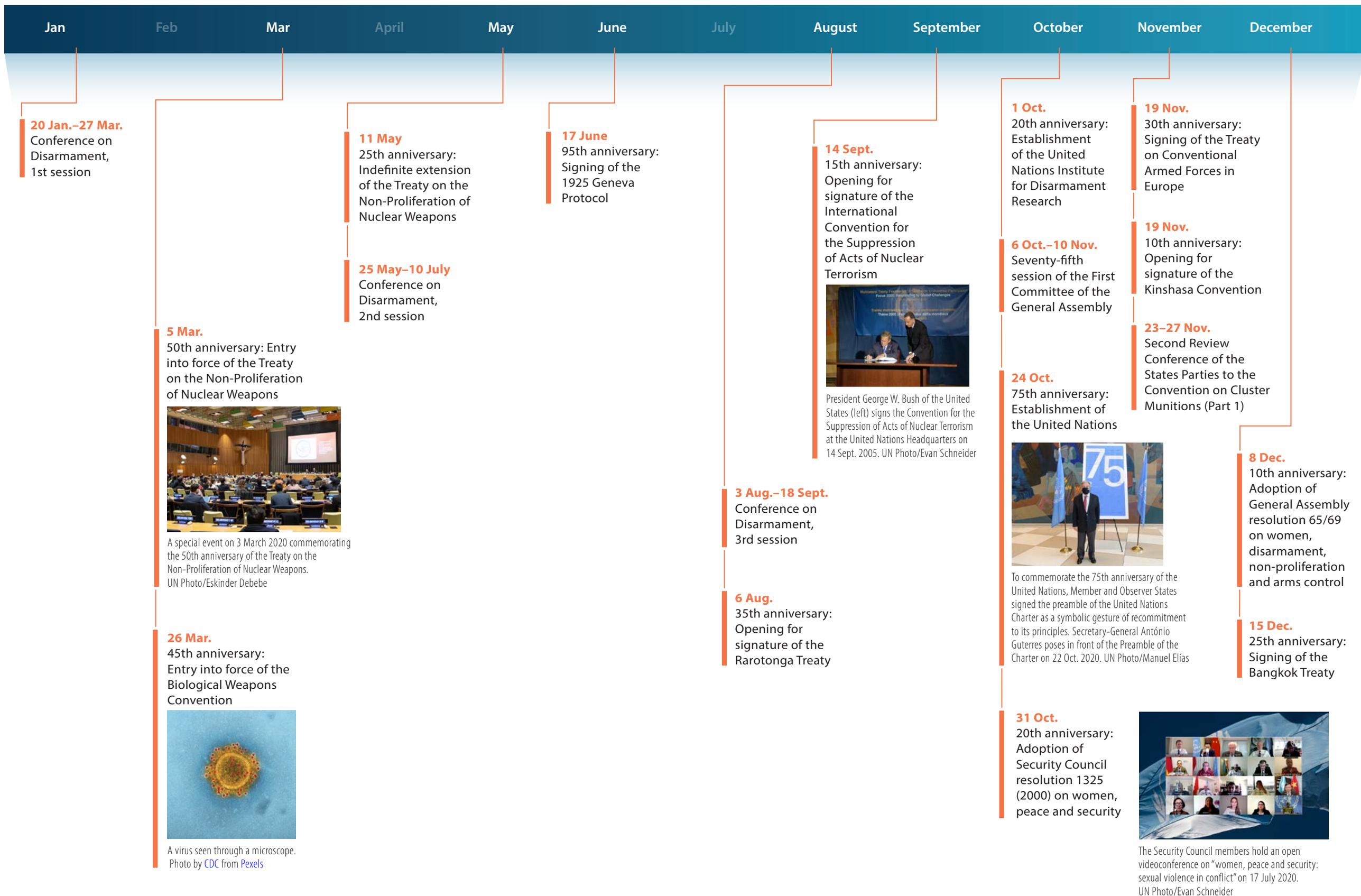
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Diane Barnes
Editor-in-Chief
August 2021

Multilateral disarmament timeline

Highlights, 2020





Chapter I

Nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation

Izumi Nakamitsu, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs (second from right, front row), meets young people in Japan on 10 August 2020 at an event to mark the 75th anniversary of the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima and the establishment of the United Nations.

CHAPTER I

Nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation

Seventy-five years since the founding of the United Nations and since the horrific bombings at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the world continues to live in the shadow of nuclear catastrophe.

ANTÓNIO GUTERRES, SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS¹

Developments and trends, 2020

IN 2020, THE WORLD MARKED SEVERAL KEY MILESTONES related to nuclear weapons, including, notably, the seventy-fifth anniversaries of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Highlights included the fiftieth anniversary of the entry into force of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty), as well as the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Treaty's indefinite extension.

Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic did not slow the growth of nuclear risks in 2020; in some cases, it exacerbated them. Meanwhile, nuclear disarmament efforts continued to face obstacles that included deteriorating geostrategic conditions, growing distrust and acrimony among nuclear-armed States, increasing concerns about technological developments contributing to greater risks and ongoing qualitative improvements to nuclear weapons.

Those negative trends served to further erode the global disarmament and non-proliferation regime, both undermining past accomplishments and impeding further progress. In 2020, the harm from those trends was made worse by the postponement of key forums related to nuclear disarmament,² as well as the growing divergences between Member States over how to achieve the common goal of eliminating nuclear weapons. The Secretary-General highlighted the stakes in his message to the Nagasaki Peace Memorial Ceremony on 9 August, stating, "The historic progress in nuclear disarmament is in jeopardy, as the web of

¹ [Statement](#) on the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, New York, 2 October 2020.

² The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in the postponement of, inter alia, the tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, negotiations on a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction and the fourth Conference of Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones and Mongolia.

instruments and agreements designed to reduce the danger of nuclear weapons and bring about their elimination is crumbling. That alarming trend must be reversed.”³

At the onset of the pandemic, the States parties to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty decided to postpone the agreement’s tenth Review Conference to help ensure the health and safety of delegates. After initially postponing the Conference until January 2021, those States decided, in light of the ongoing pandemic, to hold the meeting from 2 to 27 August 2021 and to take a final decision on dates in 2021. While the postponement of the Review Conference delayed much-needed, vital dialogue on issues related to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, it also provided the States parties with additional time to narrow divergences and overcome barriers to a consensus outcome at the Conference.

As relations between States possessing nuclear weapons continued to decline in 2020, risks from those weapons grew as they assumed a larger role in national defence strategies. In February, the United States fielded a low-yield, submarine-launched nuclear weapon,⁴ envisaged in its 2018 Nuclear Posture Review “to address the conclusion that potential adversaries, like Russia, believe that employment of low-yield nuclear weapons will give them an advantage over the United States and its allies and partners”. In June, the Russian Federation released its updated “[Basic Principles of State Policy of the Russian Federation on Nuclear Deterrence](#)”. While the publication of those principles for the first time was a useful transparency measure, the updated principles arguably lowered the threshold for nuclear-weapon use by expanding the number of scenarios in which they could be used.

Meanwhile, the network of arms-control and confidence-building instruments and arrangements was further weakened when, on 22 November, the United States ceased to be a party to the Treaty on Open Skies.⁵ Its stated reason for withdrawal was non-compliance by the Russian Federation. The remaining Parties agreed to continue their participation as observers, underscoring the Treaty’s value as both a confidence-building measure and a significant achievement for arms control.⁶

Following the dissolution in 2019 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 (Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty), in October 2020, the President of the Russian Federation,

³ [Message](#) during the Nagasaki Peace Memorial Ceremony, delivered by Izumi Nakamitsu, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Nagasaki, 9 August 2020.

⁴ John Rood, Under Secretary of Defense for Policy of the United States, “[Statement on the Fielding of the W76-2 Low-Yield Submarine Launched Ballistic Missile Warhead](#)”, 4 February 2020.

⁵ The Treaty on Open Skies establishes a regime for the conduct of observation flights by States parties over the territories of other States parties and sets forth the rights and obligations of the States parties relating thereto.

⁶ Federal Public Service of the Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation of Belgium, “[Belgium chairs the Conference of the ‘Open Skies’ treaty, a cornerstone of the European security architecture](#)”, 7 October 2020.

Vladimir Putin, offered to add “mutual verification measures” to his proposal, first put forward in 2019, for a moratorium on the deployment of missiles previously banned by the Treaty. The United States rejected the proposal because the Russian Federation had already deployed four battalions of intermediate-range missiles within range of European States.

In a more positive development, arms control negotiators from the United States and the Russian Federation engaged in four rounds of dialogue in Vienna during the year. Participants in the talks discussed issues related to strategic stability, including the possible extension of the Treaty on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (New START Treaty) before the Treaty’s expiration in February 2021. China declined an invitation by the United States to participate, however, due to the disparity in the sizes of their respective nuclear arsenals.⁷ Although the Russian Federation and the United States were ultimately unable to agree to an extension, the discussions were a welcome step in dialogue between the possessors of the world’s largest nuclear arsenals.⁸

In 2020, all States that possessed nuclear weapons continued to modernize their nuclear arsenals, including by developing, testing and deploying new nuclear-capable weapons systems. The Russian Federation tested new submarine-launched ballistic missiles and a hypersonic cruise missile, deployed missiles armed with a hypersonic glide vehicle and continued to develop weapons systems announced by President Putin in 2018.⁹ The United States, in addition to deploying a new low-yield nuclear warhead, tested a hypersonic glide vehicle and continued with plans to replace its land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles, air-launched cruise missiles, and nuclear-capable bombers and submarines. Throughout 2020, China conducted tests of both medium- and intermediate-range ballistic missiles;¹⁰ achieved further progress towards developing a road-mobile nuclear arsenal, including a solid-fuelled intercontinental ballistic missile; and moved closer to establishing a full nuclear triad, with weapons deployable by land, air and sea.

There was no resolution to regional situations with nuclear dimensions in 2020. The Islamic Republic of Iran continued to scale back compliance with its nuclear commitments under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, countering the reimposition of sanctions by the United States in 2018. The Islamic Republic of Iran’s ongoing actions, which included installing new uranium-enrichment

⁷ For independent estimates of the nuclear weapons held by each country, see Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, “[Nuclear Notebook](#)”.

⁸ United States, Department of State, “[Online Press Briefing with Ambassador Marshall Billingslea, Special Presidential Envoy for Arms Control, And Lieutenant General Thomas A. Bussiere, Deputy Commander, United States Strategic Command \(USSTRATCOM\)](#)”, 24 June 2020.

⁹ Vladimir Putin, President of the Russian Federation, [address](#) to the Federal Assembly, Moscow, 1 March 2018.

¹⁰ Medium-range ballistic missiles have a range of 1,000–3,000 km. Intermediate-range ballistic missiles have a range of 3,000–5,500 km.

centrifuge types and accelerating research and development, resulted in significant growth in its stockpile of low-enriched uranium and a further increase in its enrichment potential. It maintained that all steps were reversible. In response to the Islamic Republic of Iran's violations of the Plan of Action, in September, the United States claimed to have activated the "snap back" mechanism in the Security Council, triggering the reimposition of all United Nations sanctions on the nuclear programme of the Islamic Republic of Iran.¹¹ A strong majority of Security Council members rejected the United States' position.

Tensions also persisted on the Korean Peninsula, which saw no progress during the year in the implementation of the joint statement¹² by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States from the Singapore summit in June 2018. While the United States signalled that it remained open to negotiations and extended several diplomatic overtures, the COVID-19 pandemic hindered further diplomatic engagement with a view to the complete and verifiable denuclearization of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Despite those negative trends, several developments were causes for optimism in 2020 in the pursuit of a world free of nuclear weapons. Action items under "Disarmament to Save Humanity"—the pillar of the Secretary-General's [Agenda for Disarmament](#) dedicated to eliminating all nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction—gained three new State "champions" and 11 "supporters" during the year. States also stepped up cross-regional initiatives in support of a successful Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference, including the development of 22 proposals to reduce nuclear risks and achieve progress in nuclear disarmament.¹³

Additionally, the conditions for the entry into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons were met in October,¹⁴ representing what both the Secretary-General and the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs described as a meaningful commitment to nuclear disarmament and multilateralism. As the first multilateral nuclear disarmament treaty to be negotiated in over 20 years, the agreement was a testament to the survivors of nuclear bombings and tests, many of whom had advocated for it.

Despite the postponement of the fourth Conference of Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones and Mongolia, States continued working to strengthen both the implementation of treaties establishing such zones and coordination between

¹¹ Security Council resolution [2231 \(2015\)](#), o.p. 11–12.

¹² United States, White House, "[Joint Statement of President Donald J. Trump of the United States of America and Chairman Kim Jong Un of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea at the Singapore Summit](#)", 12 June 2018.

¹³ Embassy of Sweden, "[Ministerial meeting of the Stockholm Initiative for Nuclear Disarmament](#)", 27 February 2020.

¹⁴ The deposit with the Secretary-General of the fiftieth instrument of ratification or accession of the Treaty triggered its entry into force on 22 January 2021. See United Nations, depositary notification [C.N.478.2020.TREATIES-XXVI.9](#), 26 October 2020.

zones. In that regard, their work included support for centralized coordination mechanisms, as well as webinars aimed at strengthening implementation in the individual zones. Likewise, despite the postponement of the second negotiating conference¹⁵ on a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction, a workshop exploring the lessons learned from existing nuclear-weapon-free zones was organized in July to maintain momentum for negotiations.

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

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty¹⁶ is a landmark international treaty whose objective is to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and weapons technology, to promote cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and to further the goal of achieving nuclear disarmament and general and complete disarmament.

Postponement of the tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

The tenth Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty was scheduled to be held in New York from 27 April to 22 May, in accordance with the decision of its Preparatory Committee in 2019.¹⁷ However, owing to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, States parties agreed on 27 March to postpone the Review Conference to a date no later than April 2021. They did so not only to ensure the safety of delegations but also in recognition of the importance of holding the Review Conference in person. The President-designate of the Conference, Gustavo Zlauvinen (Argentina), stated, “this is an outcome that States Parties have not come to lightly, especially given the dual anniversaries celebrated by the Treaty this year, the fiftieth anniversary of its entry into force and the twenty-fifth anniversary of its indefinite extension. However, due to current circumstances and the rapidly evolving situation related to the COVID-19 pandemic, I believe this is the safest course of action.” In April, States parties agreed to the tentative dates of 4 to 29 January 2021 for the Review Conference.¹⁸

On 28 October, faced with the continued COVID-19 pandemic and of the view that conditions would not be safe to hold the Conference, States parties agreed to again postpone it until a date no later than August 2021, deciding upon

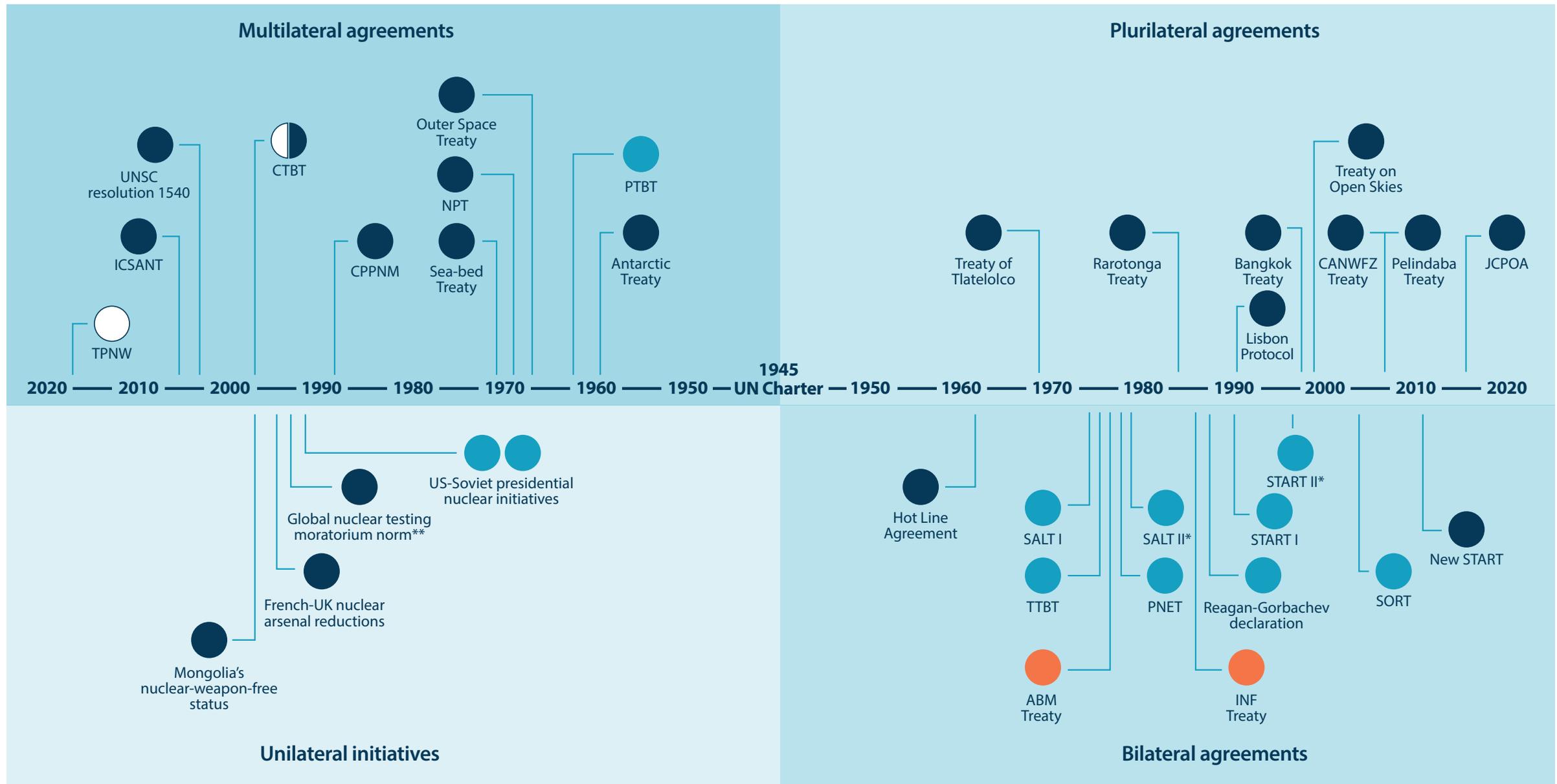
¹⁵ Convening the conference is pursuant to General Assembly decision [73/46](#) of 22 December 2018.

¹⁶ The [Treaty’s text and status of adherence](#) are available from the Office for Disarmament Affairs’ Disarmament Treaties Database.

¹⁷ Final report of the Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons ([NPT/CONF.2020/1](#)), para. 21.

¹⁸ Gustavo Zlauvinen, [message](#) from the President-designate, 21 April 2020.

The nuclear arms control architecture



● Treaty in effect
 ○ Treaty not in effect
 ◐ Treaty not in effect but enjoys near universal adherence

● Expired or superseded by newer agreement
 ● Terminated with no successor agreement in place

* Agreement never entered into force

** Universally adhered to since 1998, except for the nuclear tests conducted by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in 2006, 2009, 2013, 2016 and 2017

The nuclear arms control architecture *(continued)*

General and complete disarmament is one of the core goals of the United Nations as enshrined in its Charter, adopted in 1945. In pursuit of this universal objective, Member States, over the span of more than seven decades, have produced a multitude of treaties, agreements, initiatives and norms in the sphere of nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control that vary in their nature, scope of application and membership. This graphic highlights the key elements of that treaty framework, widely referred to as “the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime”.

More information on the treaties, agreements, initiatives and norms is available below.

Multilateral agreements

NPT. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, also known as the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, is the cornerstone of the global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. It is built upon three pillars: nuclear non-proliferation, nuclear disarmament and peaceful use of nuclear energy.

United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolution 1540 (2004) requires all States to refrain from providing any form of support to non-State actors that attempt to develop; acquire; manufacture; possess; transport; transfer; or use nuclear, chemical or biological weapons and their means of delivery.

CTBT. The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty bans all nuclear explosions by everyone, everywhere: on the Earth’s surface, in the atmosphere, underwater and underground. The Treaty also has a unique and comprehensive verification regime to monitor potential nuclear explosions.

PTBT. The Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapon Tests in the Atmosphere, in Outer Space and Under Water, also known as the Partial Test Ban Treaty, prohibited all test detonations of nuclear weapons except for those conducted underground. The Treaty has been de facto succeeded by the CTBT.

CPPNM. The Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material (including its 2005 Amendment) is the only international legally binding undertaking in the area of physical protection of nuclear material. It establishes measures related to the prevention, detection and punishment of offenses relating to nuclear material. The amended Convention makes it legally binding that States Parties protect nuclear facilities and material in peaceful domestic use, storage and transport.

ICSANT. The International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism joined the previously existing universal anti-terrorism conventions, strengthening the international legal framework in connection with terrorist acts and further promoting the rule of law. The Convention enables the criminalization of planning, threatening, or carrying out acts of nuclear terrorism.

Sea-bed Treaty. The Treaty on the Prohibition of the Emplacement of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction on the Sea-Bed and the Ocean Floor and in the Subsoil Thereof is a multilateral agreement banning the placing of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons, on the ocean floor beyond a 12-mile coastal zone.

Antarctic Treaty. The Antarctic Treaty obligates parties to use Antarctica only for peaceful purposes. Military activities are prohibited, including the testing of weapons, nuclear explosions, and the disposal of radioactive waste in Antarctica.

Outer Space Treaty. The Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies obligates parties not to place any objects carrying nuclear weapons in orbit, on the Moon or on other celestial bodies.

TPNW. The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is the most recently adopted multilateral disarmament agreement and includes a comprehensive set of prohibitions on participating in any nuclear-weapon activities. Those include undertakings not to develop, test, produce, acquire, possess, stockpile, use or threaten to use nuclear weapons.

Plurilateral agreements

Treaty of Tlatelolco. The Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean, the first treaty of its kind to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone (NWFZ) in a densely populated area, prohibits Latin American and Caribbean States from acquiring, possessing, developing, testing or using nuclear weapons, and prohibits other countries from storing and deploying nuclear weapons on their territories.

Rarotonga Treaty. The South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty was born from the South Pacific’s first-hand experience with nuclear weapons testing and was the second NWFZ in a populated region to enter into force. The geographic scope of the Treaty is vast, extending from the west coast of Australia to the boundary of the Latin American NWFZ in the east, and from the equator to 60 degrees south, where it meets the boundary of the zone established by the Antarctic Treaty.

Bangkok Treaty. The Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone is a key legal instrument in preserving South-East Asia as a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction. It also reaffirms the importance of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons and in contributing towards international peace and security.

Pelindaba Treaty. The African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty established the NWFZ on the African continent. The Treaty prohibits the research, development, manufacture, stockpiling, acquisition, testing, possession, control or stationing of nuclear weapons, as well as the dumping of radioactive wastes.

CANWFZ Treaty. The Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia is a legally binding commitment by Central Asian States not to manufacture, acquire, test, or possess nuclear weapons. The creation of the zone was driven by the common desire of Central Asian States to provide security, stability and peace in the region, address environmental concerns and create the necessary conditions for regional development and stability.

Lisbon Protocol. The Protocol to the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty of 1991 (START I) was signed by representatives of the Russian Federation (originally the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR)), Belarus, Ukraine and Kazakhstan recognizing the four States as successors of the USSR and its obligations under START I. The Protocol also established the necessary political framework for Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine to accede to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty as non-nuclear-weapon states.

The **Treaty on Open Skies** promotes openness and transparency of military forces and activities through a programme of unarmed aerial surveillance flights over the entire territory of its participants, spanning from North America to most of Europe and the Russian Federation. The Treaty is designed to enhance mutual understanding and confidence by giving all participants the opportunity to gather information about military forces and activities of concern to them.

JCPOA. The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action is an agreement on the Islamic Republic of Iran’s nuclear programme that was reached in Vienna on 14 July 2015, between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council plus Germany and the European Union. The nuclear deal was endorsed by the United Nations Security Council (resolution [2231 \(2015\)](#)). The Islamic Republic of Iran’s compliance with the agreement’s nuclear-related provisions is verified by the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Bilateral agreements

Hot Line Agreement. The Washington-Moscow Direct Communications Link, which emerged shortly after the Cuban missile crisis of 1962, is a system that allows direct communication between the leaders of the United States (US) and the USSR/Russian Federation. The need for ensuring quick and reliable communication directly between the Heads of Government of nuclear-weapon States emerged in the context of efforts to reduce the risks of nuclear confrontation due to accident or miscalculation.

SALT I. The Interim Agreement between the US and the USSR on Certain Measures with Respect to the Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms was an executive agreement that capped US and Soviet intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) and submarine-launched ballistic missile forces.

SALT II. The Treaty Between the US and the USSR on the Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms, together with agreed statements and common understandings regarding the Treaty, was the first nuclear arms treaty between the US and the USSR that assumed real reductions in strategic forces to a combined 2,250 of all categories of delivery vehicles on both sides.

TTBT. The Treaty between the USSR and the US on the Limitation of Underground Nuclear Weapon Tests, also known as the Threshold Test Ban Treaty, was signed in July 1974 by both States. It established a nuclear “threshold” by prohibiting nuclear tests of devices having a yield exceeding 150 kilotons after 31 March 1976.

PNET. In preparing the TTBT in July 1974, the US and the USSR recognized the need to establish an appropriate agreement to govern underground nuclear explosions for peaceful purposes. The Treaty on Underground Nuclear Explosions for Peaceful Purposes (negotiated in April 1976), which is also known as the Peaceful Nuclear Explosions Treaty, governs all nuclear explosions carried out at locations outside the weapons test sites specified under the TTBT while also limiting maximum allowed yields of such explosions.

Reagan-Gorbachev declaration. In a statement after their summit in Geneva, in November 1985, US President Ronald Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev declared that “a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought”, which came to be known as the Reagan-Gorbachev Principle.

INF Treaty. The Treaty Between the US and the USSR on the Elimination of Their Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles banned all the two nations’ land-based ballistic missiles, cruise missiles and missile launchers with ranges of 500–1,000 kilometers (short medium-range) and 1,000–5,500 km (intermediate-range). The agreement did not apply to air- or

sea-launched missiles. The Treaty was terminated in 2019.

Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty. The Treaty Between the US and the USSR on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems was an arms control treaty on the limitation of the anti-ballistic missile systems used in defending areas against ballistic missile-delivered nuclear weapons. Per the Treaty, each party was limited to two anti-ballistic-missile complexes, each of which was to be limited to 100 anti-ballistic missiles. The Treaty was terminated in 2002.

START I. The Treaty Between the US and the USSR on Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms barred its signatories from deploying more than 6,000 nuclear warheads atop a total of 1,600 ICBMs and bombers. START was the largest and most complex arms control treaty ever negotiated, and its final implementation in late 2001 resulted in the removal of about 80 percent of all strategic nuclear weapons then in existence.

START II. The Treaty Between the US and the Russian Federation on Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms was intended to ban the use of multiple independently targetable reentry vehicles on ICBMs. Despite continued negotiations, it never entered into force.

SORT. The Treaty between the Russian Federation and the US on Strategic Offensive Reductions (SORT) was a strategic arms reduction treaty between the US and Russian Federation limiting their nuclear arsenal to between 1,700 and 2,200 operationally deployed warheads each. It was eventually superseded by the New START Treaty.

New START Treaty. The Treaty between the US and the Russian Federation on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms limits the number of deployed strategic nuclear weapons to 1,550 per State and 800 total launchers. Originally scheduled to expire on 5 February 2021, the New START Treaty was extended for an additional five years.

Unilateral initiatives

The **global nuclear testing moratorium** is an informal behavioural norm adhered to nearly universally since 1998, after the formal cessation of nuclear tests by the US and USSR. It was further reinforced by the adoption of the CTBT in 1996.

The **US-Soviet presidential nuclear initiatives** is a framework of reciprocal initiatives by the presidents of the US and the USSR/Russian Federation (declared in 1991 and 1992) that sought to limit and reduce the tactical nuclear-weapon arsenals of the two States by removing excessive and unnecessary nuclear payloads from ships, submarines, land-based naval aircraft, artillery munitions and mines.

The **nuclear arsenal reductions of France and the United Kingdom** are significant unilateral initiatives of those countries in the mid-1990s along with a parallel adoption of “minimum deterrence” policies.

Mongolia’s nuclear-weapon-free status. Mongolia, as a State committed to non-proliferation of nuclear weapons in all its aspects and to achieving nuclear disarmament, declared its territory an NWFZ in September 1992. This unique status was recognized by the United Nations General Assembly through its resolution [53/77 D](#), first adopted in 1998 without a vote.

the tentative dates of 2 to 27 August. In announcing the decision, the President-designate expressed “deep appreciation for all States parties’ continued flexibility, as well as [his] gratitude for their commitment to ensuring that the Review Conference will be held, allowing the [Treaty] to fulfil its role as a pillar of international peace and security, and as the lynchpin of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime”.¹⁹

To help maintain momentum ahead of the postponed Review Conference, the President-designate held seven rounds of virtual consultations with the

¹⁹ [Letter](#) to permanent representatives to the United Nations of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty States parties, 28 October 2020.

Treaty's regional groups,²⁰ following two rounds of consultations held before the postponement.²¹ During his consultations, the President-designate conferred with States parties on administrative and logistical issues, as well as matters related to the core substance of the Treaty. On the latter, States parties discussed thematic questions related to implementing commitments made at previous Review Conferences, reducing the risk of nuclear weapons use, the sustainability and strengthening of the Treaty's safeguards system, transparency and reporting measures, strengthening nuclear-weapon-free zones and the implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East, and enhancing the availability of the peaceful uses of nuclear science and technology.

Meanwhile, the Office for Disarmament Affairs partnered with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and civil society organizations to hold a series of webinars on the substance of the Treaty. The five webinars—each of which featured the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs and the President-designate, as well as Chairs of the three Preparatory Committee sessions—were intended to provide a platform for States parties and other stakeholders to discuss challenges and opportunities for the Conference.

The series commenced with an event on 28 May, held by the Office for Disarmament Affairs in partnership with the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies and the Center for Energy and Security Studies.²² Entitled “The Tenth NPT Review Conference: Challenges and Opportunities”,²³ the event included speakers from Mexico, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. Addressing attendees, the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs stressed that while the postponement of the Review Conference was disappointing, it provided more time to find common ground and achieve success.²⁴ The President-designate, for his part, highlighted the need for the Review Conference to reflect balance across all three of the Treaty's pillars, discussing practical ideas for strengthening implementation of those pillars while taking into account the outcomes²⁵ from

²⁰ All consultations were open to the Non-Aligned Movement, the Eastern European Group, the Western European and Others Group, and China. They took place in Geneva from 19 to 22 May; in New York on 7, 10, 11 and 13 May; in Vienna from 13 to 15 May; in New York from 23 to 27 July; in Vienna from 28 to 30 July; in Geneva from 6 to 10 August; and for all locations on 20 and 21 October.

²¹ Before the postponement of the Review Conference, the President-designate held two rounds of consultations with all regional groups in 2020. The first of those meetings took place in Geneva on 31 January, and the second was held on 4 March in New York.

²² The James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies is part of the Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey. The Center for Energy and Security Studies is a non-governmental research institute based in Moscow.

²³ The event was held in recognition of the fiftieth anniversary of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty's entry into force. For the video recording of the event, see Nonproliferation Monterey, “[The Tenth NPT Review Conference: Challenges and Opportunities](#)”, YouTube video, 29 May 2020.

²⁴ [Opening remarks](#) at the event, New York, 28 May 2020.

²⁵ NPT/CONF.1995/32 (Part I and Corr.2, Part II and Part III), NPT/CONF.2000/28 (Parts I and II) and NPT/CONF.2010/50 (Vol. I, Vol. II and Vol. III).

the 1995, 2000 and 2010 Review Conferences. He further emphasized the need to take on board the voices of a diverse range of stakeholders, as a plurality of views would help produce lasting results.²⁶

A second event, entitled “The Tenth NPT Review Conference: Peaceful Applications of Nuclear Technology and the Sustainable Development Goals”,²⁷ was convened on 25 June by the Office for Disarmament Affairs and IAEA. The discussion was moderated by Marjolijn van Deelen (Netherlands), Chair-designate of the Review Conference’s Main Committee III on the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. The IAEA Deputy Director General and Head of the Department of Nuclear Sciences and Applications, Najat Mokhtar, delivered the keynote address. Representatives of Egypt, South Africa and the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization also took part as panellists. In her opening remarks,²⁸ the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs recalled that the Treaty’s historic accomplishments were built on a bargain in which access to the peaceful uses of nuclear science and technology played an integral role. She also expressed hope that the tenth Review Conference would enhance access to those peaceful uses, adding that that would act as common ground that could facilitate a successful Review Conference. In another speech, the President-designate expressed disappointment that the third pillar was often taken for granted or, worse, considered a distraction. He further highlighted the importance of the Treaty’s article IV²⁹ in ensuring support for the Treaty’s other pillars, as well as the possible role of the Review Conference in strengthening the facilitation of access to the peaceful uses of nuclear technology.

On 16 July, the Office for Disarmament Affairs and the British American Security Information Council convened the event entitled “The NPT Review Conference: Youth and the NPT”,³⁰ which was focused on the importance of youth engagement both on the Treaty and on the wider global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. The discussion featured speakers from the Republic of Korea, the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Next Gen Network. The High Representative for Disarmament Affairs addressed the virtual gathering, highlighting the need to “not only provide young people with education and training opportunities but also to listen and take into account their perspectives” and to “increase youth participation and create space for young people to make meaningful, substantive

²⁶ [Closing remarks](#) at the event, Buenos Aires, 28 May 2020.

²⁷ For the [video recording](#) of the event, see United Nations, Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, “Latest Updates and News” (Relevant activities during the hiatus period, 25 June 2020).

²⁸ [Opening remarks](#) at the event, New York, 25 June 2020.

²⁹ Under article IV, it was established that, inter alia, nothing in the Treaty should be interpreted as affecting the inalienable right of all States parties to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes without discrimination.

³⁰ For the video recording of the event, see United Nations #Youth4Disarmament Initiative, “[Webinar Recording: The Tenth NPT Review Conference - Youth and the NPT](#)”, YouTube video, 23 July 2020.

contributions to facilitating progress on disarmament”.³¹ Next, the President-designate recalled the long history of bold activism for international causes, including nuclear disarmament. Underscoring the unique perspective of young people and noting that the issue of nuclear weapons would be their inheritance, he called on “the youth of the world, for your talent and ambition, for your imagination, determination and strength.”³²

The fourth webinar in the series, entitled “IAEA Safeguards and the 21st Century”,³³ was convened on 27 July by the Office for Disarmament Affairs and IAEA. The event was moderated by Adam Bugajski (Poland), Chair-designate of Main Committee II³⁴ of the tenth Review Conference, and featured a keynote address by the IAEA Deputy Director General and Head of the Department of Safeguards, Massimo Aparo, with representatives from Finland, Japan and the Center for Energy and Security Studies. In her remarks,³⁵ the High Representative stated, “The safeguards system, stewarded by the IAEA, is the backbone of the Treaty, allowing it to fulfil its function as the cornerstone of the non-proliferation regime ... To this end, it is important that the international community ensures the sustainability of the safeguards system in the face of growing roles and responsibilities.” The President-designate concurred, noting that the safeguards system could not be taken for granted and that “acknowledging the success of and States parties’ enduring commitment to safeguards, and vigilance in their implementation, will be fundamental” to a successful Review Conference. He also stressed the need to engage in dialogue on evolving challenges to the safeguards regime, including those from new technologies.³⁶

The fifth and final event, entitled “Effective Measures for Nuclear Disarmament”,³⁷ was focused on disarmament—the first pillar of the Treaty—as well as the commitments contained under article VI.³⁸ Held on 27 August in partnership with the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, the event was moderated by Syed Mohamad Hasrin Aidid (Malaysia), Chair-designate of

³¹ [Statement](#) at the event, New York, 16 July 2020.

³² [Remarks](#) at the event, Buenos Aires, 16 July 2020.

³³ For the [video recording](#) of the event, see United Nations, Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, “Latest Updates and News” (Relevant activities during the hiatus period, 27 July 2020).

³⁴ Main Committee II was intended to address, inter alia, the implementation of the provisions of the Treaty relating to non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, safeguards and nuclear-weapon-free zones.

³⁵ [Welcoming remarks](#) at the event, New York, 27 July 2020.

³⁶ [Remarks](#) at the event, Buenos Aires, 27 July 2020.

³⁷ For the [video recording](#) of the event, see United Nations, Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, “Latest Updates and News” (Relevant activities during the hiatus period, 27 August 2020).

³⁸ Article VI states, “Each of the Parties to the Treaty undertakes to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control.”

Main Committee I of the Review Conference,³⁹ and featured speakers from China, Indonesia, Sweden and the Institute. In opening remarks,⁴⁰ the High Representative stressed the Treaty's importance as the central vehicle for pursuing a world free of nuclear weapons, and she outlined several measures the Review Conference could take to that end. She suggested that all States parties reaffirm their commitment to the Treaty and the implementation of all commitments undertaken as States parties, and to strengthening the norm against nuclear weapons use. The President-designate then outlined his views on where progress under the first pillar might be achieved, calling for "commitments to reinforcing norms against [nuclear weapons] use and testing and to accelerate the implementation of outstanding commitments and obligations—especially those given at previous Review Conferences". He also highlighted potential "opportunities to achieve near-term gains such as practical risk reduction measures, enhanced transparency and reporting, and to consider how to grapple with the nuclear-technology nexus".⁴¹

Issues related to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty

Entry into force and universality

Political support continued to increase for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, including its entry into force and universalization. As at 31 December, the Treaty had 168 ratifying States and 184 signatory States, including 36 of the 44 Annex 2 States.⁴²

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization adapted most of its outreach activities into virtual events and training sessions.

International Day against Nuclear Tests

In New York, the General Assembly commemorated the International Day against Nuclear Tests (29 August) through a virtual high-level plenary meeting. The event, held on 26 August, was chaired by General Assembly President Tijjani Muhammad-Bande and attended by the Executive Secretary of the Preparatory Commission, Lassina Zerbo, as well as the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs and several former and current heads of State and foreign ministers. They highlighted, inter alia, the impact of historical nuclear testing on the environment,

³⁹ Main Committee I was intended to address, inter alia, the implementation of the provisions of the Treaty relating to nuclear disarmament.

⁴⁰ [Opening remarks](#) at the event, New York, 27 August 2020.

⁴¹ For the President-designate's remarks at the event, see United Nations, Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, "Latest Updates and News" (Relevant activities during the hiatus period, 27 August 2020, [video recording](#) of the event, 1:00:50).

⁴² Annex 2 States are the 44 States listed in the Treaty's annex 2 whose ratifications of the Treaty are necessary for its entry into force.

health and economic development, as well as the importance of the moratorium on nuclear testing. All speakers acknowledged the need for more robust efforts to persuade non-ratifying States to ratify the Treaty as soon as possible, without any condition (for more information on commemorations of the International Day against Nuclear Tests, see chap. VIII).

During the virtual meeting, the Preparatory Commission launched a two-year initiative in which two former Heads of State—former President of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, and former President of Finland, Tarja Halonen—would coordinate with all members of the Preparatory Commission’s Group of Eminent Persons, as well as other relevant stakeholders, to achieve progress towards the Treaty’s entry into force. The two former leaders, in their new capacity as Champions for a Nuclear-Test-Free World, would apply their vast experience in the fields of nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation, mediation and other areas to engage with States that had not yet signed and ratified the Treaty, as well as with regional and international organizations.

Friends of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Friends of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty could not hold its biennial Ministerial Meeting in 2020. On 1 October, however, the foreign ministers of Australia, Canada, Finland, Germany, Japan and the Netherlands, together with the Secretary-General and the Preparatory Commission’s Executive Secretary, issued a video message⁴³ in which they called for the Treaty’s entry into force.

In the video, the ministers stated that nuclear testing left devastating, enduring impacts on people and the environment, and that the “tragedies of Hiroshima and Nagasaki must never be repeated”. Participants also stated that the Treaty had already resulted in valuable contributions to science and reaffirmed that, until it entered into force, the Friends of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty would spare no effort to advance that cause. The Secretary-General and Executive Secretary also emphasized the Treaty’s significance and pledged to help advance its entry into force.

Group of Eminent Persons

Through the Group of Eminent Persons, prominent personalities and internationally recognized experts examine political and technical developments related to the Treaty and identify possible actions to accelerate its entry into force.

⁴³ “[The CTBT Friends Issue Global Call to End Nuclear Testing](#)”, CTBTO (Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Organization), YouTube video, 2 October 2020.

On 29 May, the Group's members issued a statement⁴⁴ in reaction to media reports that senior officials in the United States had discussed the possibility of conducting a demonstration of a nuclear test explosion. Expressing their deep concern about the possibility, they noted that such a test would break the global moratorium on nuclear-weapon test explosions and severely undermine the Treaty regime. They said the Treaty's entry into force would be the "most effective way to resolve possible concerns about very low-yield nuclear explosions and enforce compliance". The members also urged "all responsible states to reiterate their strong support for the global norm against nuclear test explosions of any yield that has been established by the [Treaty], to take concrete action to secure its prompt entry into force, and to urge the use of diplomacy rather than intimidation to build a more peaceful and secure international security environment for all".

Youth Group

Launched in January 2016, the Preparatory Commission's Youth Group⁴⁵ grew to include, as at the end of 2020, more than 1,000 members, including a considerable number of members from the non-ratifying Annex 2 States. Throughout the year, members actively engaged in national, regional and international events and activities to promote the Treaty's entry into force and universalization.

Although the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in the postponement of several events, including the 2020 Science Diplomacy Symposium, the Youth Group organized 11 webinars during the year. Those events, which brought together 1,290 attendees, included a joint webinar co-sponsored with the United Nations organizations based in the Vienna International Centre to mark the International Youth Day on 12 August, as well as an online panel discussion hosted by the European Forum Alpbach on 29 August (for more information on the panel discussion, see chap. VIII). In addition, on 10 September, they held a webinar entitled "UN at 75: Making Youth Voices Heard", featuring the Under-Secretary-General and Special Adviser on the Preparations for the Commemoration of the Seventy-Fifth Anniversary of the United Nations, Fabrizio Hochschild. Furthermore, the Youth Group organized its first virtual table-top exercise, as well as various initiatives to foster intergenerational dialogue and connect with other youth-led organizations.

⁴⁴ Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Organization, "[Members of CTBTO Group of Eminent Persons Warn Against Any Demonstration Nuclear Test Explosion](#)", 29 May 2020.

⁴⁵ The Youth Group was launched in January 2016 during the symposium on "Science and Diplomacy for Peace and Security". It is open to students and young professionals dedicated to achieving the entry into force and universalization of the Treaty, the continued build-up of the verification regime, and the promotion of the Treaty and its verification technologies for international peace and security.

Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization

States signatories met regularly within the framework of the Preparatory Commission, chaired in 2020 by Faouzia Boumaiza Mebarki (Algeria).

In its 2020 sessions, the Executive Secretary reported on high-level engagement and bilateral meetings with States signatories and international organizations to advance the Treaty's entry into force and universalization, as well as promote the use of related verification technologies and data.⁴⁶

Integrated capacity-building, education and training

In 2020, the Preparatory Commission continued to organize integrated capacity-building, education and training activities for States signatories and other key stakeholders. Participants in those activities considered technologies associated with the three pillars of the Treaty's verification system—the International Monitoring System, the International Data Centre and on-site inspections—as well as the Treaty's political, diplomatic and legal aspects. Each event was aimed at strengthening national scientific and decision-making capabilities, developing relevant capacities of States signatories, enabling more active contributions towards reinforcing the Treaty, strengthening the international norm against nuclear testing, and building up and sustaining the agreement's verification regime.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Preparatory Commission postponed various activities of its integrated capacity-building and training programme, including training events for the National Data Centre, station operator training sessions and other technical courses. It adapted activities to a virtual format whenever possible. For example, it further expanded a National Data Centre e-learning course on accessing and using data and products related to the Treaty. The Preparatory Commission also began a series of webinars for National Data Centre administrators, opening it in September with a discussion entitled “Radionuclide processing and RN software products”.⁴⁷

In September, the Preparatory Commission unveiled an interactive, high-resolution virtual tour of the former test site in Semipalatinsk, Kazakhstan. That tour, which provided historical information on each of the three nuclear tests conducted there between 1969 and 1970,⁴⁸ was the first in a series under development. Future similar products were expected to include the Operations

⁴⁶ In addition, the Executive Secretary addressed business continuity in the context of the pandemic, as well as efforts to lower the average backlog period for data products. He also discussed the Preparatory Commission's achievements under its Medium-Term Strategy (2018–2021).

⁴⁷ Future topics were expected to include the Preparatory Commission's iNSPIRE software, as well as the Geant4-based RAdioNuclide Detectors Simulation software (GRANDSim).

⁴⁸ The information included details on each test such as its date, depth of burial and yield.

Centre of the International Data Centre, the Technology Support and Training Centre, and facilities of the International Monitoring System.

Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, adopted in 2017, includes a comprehensive set of prohibitions on participating in any nuclear-weapon activity.

In 2020, 6 States⁴⁹ signed the Treaty, 16 States⁵⁰ ratified it and Niue acceded to it. On 24 October, the conditions for the Treaty's entry into force were met when the fiftieth instrument of ratification or accession was deposited with the Secretary-General.⁵¹ As at 31 December, the number of signatory States stood at 86 and the number of ratifying or acceding States stood at 51.

In a statement⁵² to mark the fiftieth ratification of the Treaty, the Secretary-General commended the States that had ratified it and saluted the work of civil society. He noted that its entry into force was a tribute to the survivors of nuclear explosions and tests, many of whom had advocated for the Treaty. Describing the milestone as representing a meaningful commitment towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons, the Secretary-General expressed his readiness to carry out the functions assigned to him by the Treaty.

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 Treaty). 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.

According to data published by the parties pursuant to the biannual exchange of data required by the Treaty, as at 1 October, the parties possessed aggregate total numbers of strategic offensive arms as laid out in the table below.

⁴⁹ Belize, Malta, Mozambique, Niger, Sudan and Zimbabwe.

⁵⁰ Belize, Benin, Botswana, Fiji, Honduras, Ireland, Jamaica, Lesotho, Malaysia, Malta, Namibia, Nauru, Nigeria, Paraguay, Saint Kitts and Nevis, and Tuvalu.

⁵¹ In accordance with its article 15 (1), the Treaty entered into force on 22 January 2021. For more information, see United Nations, depositary notification [C.N.478.2020.TREATIES-XXVI.9](#), 26 October 2020.

⁵² Stéphane Dujarric, Spokesman for the Secretary-General, [statement](#) on the occasion of the fiftieth ratification of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, New York, 24 October 2020.

New START aggregate numbers of strategic offensive arms

<i>Category of data</i>	<i>United States</i>	<i>Russian Federation</i>
Deployed intercontinental ballistic missiles, deployed submarine-launched ballistic missiles and deployed heavy bombers	675	510
Warheads on deployed intercontinental ballistic missiles, on deployed submarine-launched ballistic missiles and nuclear warheads counted for deployed heavy bombers	1,457	1,447
Deployed and non-deployed launchers of intercontinental ballistic missiles, deployed and non-deployed launchers of submarine-launched ballistic missiles, and deployed and non-deployed heavy bombers	800	764

Source: United States Department of State, Bureau of Arms Control, Verification and Compliance, [Fact Sheet](#), 1 October 2020.

The Treaty was to remain in force until 5 February 2021, although it could be extended for a period of up to five years without legislative approval.⁵³

In 2020, arms control negotiators from the Russian Federation and the United States met in Vienna on four occasions—on 16 January, on 22 June, from 27 to 30 July, and on 17 and 18 August—to discuss the possible extension of the New START Treaty, as well as potential future arms control agreements and other issues related to strategic stability. Their meeting on 22 June resulted in an agreement to hold expert-level discussions on space security, verification, transparency and military doctrines and capabilities.⁵⁴ Those discussions took place from 27 to 30 July. Then, following the talks on 17 and 18 August, it was noted that progress had been made and the extension of the New START Treaty discussed.

During the ongoing negotiations, the Russian Federation expressed a preference for extending the Treaty by five years. However, the United States conditioned a limited extension on China's involvement in negotiations, as well as a verifiable freeze on all nuclear weapons not covered by the New START Treaty.⁵⁵ Citing the large difference between its nuclear arsenal and the arsenals

⁵³ On 3 February 2021, the Russian Federation and the United States announced the completion of procedures to extend the New START Treaty for five years, until 5 February 2026. For more information, see Antony Blinken, Secretary of State of the United States, [press statement](#) on the extension of the New START Treaty with the Russian Federation, 3 February 2021; and Russian Federation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, [statement](#) on the extension of the Treaty on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms, 3 February 2021.

⁵⁴ Russian Federation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “[Briefing by Deputy Director of the Information and Press Department Alexey Zaytsev, Moscow, July 30, 2020](#)” (Russian-US Strategic Meeting).

⁵⁵ United States, Department of State, “[Online Press Briefing with Ambassador Marshall Billingslea, Special Presidential Envoy for Arms Control, And Lieutenant General Thomas A. Bussiere, Deputy Commander, United States Strategic Command \(USSTRATCOM\)](#)”, 24 June 2020.

of the Russian Federation and the United States, China declined to participate.⁵⁶ By October, negotiations had narrowed to a limited extension of the New START Treaty coupled with a freeze on the nuclear arsenals of the Russian Federation and the United States, including those weapons not covered by the Treaty. However, negotiations appeared to break down over the United States' position that the freeze must be verifiable.⁵⁷ In November, the United States Department of State indicated that both sides had reached a "plateau" in their discussions.⁵⁸

Proposed moratorium on the deployment by the United States and Russian Federation of missiles previously banned by the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty

In October, President Putin of the Russian Federation offered the addition of "reciprocal verification measures" to his 2019 proposed moratorium on the deployment of missiles previously banned by the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty. In that regard, he suggested that verification could focus on Aegis Ashore ballistic-missile defence systems deployed at North Atlantic Treaty Organization bases in Europe and on military facilities of the Russian Federation in Kaliningrad.⁵⁹

The United States rejected that proposal. North Atlantic Treaty Organization States in Europe acknowledged the offer, but neither accepted nor rejected it.⁶⁰

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

On 5 January 2020, the Islamic Republic of Iran announced that it "discards the last key component of its operational limitations in the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, which is the limit on the number of centrifuges".⁶¹ The Government added, however, that it would continue to abide by its IAEA safeguards commitments under the Plan of Action.

Since May 2019, the Islamic Republic of Iran had taken a series of steps, spaced approximately 60 days apart, to reduce its commitments under the Plan in

⁵⁶ China, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "[Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hua Chunying's Regular Press Conference on June 11, 2020](#)", 11 June 2020.

⁵⁷ United States, Congressional Research Service, "[Status of U.S.-Russian Nuclear Arms Control Talks](#)", 3 February 2021.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

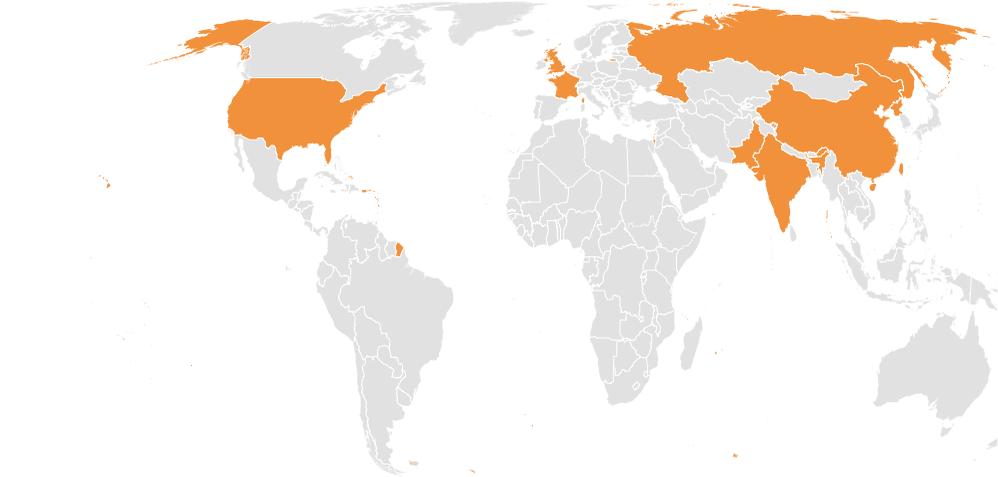
⁵⁹ Russian Federation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "[Statement by Vladimir Putin on additional steps to de-escalate the situation in Europe after the termination of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty \(INF Treaty\)](#)", 26 October 2020.

⁶⁰ The United States and its allies had alleged that the Russian Federation had deployed four battalions of an intermediate-range missile within range of NATO States. On 12 December 2019, the United States tested a "prototype conventionally-configured ground-launched ballistic missile" of intermediate range. The Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty was terminated in 2019.

⁶¹ MEHR News Agency, "[Iran takes final JCPOA step, removing last limit on nuclear program](#)", 5 January 2020.

Nuclear modernization programmes

In recent years, States possessing nuclear weapons have stepped up nuclear modernization efforts, resulting in the development of new weapons systems, qualitative improvement of existing systems and the development of new nuclear-capable platforms. It has been argued that the modernization programmes of the five nuclear-weapon States identified in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty are inconsistent with commitments undertaken as parties to the Treaty.



The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. 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 Republic of Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan has not yet been determined. Final status of the Abyei area is not yet determined.

Map source: United Nations Geospatial Information Section.

📍 **China's** nuclear arsenal modernization efforts include the development of the Type 094 and Type 096 ballistic-missile submarines, the JL-3 submarine-launched ballistic missile and road-mobile missile systems such as the DF-41 intercontinental ballistic missile, which will replace older, silo-based systems.

📍 The **Democratic People's Republic of Korea** is in the process of developing and testing various delivery systems capable of delivering nuclear weapons. Recent ballistic-missile tests have focused on developing both its short-range and submarine-launched ballistic missiles.

📍 **France's** nuclear modernization campaign includes modernization of its submarine-launched ballistic missiles and their associated TNO warheads, refurbishment of its ASMP-A air-launched cruise missiles and the development of a third-generation ballistic-missile submarine for use in the 2030s.

📍 **India's** nuclear modernization programme focuses on the creation of a strategic nuclear triad and the establishment of a credible nuclear deterrent. India is developing an indigenous ballistic-missile submarine, enhancing its submarine-launched and long-range ballistic missile capabilities, and increasing the size of its nuclear arsenal.

📍 While **Israel** is generally purported to have nuclear weapons, it officially neither confirms nor denies that it possesses them.

📍 **Pakistan** is expected to increase its nuclear arsenal and continue actively augmenting its nuclear-capable ballistic and cruise missiles over the next decade. Additionally, Pakistan is developing the Babur-3 SLCM in a bid to develop a nuclear triad and ensure a secure second-strike capability.

📍 The **Russian Federation's** strategic and non-strategic nuclear force modernization includes retiring

and replacing Soviet-era missile systems, the introduction of Borei-class ballistic-missile submarines and the integration of several new types of nuclear-capable delivery systems.

📍 The **United Kingdom** aims to replace its current group of four Vanguard-class ballistic-missile submarines with four Dreadnought-class ballistic-missile submarines by the early 2030s. The country has also begun to improve the lifespan of the Trident Holbrook warhead.

📍 The **United States'** nuclear modernization plan involves all three legs of its strategic nuclear triad. It includes the development of the Columbia-class ballistic-missile submarines, the F-35A nuclear-capable tactical fighter-bomber, and the Grand-Based Strategic Deterrent and Long-Range Standoff systems. The United States also aims to increase plutonium core production and modernize the command-and-control systems of its Department of Defense.

response to the unilateral withdrawal of the United States in May 2018. The action of the Islamic Republic of Iran on 5 January was the fifth—and, according to the Government, final—step in a phased reduction of commitments.⁶² The country had described all its reductions as reversible actions.⁶³

Dispute-resolution mechanism

The dispute-resolution mechanism is a time-limited process by which parties to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action can refer the issue of non-compliance to the Joint Commission, which oversees the implementation of the Plan of Action, potentially leading to the reimposition of United Nations sanctions previously lifted in line with Security Council resolution [2231 \(2015\)](#).

On 14 January, France, Germany and the United Kingdom referred four earlier withdrawals of the Islamic Republic of Iran from nuclear-related commitments to the Coordinator of the Joint Commission, Josep Borrell, in connection with the dispute-resolution mechanism.⁶⁴ On 24 January, the Coordinator stated that the mechanism's review process would be extended “due to the complexity of the issues involved”.⁶⁵ Then, on 4 February, news media quoted him saying that he had agreed with the three countries to “continuously postpone” the 15-day limit of the first step in the dispute-resolution process.

On 3 July, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Javad Zarif, referred the Coordinator to the issue of the Plan's implementation by France, Germany and the United Kingdom. The following day, the Minister stated that his country had previously triggered the dispute-resolution mechanism “on at least 6 occasions” in relation to actions by France, Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States.⁶⁶

⁶² The preceding phases were as follows: (a) in May 2019, the Islamic Republic of Iran said that it would no longer abide by the limits on its stockpiles of enriched uranium and of heavy water; (b) in July 2019, the Islamic Republic of Iran started enriching uranium beyond 3.67 per cent and suspended the transformation of the Arak Heavy Water Reactor; (c) in September 2019, the Islamic Republic of Iran announced that it would cease to honour the limitations on research and development of advanced centrifuges imposed by the Plan of Action; and (d) in November 2019, the Islamic Republic of Iran stated that it would resume enrichment of uranium at Fordow Fuel Enrichment Plant.

⁶³ However, some countries viewed certain results of the actions of the Islamic Republic of Iran not to be fully reversible, such as the knowledge and experience gained through testing advanced centrifuges beyond the limits of the Plan of Action.

⁶⁴ Germany, Federal Foreign Office, “Joint statement by the Foreign Ministers of France, Germany and the United Kingdom on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action: 14 January 2020”, [press release](#), 14 January 2020. As per procedures set forth in paragraph 36 of the Plan of Action, the countries referred the matter to the Joint Commission in a letter from their foreign ministers to its Coordinator (i.e., the High Representative of the European Union).

⁶⁵ European Union External Action Service, “[Statement by High Representative Josep Borrell following consultations with JCPOA participants](#)”, 24 January 2020.

⁶⁶ Javad Zarif, [Twitter post](#), 4 July 2020, 1:20 p.m. According to the Foreign Minister, the Islamic Republic of Iran had previously sent letters to trigger the mechanism on 16 December 2016, 10 May 2018, 17 June 2018, 6 November 2018, 8 May 2019 and 2 July 2020.

The United States later notified the Security Council, in a letter⁶⁷ dated 20 August, that the Islamic Republic of Iran was “in significant non-performance of its commitments” under the Plan of Action and, therefore, the process leading to the reimposition of sanctions under paragraph 7 (a) had been initiated. Then, on 21 September, the United States informed the President of the Council that, pursuant to paragraph 12 of resolution [2231 \(2015\)](#), all sanctions provisions previously terminated by that resolution were again in force, effective midnight Greenwich Mean Time on 20 September.⁶⁸

However, in a series of responses to the United States’ letter of 20 August, a majority of the Council’s members informed the body’s President that the letter did not constitute a notification as defined under paragraph 11 of resolution [2231 \(2015\)](#).⁶⁹ The Secretary-General, in a letter⁷⁰ dated 19 September, noted that the two most recent presidents of the Security Council had indicated that they were not in a position to take any action on the matter. Citing apparent “uncertainty as to whether or not the process set forth in paragraph 11 of resolution 2231 was indeed initiated”, the Secretary-General said that it was not for him “to proceed as if no such uncertainty exists”.

Verification and monitoring

In 2020, IAEA continued to report each quarter to its Board of Governors and the Security Council on the implementation of nuclear-related commitments of the Islamic Republic of Iran under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, as well as on matters related to verification and monitoring in the Islamic Republic of Iran in light of Security Council resolution [2231 \(2015\)](#).⁷¹

In that reporting, the Agency noted that the Islamic Republic of Iran had been engaging in several activities inconsistent with the Plan of Action, in line with announcements by the Government since May 2019. Among those, the Agency noted that the country had continued to enrich uranium up to 4.5 per cent U-235,

⁶⁷ [S/2020/815](#).

⁶⁸ Letter dated 21 September 2020 from the Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council ([S/2020/927](#)).

⁶⁹ Letter dated 21 September from Belgium, Estonia, France and Germany transmitting a statement by the European Union High Representative and Coordinator of the Joint Commission of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action ([S/2020/931](#)); letters dated 20 August ([S/2020/817](#)) and 20 September ([S/2020/923](#)) from China; letter dated 26 August from Belgium, Estonia, France and Germany ([S/2020/839](#)); letter dated 21 August from Indonesia ([S/2020/824](#)); letters dated 20 August ([S/2020/821](#)) and 21 September ([S/2020/928](#)) from the Niger, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, South Africa and Tunisia; letters dated 20 August ([S/2020/816](#)), 21 August ([S/2020/828](#)) and 20 September ([S/2020/924](#)) from the Russian Federation. In addition, Security Council members sent a number of letters not published as official documents of the Council.

⁷⁰ [S/2020/921](#).

⁷¹ IAEA documents [GOV/2020/5](#), [GOV/2020/26](#), [GOV/2020/41](#) and [GOV/2020/51](#).

above the 3.67-per-cent limit prescribed by the Plan of Action.⁷² IAEA also found that the Islamic Republic of Iran was accumulating low-enriched uranium far in excess of the Plan's limit,⁷³ including at two locations where such accumulation was not permissible under the Plan.⁷⁴ Furthermore, at its Pilot Fuel Enrichment Plant, the Islamic Republic of Iran continued to test new types of advanced uranium-enrichment centrifuges not explicitly listed in the Plan of Action, and to do so in a manner inconsistent with the Plan. The country was also (a) transferring centrifuge cascades, as well as research and development activities from the Pilot Fuel Enrichment Plant to the Fordow Fuel Enrichment Plant, and (b) installing and operating cascades of advanced centrifuges in the Fuel Enrichment Plant in Natanz.⁷⁵

Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty safeguards

In addition, IAEA reported on the implementation of (a) its 1974 agreement with the Islamic Republic of Iran on the application of safeguards in connection with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, and (b) the additional protocol provisionally applied by the country pending its entry into force. The Agency's findings in that regard were contained in its quarterly reports to the IAEA Board of Governors and, beginning in March, in separate, dedicated reports.⁷⁶

In the quarterly reports, IAEA stated that it continued to verify the non-diversion of declared nuclear material in the Islamic Republic of Iran pursuant to the safeguards agreement and carry out its evaluation regarding the absence of undeclared nuclear materials and activities in the country.

IAEA also reported on an investigation concerning anthropogenic uranium particles found at an undeclared location in the Islamic Republic of Iran in early 2019.⁷⁷ After reviewing the information provided by the country on the particles' possible source, as well as additional environmental samples, the Agency requested the Government to provide additional information related to, inter alia, the presence of isotopically altered particles of low-enriched uranium found at the

⁷² [Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action](#), paras. 5 and 7. The Islamic Republic of Iran had been enriching uranium up to 4.5 per cent U-235 since July 2019.

⁷³ [GOV/2020/51](#), para. 28.

⁷⁴ The Fuel Enrichment Plant in Natanz is the only location where accumulating low-enriched uranium is permissible under the Plan of Action. According to the IAEA, the Islamic Republic of Iran was also accumulating the material at two additional locations: the separate Pilot Fuel Enrichment Plant in Natanz and the Fordow Fuel Enrichment Plant.

⁷⁵ The Agency provided further details on many of those activities in additional, ad hoc reports. See IAEA documents [GOV/INF/2020/10](#), [GOV/INF/2020/15](#), [GOV/INF/2020/16](#) and [GOV/INF/2020/17](#).

⁷⁶ IAEA documents [GOV/2020/15](#), [GOV/2020/30](#) and [GOV/2020/47](#). Before 2016, the Agency issued quarterly reports on the implementation of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty safeguards agreement and relevant provisions of Security Council resolutions in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

⁷⁷ The Agency first reported the detection of those uranium particles in November 2019. See IAEA document [GOV/2019/55](#), para. 29.

undeclared location.⁷⁸ Then, in November, the Agency reported that explanations of the Islamic Republic of Iran for the presence of those particles were not “technically credible” and that a full and prompt explanation was needed.⁷⁹

In addition, the Agency’s safeguards reports included descriptions of its efforts and interactions with the Islamic Republic of Iran to clarify information relating to, inter alia, possible undeclared nuclear material and nuclear-related activities at three locations that the country had not declared. In the relevant report dated 3 March, IAEA stated that the Islamic Republic of Iran had yet to provide either clarification on those matters or access to the sites, which the Agency had requested pursuant to article 4.b.(i) and article 5.c of the additional protocol to the safeguards agreement of the Islamic Republic of Iran.⁸⁰

Consequently, on 19 June, the IAEA Board of Governors adopted a resolution⁸¹ in which it expressed “serious concerns” about the refusal of the Islamic Republic of Iran to grant access to two of the sites.⁸² In that regard, it called on the country to “fully cooperate with the Agency and satisfy the Agency’s requests without any further delay”.

The IAEA Director General, Rafael Grossi, visited Tehran from 24 to 26 August to discuss access to the requested sites. On 26 August, in a joint statement⁸³ co-signed by the Vice-President of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran, the Islamic Republic of Iran agreed to voluntarily provide IAEA with access to the two specified locations.⁸⁴

Implementation of Security Council resolution 2231 (2015)

By its resolution [2231 \(2015\)](#), on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, the Security Council requested the Secretary-General to report every six months on the resolution’s implementation. In his ninth and tenth reports,⁸⁵ issued on 11 June and 7 December, the Secretary-General continued to focus on the resolution’s provisions on the following: (a) restrictions applicable to nuclear-

⁷⁸ IAEA document, [GOV/2020/41](#), para. 32.

⁷⁹ IAEA document, [GOV/2020/51](#), paras. 33–25.

⁸⁰ The Agency said its requests for clarifications and access were strictly in accordance with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty safeguards agreement and the additional protocol of the Islamic Republic of Iran and were not related to the Agency’s verification and monitoring of nuclear-related commitments under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

⁸¹ IAEA document, [GOV/2020/34](#).

⁸² In its June report on the application of Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty safeguards in the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Agency said that it had assessed that there would be no verification value in conducting complementary access at the third location. See IAEA document, [GOV/2020/30](#), para. 4.

⁸³ IAEA, “[Joint Statement by the Director General of the IAEA and the Vice-President of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Head of the AEIOI](#)”, press release, 26 August 2020.

⁸⁴ IAEA document, [GOV/2020/47](#), annex.

⁸⁵ [S/2020/531](#) and [S/2020/1177](#).

related transfers, ballistic-missile-related transfers and arms-related transfers to or from the Islamic Republic of Iran; and (b) asset freezes and travel bans.⁸⁶

In the June report, the Secretary-General observed that some items seized by the United States in November 2019 and February 2020 in “international waters (seaward of the territorial sea of Yemen and any other State)” may have been transferred in a manner inconsistent with the resolution, and that cruise missiles and/or parts thereof used in the attacks on Saudi Arabia in 2019 originated from the Islamic Republic of Iran. The Secretary-General also reported on other allegations concerning activities related to ballistic missiles, as well as transfers of related items and technologies and other arms by the Islamic Republic of Iran.

In August, the United States submitted to the Security Council a draft resolution to extend arms-related restrictions on the Islamic Republic of Iran that were set to expire in October.⁸⁷ On 14 August, the Council considered the draft resolution and rejected it by a vote of 2 to 2, with 11 abstentions.⁸⁸

Democratic People’s Republic of Korea

Tensions on the Korean Peninsula continued into 2020 from the last days of 2019 when 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—had promised that “the world would witness a new strategic weapon ... in the near future”.⁸⁹ For the first time since taking power, he did not deliver a televised New Year address in January 2020.

Despite a lack of progress during the year towards implementing the Joint Statement⁹⁰ from the Singapore summit in June 2018, the United States signalled that it remained open to diplomatic negotiations and, according to media reports, continued to extend diplomatic overtures to the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea through various channels. While independent experts had widely

⁸⁶ The provisions on those matters are contained in the resolution’s annex B.

⁸⁷ Per annex B, paras. 5, 6 (b) and 6 (e).

⁸⁸ China and the Russian Federation voted against while the Dominican Republic and the United States voted in favour. The remaining 11 States of the Council abstained.

⁸⁹ Addressing the fifth plenary meeting of the seventh Central Committee of the Workers’ Party of Korea, held from 28 to 31 December 2019, Chairman Kim also called for “launching an offensive for frontal breakthrough” in economic, political, diplomatic and military affairs. See Korean Central News Agency, “[Report on the 5th Plenary Meeting of the 7th C.C., WPK](#)”, 1 January 2020.

⁹⁰ The Joint Statement from the summit in Singapore committed the United States to provide unspecified “security guarantees” in exchange for the “complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula”. It also covered several other issues, including new peaceful relations, denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, recovery of soldiers’ remains and follow-up negotiations between high-level officials. However, it did not include specific measures leading to the dismantlement of the nuclear weapons of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, instead leaving the matter for future negotiations.

anticipated that the countries would not pursue high-level engagement in the lead-up to the United States presidential election in November, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic also hindered further diplomatic engagement at all levels, especially due to strict mitigation measures that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea enacted in response.

Chairman Kim observed a military drill by his country on 28 February, exactly one year after he ended his second summit with the President of the United States, Donald Trump. In addition to coinciding with the first anniversary of the Hanoi summit,⁹¹ the exercise took place two days after the United States and the Republic of Korea announced their postponement, due to COVID-19, of their annual joint military drills for the first half of 2020.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea carried out a series of missile and artillery rocket launches over the next month. On 2 and 8 March, its leader observed a "firepower strike drill of long-range artillery sub-units",⁹² including the launch of five missiles. The Security Council discussed those launches in a closed session on 6 March, under its agenda item for "any other business", and Council members Belgium, Estonia, France, Germany and the United Kingdom subsequently issued a joint statement.⁹³ Responding to separate criticism of the launches by the Republic of Korea, the First Vice Department Director of the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea, Kim Yo Jong, called the country "foolish".⁹⁴ The comment by Chairman Kim's sister was her first official statement carried by state media.

On 21 March, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea launched two short-range missiles, which each flew a distance of 410 km at an altitude of 50 km. On 29 March, the country fired two more short-range missiles, each of which travelled 230 km and reached a maximum altitude of 30 km. The Security Council discussed the launches in closed consultations on 31 March, and its six European members⁹⁵ condemned the launch afterwards in a joint statement.⁹⁶

Meanwhile, the Koreas failed over the course of the year to achieve new diplomatic progress or preserve recent gains. Several particularly visible setbacks

⁹¹ The second summit between Chairman Kim and President Trump took place in Hanoi on 27 and 28 February 2019. The meeting concluded early when the sides determined that they could not reach an agreement.

⁹² Korean Central News Agency, "[Supreme Leader Kim Jong Un Guides Another Firepower Strike Drill of Long-range Artillery Sub-units of KPA on Front](#)", 10 March 2020.

⁹³ Germany, Permanent Mission to the United Nations, "[Joint Statement by Germany, Belgium, Estonia, France, and the United Kingdom on North Korea, March 5](#)", press release, 5 March 2020.

⁹⁴ Korean Central News Agency, "[First Vice-department Director of WPK Central Committee Kim Yo Jong Blasts Chongwadae's Foolish Way of Thinking](#)", 3 March 2020.

⁹⁵ Belgium, Estonia, France, Germany, Poland and United Kingdom.

⁹⁶ Germany, Permanent Mission to the United Nations, "[Joint Statement by Germany, Belgium, Estonia, France, Poland, and the United Kingdom on North Korea, March 31](#)", press release, 31 March 2020.

occurred in June, as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea ended all official communications with the Republic of Korea, and demolished the Kaesong liaison office that the two Governments had jointly operated.

In addition, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea issued a series of confrontational statements in the middle of the year. On 25 June—the seventieth anniversary of the start of the Korean War—the Government said it would continue to develop its “nuclear war deterrent” due to the continued “hostile policy” of the United States, while also blaming that country for the breakdown in bilateral dialogue.⁹⁷ In early July, First Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Choe Son Hui publicly stated that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea no longer had any interest in diplomacy with the United States. Then, in a speech on 27 July to mark the sixty-seventh anniversary of the Korean Armistice Agreement, Chairman Kim said that his country was a “nuclear power” with a “reliable and effective self-defensive nuclear deterrent”.⁹⁸ The United States, however, responded by restating its readiness for negotiations.

In the ensuing months, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea experienced further domestic challenges, including severe typhoons and flooding, as well as continuing economic impacts from COVID-19 public health restrictions and United Nations sanctions. Together, those factors contributed to significant food shortages and other humanitarian concerns. Publicly lamenting the slow economic progress since 2016, Chairman Kim announced in August that he would institute a new five-year plan in January 2021, at the eighth Congress of the Workers' Party of Korea.

On 10 October, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea held a military parade where it unveiled several new weapons, including an atypically large road-mobile, liquid-fuelled intercontinental-range ballistic missile, as well as a solid-fuelled submarine-launched ballistic missile. The new intercontinental ballistic missile was significantly larger than the country's next-largest missile, the Hwasong-15,⁹⁹ which the country displayed on a series of newly revealed 11-axle transporter-erector launchers. Apart from those systems, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea displayed three other nuclear-capable missiles at the parade: the Pukguksong-2 medium-range ballistic missile and the Hwasong-12 intermediate-range ballistic missile. The country also displayed several shorter-range missiles, as well as long-range artillery rockets it had tested extensively in 2019 and 2020.

As the Democratic People's Republic of Korea commenced preparations later in the year for the eighth Congress of the Workers' Party of Korea, diplomatic

⁹⁷ Korean Central News Agency, “Withdrawal of U.S. Hostile Policy towards DPRK - Indispensable Prerequisite for Peace and Stability on Korean Peninsula: Institute for Disarmament and Peace of DPRK Foreign Ministry”, 25 June 2020.

⁹⁸ Korean Central News Agency, “Supreme Leader Kim Jong Un Makes Speech at Sixth National Conference on War Veterans”, 28 July 2020.

⁹⁹ The Hwasong-15 was flight-tested in November 2017.

processes remained stalled and the country remained under severe national restrictions. It thus remained unclear whether and how diplomatic negotiations for sustainable peace and the complete and verifiable denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula could be resumed in 2021.

Nuclear disarmament verification

Implementation of General Assembly resolution 74/50 on nuclear disarmament verification

By its resolution [74/50](#) of 12 December 2019, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to seek the substantive views of Member States on the report¹⁰⁰ of the Group of Governmental Experts on Nuclear Disarmament Verification and to report back to the General Assembly at its seventy-fifth session.

Fourteen Member States and the European Union submitted their views, as reflected in the relevant report¹⁰¹ of the Secretary-General, issued on 25 June.

In resolution [74/50](#), the Assembly also requested the Secretary-General to establish a group of governmental experts of up to 25 participants, chosen based on equitable geographical representation and equal representation of women and men, to meet in Geneva for four sessions of one week each in 2021 and 2022, to further consider nuclear disarmament verification issues, including, inter alia, the concept of a group of scientific and technical experts. The new group was to build on the report¹⁰² of the Group of Governmental Experts on Nuclear Disarmament Verification and the views of Member States referred to in paragraph 2 of the resolution.

After careful consideration of the appropriate composition of the requested group of governmental experts, the Secretary-General invited the Governments of 25 countries¹⁰³ to nominate an expert to participate in the work of the group.

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

¹⁰⁰ [A/74/90](#).

¹⁰¹ [A/75/126](#).

¹⁰² [A/74/90](#).

¹⁰³ 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.

survey of the work of IAEA in 2020 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 programme involves activities that enable the Agency to provide assurances to the international community regarding the peaceful use of nuclear material and facilities.^{104,105} The IAEA 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.¹⁰⁶

Safeguards conclusions

At the end of each year, 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 agreement¹⁰⁷ and an additional protocol¹⁰⁸ in force, IAEA must have been able to conduct all necessary verification and evaluation activities for the State and have found no indication that, in its judgement, would give rise to a safeguards concern. For States that have a comprehensive safeguards agreement but no additional protocol in force, IAEA draws a safeguards conclusion regarding only the non-diversion of declared nuclear material, as the Agency does not have sufficient tools to provide credible assurances regarding the absence of undeclared nuclear material and activities.

For States for which the broader conclusion had been drawn, IAEA was able to implement integrated safeguards—an optimized combination of measures available under comprehensive safeguards agreements and additional protocols—to maximize effectiveness and efficiency in fulfilling its safeguards obligations.

In 2020, safeguards were applied for 183 States^{109,110} with safeguards agreements in force with IAEA. Of the 131 States that had both a comprehensive

¹⁰⁴ The designations employed and the presentation of material in this section, including the members cited, do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the IAEA or its member States concerning the legal status of any country or territory or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers.

¹⁰⁵ The referenced number of States parties to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty is based on the number of instruments of ratification, accession or succession that had been deposited.

¹⁰⁶ For more information, see IAEA, “[Safeguards and verification](#)”. See also article III (1) of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

¹⁰⁷ Comprehensive safeguards agreements are based on [INFCIRC/153 \(Corrected\)](#).

¹⁰⁸ Additional protocols are based on [INFCIRC/540 \(Corrected\)](#).

¹⁰⁹ Those States do not include the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, where the IAEA did not implement safeguards and, therefore, could not draw any conclusion.

¹¹⁰ Safeguards were also applied for Taiwan Province of China.

safeguards agreement and an additional protocol in force,¹¹¹ the Agency concluded that all nuclear material remained in peaceful activities in 72 States.¹¹² IAEA was unable to draw the same conclusion for 59 States, as the necessary evaluation regarding the absence of undeclared nuclear material and activities for each of those States remained ongoing. For those 59 States, and the 44 States with a comprehensive safeguards agreement but with no additional protocol in force, IAEA concluded only that declared nuclear material remained in peaceful activities.

Integrated safeguards were implemented for the whole of 2020 or part thereof for 66 States.^{113,114}

For the three States for which IAEA implemented safeguards pursuant to item-specific safeguards agreements based on [INFCIRC/66/Rev.2](#), IAEA concluded that nuclear material, facilities or other items to which safeguards had been applied remained in peaceful activities. Safeguards for nuclear material were also implemented in selected facilities in the five nuclear-weapon States party to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty under their respective voluntary offer agreements. For those five States, 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 at 31 December, 10 States parties to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty had yet to bring comprehensive safeguards agreements into force pursuant to article III of the Treaty. IAEA could not draw any safeguards conclusions for those States parties.

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.

IAEA continued to implement the [Plan of Action to Promote the Conclusion of Safeguards Agreements and Additional Protocols](#), which was updated in

¹¹¹ Or an additional protocol being provisionally applied, pending its entry into force.

¹¹² Such a conclusion was also reached for Taiwan Province of China.

¹¹³ Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Belgium, Botswana, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Canada, Chile, Croatia, Cuba, Czechia, Denmark, Ecuador, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Holy See, Hungary, Iceland, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Mali, Malta, Mauritius, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Norway, Palau, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, Seychelles, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan and Viet Nam.

¹¹⁴ Integrated safeguards were also applied for Taiwan Province of China.

September. The Agency held consultations with representatives from several member and non-member States in Geneva, New York and Vienna at various times throughout the year. During those outreach activities, IAEA encouraged States to conclude comprehensive safeguards agreements and additional protocols and to amend their small quantities protocol.

During the year, a comprehensive safeguards agreement with a small quantities protocol and an additional protocol was approved by the Board of Governors for Eritrea. A voluntary offer agreement and an additional protocol entered into force for the United Kingdom.

IAEA continued to facilitate the conclusion of safeguards agreements and additional protocols, and the amendment or rescission of small quantities protocols. In 2020, the Director General wrote to 31 States with small quantities protocols based on the original standard text calling upon them to amend or rescind them. The Director General stressed that that was essential to address a weakness in the IAEA safeguards system recognized by the Board of Governors 15 years ago and that the old standard small quantities protocol was inadequate for the current safeguards system. During the year, a small quantities protocol was amended for Haiti. By the end of 2020, 69 States had accepted the revised small quantities protocol text (which was in force for 63 of those States) and 8 States had rescinded their small quantities protocols.

Verification activities

Throughout 2020, IAEA continued to verify and monitor the nuclear-related commitments of the Islamic Republic of Iran under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. During the year, four quarterly reports and four reports providing updates on developments in between the issuance of quarterly reports,¹¹⁵ entitled “Verification and monitoring in the Islamic Republic of Iran in light of United Nations Security Council resolution 2231 (2015)”, were submitted to the Board of Governors and, in parallel, to the United Nations Security Council.

In August, the Director General submitted a report¹¹⁶ to the Board of Governors entitled “Implementation of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Safeguards Agreement in the Syrian Arab Republic”, covering relevant developments since the previous report¹¹⁷ in August 2019. The Director General informed the Board of Governors that no new information had come to the knowledge of IAEA that would have an impact on the Agency’s assessment that it was very likely that a building destroyed at the Dair Alzour site was a nuclear reactor that should have been declared to IAEA by the Syrian Arab Republic.¹¹⁸ In

¹¹⁵ IAEA documents [GOV/2020/5](#), [GOV/2020/26](#), [GOV/2020/41](#) and [GOV/2020/51](#); and [GOV/INF/2020/10](#), [GOV/INF/2020/15](#), [GOV/INF/2020/16](#) and [GOV/INF/2020/17](#).

¹¹⁶ IAEA document [GOV/2020/43](#).

¹¹⁷ IAEA document [GOV/2019/34](#).

¹¹⁸ The Board of Governors, in its resolution [GOV/2011/41](#) of 9 June 2011 (adopted by a vote), had, inter alia, called on the Syrian Arab Republic to urgently remedy its non-compliance with

2020, the Director General urged the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to cooperate fully with IAEA in connection with all unresolved issues and expressed his willingness to engage with the Syrian Arab Republic to take concrete steps towards a mutually acceptable solution to that matter. The Government had yet to respond to those calls.

Based on the evaluation of information provided by the Syrian Arab Republic and all other safeguards-relevant information available to it, IAEA found no indication of the diversion of declared nuclear material from peaceful activities. For 2020, the Agency concluded, for the Syrian Arab Republic, that declared nuclear material remained in peaceful activities.

In August, the IAEA Acting Director General submitted a report¹¹⁹ to the Board of Governors and the General Conference entitled “Application of Safeguards in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea”, which provided an update of developments since the Director General’s report¹²⁰ of August 2019.

Since 1994, IAEA had not been able to conduct all necessary safeguards activities provided for in the safeguards agreement of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. From the end of 2002 until July 2007, IAEA was not able—and, since April 2009, had not been able—to implement any verification measures in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea; therefore, IAEA could not draw any safeguards conclusion regarding that country.

In 2020, no verification activities were implemented in the field, but IAEA 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 2020, the IAEA secretariat intensified efforts to enhance the Agency’s readiness to play its essential role in verifying the nuclear programme of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. In that regard, it intensified collection and analysis of open source information on the nuclear programme, expanded collection and analysis of high-resolution commercial satellite imagery to monitor the programme, completed the procurement of equipment and supplies necessary to ensure that IAEA is prepared to promptly initiate verification and monitoring activities in the country, trained IAEA inspectors on the technical features of facilities in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea and on the technologies relevant to the country’s nuclear programme, documented the knowledge of inspectors with experience conducting verification and monitoring in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, and consolidated historical information

its Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty safeguards agreement and, in particular, to provide the IAEA 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 it could provide the necessary assurance as to the exclusively peaceful nature of the nuclear programme of the Syrian Arab Republic.

¹¹⁹ IAEA document [GOV/2020/42-GC\(64\)/18](#).

¹²⁰ IAEA document [GOV/2019/33GC\(63\)/20](#).

acquired from such past activities with current information. Once a political agreement has been reached among the countries concerned, IAEA is ready to return to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in a timely manner, if requested to do so by the Government and subject to approval by the Board of Governors.

Application of safeguards in the Middle East

As requested in operative paragraph 13 of resolution [GC\(63\)/RES/13](#), on the application of IAEA safeguards in the Middle East, adopted at the sixty-third regular session of the IAEA General Conference in 2019, the Director General submitted to the IAEA Board of Governors and the General Conference at the sixty-fourth regular session a report¹²¹ on the implementation of that resolution. Reporting on the application of IAEA safeguards in the Middle East, the Director General described, inter alia, the steps he had undertaken in his efforts to further the implementation of his mandates conferred by the IAEA General Conference in resolution [GC\(63\)/RES/13](#) and in decision [GC\(44\)/DEC/12](#).

In that connection, in September 2013, following the discussions of the Board of Governors, the Director General provided IAEA member States with the “background documentation prepared for the 2012 Conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction”, describing the work of IAEA and the experience it gained concerning modalities for a zone free of nuclear weapons in the Middle East region.¹²²

Furthermore, in response to a request of the Secretary-General conveyed by the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs pursuant to the General Assembly decision [73/546](#), the IAEA secretariat provided, in September 2019, background documentation¹²³ describing the Agency's previous work on modalities of the application of safeguards in the Middle East and its role under nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties and regional arrangements. The IAEA also attended, as an observer, the first session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, held at the United Nations Headquarters in November 2019.

¹²¹ IAEA document, [GOV/2020/38-GC\(64\)/11](#).

¹²² 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)). See also “Application of IAEA Safeguards in the Middle East”, IAEA document [GOV/2013/33/Add.1-GC\(57\)/10/Add.1](#).

¹²³ [A/CONF.236/3](#)

Assurances of nuclear fuel supply

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 Type 30B cylinders containing standard commercial low-enriched uranium hexafluoride with enrichment levels of up to 4.95 per cent. The Low-Enriched Uranium Bank, which became operational in 2019, serves as a supply mechanism of last resort if an eligible Member State's supply of low-enriched uranium is disrupted and cannot be restored by commercial means.

In a new milestone for the Low-Enriched Uranium Bank, in September 2020, IAEA signed a contract with the China Nuclear Energy Industry Corporation for transporting low-enriched uranium and equipment necessary for the Bank's operation. Through that arrangement, the parties allowed for the future establishment of a second route of transportation to and from the Bank. Two of the Agency's earlier transport contracts, with TENEX and KTZ Express, also remained available for use in both directions.

Nuclear security

Nuclear Security Plan 2018–2021

IAEA continued to assist States, at their request, in making their national nuclear security regimes more robust, sustainable and effective, while also playing a central role in enhancing international cooperation in nuclear security.

In 2020, the Agency continued implementing the Nuclear Security Plan 2018–2021¹²⁴ and contributing to global efforts to achieve effective nuclear security. In that manner, IAEA established comprehensive nuclear security guidance and promoted its use through peer reviews and advisory services and capacity-building, including education and training. Furthermore, IAEA worked to assist in adhering to and implementing relevant international legal instruments, as well as in strengthening international cooperation and coordination of assistance.

International Conference on Nuclear Security

In February, the Agency convened the International Conference on Nuclear Security in Vienna. That event brought together more than 1,900 participants—a record number, which included 53 ministers—from 141 member States, 4 non-member States and 25 international organizations. The attendees formulated and exchanged views on experiences and achievements, current approaches, future directions and priorities concerning nuclear security, including cybersecurity. Participating States adopted a ministerial declaration¹²⁵ and, together with the

¹²⁴ IAEA document GC(61)/24.

¹²⁵ IAEA, “[International Conference on Nuclear Security: Sustaining and Strengthening Efforts, 10–14 February 2020—Ministerial Declaration](#)”, 10 February 2020.

European Union, delivered 109 statements¹²⁶ in which they reaffirmed their support for nuclear security.

International nuclear security framework

In 2020, progress towards the universalization of the principal binding international instruments relevant to nuclear security continued. Those instruments had been adopted under the auspices of IAEA: the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material and the 2005 Amendment thereto.¹²⁷ During the year, the number of States parties to the original Convention increased to 162 and the number of States parties to the Amendment increased to 125.

Throughout the year, IAEA continued to promote universal adherence to the Convention and its Amendment through various outreach activities. To encourage further adherence to both, the IAEA Director General sent official letters in January to States not party to the Convention, as well as to those party to the Convention but not its Amendment. Then, in February, on the margins of the International Conference on Nuclear Security, the Agency organized both a ministerial event and a technical session on universalizing the Convention and its Amendment. Furthermore, in July, it organized two webinars that brought together 300 participants to discuss the Convention and its Amendment. On the margins of the sixty-fourth IAEA General Conference in September, the Agency organized a virtual event entitled “NuSec Talks: Security through Law”,¹²⁸ where the Director General reiterated his call for universal adherence to and full implementation of the Convention and its Amendment. Additionally, in December, IAEA convened a virtual technical meeting for more than 140 representatives of States parties to the Convention and its Amendment to discuss matters within the scope of those instruments, as well as to promote the Amendment’s universalization.

Meanwhile, IAEA continued to support States in preparing for the 2021 Conference of the Parties to the Amendment to the Convention, including by convening a virtual meeting of its Preparatory Committee in December. That event involved more than 200 representatives from the States parties to the Amendment, as well as from States party only to the Convention.

¹²⁶ IAEA, “[International Conference on Nuclear Security: Sustaining and Strengthening Efforts—Statements](#)”.

¹²⁷ The Convention, which entered into force in 1987, establishes legal obligations for parties regarding the physical protection of nuclear material used for peaceful purposes during international transport, the criminalization of certain offences involving nuclear material and international cooperation. 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.

¹²⁸ For the video recording of the event, see NUSEC IAEA, “[IAEA NuSec Talks - Security through Law](#)”, YouTube video, 30 September 2020.

Nuclear security guidance for member States

IAEA continued to publish a broad range of technical guidance on nuclear security as part of its [Nuclear Security Series](#), fulfilling part of the Agency's central role in providing international support and coordination related to nuclear security.

In 2020, IAEA held two meetings of the Nuclear Security Guidance Committee, to which 59 member States nominated representatives. The Agency also released one new publication¹²⁹ and two revisions of existing publications in the Nuclear Security Series, for a total of 39 published volumes. In addition, the Agency approved three draft publications for the series while overseeing the development of 11 others. In addition, IAEA issued translations of five publications initially released in English in other official languages of the United Nations.

Incident and Trafficking Database

The IAEA Incident and Trafficking Database continued to be an important source of information assisting the IAEA secretariat, participating States and selected international organizations in strengthening nuclear security.¹³⁰ In 2020, Papua New Guinea and Rwanda joined the Database, bringing the total number of participating States to 141.

During the year, States reported 125 incidents of nuclear and other radioactive material out of regulatory control, one of which was a confirmed or likely act of trafficking,¹³¹ increasing the total number in the Database to 3,809.

Nuclear-security human-resource development

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 2020, IAEA conducted 42 security-related training activities, most of them virtual, providing training to more than 576 participants. The Agency also continued implementation of its e-learning programme—registering 2,353 new users, for a total of 8,949 users representing 170 member States—and delivered

¹²⁹ IAEA, *Preparation, Conduct and Evaluation of Exercises for Detection of and Response to Acts Involving Nuclear and Other Radioactive Material out of Regulatory Control*, IAEA Nuclear Security Series No. 41-T (Vienna, 2020).

¹³⁰ The Database is a component of the information management systems supporting the implementation of the IAEA Nuclear Security Plan.

¹³¹ 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.

a new computer-security incident-response course. Additionally, in March, IAEA convened the Leadership Meeting of the International Nuclear Security Education Network in Vienna. Furthermore, in September, the Agency held the first session of the International School on Nuclear Security for Russian-speaking countries, utilizing a virtual format.

IAEA also supported fellowships that enabled five students from four developing member States to attend a master's programme in nuclear security at the University of National and World Economy in Sofia.

Separately, the Agency's Department of Nuclear Safety and Security continued to cooperate with member States on two projects to further develop national nuclear-security support centres, including through procurement and delivery of equipment for radiation detection and physical protection.

Nuclear security peer reviews and advisory services

IAEA continued to implement peer reviews and advisory services to help States 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 2020, IAEA carried out several expert missions and workshops to provide States with guidance on drafting regulatory principles, reviewing regulatory frameworks and finalizing nuclear security regulations and associated administrative measures. Three member States approved integrated nuclear-security support plans during the year, bringing the total number of approved plans to 89.

Coordinated Research Projects

The Agency continued to coordinate with educational, 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 2020, IAEA launched one new Coordinated Research Project, entitled "Facilitation of Safe and Secure Trade Using Nuclear Detection Technology—Detection of CBRNE and Other Contraband".¹³² As part of other related Coordinated Research Project activities, IAEA developed, tested and circulated to relevant member States the first available tool for use in determining minimum detectable quantities of nuclear materials and alarm threshold values. The Agency also prepared a new technical document containing guidance on how to use the

¹³² The title contains a reference to chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and explosive materials.

tool, as well as risk-informed approaches for establishing alarm threshold values for member States.

Risk reduction

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 2020, the Agency continued to support member States in protecting radioactive material during and after use. That support helped achieve the removal of one high-activity disused sealed source from a member State, as well as the consolidation of nine sources from another member State. The Agency also completed physical protection upgrades in two member States, at 2 research reactors and 13 hospitals. In addition, it assisted 18 member States in drafting nuclear security regulations.

Export controls

Nuclear Suppliers Group

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Nuclear Suppliers Group¹³³ had to postpone its annual plenary meeting, originally scheduled for June 2020, until the middle of 2021. Other in-person meetings of its participating Governments also had to be postponed, and the timing for outreach and representational activities had to be revisited.

The term of Werner Bauwens (Belgium) as Chair commenced in June 2020, as planned, and the Group undertook remote consultations and decision-making by written procedure. In occasional, informal briefing sessions that they held virtually during the year, the participating Governments discussed recent developments and trends with a view to their common aim of supporting the non-proliferation of nuclear arms through the implementation of Guidelines for nuclear¹³⁴ and nuclear-related¹³⁵ exports.

¹³³ As at the end of 2020, the participating Governments of the Group were the following: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, China, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom and United States. The European Commission and the Chair of the Zangger Committee participated as permanent observers.

¹³⁴ IAEA document [INFCIRC/254/Rev.14/Part 1](#).

¹³⁵ IAEA document [INFCIRC/254/Rev.11/Part 2](#).

In 2020, the Group laid plans to intensify preparations for its 2021 Brussels Plenary Meeting in all its aspects. The preparations were expected to include discussions within its Consultative Group, as well as separate meetings for the following: information exchange, licensing and enforcement officers, and technical experts.¹³⁶

The Chair stated, “These are challenging times indeed, but as any vibrant community with strong roots and a clear purpose, the [Nuclear Suppliers Group] will stay on course and play its role in nuclear non-proliferation.”¹³⁷

Missile Technology Control Regime

Owing to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, outreach activities undertaken by the Missile Technology Control Regime were limited in 2020.¹³⁸ The Regime was represented at the Asian Export Control Seminar in Tokyo in February, and the Regime’s Chair, Dell Higgie (New Zealand), carried out an outreach visit to Israel in March.¹³⁹ Her successor, Thomas Hajnoczi (Austria), assumed the role of Chair in October.

The Regime planned to hold its thirty-third Plenary Meeting from 15 to 19 March 2021 in Innsbruck, Austria.

Hague Code of Conduct Against Ballistic Missile Proliferation

The nineteenth annual regular meeting of the subscribing States to the Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation took place on 12 October in Vienna, chaired by Switzerland and with the participation of 71 delegations.¹⁴⁰ Since the 2019 regular meeting, three additional States¹⁴¹ had subscribed to the Code, bringing the total number of subscribing States to 143.

The subscribing States reaffirmed the importance of the Code as a unique multilateral confidence-building and transparency instrument against ballistic-missile proliferation, which contributes to the process of strengthening

¹³⁶ The Consultative Group was tasked with holding consultations on issues associated with the Guidelines on nuclear supply and its technical annexes, while the Information Exchange Meeting provides another opportunity for participating Governments to share information and developments of relevance to the objectives and content of the Guidelines. As part of the latter entity, the Licensing and Enforcement Experts Meeting discusses issues relating to effective licensing and enforcement practices. At the request of the Consultative Group, the Technical Experts Group makes recommendations to ensure that the control lists of the Nuclear Suppliers Group are complete and up to date with technical advancements.

¹³⁷ [President’s note](#) to the Office for Disarmament Affairs on Nuclear Supplier Group activities in 2020.

¹³⁸ See Missile Technology Control Regime, [newsletter](#), 3 September 2020.

¹³⁹ Missile Technology Control Regime, “[Report by the MTCR Chair: Outreach Visit to Israel](#)”, 3 September 2020.

¹⁴⁰ See Hague Code of Conduct subscribing States, [press release](#) on the nineteenth regular meeting of the subscribing States to the Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation, Vienna, 12 October 2020.

¹⁴¹ Equatorial Guinea, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Somalia.

existing national and international security arrangements and disarmament and non-proliferation objectives and mechanisms. They stressed the importance of achieving the full implementation of the Code, in particular concerning the timely submission of pre-launch notifications and annual declarations.

The subscribing States also reaffirmed the threat to international peace and security posed by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery, which they regarded as constituting a serious concern of the international community, in various regions of the world. They discussed developments related to the missile programme of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, in the context of the relevant resolutions of the Security Council.

In addition, the subscribing States reaffirmed the right to exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes as provided for in the Outer Space Treaty. It was emphasized that States needed to exercise necessary vigilance in the consideration of assistance to space launch vehicle programmes so as not to contribute to, support or assist any ballistic-missile programme in contravention of international norms and obligations.

The subscribing States agreed to continue efforts to universalize the Code through various outreach activities and to promote it through a resolution¹⁴² of the seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly.

Political declarations and other initiatives

Stockholm Initiative for Nuclear Disarmament

States parties to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty launched the Stockholm Initiative in 2019 to strengthen disarmament diplomacy within the context of the Treaty, as well as build bridges between nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States.

At a ministerial meeting of the Initiative held in Berlin on 27 February, its members¹⁴³ adopted a declaration¹⁴⁴ to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. In the declaration, they reaffirmed their unequivocal support for the Treaty, resolved to strengthen it and called for action to reduce nuclear risk. They also endorsed a set of “stepping stones for advancing nuclear disarmament” aimed at reinforcing the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and its implementation.

¹⁴² General Assembly resolution [75/60](#) of 7 December 2020.

¹⁴³ Argentina, Canada, Finland, Germany, Indonesia, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Republic of Korea, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland.

¹⁴⁴ Germany, Federal Foreign Office, “[The NPT at 50](#)”, 25 February 2020, annex.

The group¹⁴⁵ met again by videoconference on 9 June, and Jordan agreed to host a ministerial meeting in January 2021.

Creating an Environment for Nuclear Disarmament

The Working Group of the “Creating an Environment for Nuclear Disarmament” initiative was established in 2018 to identify ways to improve the international security environment to overcome obstacles to further progress on nuclear disarmament.

Its Leadership Group of the initiative held a virtual meeting on 3 September 2020 to plan the future work of the initiative. At that meeting, Assistant Secretary of State of the United States Christopher Ford characterized the Working Group as a global initiative in which 43 States had participated. According to the Assistant Secretary of State, its subgroups were poised to tackle three lines of inquiry: (a) incentives to possess or eliminate nuclear weapons; (b) mechanisms to bolster non-proliferation; and (c) disarmament and managing and reducing nuclear risk.¹⁴⁶

At a civil society outreach event on 24 November, the Assistant Secretary of State announced that the Working Group planned to meet each quarter and to hold plenary sessions in late 2021 and early 2023. He added that the Group expected to conclude its initial phase of work in early 2023 when it would issue a report.¹⁴⁷

Fissile materials

In 2020, the Office for Disarmament Affairs concluded the implementation of a multi-year project, financed entirely by the European Union,¹⁴⁸ to provide Member States in Africa, the Asia-Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean with support to, inter alia, participate in possible future negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty.¹⁴⁹

The project activities were aimed at facilitating dialogue among Member States and regional organizations on the possible content and role of a future treaty, including its relationship with established regional- and international-level legal instruments for disarmament and non-proliferation. Participants shared knowledge

¹⁴⁵ By 9 June, the group had gained a sixteenth member, Ethiopia.

¹⁴⁶ Christopher Ford, Assistant Secretary of State, United States, [remarks](#) at the Leadership Meeting, 3 September 2020.

¹⁴⁷ Christopher Ford, Assistant Secretary of State, performing the duties of Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security of the United States, [remarks](#) at the Working Group Civil Society Outreach Event, 24 November 2020.

¹⁴⁸ Pursuant to European Union, Council Decision (CFSP) [2017/2284](#) of 11 December 2017, *Official Journal of the European Union*, L 328 (12 December 2017), pp. 32–37.

¹⁴⁹ In 2021, the Office for Disarmament Affairs published a comprehensive report on the project: Jean du Preez, *Advancing the Process to Negotiate a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty: The Role of States in the African, Asia-Pacific and Latin American and Caribbean Regions—Project Report*, United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs Occasional Papers, No. 38 (United Nations publication, 2021).

and information on issues related to banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. They also exchanged views and discussed challenges and ways ahead for a future treaty.

Project participants developed a fuller understanding of the structure and functions of negotiation forums and procedures relevant to work on a potential fissile material cut-off treaty. They also gave wide-ranging consideration to the potential components of a future treaty, thus increasing the capacity of Member States to participate in possible future negotiations.



Chapter II

Biological and chemical weapons

Izumi Nakamitsu, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, briefs Security Council members on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2118 (2013) on the Syrian Arab Republic during an open videoconference on 10 September 2020.

UN Photo/Loey Felipe

CHAPTER II

Biological and chemical weapons

The use of chemical weapons anywhere, by anyone, under any circumstances, is intolerable and a serious violation of international law. Impunity for their use is unacceptable. There can be no justification for the use of these abhorrent weapons. We must remain united and determined in preventing their use, or the threat of their use.

ANTÓNIO GUTERRES, UNITED NATIONS SECRETARY-GENERAL¹

Developments and trends, 2020

IN 2020, THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC posed a significant challenge to international efforts to uphold the global ban against the use of chemical weapons. The Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) adapted to the situation, however, continuing to deliver on its mission to fully and effectively implement the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction (Chemical Weapons Convention).²

In addition to carrying forward its critical work of verifying the destruction of remaining declared chemical weapons stockpiles, OPCW successfully resumed its inspections, in line with article VI of the Convention,³ after a pause forced by public health restrictions. It also continued to provide States parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention with assistance in meeting their declaration obligations.

Meanwhile, the OPCW policymaking organs flexibly carried out their responsibilities amid limits on in-person meetings. The OPCW Executive Council held its regular sessions in an adapted modality to continue promoting the Chemical Weapons Convention's effective implementation, and the OPCW Technical Secretariat developed online platforms and new modules to continue building capacities among States parties to prevent the re-emergence of chemical weapons. In addition, the Technical Secretariat provided ongoing assistance to States in promoting the peaceful uses of chemistry; advancing scientific and

¹ [Message](#) for the Remembrance Day for All Victims of Chemical Warfare (press release SG/SM/20453), 30 November 2020.

² For the [Convention's text and adherence status](#), see the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) Disarmament Treaties Database.

³ Article VI covers "activities not prohibited under this Convention", otherwise known as the non-proliferation or industry verification regime. For more information about article VI inspections, see the OPCW [website](#).

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.

OPCW also moved forward with work in other areas, achieving major progress towards the construction of the Centre for Chemistry and Technology (ChemTech Centre). It also continued efforts to universalize the Chemical Weapons Convention, including through calls for States still not party to the Convention to join without delay or preconditions.

For OPCW and other international organizations, one priority was addressing significant concern around allegations about possession and use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic. In that regard, the Office for Disarmament Affairs continued to support the Secretary-General's good offices in furtherance of the implementation of Security Council resolution [2118 \(2013\)](#) on the elimination of the chemical weapons programme in the Syrian Arab Republic, while also working with the Council's members to build unity and restore adherence to the global norm against chemical weapons. OPCW, for its part, engaged further with the Syrian Arab Republic in an effort to resolve all gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies that had arisen from the initial declaration of its chemical weapons programme. The OPCW Fact-Finding Mission also continued its work to establish the facts surrounding allegations of chemical weapons use in the Syrian Arab Republic. Separately, the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team kept up its activities, pursuant to the 2018 decision⁴ of the Conference of the States Parties, to identify the perpetrators of chemical weapons use in the country, issuing its first report⁵ in April.

Meanwhile, the Secretary-General continued to work with the members of the Security Council to build unity and underscore the need to identify and hold accountable those who have used chemical weapons. In support of this priority, the Office for Disarmament Affairs completed a lessons-learned project on the OPCW–United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism, aiming to provide the Security Council, as well as the United Nations Secretariat and its partners, with food for thought on how to fulfil the Council's responsibilities in this regard.

On 26 March, the world marked the forty-fifth anniversary of the entry into force 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).⁶ As at 31 December, the

⁴ OPCW, Conference of the States Parties decision [C-SS-4/DEC.3](#) of 27 June 2018.

⁵ OPCW, document [S/1867/2020](#).

⁶ To mark that occasion, the Implementation Support Unit produced videos on the history of the Biological Weapons Convention ("[UNOG BWC 1 history 25 03 20](#)", United Nations Geneva, YouTube video, 26 March 2020) and young female scientists from the Global South ("[Women: A Force Multiplier for the Biological Weapons Convention](#)", Biological Weapons Convention, YouTube video, 30 June 2021). Those productions were funded by the European Union through its Council decision [2019/97](#) in support of the Convention.

Convention had 183 States parties;⁷ 4 signatory States⁸ had yet to ratify the Convention, and 10 States⁹ had neither signed nor acceded to it.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the States parties decided to postpone the Meetings of Experts and the Meeting of States Parties from their originally scheduled dates in 2020. In that context, the Convention's Implementation Support Unit organized a series of webinars where participants could informally discuss the topics of the future Meetings of Experts.

Chemical weapons

Twenty-fifth session of the Conference of the States Parties

To fulfil its obligations while minimizing health risks to participants during the pandemic, the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention divided its twenty-fifth session into two parts, the first held in The Hague, Netherlands, from 30 November to 1 December. Among other decisions taken, the Conference considered and approved by vote the OPCW programme and budget for 2021,¹⁰ providing the necessary resources for the Technical Secretariat to operate in the coming year. During its second part, planned for 20 to 22 April 2021, the Conference would address the remaining items on its agenda.

The first part of the Conference was attended in person by representatives of 164 States parties and 1 signatory State.¹¹ In addition, 73 civil society organizations participated remotely, along with representatives of the chemical industry and scientific community.¹²

Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons

As at 31 December, 98.35 per cent (69,330 metric tons) of all Category 1 chemical weapons declared by States parties had been destroyed. The destruction of all Category 1 chemical weapons stockpiles declared by six States parties had been completed previously.

The aggregate amount of Category 2 chemical weapons destroyed stood at 1,811 metric tons, or 100 per cent of the total amount declared. Albania, India, Libya, the Russian Federation, the Syrian Arab Republic and the United States had completed the destruction of all declared Category 2 chemical weapons.

⁷ For the [Convention's text and adherence status](#), see the UNODA Disarmament Treaties Database.

⁸ Egypt, Haiti, Somalia and Syrian Arab Republic.

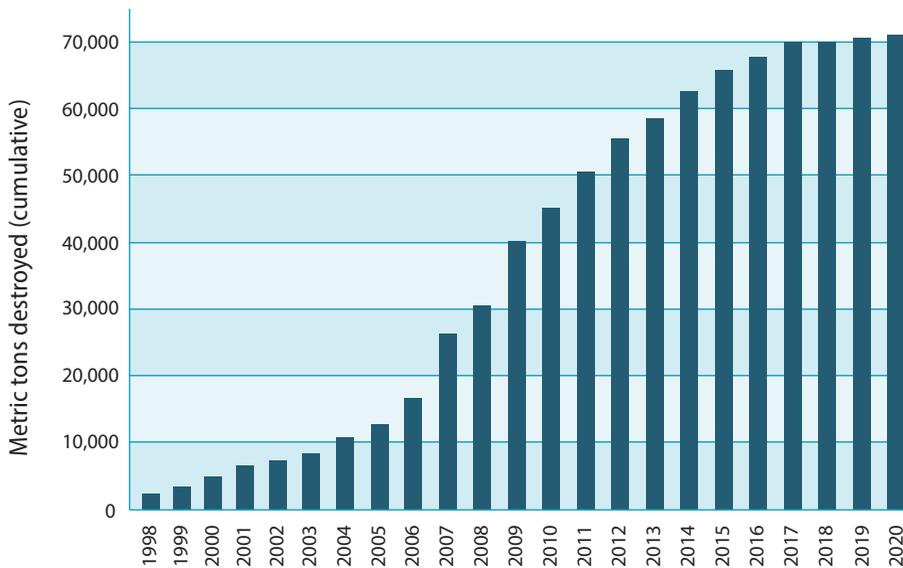
⁹ Chad, Comoros, Djibouti, Eritrea, Israel, Kiribati, Micronesia (Federated States of), Namibia, South Sudan and Tuvalu.

¹⁰ OPCW, document [C-25/DEC.7](#).

¹¹ For the list of participants for part I of the Conference, see OPCW, document [C-25/INF.5/Rev.1](#).

¹² For the lists of organizations, see OPCW, documents [C-25/DEC.2](#), annex, and [C-25/DEC.3](#), annex.

Progress in the destruction of chemical weapons stockpiles, 1998–2020



Since the Chemical Weapons Convention entered into force, some 72,000 metric tons of chemical weapons have been declared by eight possessor States parties. To date, more than 98 per cent of those declared chemical weapon stockpiles have been destroyed, all under verification by OPCW.

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, the United States continued to make progress in its efforts to destroy all of its declared chemical weapons. As at 31 December, the country had eliminated 95.81 per cent of its Category 1 chemical weapons, including 2.37 per cent destroyed during the calendar year. The United States had eliminated all of its Category 2 and Category 3 chemical weapons.

In China, the pandemic caused the suspension of all on-site operations and related work to excavate, recover and destroy the chemical weapons abandoned by Japan, as well as activities to identify and investigate such weapons. In that context, China and Japan cooperated closely to explore an action plan to continue recovering and destroying abandoned chemical weapons on Chinese territory during the pandemic. In addition, China, Japan and the OPCW Technical Secretariat held their thirty-second trilateral meeting on 23 September, convening virtually to discuss practical and technical aspects of resuming the destruction of abandoned chemical weapons.

Due to the pandemic, the OPCW Technical Secretariat carried out only 82 of the 241 inspections required under article VI that were budgeted for 2020. However, despite the challenges stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic, the Technical Secretariat succeeded in carrying out 64 per cent of its budgeted inspections (including all those planned for 11 States parties) for chemicals listed in the Convention's Schedule 1.¹³

Meanwhile, OPCW continued to engage with a global network of designated laboratories that must meet the organization's proficiency criteria to perform off-site analysis of samples collected by its inspectors. During the year, 58 laboratories across 38 States parties participated in OPCW proficiency tests and other related activities on analysing chemicals related to the Chemical Weapons Convention. Moreover, those laboratories registered more than 100 times for various tests organized by the Technical Secretariat. OPCW also continued its official proficiency test programme without interruption, despite the challenges posed by the pandemic.

OPCW also made further progress in 2020 towards building the new Centre for Chemistry and Technology (ChemTech Centre). As of the end of the year, the project's budget of €33.5 million had been nearly fully funded, with OPCW receiving over €33.4 million in financial contributions and pledges from 46 countries, the European Union and other donors. Additionally, the ChemTech Centre's design was completed and its main construction contract tendered.¹⁴ Upon launch, the Centre would increase OPCW ability to respond to new threats, prevent chemical weapons from re-emerging and support the peaceful uses of chemistry, thus enabling the organization to more fully achieve the object and purpose of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Technical assistance visits

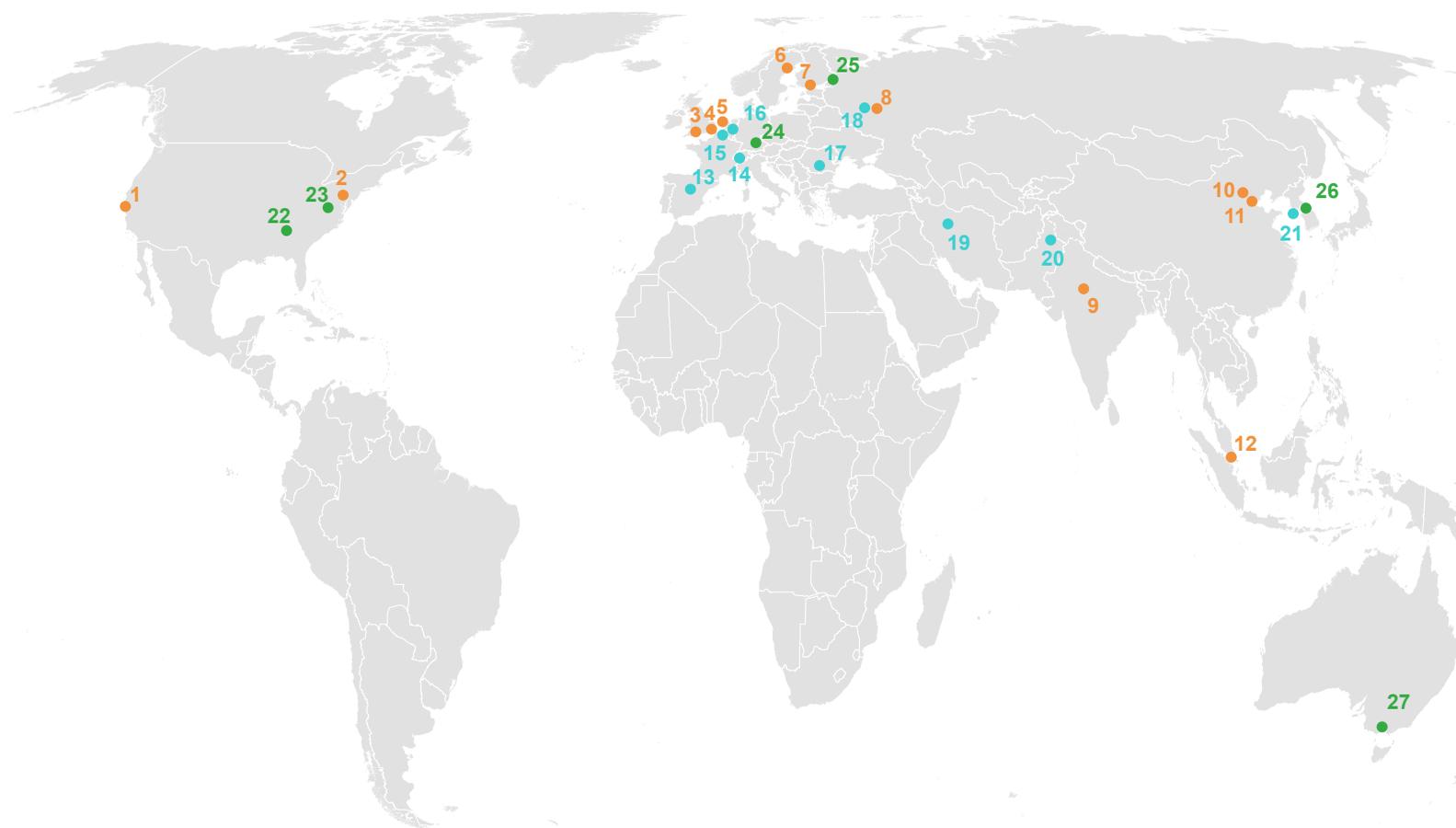
Under paragraph 38 (e) of article VIII of the Chemical Weapons Convention,¹⁵ Germany requested an OPCW technical assistance visit in relation to the suspected poisoning of a citizen of the Russian Federation, Alexei Navalny, on 20 August. In response, the OPCW Technical Secretariat dispatched a team to Germany from 5 to 7 September that independently collected biomedical samples directly from Mr. Navalny, with his consent. The resulting analysis by two

¹³ To implement the Convention, the schedules in the [annex on chemicals](#) of the Convention identify chemicals in respect of which special verification measures are applied in accordance with the provisions of the Convention's verification annex.

¹⁴ As at 26 May 2021, construction of the Centre was expected to begin in mid-2021 and conclude by the end of 2022.

¹⁵ Article VIII establishes OPCW as the implementing body of the Convention. By paragraph 38 (e), OPCW is mandated to provide technical assistance and technical evaluation to States parties in the implementation of the Convention's provisions, including evaluation of scheduled and unscheduled chemicals. For more information, see the OPCW [website](#).

OPCW-designated laboratories, November 2020



- 1–12 Biomedical and environmental samples
- 13–21 Environmental samples only
- 22–27 Biomedical samples only

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 27 laboratories designated by the OPCW for the analysis of authentic biomedical and/or environmental samples.

The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. 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 Republic of Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan has not yet been determined. Final status of the Abyei area is not yet determined.

Map source: United Nations Geospatial Information Section

1. Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory (United States)
2. United States Army Combat Capabilities Development Command Chemical Biological Center
3. Defence Science and Technology Laboratory, Porton Down (United Kingdom)
4. Direction générale de l’armement, Maîtrise nucléaire, radiologique, biologique et chimique, Analytical Chemistry Department (France)
5. Toegepast Natuurwetenschappelijk Onderzoek Defence, Security and Safety (Netherlands)
6. Swedish Defence Research Agency
7. Finnish Institute for Verification of the Chemical Weapons Convention
8. State Scientific Research Institute of Organic Chemistry and Technology, Federal State Unitary Enterprise (Russian Federation)
9. Vertex Laboratory, Defence Research and Development Establishment (India)
10. Laboratory of Toxicant Analysis, Academy of Military Medical Sciences (China)
11. Laboratory of Analytical Chemistry, Research Institute of Chemical Defense (China)
12. Defence Science Organisation National Laboratories (Singapore)
13. Laboratorio de Verificación de Armas Químicas, Instituto Nacional de Técnica Aeroespacial, Campus La Marañosa (Spain)
14. Spiez Laboratory, Swiss Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Defence Establishment
15. Belgian Defence Laboratories (Defence Laboratory Department)
16. Bundeswehr Research Institute for Protective Technologies and Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Protection (Germany)
17. Scientific Research Center for Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Defense and Ecology, Chemical Analysis and Special Synthesis Laboratory (Romania)
18. Laboratory for the Chemical and Analytical Control of Military Research Centre (Russian Federation)
19. Defense Chemical Research Laboratory (Islamic Republic of Iran)
20. Defence Science and Technology Organisation (Pakistan)
21. Chemical Analysis Laboratory, Chemical and Biological Department, Agency for Defense Development (Republic of Korea)
22. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (United States)
23. United States Army Medical Research Institute of Chemical Defense
24. Bundeswehr Institute of Pharmacology and Toxicology (Germany)
25. Laboratory of Chemical Analytical Control and Biotesting, Research Institute of Hygiene, Occupational Pathology and Human Ecology (Russian Federation)
26. Republic of Korea Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Command
27. Defence Science and Technology Group (Australia)

OPCW-designated laboratories confirmed that Mr. Navalny had been exposed to a toxic chemical of the so-called Novichok family.¹⁶

On 6 October, the Russian Federation also requested, under paragraph 38 (e) of article VIII of the Convention, a technical assistance visit to the Russian Federation in relation to the suspected poisoning of Mr. Navalny. Following that request, the OPCW Technical Secretariat and the Russian Federation discussed the legal, technical, operational and logistical parameters of the requested visit. Subsequently, the Russian Federation informed the Technical Secretariat that it no longer considered a technical assistance visit to be necessary.

OPCW partnerships in the chemical industry

In 2020, the OPCW Technical Secretariat and its chemical industry partners continued working to strengthen their cooperation in accordance with the relevant recommendations of the third Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties to Review the Operation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (third Review Conference), held in 2013.¹⁷ Acting in May to broaden its dialogue with chemical industry associations, OPCW formalized its relationship with the International Chemical Trade Association, a network of chemical associations, federations and companies.¹⁸ In turn, the Association joined the Chemical Industry Coordination Group, established in 2015 as a platform for dialogue between OPCW and the International Council of Chemical Associations.¹⁹

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, only one meeting of the Chemical Industry Coordination Group took place during the year, on 10 September. During that virtual meeting, representatives of the International Council of Chemical Associations, the International Chemical Trade Association and the OPCW Technical Secretariat exchanged information on new developments; continued a discussion of practical steps to improve the efficiency of industry inspections; and exchanged views on joint capacity-building activities, particularly in the area of chemical safety and security.

Education and outreach

The OPCW Advisory Board on Education and Outreach²⁰ and its members conducted a range of activities in 2020 to support e-learning, active learning and the creation of new educational and outreach materials. Through a newly formed

¹⁶ See OPCW, “Summary of the report on activities carried out in support of a request for technical assistance by Germany (technical assistance visit – TAV/01/20)”, document [S/1906/2020](#).

¹⁷ OPCW, “Report of the Third Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties to Review the Operation of the Chemical Weapons Convention”, document [RC-3/3](#), paras. 9.131 (l), 9.79 (e) and 9.95 (h).

¹⁸ OPCW, “Note by the Director-General: Exchange of letters with the International Chemical Trade Association”, document [S/1880/2020](#).

¹⁹ For more information on the Chemical Industry Coordination Group, see OPCW, “Note by the Director-General: Engaging the chemical industry associations”, document [C-20/DG-15](#).

²⁰ For the report of the ninth session of the Advisory Board, see OPCW, document [ABEO-9/1](#).

subgroup, for example, the Advisory Board aimed to further develop its strategic plan and ensure that its work remained in line with OPCW needs while making optimal use of the Board's expertise. The Advisory Board also established on 25 September a temporary working group on e-learning to better assist the OPCW in developing its educational offerings. That temporary working group held its first meetings on 10 and 12 November, and the Advisory Board held its ninth session virtually on 11 December.

In addition, the Advisory Board and the OPCW Technical Secretariat submitted inputs for the Secretary-General's 2020 report²¹ to the General Assembly on disarmament and non-proliferation education.

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

The OPCW Technical Secretariat continued to assist States parties in pursuing the full and effective implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention in the areas of national implementation, assistance, protection against chemical weapons and international cooperation on promoting peaceful uses of chemistry. In 2020, despite operational restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Technical Secretariat conducted 48 capacity-building and knowledge-sharing sessions—39 of them virtual—benefiting 1,500 participants.

In the field of technical assistance and capacity-building, the Technical Secretariat continued supporting States parties in their national implementation of the Convention, in line with article VII.²² As in-person capacity-building support was not possible, OPCW successfully reformatted several existing programmes and activities for online delivery, allowing several postponed in-person events to be modified and held as remote technical assistance and capacity-building opportunities. Throughout the year, OPCW also offered online activities—on strengthening chemical safety and security and reviewing national legislative measures—and a variety of training courses. Additionally, to ensure continued support for the work of national authorities of States parties, the Technical Secretariat organized four virtual regional meetings and, in late November, held its twenty-second Annual Meeting of National Authorities of States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention online.²³ Overall, 603 participants attended 13 events related to article VII throughout 2020.

²¹ [A/75/127](#).

²² Article VII covers the national implementation of the Convention and requires each State Party to enact implementing legislation at the national level. For more information, see the [OPCW website](#).

²³ The event included opening remarks by the OPCW Director-General (Fernando Arias, [remarks](#) at the twenty-second Annual Meeting of National Authorities of States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention, The Hague, 23 November 2020).

In the area of assistance and protection related to the implementation of article X of the Convention,²⁴ the OPCW Technical Secretariat continued to administer a three-component training cycle consisting of a basic and an advanced course, followed by a practical exercise. In response to pandemic restrictions, the Technical Secretariat designed and conducted several online training courses to support the capacity of States parties to respond to chemical incidents. It also conducted several online basic training courses for States parties, covering theoretical material related to chemical emergency response. Building further on those offerings, the Technical Secretariat hosted a series of specialized online courses on decontamination techniques, as well as a virtual table-top exercise in which participants applied national response plans in a realistic scenario.

The Technical Secretariat also launched an updated version of its Assistance and Protection Data Bank, a user-friendly mechanism for States parties to exchange information on national protection programmes against the use of chemical weapons. In addition, the Technical Secretariat initiated a needs-assessment pilot project to develop an online tool for States parties to evaluate their protection efforts. The project was aimed at facilitating communication and supporting the development or improvement of national protection programmes.

Meanwhile, OPCW continued to promote the peaceful uses of chemistry during 20 capacity-building events on that topic throughout the year. Through those online programmes—initiated with expert support from Governments, regional and international organizations, industry, academia and the technical community—the Technical Secretariat aimed to assist States parties in developing their capacities and knowledge in chemical safety and security management, as well as to cultivate a culture of safety and security among stakeholders.

Additionally, OPCW launched a series of training modules as part of the Associate Programme, the organization's flagship capacity-building effort. Through that interactive programme, which took place online due to the pandemic, participants could enhance their knowledge of the Chemical Weapons Convention, access practical advice on its implementation, and learn about best practices in the chemical industry.

To support African States parties in meeting their specific requirements for implementing the Convention, OPCW prioritized activities under its Programme to Strengthen Cooperation with Africa on the Chemical Weapons Convention (Africa Programme), which entered its fifth three-year phase on 1 January. In pursuing the Africa Programme's eight specific objectives,²⁵ OPCW engaged with

²⁴ Article X provides for assistance and protection to a State party if it is attacked or threatened with attack by chemical weapons. For more information, see the OPCW [website](#).

²⁵ The fifth phase of the Africa Programme (2020–2022) is focused on enhancing the African States parties' capabilities in the following areas: (a) advancing national implementation of the Convention in Africa; (b) enhancing the effectiveness of the African national authorities; (c) strengthening controls over cross-border transfers of toxic chemicals to prevent access to such chemicals, including by non-State actors, for purposes prohibited under the Convention;

African States parties to advance national implementation of the Convention and strengthen the capabilities of those States in the peaceful application of chemistry.

Notwithstanding the constraints created by the pandemic, OPCW held 22 capacity-building events under the Africa Programme in 2020, benefiting over 300 participants from more than 40 African States parties. Those activities included training courses, opportunities to access expertise and technical assistance, and sponsored or facilitated exchanges of scientific and technical information and resources.

To secure optimal support, advice and guidance to implement the Africa Programme, OPCW established a steering committee comprising African States parties and Programme donors. The Committee held its first two meetings online in June and November, with plans to continue meeting twice yearly.²⁶

Elimination of the chemical weapons programme in the Syrian Arab Republic

In 2020, OPCW continued its mission to verify the elimination of the Syrian Arab Republic's declared chemical weapons programme. Pursuant to a July 2014 decision of the OPCW Executive Council regarding the destruction and verification of 12 declared chemical-weapon production facilities,²⁷ the Technical Secretariat had been maintaining remote monitoring systems installed at four sealed underground structures in the Syrian Arab Republic. In line with the Executive Council's decision, the Technical Secretariat deployed a team to the Syrian Arab Republic from 15 to 18 November 2020 to observe the removal of those monitoring systems from the underground structures, as well as to conduct the final visit of OPCW to those sites.

Meanwhile, 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. In 2020, the Technical Secretariat issued two reports in which the Fact-Finding Mission addressed the alleged use of chemical weapons in Aleppo on 24 November 2018²⁸ and in Saraqib on 1 August 2016.²⁹ The Mission concluded that it could not establish whether chemicals were used or likely used as a weapon in those incidents. The Technical Secretariat also issued, on

(d) enhancing protection and response capabilities against chemical incidents and attacks; (e) advancing chemical safety and security culture, standards and practices in Africa; (f) strengthening the capabilities of chemical laboratories in Africa; (g) promoting knowledge of peaceful chemistry and its exchange in Africa; and (h) fostering programme visibility, stakeholder engagement and partnerships. For more information, see OPCW, document [EC-93/DG.9](#).

²⁶ The November meeting was opened with remarks by the OPCW Director-General (Fernando Arias, [remarks](#) to the second meeting of the OPCW Africa Programme Steering Committee, The Hague, 16 November 2020).

²⁷ By its decision EC-M-43/DEC.1 of 24 July 2014, the Council agreed to a revised plan (EC-M-40/DG.2) for the destruction and verification of 12 declared chemical-weapon production facilities.

²⁸ OPCW, document [S/1902/2020](#).

²⁹ OPCW, document [S/1901/2020](#).

21 December, a summary update³⁰ of the Mission's activities in the Syrian Arab Republic in 2020.

Additionally, the OPCW Declaration Assessment Team continued working with the Syrian Arab Republic to ensure that the country met all its declaration-related requirements in accordance with the Convention, as well as relevant decisions by the OPCW policymaking organs and resolutions of the Security Council. The Team conducted one round of consultations with the Syrian Arab Republic during the year, in September, and reported to the OPCW Executive Council on the outcome of those consultations in an addendum³¹ to a report of the Director-General.

The Technical Secretariat also conducted one round of inspections in November at the Scientific Studies and Research Centre in the Syrian Arab Republic, pursuant to a 2016 decision³² of the OPCW Executive Council.

Separately, and pursuant to a June 2018 decision of the OPCW Conference of the States Parties,³³ the Technical Secretariat issued the first report³⁴ of the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team on 8 April, covering the Team's findings on three incidents. In the report, the Investigation and Identification Team identified individuals belonging to the Syrian Arab Air Force as the perpetrators and concluded that there were reasonable grounds to believe that the identified perpetrators used chemical weapons in Ltamenah on three occasions in March 2017, two involving the use of sarin and one involving the use of chlorine. The Technical Secretariat provided that report to the Executive Council and the United Nations Secretary-General, as mandated by the Conference of the States Parties in its 2018 decision.

Despite limitations on travel and other restrictions stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic, the Investigation and Identification Team continued to request meetings with key representatives of the Syrian Arab Republic to discuss the Team's work, as well as the potential for authorities of the State to facilitate the provision of any relevant information or access to locations of interest.

In October and November, the Technical Secretariat provided, as required by the OPCW Conference of the States Parties,³⁵ 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. By

³⁰ OPCW, document S/1922/2020.

³¹ OPCW, document EC-95/HP/DG.2/Add.1.

³² OPCW, Executive Council decision [EC-83/DEC.5](#) of 11 November 2016, para. 11.

³³ In accordance with Conference of the States Parties decision [C-SS-4/DEC.3](#) of 27 June 2018, the OPCW Technical Secretariat established the Investigation and Identification Team in 2019, with a mandate to identify individuals or entities directly or indirectly involved in the use of chemical weapons by investigating and reporting on all information potentially relevant to the origin of those weapons.

³⁴ OPCW, document [S/1867/2020](#).

³⁵ OPCW, Conference of the States Parties decision [C-SS-4/DEC.3](#), para. 12.

making those first submissions of information to the Mechanism, the Technical Secretariat ensured adherence to all applicable legal requirements and provisions.

Science and technology-related activities

The Technical Secretariat continued to engage with broad sectors of the global scientific community throughout the year, both to maintain strong ties with scientists and scientific societies and to keep fully abreast of developments in science and technology. The OPCW Scientific Advisory Board convened virtually twice in 2020, holding its twenty-ninth session in September and its thirtieth session in November.³⁶

At the Board's recommendation, the OPCW Director-General decided to establish a new temporary working group on the analysis of biotoxins, to begin work in early 2021.³⁷

Project on Lessons Learned from the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism

In 2020, the Office for Disarmament Affairs convened the final two workshops of a project to identify lessons learned from the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM), established by the Security Council in 2015 to identify the perpetrators of confirmed chemical-weapon attacks in the Syrian Arab Republic.³⁸ The JIM ceased operations in 2017, when the Council could not agree to further extend its mandate. The project on lessons learned was designed to use the experience of the JIM to help better prepare the United Nations and its partners to respond to any future allegations of chemical weapons use, particularly with regard to attribution.

The Office convened the third and fourth workshops of the project in Glen Cove, New York, in February 2020, following two workshops held the prior year. The third workshop was focused on stakeholder and management interactions with, inter alia, the Security Council, the United Nations Secretariat and the Syrian Arab Republic. In the fourth and final workshop, participants focused on reviewing and analysing the recommendations identified in the previous

³⁶ See (a) OPCW, report of Scientific Advisory Board at its twenty-ninth session, 1–2 September 2020, document [SAB-29/1](#); and (b) OPCW, “Note by the Director-General: Response to the report of the twenty-ninth session of the Scientific Advisory Board, 1–2 September 2020”, document [EC-95/DG.26](#).

³⁷ The decision was reached after an earlier temporary working group of the Scientific Advisory Board, on investigative science and technology, concluded its work in December 2019 with the issuance of its final substantive report ([SAB/REP/1/19](#)).

³⁸ The Mechanism was mandated by Security Council resolution 2235 (2015) to identify, to the greatest extent feasible, individuals, entities, groups, or governments who were perpetrators, organizers, sponsors or otherwise involved in the use of chemicals as weapons, including chlorine or any other toxic chemical, in the Syrian Arab Republic, where the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission determined or had determined that a specific incident involved or likely involved the use of chemicals as weapons.

workshops, aiming to consolidate lessons learned that merited inclusion in the project's final report.

The Office for Disarmament Affairs published the final report of the lessons learned project in October 2020.³⁹ Although any future mechanism established to identify those responsible for the use of chemical weapons would need—and should be enabled to the fullest extent—to make its own decisions on the topics addressed in the report based on the requirements of its mandate and individual case information, the report was aimed at helping to enhance common understanding of what could be done to establish an effective and credible mechanism. To this end, the report included recommendations that could benefit such future investigations.

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. The Convention effectively prohibits the development, production, acquisition, transfer, stockpiling and use of biological and toxin weapons. As at the end of 2020, it had 183 States parties and four signatory States.

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in the postponement of the Meetings of Experts from their scheduled dates of 25 August to 3 September, as well as the Meeting of States Parties from its previously planned dates of 8 to 11 December.

Informal webinars to prepare for the Meetings of Experts to the Biological Weapons Convention

After the Convention's five Meetings of Experts were postponed until 2021, the Implementation Support Unit held five corresponding informal webinars⁴⁰ in October and November on the topics of the Meetings. Participation in the webinars was high, with representatives of States parties, international organizations and non-governmental organizations joining from over 40 countries. Each of the webinars was moderated by the Chair of the corresponding Meeting of Experts.

³⁹ Office for Disarmament Affairs, "[Final Report of the UNODA Project to Identify Lessons Learned from the OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism](#)", 2020.

⁴⁰ For the speaker presentations and webinar video recordings, see UNODA Meetings, Biological Weapons Convention – Meetings of Experts:

- MX1 – Cooperation and Assistance, with a Particular Focus on Strengthening Cooperation and Assistance under Article X, [Informal Webinar, 24 November 2020](#)
- MX2 – Review of Developments in the Field of Science and Technology Related to the Convention, [Informal Webinar, 29 October 2020](#)
- MX3 – Strengthening National Implementation, [Informal Webinar, 16 November 2020](#)
- MX4 – Assistance, Response and Preparedness, [Informal Webinar, 12 November 2020](#)
- MX5 – Institutional Strengthening of the Convention, [Informal Webinar, 18 November 2020](#).

The Biological Weapons Convention at 45

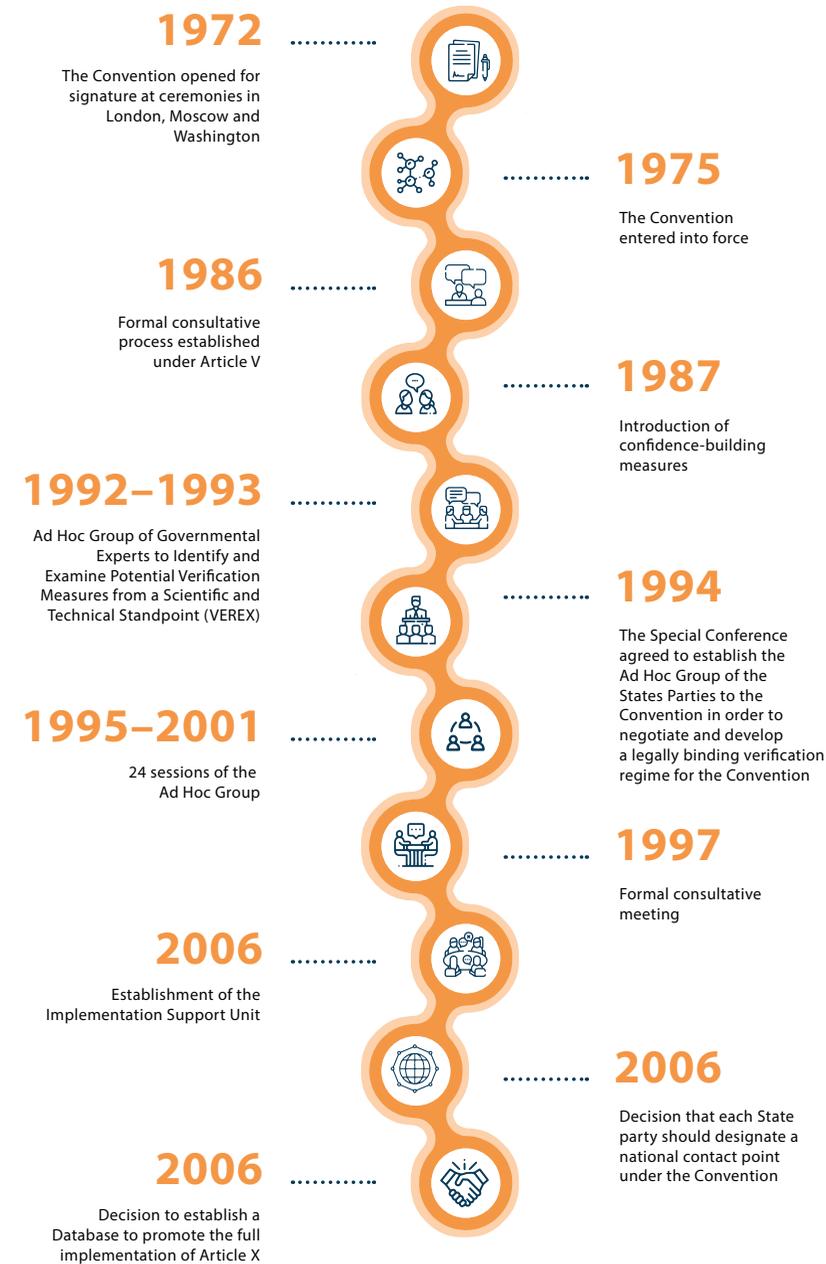


Since the entry into force of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) in 1975, 183 States have joined, establishing a strong norm against the deliberate use of disease in armed conflict. Over the course of 45 years, States parties have agreed on various measures to strengthen the Convention, including a system of confidence-building measures implemented in 1987 to enhance trust among them. As at the end of 2020, States had submitted 1,801 reports further to those measures. Additionally, States parties established 132 national contact points to facilitate the Convention's implementation at the domestic level.

States parties regularly meet in Geneva to consider technical topics, as well as to discuss and promote common understandings and effective action on the topics identified by the Review Conferences. States parties have convened in eight Review Conferences since 1980, established four intersessional programmes since 2003 and held 70 official meetings and conferences since the Convention entered into force.

History of the Biological Weapons Convention

MILESTONES OF THE CONVENTION



The Biological Weapons Convention entered into force in 1975. In 1986, States parties agreed on consultative procedures to promptly address alleged violations when requested by a State party, in line with article V. They also introduced a system of confidence-building measures to improve international cooperation and prevent or reduce ambiguities, doubts and suspicions.

After the cold war, an expert group (VEREX) weighed the scientific and technical merits of 21 proposals for verifying compliance, including on-site actions like facility inspections and off-site efforts like monitoring relevant publications. A separate ad hoc group negotiated a draft verification protocol from 1995 to 2001, but the effort failed when States parties could not agree on several fundamental issues.

In 2006, States parties created an Implementation Support Unit to provide administrative support, assist with national implementation, encourage universal adoption and oversee the process for confidence-building measures.

In 2011, the seventh Review Conference established a database to pair assistance requests with offers, in support of article X, which protects States parties' right to exchange biological materials, technology and information for peaceful purposes.

Office holders of the Biological Weapons Convention

Although the official meetings of the Convention for 2020 were delayed, the States parties successfully elected office holders for each meeting while pursuing related administrative preparations and informal substantive discussions:

- Cleopa Kilonzo Mailu (Kenya) was appointed as Chair of the Meeting of States Parties, while Peter Beerwerth (Germany) and Robertas Rosinas (Lithuania) were named as its two Vice-Chairs.
- Kimmo Laukkanen (Finland) was elected to chair the Meeting of Experts on Cooperation and Assistance, with a Particular Focus on Strengthening Cooperation and Assistance under Article X.
- Kazuhiro Nakai (Japan) was elected to chair the Meeting of Experts on Review of Developments in the Field of Science and Technology Related to the Convention.
- Arman Baissuanov (Kazakhstan) was elected to chair the Meeting of Experts on Strengthening National Implementation.
- Elena Kuzmanovska (North Macedonia) was elected to chair the Meeting of Experts on Assistance, Response and Preparedness.
- Grisselle del Carmen Rodriguez Ramirez (Panama) was elected to chair the Meeting of Experts on Institutional Strengthening of the Convention.

Work of the Implementation Support Unit

Based within the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, the Biological Weapons Convention's Implementation Support Unit continued to carry out its mandate in 2020 while adapting as necessary to restrictions resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. During the year, the Unit organized webinars and training courses, participated in virtual meetings and discussions,⁴¹ and migrated the Convention's official online presence to the website of the Office for Disarmament Affairs.⁴²

To support the Convention's national implementation, the Unit continued to collect and update details on relevant national contact points. As at 31 December, it had received the nominations of national contact points from 132 States parties and States not party to the Convention.⁴³

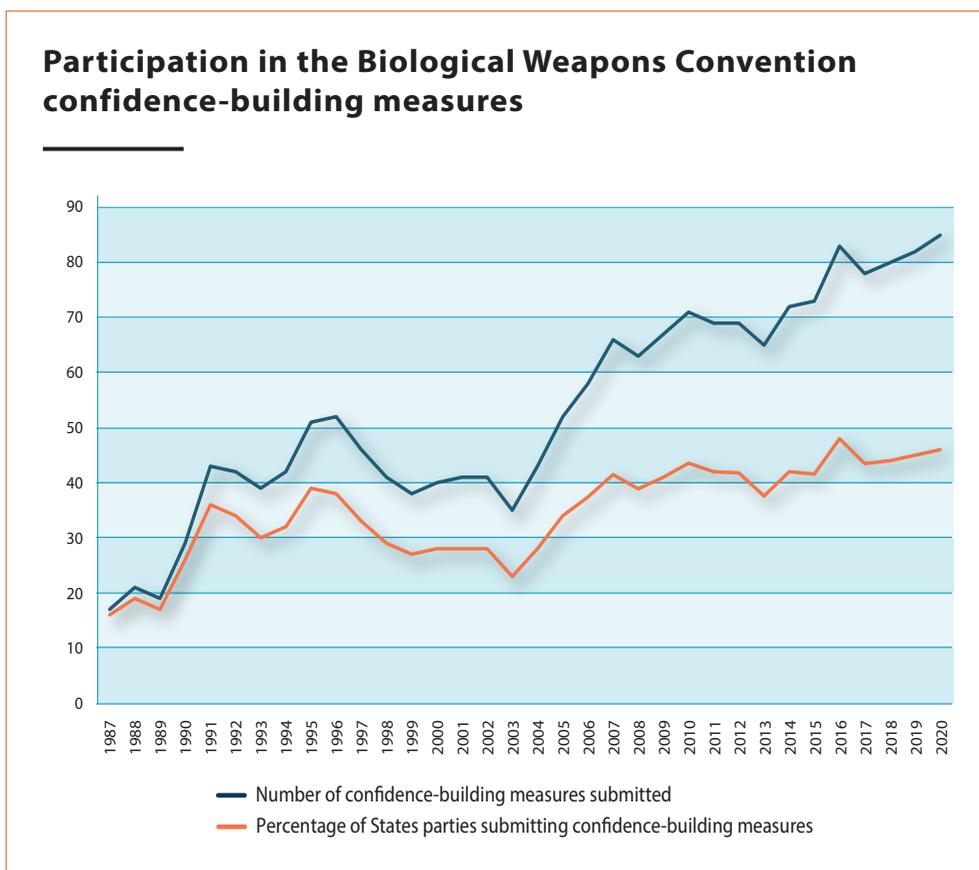
⁴¹ For details of activities undertaken by the Biological Weapons Convention Implementation Support Unit, see [BWC Newsletter](#), January 2021.

⁴² As of January 2021, see the new Biological Weapons Convention official web pages at www.un.org/disarmament/biological-weapons. Furthermore, for information and documents related to Biological Weapons Convention meetings, see the [UNODA Meetings Place](#).

⁴³ The Implementation Support Unit made those contact details available to all States parties on a restricted-access web page. Contact the Unit for information on accessing that page.

In addition, the Unit cooperated with Japan to hold an online training course for national contact points in South-East Asia.⁴⁴ The two-week event ran from 22 September to 1 October, allowing national contact points to receive practical training on the implementation of the Convention, as well as skills and guidance about their roles and responsibilities. Furthermore, the course included special assistance for national contact points in South-East Asia to establish a network among themselves.

To facilitate participation in the Convention’s confidence-building measures, the Unit maintained capabilities for States parties to submit relevant reports electronically, compiled and distributed submissions, provided routine administrative assistance and advice, took part in webinars to promote confidence-building measures, and sent written reminders to States parties ahead of the submission deadline. In 2020, the Unit received reports from 85 States parties, the most ever submitted, as shown in the graph below.



⁴⁴ For details, see the working paper submitted by Japan for the Meeting of Experts on Strengthening National Implementation ([BWC/MSP/2020/MX.3/WP.1](#)).

Meanwhile, the Implementation Support Unit continued to maintain and administer the [Assistance and Cooperation Database](#) and to facilitate contacts between States parties offering or requesting assistance.

The COVID-19 pandemic prompted the temporary suspension of the Biological Weapons Convention sponsorship programme, administered by the Unit to help developing States parties participate in meetings of the Convention.

Additionally, Germany provided voluntary contributions through the Office for Disarmament Affairs in 2020 to organize workshops on “A Science and Technology review mechanism for the BWC”, including an online workshop organized by the Implementation Support Unit in December.

European Union Council decision 2019/97 in support of the Biological Weapons Convention

The COVID-19 pandemic also impeded the planned implementation of European Union Council decision [2019/97](#) in support of the Biological Weapons Convention.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, the Office for Disarmament Affairs used alternative virtual means to take forward the implementation of the three-year project. Efforts to that end included further engagement with States not party to the Convention to achieve universalization. In addition, the Office began preparing for a virtual workshop for African States not party to the Convention, supplementing an in-person regional workshop in Nairobi that was originally planned for April and subsequently postponed.

The Office for Disarmament Affairs also endeavoured to advance two assistance initiatives⁴⁶ funded under the Council decision—the Extended Assistance Programmes and the National Preparedness Programmes—in coordination with the beneficiary States and with third parties providing assistance. In that context, the National Preparedness Programme for Nigeria was launched virtually in October, followed by an online training session on the drafting and submission of reports on confidence-building measures under the Convention.

In addition, the Office adopted a new virtual format for the second Biosecurity Diplomacy Workshop for young scientists from the Global South. Originally planned to take place in conjunction with the Meeting of Experts on Review of Developments in the Field of Science and Technology, the workshop was rescheduled to take place as a series of online sessions starting in January 2021.

⁴⁵ See UNODA, “[European Union support to the Biological Weapons Convention](#)”.

⁴⁶ The States selected under the Extended Assistance Programmes—to receive technical assistance to develop their national capacities to implement the Convention—were Botswana, Jamaica, Papua New Guinea, the State of Palestine and Viet Nam. The selected beneficiaries of the National Preparedness Programmes—to receive technical assistance and support to develop their preparedness, prevention and response capabilities in the event of a biological attack or incident—were Fiji, Nigeria, Sri Lanka and the Sudan.

The Office also achieved significant progress in drafting a guide for national stakeholders in implementing the Biological Weapons Convention (to be launched in the second quarter of 2021, with planned translations from English into the other official languages of the United Nations).

Separately, to mark the forty-fifth anniversary of the Convention's entry into force, the Office for Disarmament Affairs produced two short videos in the framework of the Council decision: one on the [history of the Convention](#) and another on the experiences of [three young women scientists](#) working in the fields of bioethics, biochemistry, science communication and molecular biology.

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

The Secretary-General has a mandate⁴⁷ to carry out investigations when Member States bring to his attention the alleged use of chemical or biological weapons. To fulfil that mandate, the United Nations relies on countries to designate technical experts to deploy to the field on short notice, as well as analytical laboratories to support such investigations.

In 2020, the Office carried out further activities to strengthen the operational readiness of the mechanism, including additional training of experts. As of 31 December, the roster maintained by the Office for Disarmament Affairs comprised 528 qualified experts, 40 expert consultants and 68 analytical laboratories.

Member States offer and implement training in close cooperation with the Office for Disarmament Affairs. From 2009 to 2019, 18 training activities and field exercises were carried out by six countries⁴⁸ and two international organizations.⁴⁹ Owing to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, additional training and field exercises had to be postponed to 2021, except for a virtual table-top exercise organized by Germany. In addition, the Office held two virtual workshops, one for expert consultants and one for United Nations entities critical to successfully carrying out a mission requested by Member States.

In addition to facilitating further training of qualified experts and expert consultants, Member States offer external quality assurance exercises for analytical laboratories nominated to the roster. Since 2017, the RefBio project has offered such exercises for the three main classes of biological agents relevant to potential bioweapons: bacteria, viruses and biological toxins. In subsequent

⁴⁷ By General Assembly resolution 42/37 C of 30 November 1987, which the Security Council later reaffirmed in its resolution 620 (1988), the Secretary-General was requested to investigate, upon request by any Member State, the possible use of chemical, biological and toxin weapons (see para. 4). For more information, see UNODA, "[Secretary-General's Mechanism for Investigation of Alleged Use of Chemical and Biological Weapons](#)".

⁴⁸ Australia, Denmark, France, Germany, Sweden and United Kingdom.

⁴⁹ International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) and OPCW.

Secretary-General's Mechanism: Nominated expert consultants, qualified experts and analytical laboratories by region (as of 31 December 2020)



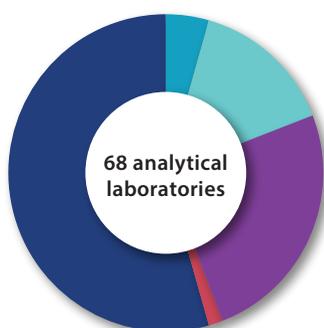
- Africa (2 from 1 Member State)
- Asia and the Pacific (5 from 2 Member States)
- Eastern Europe (5 from 2 Member States)
- Latin America and Caribbean (3 from 1 Member State)
- Western Europe and others (25 from 7 Member States)

Expert consultants advise and assist in the overall conduct of investigations, from planning and deployment to operation and reporting.



- Africa (63 from 7 Member States)
- Asia and the Pacific (99 from 13 Member States)
- Eastern Europe (116 from 12 Member States)
- Latin America and Caribbean (33 from 5 Member States)
- Western Europe and others (214 from 20 Member States)

Qualified experts are dispatched to the field to investigate the alleged use of weapons.



- Africa (3 from 2 Member States)
- Asia and the Pacific (10 from 4 Member States)
- Eastern Europe (17 from 7 Member States)
- Latin America and Caribbean (1 from 1 Member State)
- Western Europe and others (37 from 12 Member States)

Nominated analytical laboratories test for the presence of chemical, biological or toxin agents.

years, analytical laboratories in additional countries have been involved, including through a 2020 exercise that focused on coronaviruses.

Export controls

Australia Group

The Australia Group, composed of 42 States⁵⁰ and the European Union, held an intersessional meeting in Bratislava on 6 February. At the meeting, the Group agreed to update its control list of chemical weapons precursors to include precursors to the nerve agent Novichok. Participants also agreed to continue reviewing other potential chemical precursors that might need to be added to the control list in the future.⁵¹

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Group cancelled a plenary meeting it had planned to hold in Paris from 15 to 19 June.⁵² To carry forward its work, the Group convened the following virtual meetings of its technical subgroups: an enforcement exchange on 23 October; a meeting of technical experts on 10 November on new and evolving technologies; and meetings on 16 November and 2 December on implementation. Those meetings attracted significant interest and broad participation from members, including through several draft decisions submitted to the subgroup on implementation for consideration on a non-objection basis during the intersessional period.

⁵⁰ Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, India, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom and United States.

⁵¹ The Group's decision to add Novichok precursors to its control list of chemical weapons precursors followed the 2019 decision (C-24/DEC.4) of the Conference of States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention at its twenty-fifth session to add Novichok nerve agents to the Convention's Schedule 1 chemicals.

⁵² At the thirty-fourth plenary meeting of the Australia Group in June 2019, participants accepted an offer by France to host the Group's next meeting.



Chapter III

Conventional weapons



Youth leaders displaying their Africa Amnesty Month shirts at a local sensitization workshop held in Hola, Tana River County, Kenya, in September 2020.

CHAPTER III

Conventional weapons

If threats to international peace and security are to be adequately addressed, small arms and light weapons must be considered regularly and across issue areas.

IZUMI NAKAMITSU, HIGH REPRESENTATIVE FOR DISARMAMENT AFFAIRS¹

Developments and trends, 2020

THE CHALLENGES POSED BY CONVENTIONAL ARMS grew throughout 2020. Across much of the globe, illicit flows and misuse of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition contributed directly to pervasive armed violence in rural and urban settings, including through transnational organized crime and terrorism. While major armed conflicts persisted across the world—including in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Libya, Mali, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen—new instances of sustained armed violence emerged in Cameroon, Ethiopia and Nagorno-Karabakh, further heightening the urgency of dialogue and activities to address illicit arms flows.²

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated both the above-mentioned challenges and the difficulty of implementing global and local arms control measures, thus contributing to negative impacts on peacebuilding and post-conflict development. Illicit arms networks leveraged higher unemployment and civil unrest to their advantage with diminished resistance from weakened institutions and overburdened public services. In that context, multiple actors continuously underlined the urgency of reining in conflict in the face of the global public health emergency; in March the Secretary-General called for an immediate global ceasefire, and the Security Council supported his appeal with its adoption of resolution [2532 \(2020\)](#) in July. Regrettably, the global focus on addressing the pandemic still did not produce a cessation of armed conflict, and global military spending continued to rise.

In the face of those setbacks, international organizations applied the means at their disposal to tackle those and other challenges from conventional arms. In

¹ [Remarks](#) during the briefing to the meeting of the Security Council on small arms and light weapons, New York, 5 February 2020.

² Illicit arms flows undermine elections, democratic transitions and processes of reconciliation, and they serve as enablers of sexual and gender-based violence. The pandemic's other impacts included complicating the delivery of humanitarian assistance to victims, undermining sustainable development and imposing new challenges on those already fleeing war, persecution and conflict.

April, the Secretary-General convened his Executive Committee—made up of heads of United Nations departments, offices and agencies—to reflect on the role of conventional-arms control in his vision for “disarmament that saves lives”.

In 2020, instances of progress were still seen in efforts to address the safety and security of conventional ammunition stockpiles, despite the pandemic necessitating the postponement to 2021 of the seventh Biennial Meeting of States to review the implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons. Drawing on informal consultations convened by Germany throughout 2018 and 2019, a group of governmental experts held an in-person meeting in January, followed by virtual, informal discussions in April. In those discussions, the experts initiated a process of comprehensive consideration to both safety and security aspects of conventional ammunition management.

As the use of explosive weapons in populated areas remained a major security and safety concern for civilians around the world, a group of States continued developing a political declaration on the humanitarian impact of such use. Building on an initial consultation held in 2019, Ireland continued to steer work on a draft declaration by organizing a second consultation in February and subsequently welcoming virtual inputs.

Progress was also seen in the implementation of relevant funding mechanisms. Working with the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs began preparing to launch the first pilot projects of the Saving Lives Entity, a funding facility established in 2019 within the Secretary-General’s Peacebuilding Fund. Cameroon and Jamaica were expected to be early beneficiaries of the new trust facility, designed to help Member States tackle illicit small arms and light weapons as part of a comprehensive and programmatic approach to sustainable security and development. Meanwhile, in a separate development, the United Nations Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation continued to support 14 projects³ for its 2019–2020 cycle, as well as 16 projects⁴ initiated in 2018.

In the second half of the year, the Office for Disarmament Affairs joined the African Union Commission and the Regional Centre on Small Arms in the Great Lakes Region, the Horn of Africa and Bordering States to assist seven African States in processing the weapons surrendered to authorities as part of Africa Amnesty Month. As part of the broader support from the United Nations for the African Union’s flagship initiative, referred to as “Silencing the Guns”, the Office and its project partners collaborated with the national commissions and focal points on small-arms control in beneficiary countries to identify needs and develop country-specific programming. To support nationwide outreach campaigns in those States, the Office also assisted in the delivery of gender- and

³ United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), “UNSCAR Projects Selected in 2019”.

⁴ UNODA, “UNSCAR Projects Selected in 2018”.

youth-sensitive messaging that highlighted the key objectives of the Silencing the Guns initiative. Such messages were also intended to raise awareness about the devastating impacts of the illicit proliferation of small arms on sustainable peace and development.

In 2020, fewer Member States reported to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and the United Nations Report on Military Expenditures than in the previous year. While the ongoing pandemic may have contributed to the drop in participation, the decline in reporting was a continuation of a decade-long downward trend. There was also a slight decrease in the number of States declaring their transfers of small arms and light weapons as part of their reporting for the Register, from 27 in 2019 to 26 in 2020. Meanwhile, the Office for Disarmament Affairs continued to oversee an upgrade of the database used by Member States to submit their military expenditures; the project was scheduled to conclude in the first quarter of 2021.

The Office for Disarmament Affairs also further developed the Modular Small-arms-control Implementation Compendium (MOSAIC), publicly releasing three new modules in 2020. Additionally, to facilitate the use of MOSAIC by a larger number of countries and entities, the Office continued to oversee the translation of previously approved modules into languages other than English.

Arms Trade Treaty

The Arms Trade Treaty entered into force on 24 December 2014, aimed at establishing common standards for the international trade in conventional arms and eradicating the illicit trade in such weapons. In 2020, five States⁵ deposited their instruments of accession and ratification with the Secretary-General in his capacity as the Treaty's depositary. Accordingly, the total number of States parties increased to 110. As at the end of the year, 31 signatory States had not yet acceded to the Treaty.⁶

Sixth Conference of States Parties

The sixth Conference of States Parties was preceded by one informal preparatory meeting that was convened in Geneva on 7 February, alongside a meeting of the Treaty's three Working Groups.⁷ When the COVID-19 pandemic led to the cancellation of a second informal preparatory meeting that was scheduled for 17 April, the consultations planned for that meeting instead took place during the intersessional period, with stakeholders providing written comments and suggestions on draft documentation by email.

⁵ In 2020, Afghanistan, China and Niue acceded to the Treaty, and Namibia and Sao Tome and Principe ratified it.

⁶ For the [Treaty's text and adherence status](#), see the UNODA Disarmament Treaties Database.

⁷ The groups are as follows: Working Group on Effective Treaty Implementation, Working Group on Transparency and Reporting, and Working Group on Treaty Universalization.

Owing to the pandemic, States parties agreed to conduct, on an exceptional basis, the sixth Conference of States Parties through written procedure. The Conference was presided over by Federico Villegas (Argentina), who succeeded Carlos Foradori (Argentina) following his departure from Geneva. A total of 102 States participated in the work of the Conference (including one State that had acceded to the Treaty but for which the Treaty had not yet entered into force, and 12 signatory States). In addition, 37 international and civil society organizations participated in the meeting.⁸

The Conference concluded on 21 August with the publication of a final report.⁹ A total of 17 draft decisions were circulated to States parties, of which the Conference adopted 11. The remaining 6 draft decisions were to be taken up in the Treaty's next annual cycle.¹⁰

Notably, the Conference decided to establish the Diversion Information Exchange Forum¹¹ and mandated the President of the next Conference of States Parties to organize the Forum's first formal meeting within the time frame and budget allocated for the Treaty's meetings in 2021.¹² The Conference also decided to review the usefulness of the Forum at the eighth Conference of States Parties in 2022.

Additionally, the Conference considered several other matters related to its Working Groups. It endorsed standing agenda items, as well as recurring and specific tasks, for the Working Group on Transparency and Reporting to take up in advance of the seventh Conference of States Parties in 2021.¹³ Meanwhile, the Conference did not adopt the proposed multi-year workplans (on articles 6 and 7, on article 9 and on article 11) of the Working Group on Effective Treaty

⁸ See Arms Trade Treaty, "List of participants", document [ATT/CSP6/2020/SEC/634/Conf.PartList/Rev1](#).

⁹ Arms Trade Treaty, document [ATT/CSP6/2020/SEC/635/Conf.FinRep.Rev1](#).

¹⁰ On 29 July, the Arms Trade Treaty Secretariat circulated 15 draft decisions to States parties to be considered for adoption by the sixth Conference of States Parties. Each draft decision was presented separately to States parties for consideration and adoption via silence procedure based on rule 41 (3) of the Arms Trade Treaty Rules of Procedure, with a deadline of 17 August (20 days from 29 July). On 14 August, the Arms Trade Treaty Secretariat circulated two more draft decisions to States parties to be considered for adoption by the Conference via silence procedure, with a deadline of 17 August (4 days from 14 August).

¹¹ The Forum was established to allow States parties and signatory States to share concrete and operational information about current or past cases of suspected or detected arms diversion. States could then use the information to prevent such cases from happening, address them properly when they occur, or help other States prevent or address them. For more information, see the Forum's Terms of Reference (Arms Trade Treaty, document [ATT/CSP6.DIEF/2020/CHAIR/632/Conf.DIEFToRS](#)).

¹² See Arms Trade Treaty, decision 13 ([ATT/CSP6.DIEF/2020/CHAIR/629/Decision.DIEFToRS](#)).

¹³ See Arms Trade Treaty, "ATT Working Group on Transparency and Reporting: Co-Chairs' draft report to CSP6", document [ATT/CSP6.WGTR/2020/CHAIR/607/Conf.Rep](#).

Implementation; the relevant draft decisions¹⁴ were to be taken forward to the next cycle.

In addition, the Conference adopted procedural decisions related to the functioning of the Treaty process, including the budget¹⁵ for 2021, and it decided to continue the contract of the Head of the Arms Trade Treaty Secretariat.¹⁶ The Conference also appointed 14 States¹⁷ to serve on the Voluntary Trust Fund Selection Committee for the Treaty's sixth, seventh and eighth Conferences of States Parties. Furthermore, the States parties endorsed the conclusion of the Management Committee draft report on the Arms Trade Treaty Secretariat's performance on the administration of the Sponsorship Programme.¹⁸ However, they did not adopt a decision on the application of financial rule 8(1)d on the Arms Trade Treaty Sponsorship Programme and Voluntary Trust Fund.¹⁹

The Conference decided to hold the seventh Conference of States Parties in Geneva from 30 August to 3 September 2021, at the International Conference Centre Genève. It elected Lansana Gberie (Sierra Leone) as President of the next Conference, as well as four States²⁰ to serve as Vice-Presidents.

Small arms and light weapons

Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons

The Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, with its International Tracing Instrument,²¹ remained the only universal framework for coordinated efforts to combat the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the seventh Biennial Meeting of States to consider the national, regional and global implementation of the Programme of Action and its International Tracing Instrument had to be postponed from its

¹⁴ See Arms Trade Treaty, decisions 9, 10 and 11 ([ATT/CSP6.WGETI/2020/CHAIR/625/Decision.MYPlanArt6&7](#), [ATT/CSP6.WGETI/2020/CHAIR/626/Decision.MYPlanArt9](#) and [ATT/CSP6.WGETI/2020/CHAIR/627/Decision.MYPlanArt11](#)).

¹⁵ Arms Trade Treaty, "ATT provisional budget estimates for the financial year 2021", document [ATT/CSP6/2020/SEC.FIN/598/Conf.2021Bud](#).

¹⁶ See Arms Trade Treaty, decision 8 ([ATT/CSP6.MC/2020/MC/624/Decision.HoSContract](#)).

¹⁷ Albania, Australia, Canada, Finland, Germany, Japan, Madagascar, Mexico, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom were appointed to serve in the Voluntary Trust Fund Selection Committee for the sixth, seventh and eighth Conferences of States parties.

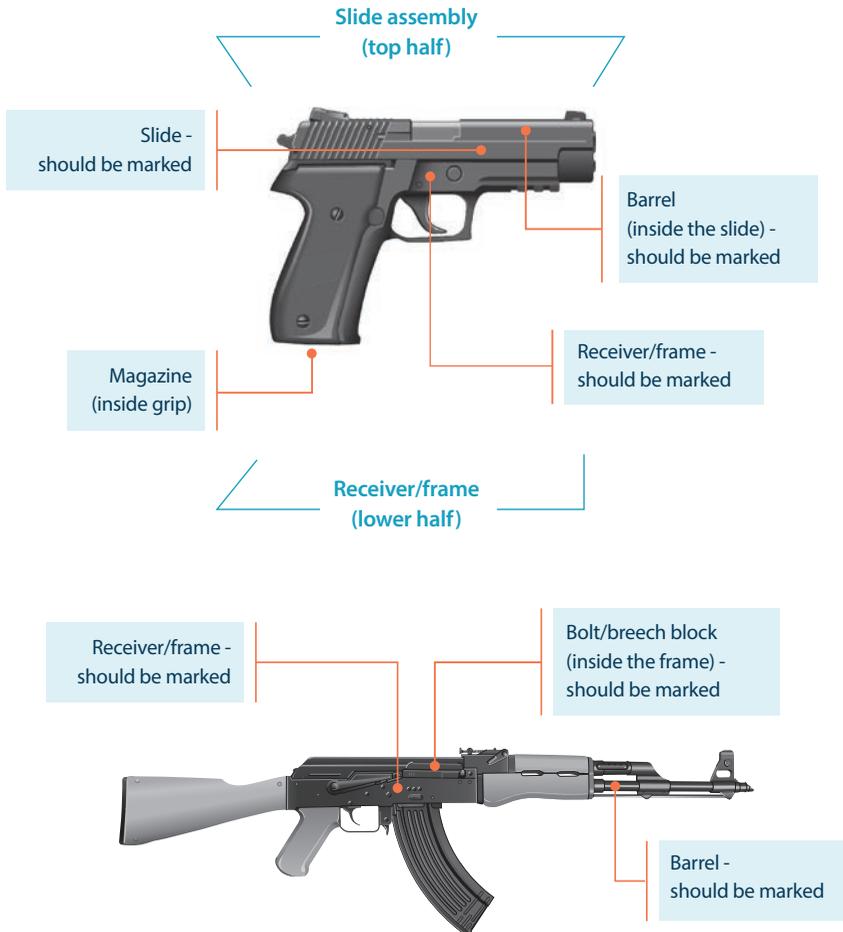
¹⁸ Arms Trade Treaty, decision 14 ([ATT/CSP6.MC/2020/MC/630/Decision.AdminSponsProgr](#)).

¹⁹ Arms Trade Treaty, decision 16 ([ATT/CSP6.MC/2020/MC/632/Decision.ImpFR8\(1\)d](#)).

²⁰ Cyprus, Germany, Latvia and Peru were elected as the four Vice-Presidents of the seventh Conference of States Parties.

²¹ The International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons is also known as the International Tracing Instrument.

Firearms marking locations



Illustrations courtesy of Small Arms Survey.

Marking weapons is a critical measure in the fight against illicit trafficking. Once a weapon is emblazoned with a unique identifier, authorities can identify the point of “diversion” if it is moved from the legal to illegal realm. A marked weapon can also be “traced”, or systematically tracked through the lines of supply to where it was manufactured or most recently imported. That process provides information that can support enforcement of arms embargoes or identification of trafficking routes, among other activities.

In accordance with the International Tracing Instrument, a marking should be applied to an essential or structural component of the weapon, such as its receiver or frame. States are also encouraged to mark other parts of the weapon, like its barrel and slide or cylinder. More information on marking and tracing can be found in [MOSAIC](#), a set of voluntary, practical guidance notes combining the best small-arms expertise in succinct, operational advice.

originally scheduled dates of 15 to 19 June 2020.²² By its resolution [75/241](#) of 31 December 2020, the General Assembly rescheduled the Meeting for 26 to 30 July 2021.²³

Kenya, acting in its capacity as Chair-designate, carried out a series of informal consultations before the postponement, seeking agreement on the Meeting's provisional agenda and working methods. In addition, at the request of the Chair-designate, Belgium agreed to facilitate discussions on a potential agenda item related to the consideration of a supplementary annex to the International Tracing Instrument for addressing recent developments in manufacturing, technology and design of small arms and light weapons.²⁴

In preparation for the seventh Biennial Meeting of States, the Secretary-General published his annual consolidated report²⁵ on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, including both the views of Member States and inputs from relevant United Nations entities, the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) and the World Customs Organization. In their submissions, those States and entities addressed the Meeting's mandated thematic focus on best practices, lessons learned and recommendations on preventing and combating the diversion and illicit international transfer of small arms and light weapons to unauthorized recipients.

During the year, the Office for Disarmament Affairs received 85 reports²⁶ from Member States on their implementation of the Programme of Action in 2018 and 2019 as part of the framework's biennial reporting cycle. For the first time, international and regional organizations also received invitations to submit reports on their implementation efforts, thus fulfilling an agreement of the third Review Conference in 2018 to encourage reporting by relevant regional and subregional organizations and mechanisms on their relevant actions at the regional and subregional levels.²⁷

²² See General Assembly resolution [74/60](#) of 12 December 2019.

²³ By its decision [74/552](#) of 14 May 2020, the General Assembly, noting with concern the situation concerning the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, decided to postpone the biennial meeting of States, scheduled for 15 to 19 June 2020, to consider key challenges and opportunities relating to the implementation of the Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons and the International Instrument to a period in 2021 to be decided by the General Assembly at its seventy-fifth session.

²⁴ Recommendations to that end were included in the 2019 report of the Secretary-General on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects and assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons and collecting them ([A/74/187](#)).

²⁵ [A/75/78](#).

²⁶ UNODA, Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons, "National reports".

²⁷ Outcome document of the third Review Conference ([A/CONF.192/2018/RC/3](#), annex), section II, paras. 10 and 67. Reports submitted by regional and international organizations are available at UNODA Meetings Place, "[Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons – Seventh Biennial Meeting of States: Information for IGOs](#)".

Furthermore, in the context of the Programme of Action, the Office for Disarmament Affairs continued implementing a multi-year project²⁸ funded by the European Union in support of gender-mainstreamed policies, programmes and actions in the fight against small-arms trafficking and misuse, in line with the women, peace and security agenda (for more information, see chap. VI). Through that project, the Office continued to support Member States, as well as the wider community of practitioners, in integrating gender considerations into their efforts towards small-arms control.

Silencing the Guns in Africa by 2020: Africa Amnesty Month

As part of the United Nations' broader support to the African Union's Silencing the Guns flagship initiative,²⁹ the Office for Disarmament Affairs collaborated with the African Union Commission and the Regional Centre on Small Arms in the Great Lakes Region, the Horn of Africa and Bordering States to help seven African States³⁰ collect illegally held firearms. The joint project was launched in September to mark Africa Amnesty Month.³¹

The three organizations assisted States, for example, in undertaking nationwide outreach to citizens on the negative effects of illegal gun ownership and illicit small-arms trafficking. As part of a series of awareness-raising campaigns conducted over national and local television, radio, print media and seminars, the partners held a national slogan contest that encouraged youth and women to share their voices, building upon their crucial roles as peacebuilders in their communities. In addition, Ramtane Lamamra, the African Union High Representative for Silencing the Guns, and Izumi Nakamitsu, the United Nations

²⁸ See UNODA, “[Supporting gender mainstreamed policies, programmes and actions in the fight against small arms trafficking and misuse, in line with the Women, Peace and Security agenda](#)”.

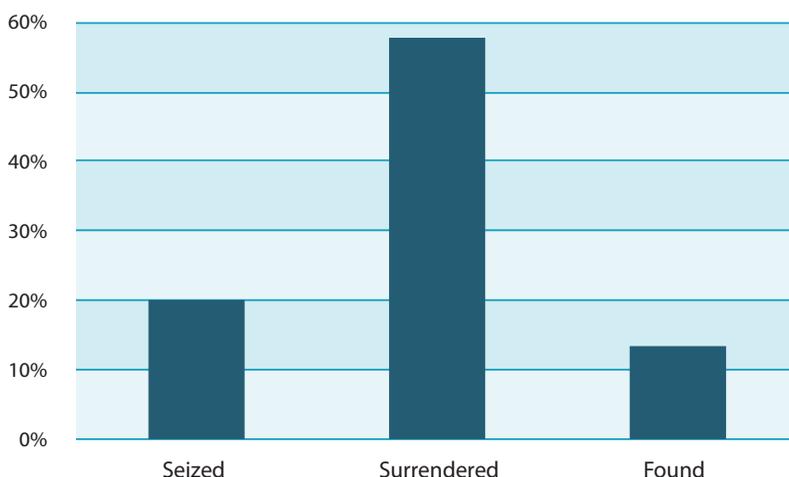
²⁹ In May 2013, African States committed to “Silencing the Guns in Africa by 2020” and achieving a conflict-free Africa ([Assembly/AU/Decl.3 \(XXI\) \(2013\)](#)). They later transformed that commitment into a “flagship initiative” for the [first 10-year implementation plan](#) of Agenda 2063, thus establishing it as crucial to accelerating Africa’s economic growth and development, and to promoting a common identity. The Security Council, by its resolution [2457 \(2019\)](#), underscored the importance of a joint United Nations-African Union partnership framework for the African Union Silencing the Guns initiative and further indicated its readiness to provide support in the implementation of the road map.

³⁰ Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Côte d’Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia and Kenya.

³¹ In 2016, the African Union prepared the [Master Roadmap of Practical Steps to Silence the Guns in Africa by the Year 2020](#) and declared its theme for 2020: “Silencing the Guns in Africa: Creating Conducive Conditions for Africa’s Development”. In the Master Roadmap, the African Union underlined what it considered to be crucial linkages between peace, security and inclusive socioeconomic development. (For more information, see [remarks](#) by Ambassador Ramtane Lamamra, African Union High Representative for Silencing the Guns, Addis Ababa, February 2020.) In 2017, in support of Silencing the Guns, and to accelerate its practical implementation, the African Union Assembly declared September to be “Africa Amnesty Month”, observed each year until 2020, for the surrender and collection of illicit small arms and light weapons (Assembly of the African Union, document [Assembly/AU/Dec. 645 \(XXIX\) \(2017\)](#), para. 9).

Voluntary handovers of firearms in African States

Small arms and light weapons collected in 2018 and 2019



According to data collected by 13 African States under the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons, voluntary surrender was the primary means of weapons collection in 2018 and 2019. The African Union and the United Nations aimed to enhance that trend in 2020 and 2021 by supporting national institutions responsible for small-arms control and assisting operational entities in areas like sensitization, outreach and capacity-building. Those activities—undertaken to mark Africa Amnesty Month for the surrender and collection of illicit small arms and light weapons—support participating States in weapons collection and other areas likely to be reflected in their 2022 reports for the Programme of Action.

High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, co-authored a joint statement³² on the initiative.

In another part of the project, national law enforcement authorities benefited from capacity-building efforts on approaches to community-based policing, weapons and ammunition management, including record-keeping and destruction.

While several project activities were scheduled to continue through 2021, 850 small arms and 500 rounds of ammunition were initially collected in 2020.

³² United Nations Africa Renewal, “Africa Amnesty Month: UN-AU joint call for the surrender of illicit weapons”, 23 September 2020.

On 6 December, at its fourteenth extraordinary session³³ of Heads of States, the African Union decided to extend to 2030 the Silencing the Guns flagship initiative and the designation of September as Africa Amnesty Month.

Security Council

The Security Council remained seized of the challenges related to the misuse, illicit transfer and destabilizing accumulation of small arms and light weapons, particularly in the context of its agenda items on the Central African Republic, Libya, the Sudan, South Sudan and Yemen, as well as other countries.

To address the regional dimension of the scourge of small arms, the Council held a dedicated meeting in March on the agenda item “Peace and Security in Africa”. By a presidential statement,³⁴ the Council recognized the impact and challenges posed by illicit trade and diversion of small arms and light weapons in Africa that enabled terrorist groups to considerably increase their armed capabilities.

Although the Security Council did not have to consider a biennial report of the Secretary-General on small arms and light weapons in 2020, it regularly addressed issues related to weapons and ammunition in the context of peacekeeping operations and special political missions. Through those operations and missions, the United Nations continued to implement the arms-related provisions of Security Council mandates in Abyei, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti, Libya, the Sudan and South Sudan.

Meanwhile, as COVID-19 dominated the international agenda throughout the year, the Security Council addressed the pandemic’s impact on ongoing armed conflicts and the resulting disruptions to humanitarian assistance. In July, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution [2532 \(2020\)](#), calling upon all parties to armed conflicts to engage immediately in a durable humanitarian pause for at least 90 consecutive days in order to enable the safe, unhindered and sustained delivery of humanitarian assistance and provision of related services by impartial humanitarian actors. With the resolution, the Council was seen to express support for the Secretary-General’s appeal on 23 March for a global ceasefire to “silence the guns”, create opportunities for life-saving aid, open windows for diplomacy and bring hope to people suffering in conflict zones who were particularly vulnerable to the pandemic.³⁵

³³ African Union, “[14th Extraordinary Session of the Assembly on Silencing the Guns](#)” (video), 6 December 2020.

³⁴ [S/PRST/2020/5](#).

³⁵ In addition to the Security Council, 180 countries, regional organizations, civil society groups and peace advocates endorsed the Secretary-General’s ceasefire call throughout 2020. On 22 June, a group of 170 States issued a collective statement endorsing a global ceasefire (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Malaysia, “[Statement of support by 171 UN Member States, non-member observer State and observer to the UN Secretary-General’s appeal for a global ceasefire amid the COVID-19 pandemic](#)”).

Additionally, in a thematic resolution on security sector reform adopted in November, the Security Council recognized how such reform is interlinked with other factors related to stabilization and reconstruction, such as weapons and ammunition management and arms embargo implementation.³⁶

Peace operations

In the context of country-specific situations on its agenda, the Security Council addressed issues regarding weapons and ammunition in the Central African Republic, Haiti, Libya, Mali, Somalia, the Sudan and Yemen.

In 2020, the Council addressed weapons and ammunition management in two resolutions on the situation in the Central African Republic. In its resolution [2507 \(2020\)](#), adopted in January, the Council renewed the arms embargo and requested the national authorities to report to the relevant Security Council Committee by midyear on the progress achieved regarding, inter alia, the management of weapons and ammunition. Then, in November, the Council adopted resolution [2552 \(2020\)](#), renewing the mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic for one year, including provisions related to weapons and ammunition management. By the same resolution, the Council also called upon national authorities, in coordination with the Mission and the United Nations Mine Action Service, to address the illicit transfer, destabilizing accumulation and misuse of small arms and light weapons. It also called on national authorities to ensure the safe and effective management, storage and security of stockpiles. The Mission was also requested to support authorities in implementing the action plan of the national commission to combat the proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

The Security Council adopted four resolutions in 2020 on the situation in Libya. In resolution [2509 \(2020\)](#), adopted in February, the Council called upon the national authorities to support the investigative work of the panel of experts inside Libya³⁷ for implementing the relevant arms embargo. That support, the Council specified, should include granting access to weapons storage facilities.

In the same month, the Security Council also adopted resolution [2511 \(2020\)](#), expressing concern over the ongoing political, security, economic and humanitarian challenges in Yemen—including the ongoing violence and enforced disappearances—and threats arising from the illicit transfer, destabilizing accumulation and misuse of weapons. By the same resolution, the Council authorized a one-year extension of an asset freeze and travel ban it had imposed in 2014 on individuals or entities threatening peace, security and stability in the country.

In June, the Security Council made a dedicated reference to small arms, light weapons and explosive ordnance threat mitigation in resolution [2531 \(2020\)](#), by which it renewed for one year the mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional

³⁶ See Security Council resolution [2553 \(2020\)](#).

³⁷ Panel of Experts on Libya established pursuant to Security Council resolution [1973 \(2011\)](#).

Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali. In particular, the Council called upon the authorities of Mali to address the issue of the proliferation and illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons, including by ensuring the safe and effective management, storage and security of their stockpiles and ammunitions in accordance with the Economic Community of West African States Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and Other Related Materials, the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons, and Security Council resolution 2220 (2015).

Also in June, the Security Council adopted resolution 2524 (2020), establishing the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan for one year. The Council mandated the new Mission to provide, if so requested by the parties to the negotiations, scalable support to the implementation of any future peace agreements, including assistance with the following: (a) accountability and transitional justice, including for acts of sexual and gender-based violence; (b) disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (including transitional weapons and ammunition management, as well as considering the different needs, experiences and safety of female and male ex-combatants, including children); and (c) monitoring and verification of possible ceasefires with particular focus on Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan (the Two Areas) and Darfur. The Mission was also requested to support Sudanese-led peacebuilding, in particular conflict prevention, mitigation and reconciliation; community violence reduction with a particular focus on intercommunal conflict; mine action; and the collection of small arms and light weapons consistent with international standards.

In October, the Security Council renewed the mandate of the United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti, a special political mission initially established in 2019. In adopting resolution 2547 (2020), the Council decided that the Office would continue (a) having an advisory role in the areas of, inter alia, good governance, justice, elections, constitutional reform and public sector accountability, and (b) addressing gang violence, community violence reduction and weapons and munitions management.

The situation in Somalia was the subject of six Security Council resolutions during the year. In resolution 2551 (2020), adopted in November, the Council extended the mandate of the Panel of Experts on Somalia;³⁸ renewed the partial lifting of the arms embargo; and welcomed the progress made by the national authorities in weapons and ammunition management, including through the adoption of a national action plan and the development of a weapons tracing system for the security forces in Somalia. By the same resolution, the Council condemned the continued flow of weapons and ammunition to and through Somalia in violation of the respective arms embargo—especially when such materiel reached Al-Shabaab and affiliates linked to Islamic State in Iraq and

³⁸ The Security Council established the Panel of Experts on Somalia by resolution 2444 (2018), operative para. 11.

the Levant (also known as Da'esh)—and it further condemned the illegal supply of weapons, ammunition and improvised explosive device components from Yemen to Somalia. In addition, the Security Council called upon the international community to continue supporting the development of the Somali national authorities' weapons and ammunition management capacity. In developing such capacity, the Council cited a particular need to focus on the following: training; storage; support for infrastructure and distribution; technical assistance and capacity-building in countering the financing of terrorism; and support in tackling the threat of improvised explosive devices.

UNODA Aide-Memoire on weapons and ammunition management

In the context of a sustained international focus on the implications of weapons and ammunition management for peace and security,³⁹ the Office for Disarmament Affairs produced the second edition of *Aide-Memoire: Options for Reflecting Weapons and Ammunition Management in Decisions of the Security Council*. Like the 2018 edition, the new publication was intended to be a tool for accurately and comprehensively reflecting, in relevant Security Council draft resolutions and decisions, state-of-the-art practices in weapons and ammunition management, which would ensure maximum consideration of weapons-related issues across the Council's agenda.

By reflecting the latest provisions of the United Nations technical guidelines on weapons and ammunition management developed over the previous decade—namely, MOSAIC and the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines—the updated edition continued to provide meaningful guidance on comprehensive and effective weapons and ammunition management in challenging environments, based on solid technical advice. The second edition also incorporated views on the full range of applicable normative frameworks,⁴⁰ as well as a new collection of recommendations from relevant reports of the Secretary-General to support the integration of weapons and ammunition-related matters in the Council's work.

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

Throughout 2020, the Department of Peace Operations and the Office for Disarmament Affairs continued to implement the joint initiative on “Effective Weapons and Ammunition Management in a Changing Disarmament,

³⁹ In his Agenda for Disarmament, *Securing Our Common Future*, the Secretary-General acknowledged that the loss of arms and ammunition from storage sites, and their onward proliferation, could be a catalyst for armed violence, conflict and insecurity. Similarly, in his 2019 report to the Security Council on small arms and light weapons (S/2019/1011), the Secretary-General underscored that weapons and ammunition management had continued to play a key role in peace operations and other activities of the Security Council to address conflict-affected situations and the activities of armed groups.

⁴⁰ Those frameworks include the Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons, the Arms Trade Treaty and the Firearms Protocol, as well as regional and subregional instruments.

Demobilization and Reintegration Context”. With this project, the partners aim to enable the United Nations to design and implement safe and secure weapons and ammunition management activities that are integrated with disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes and aligned with the highest international arms-control standards and guidelines.

Through the initiative, the Department of Peace Operations and the Office for Disarmament Affairs continued working together to develop relevant policy and guidance. In June, the partners published two submodules of the Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards—on disarmament (4.10) and transitional weapons and ammunition management (4.11)—as part of an ongoing review of the Standards. Additionally, using the guidance of the Standards as their basis, the partners developed a new MOSAIC module on controlling small arms and light weapons in the context of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (2.30), released in September. That month, they also launched an online community of practice (“[WAM & DDR Hub](#)”)⁴¹ to ensure continuous dissemination of resource material on weapons and ammunition management for practitioners of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration.

Meanwhile, the partner offices held their annual training course on “Effective Weapons and Ammunition Management in a Changing Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Context” from 2 to 4 December. It was organized in collaboration with the United Nations Institute for Training and Research and the Ammunition Management Advisory Team. Conducted in a virtual format owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, the participatory five-week training brought together representatives from various United Nations peace operations, United Nations entities from non-mission settings, national authorities, the African Union and training institutes.

The Department of Peace Operations and the Office for Disarmament Affairs continued to operationalize a new mechanism for providing technical assistance in weapons and ammunition management in support of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes. In addition to providing relevant remote support to the newly established United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan, the offices collaborated with the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research to finalize, in November, a preliminary study on transitional weapons and ammunition management in the Sudan. Notably, the study included concrete recommendations to inform the Mission’s work on weapons and ammunition management, with a focus on Darfur, Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile.

Furthermore, the partner offices continued to support Haiti in establishing a comprehensive arms-control framework, following a 2019 technical assessment mission on weapons and ammunition management in the country. For this project, they collaborated with the United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti, the United

⁴¹ WAM is an abbreviation for “weapons and ammunition management”. DDR is an abbreviation for “disarmament, demobilization and reintegration”.

Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, and the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research.

Modular Small-arms-control Implementation Compendium

The Office for Disarmament Affairs continued to maintain **MOSAIC**⁴² as a source of practical and voluntary advice on measures for controlling small arms. As at the end of 2020, MOSAIC contained 21 practical and voluntary guidance modules that, as a whole, could be applied in the development of national controls for small arms at every stage of their life cycle.

In 2020, three additional MOSAIC modules were developed. They cover the following subjects: monitoring, evaluation and reporting; the control of small arms and light weapons in the context of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration; and small arms and light weapons in the context of security sector reform.⁴³ During the year, the Office also began planning to develop two modules on new topics—namely, gun-free zones and the deactivation of small arms and light weapons.

Despite the challenging circumstances of the global pandemic, MOSAIC modules remained an integral part of related training activities, particularly those carried out by the regional centres of the Office for Disarmament Affairs. For instance, during a workshop on border controls in November attended by government officials from Peru and the Plurinational State of Bolivia, the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean discussed relevant MOSAIC modules, which would help participants in national efforts to control small arms and light weapons. In addition, as part of its ongoing legal assistance to Haiti, the Centre explicitly referenced and promoted MOSAIC as a reference tool for elaborating and modernizing the country's firearms law.

As at the end of the year, the Office for Disarmament Affairs had successfully overseen the translation of selected MOSAIC modules from English into Arabic, French and Spanish, as well as Bosnian, Croatian, Montenegrin and Serbian. In addition, to encourage the use of MOSAIC in more countries, the Office was preparing to translate additional modules into French and Spanish.

⁴² The MOSAIC modules are publicly available and designed for use by any interested Government or organization. They are developed and reviewed by technical experts from around the world, including more than 300 civil society and industry specialists who sit on a dedicated external reference group. As at the end of the year, the advice contained in MOSAIC had been used by Governments or civil society organizations in 110 Member States.

⁴³ From 2009 to 2019, modules were developed on topics such as establishing a national commission on small arms, setting up a national action plan on small arms and light weapons, stockpile management, and weapons marking. The MOSAIC modules, including the three released in 2020, are available [online](#).

Meanwhile, in its annual resolution on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons (75/241), the General Assembly once again noted the role of web-based tools developed by the Secretariat, including MOSAIC, and their utility in assessing progress made in the implementation of the Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons.

Coordinating Action on Small Arms mechanism

Established in 1998, the Coordinating Action on Small Arms mechanism enables 24 participating United Nations entities to exchange information, share lessons learned and jointly plan activities on controlling small arms and reducing armed violence. The participants draw from the fields of economic and social development, human rights, disarmament, organized crime, terrorism, conflict prevention, peacekeeping, public health, environment, gender and children.⁴⁴

In April, the Secretary-General's Executive Committee adopted decision 2020/28, highlighting the need for strengthened headquarters-level coordination with respect to the strategic role of activities to control small arms or reduce armed violence. In the decision, the Committee highlighted the following: (a) the need for strengthened strategic and policy coordination and country-level operational cohesion in the implementation of small-arms programmes; and (b) the criticality of national ownership as the guiding principle for the approach of the United Nations to such programmes.⁴⁵ Further to that decision, the Office for Disarmament Affairs began collaborating with other stakeholders—particularly the Development Coordination Office⁴⁶ of the United Nations Secretariat—to establish a country level, system-wide approach for advancing the Committee's

⁴⁴ The following United Nations entities participated in 2020: Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate, Department for 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, United Nations Children's Fund, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), United Nations Environment Programme, United Nations Human Settlements Programme, United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, United Nations Mine Action Service, United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, and World Health Organization.

⁴⁵ Furthermore, the Committee emphasized that the principle of national ownership would guide the entire United Nations approach to small arms and light weapons and that the Coordinating Action on Small Arms mechanism should be reinvigorated to reinforce its role in the decision's implementation.

⁴⁶ The United Nations Development Coordination Office is the secretariat for the [United Nations Sustainable Development Group](#), comprising 34 agencies, funds and programmes working on development at the regional and global levels.

stated aims through the “common country analyses”⁴⁷ carried out within the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework.

To implement the decision, the mechanism’s participants undertook a structural and functional review to position the mechanism as the main platform of the United Nations for coordinating holistic assistance to States in controlling small arms, light weapons and ammunition, as well as the illicit arms trade. Such coordination is a key component of the Secretary-General’s prevention agenda.

Additionally, in consultation with the Development Coordination Office, the mechanism started developing options to improve support to relevant field actors, particularly United Nations country teams, in establishing country-level approaches to controlling small arms and light weapons. Such approaches should (a) account for relevant activities across the United Nations system, and (b) be based on and reflected in both common country analyses and the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework.

In addition, the Coordinating Action on Small Arms mechanism continued to oversee the development and utilization of MOSAIC and function as the advisory body for the Saving Lives Entity fund and the United Nations Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation. It also provided a forum for information exchange on, inter alia, the intergovernmental Working Group on Firearms;⁴⁸ gender and arms control; weapons and ammunition management in the context of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration; and developments in the Human Rights Council related to small arms.

Firearms Protocol to the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime

In 2020, the Plurinational State of Bolivia acceded to 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. Accordingly, the total number of States parties increased to 119, with 10 signatory States that had not yet acceded to it.

The General Assembly adopted the Firearms Protocol on 31 May 2001 to promote, facilitate and strengthen cooperation among States parties to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, their parts and components and ammunition.

⁴⁷ A common country analysis is an objective, impartial assessment of a State’s context, opportunities and challenges, encompassing sustainable development, human rights, gender equality, peace and security, and humanitarian perspectives. For more information, see United Nations Development Group, *United Nations Development Assistance Framework Guidance* (2017), pp. 21–22.

⁴⁸ At its tenth session, the Conference to the Parties to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime decided to establish the Working Group on Firearms (see resolution 5/4).

Ammunition

In multilateral deliberations throughout 2020, States continued to raise concern over the dual risks of unintended explosions and the diversion of conventional ammunition.

Furthermore, a new group of governmental experts⁴⁹ established to address problems arising from the accumulation of conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus began its work. The Group achieved significant progress, despite the postponement of two of its formal meetings until 2021 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition, the Office for Disarmament Affairs continued to promote, under its United Nations SaferGuard Programme, the application of the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines. The United Nations developed the Guidelines to enhance the safety and security of ammunition stockpiles in support of Member States' efforts to mitigate the human costs of unplanned explosions and prevent the diversion of ammunition.

Group of Governmental Experts on problems arising from the accumulation of conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus

Pursuant to General Assembly resolution [72/55](#) of 4 December 2017, the Secretary-General convened in 2020 the Group of Governmental Experts on problems arising from the accumulation of conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus. It was the second such group established to consider the topic, following one convened in 2008.⁵⁰

Owing to COVID-19 restrictions, the Group held only one formal session, in January, and could neither complete its work in 2020 nor report to the General Assembly's seventy-fifth session, as planned. As a result, the General Assembly adopted a procedural decision ([75/552](#)) to carry over the mandate of the Group to 2021, thus allowing the Group to convene for up to 10 working days, complete its work and report to the Assembly at its seventy-sixth session.

Before the onset of pandemic-related restrictions in New York, the Group met for its first session from 20 to 24 January at the United Nations Headquarters. Its proceedings were opened by the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, who recalled that the Secretary-General had committed, in his [Agenda for Disarmament](#), to supporting State and regional action on excessive and poorly maintained stockpiles. At that first session, the Group unanimously elected Marcus Bleinroth (Germany) as its Chair, adopted its agenda,⁵¹ took note of its indicative timetable and considered its working methods. In line with past practice, the

⁴⁹ The Group was established pursuant to General Assembly resolution [72/55](#).

⁵⁰ For the final report of the earlier Group, see [A/63/162](#).

⁵¹ [GGE/PACAS/2020/1/Rev.1](#).

Group decided to operate by consensus and invite presentations from external experts on topics of particular relevance to its work.

Drawing upon topics arising from informal consultations convened by Germany throughout 2018 and 2019 pursuant to General Assembly resolution [72/55](#), the Group initiated a comprehensive examination of both safety and security aspects of conventional ammunition management.⁵²

Following the first session in January, the Chair convened informal, virtual discussions from 20 to 24 April to maintain momentum and continue work towards a final report. Participating experts, who had been invited to submit working papers on issues pertinent to the deliberations, covered topics such as the sustainability of cooperation and assistance in the safe and secure management of ammunition, as well as regional and national priorities in the context of the Group's mandate and General Assembly resolution [72/55](#).⁵³ The Chair also prepared two substantive working papers,⁵⁴ at the request of the experts, to support the Group's consideration of key issues that arose out of the first session's discussions—namely, diversion typology and existing frameworks applicable to conventional ammunition management. In advance of the Group's first session, the Secretariat prepared an overview paper⁵⁵ on the history of the issue of conventional ammunition under United Nations auspices.

With the General Assembly's adoption of decision [75/552](#), the Group was expected to convene for two additional sessions in 2021.

International Ammunition Technical Guidelines and United Nations SaferGuard activities

Ammunition Management Advisory Team

The Ammunition Management Advisory Team, established in 2019 as a joint initiative of the Office for Disarmament Affairs and the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining, became fully operational in 2020. By

⁵² Pursuant to General Assembly resolution [72/55](#), throughout 2018 and 2019, Germany convened six informal consultations at the United Nations Headquarters in February, March and October 2018, as well as February, May and September 2019. Those informal consultations explored the multidimensional challenges posed by the accumulation of conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus, with particular focus on the dual challenges of unplanned explosions at munition sites and the diversion of ammunition to unauthorized recipients. That informal consultative process was further informed by a series of thematic seminars organized over the same period by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research to frame key issues and inform processes pertinent to the management of conventional ammunition. The seminars aimed to facilitate dialogue and generate ideas in order to make progress at the national, regional and global levels. For more information, see the informal [non-paper](#) for the Group presented by Germany. A comprehensive overview of the key findings and discussions is provided in the reports of the seminar series, available from the [Institute](#) in English, Spanish and French.

⁵³ For all working papers of the Group, see [UNODA Meetings Place](#).

⁵⁴ [GGE/PACAS/2020/3](#) and [GGE/PACAS/2020/4](#).

⁵⁵ [GGE/PACAS/2020/2](#).

providing technical assistance in ammunition management in response to requests from Member States,⁵⁶ the Advisory Team helped strengthen State capacities to improve the safety and security of ammunition stocks. Its work also contributed to the implementation of the Secretary-General's vision for "disarmament that saves lives", particularly Action 22, on securing excessive and poorly maintained stockpiles, of his Agenda for Disarmament.

Validation process

In 2020, the Office for Disarmament Affairs, under its United Nations SaferGuard Programme, continued to promote the global application of the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines, including by further developing the validation process to build a diverse roster of ammunition management experts with knowledge and skills compatible with the Guidelines. In February, the Office for Disarmament Affairs, the Ammunition Management Advisory Team and the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean initiated a validation process in Spanish, leading to the final selection of 12 experts from seven countries. Their selection is expected to strengthen the United Nations SaferGuard roster by including experts who could provide ammunition-management advice in Spanish that is firmly based on the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines. Owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, however, the completion of the Spanish-language validation process and several other validation exercises planned in different regions had to be postponed until 2021 or 2022.

Translating the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines and their support tools

Continuing its support for the United Nations SaferGuard Programme, the Office for Disarmament Affairs oversaw full French and Spanish translations of the [modules](#) and [implementation support toolkit](#) of the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines, as well as the [web page](#) of the SaferGuard Programme. Originally developed in English, the Guidelines subsequently had been made available in several other languages. However, only a handful of modules were translated into French, and none were available in Spanish. The new translations were thus expected to facilitate wider and more effective utilization of the Guidelines in ammunition management activities undertaken by United Nations personnel and national authorities, as well as by industry and operational non-governmental organizations. In addition to translations of the Guidelines' modules and the toolkit, the full translation of the implementation support guides—*Guide to Developing National Standards for Ammunition Management* and the *Critical Path Guide to the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines*—into French and Spanish were completed in 2020.

⁵⁶ The requesting States included Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kyrgyzstan, Mauritania, Montenegro, Peru and the Republic of Moldova.

Technical Review Board

The United Nations SaferGuard Technical Review Board, a group of experts⁵⁷ overseeing the updating of the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines, completed a comprehensive review of the Guidelines and their implementation support toolkit. To that end, the Board's members continued in 2020 to update and improve the Guidelines during an informal virtual meeting held from 27 to 30 July. Then, from 7 to 10 December, the Technical Review Board and the Strategic Coordination Group⁵⁸ convened virtually for their annual meeting, enabling participants to review version 3 of the Guidelines and approve further improvements to their implementation support toolkit and web page. The Board also approved plans to conduct a gender-sensitive review of the Guidelines based on the findings of a briefing paper⁵⁹ prepared by the Small Arms Survey, a non-governmental research institute, in collaboration with the Office for Disarmament Affairs (for more information, see chap. VI).

Ammunition management in United Nations peace operations

In 2020, the Office for Disarmament Affairs began developing training materials on weapons and ammunition management in United Nations peace operations. As policy developments and past experiences in mission settings had illustrated the need to apply international good practices and guidance on ammunition management during such operations, the learning materials were intended to ensure that United Nations personnel and troop- and police-contributing countries acquired the competencies necessary to effectively apply the guidance set out in United Nations policies and manuals on ammunition management. The Office worked on developing the learning materials in close partnership with the Ammunition Management Advisory Team and other United Nations entities.

To launch the initiative, the Office assessed the training needs of the above-mentioned target audiences, as well as the development of initial draft training materials.

⁵⁷ Technical Review Board members are national ammunition technical experts from Austria, Bangladesh, Brazil, Canada, China, Germany, Singapore, South Africa, Switzerland and the United States. The Board receives inputs and guidance from the wider Strategic Coordination Group, which is composed of the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines implementing partners.

⁵⁸ The Board receives inputs and guidance from the Strategic Coordination Group, which is composed of implementing partners.

⁵⁹ Emile LeBrun, *Making Room for Improvement: Gender Dimensions of the Life-cycle Management of Ammunition* (United Nations publication, 2020).

Improvised explosive devices

In 2020, the threat of improvised explosive devices continued to receive attention from Member States and the United Nations, as well as humanitarian organizations and other civil society actors. Throughout the year, incidents involving such devices took place across multiple regions in the context of armed conflict, crime and terrorism, with continued heavy impacts in countries including Afghanistan, Somalia, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen. According to the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, non-suicide attacks using improvised explosive devices caused 217 deaths and 471 injuries in the first half of 2020, making such strikes the country's leading cause of harm to civilians from anti-Government elements. During the same period, the Mission documented 28 deaths and 124 injuries from suicide attacks involving the weapons.⁶⁰

United Nations peacekeeping operations also continued to suffer from attacks involving improvised explosive devices. In late March, the Security Council adopted resolution 2518 (2020), expressing concern over security threats and targeted attacks against peacekeepers, including threats posed by landmines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices. By that resolution, the Council requested Member States to support enhanced training, including on countering improvised explosive devices, for peacekeepers.

The use of improvised explosive devices in Mali posed particularly significant security challenges to United Nations peacekeepers in 2020. The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali endured 41 attacks with improvised explosive devices in the first half of the year, up from 25 carried out during the same period in 2019, according to a country report⁶¹ by the Secretary-General. While the number of injured peacekeepers more than doubled, from 22 in the first half of 2019 to 58 in the first half of 2020, the number of fatalities increased only slightly, from 3 peacekeepers to 4 in the respective periods, owing in part to the Mission's increased training and enhanced equipment for countering improvised explosive devices. The Secretary-General also noted an increase in the use of victim-operated improvised explosive devices at the country's centre, resulting in higher civilian casualties: 153 in the first half of 2020 (35 killed and 118 injured), compared with 108 during the same period in 2019.

Security Council

The Security Council remained seized of the issue of improvised explosive devices, particularly relating to its work on countering terrorism. By resolution 2551 (2020), adopted in November, the Council extended the mandate of the Expert Panel on Somalia; noted an increase in attacks with improvised explosive devices undertaken by Al-Shabaab; and decided that States should continue to

⁶⁰ United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, *Afghanistan—Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, Midyear Report: 1 January–30 June 2020* (United Nations publication, 2020).

⁶¹ S/2020/952.

prevent the direct or indirect sale or transfer of potentially dangerous precursor items, if there was sufficient evidence to demonstrate that the items will be used, or significant risk that they may be used, in the manufacture of such devices. In adopting the resolution, the Security Council extended a ban on exporting components of improvised explosive devices to Somalia, using an accompanying annex to detail related items that included explosive materials and precursors, as well as related equipment and technology. The Council also required States to notify the Expert Panel within 15 working days of any item listed in the annex that was directly or indirectly sold, supplied or transferred to Somalia.⁶²

Meanwhile, the Panel of Experts on Yemen issued a final report,⁶³ as mandated by the Security Council. In the document, the Panel said that it had observed the transfer of commercially available parts—such as uncrewed aerial vehicle engines, servo actuators and electronics—that were subsequently integrated into locally assembled uncrewed aerial vehicles and waterborne improvised explosive devices. In February, the Security Council adopted resolution [2511 \(2020\)](#), requesting the Panel of Experts to provide a midterm update by 28 July 2021 with information about the commercially available components used by individuals or entities designated by the relevant committee⁶⁴ to assemble unmanned aerial vehicles, waterborne improvised explosive devices, and other weapon systems.

General Assembly

In July, the Secretary-General submitted the third substantive report⁶⁵ to the General Assembly on the implementation of its resolution entitled “Countering the threat posed by improvised explosive devices”. In particular, he reported on awareness and prevention strategies, acknowledging and taking into account existing efforts, both inside and outside the United Nations.

In the report, the Secretary-General expressed regret over the use of improvised explosive devices in urban settings and against civilian infrastructure, including health-care systems. Against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic, he emphasized that health-care systems in situations of armed conflict and violence were already fragile and under tremendous stress and that the use of

⁶² In August, to assist Member States, international, regional and subregional organizations and other public and private entities in the implementation of the ban on components of improvised explosive devices, the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolution 751 (1992) concerning Somalia issued an [Implementation Assistance Notice](#) entitled “Summary of the Improvised Explosive Device components ban and regulations in place for exportation of explosive materials to Somalia”. In that document, the Committee explained both the ban and the procedure for States to submit mandatory notifications to the Committee.

⁶³ [S/2020/70](#).

⁶⁴ Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution [2140 \(2014\)](#).

⁶⁵ The Secretary-General issued the report ([A/75/175](#)) pursuant to General Assembly resolution [73/67](#) of 5 December 2018, following earlier substantive reports issued in 2016 ([A/71/187](#)) and 2018 ([A/73/156](#)).

improvised explosive devices would further weaken those systems, undermining their ability to treat patients of the pandemic and others in need of health care. To further underscore the humanitarian impact of improvised explosive devices, including the dire consequences of their use in situations of urban conflict and violence, the Secretary-General highlighted serious harm they had caused to civilians in the hardest hit States, such as Afghanistan. He also addressed the civilian impact in other States, including Burkina Faso, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Libya, Mali, Nigeria, Somalia, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen. Noting the particularly high threat of improvised explosive devices in complex urban settings, the Secretary-General called for a systematic approach to urban decontamination.

In addition, the Secretary-General addressed new developments in the design of improvised explosive devices and modes of detonation.⁶⁶ In that regard, he noted the harm caused to civilians by the construction and deployment of anti-personnel mines of an improvised nature, as well as the diversion of commercial products for the manufacture of improvised explosive devices. He also noted a worrying increase in the technical capacity of some armed groups to diversify their construction methods and deploy improvised explosive devices of increasing sophistication.

Turning his attention to the international response, the Secretary-General highlighted the establishment of a coordinating task force on a whole-of-system approach on improvised explosive devices, noting the importance of the dedicated forum for sharing data, doctrines, operational principles, technical knowledge and best practices (for more information about the Coordinating Task Force, see the following section).

The Secretary-General further emphasized the role of strategies to raise awareness about improvised explosive devices and prevent the use of such weapons. In the area of awareness-raising, he referenced efforts that included risk education, engagement between private sector entities, and data collection and information exchange. Regarding prevention strategies, he referred to national risk assessments and strategies, monitoring and reporting, and capacity-building.

The report's recommendations touched on a range of opportunities for countering improvised explosive devices. For example, he encouraged States to strengthen their efforts in existing forums, such as the General Assembly, the Security Council and the meetings of the High Contracting Parties to Amended Protocol II of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. Additionally, he called for strengthened risk education and victim assistance, regional strategies and national countermeasures.

In December, the General Assembly adopted its fifth iteration of the resolution entitled "Countering the threat posed by improvised explosive devices" (75/59). Afghanistan, the lead sponsor, limited revisions to include only technical

⁶⁶ The Secretary-General also considered the matter in his 2018 report. See [A/73/156](#), paras. 14–18.

changes that reflected ongoing work in the field, such as the completion of related updates to the International Mine Action Standards and the development of a related [self-assessment tool](#) by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research. The General Assembly requested that the next report of the Secretary-General on improvised explosive devices be issued for its seventy-seventh session.

United Nations Mine Action Service and other United Nations entities

In 2020, consistent with Action 18 of the Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament, the United Nations Mine Action Service convened a new coordinating task force on a whole-of-system approach to improvised explosive devices, bringing together colleagues across the counterterrorism, development, humanitarian, political and security spectrum.

In coordinating inputs for relevant United Nations doctrine and reports, the Task Force clarified the use of related language to establish a common understanding of the threat posed by improvised explosive devices. It also elaborated a United Nations response toolbox, bringing together relevant mandates, expertise, interventions and available tools from across the United Nations system. In addition, the Task Force liaised with United Nations peace operations and resident coordinator offices in affected countries, aiming to make its expertise available to them.

Meanwhile, the Mine Action Service joined other entities in the Department of Peace Operations to update several United Nations manuals designed to reduce threats from improvised explosive devices to the safety and security of peacekeepers, in line with the Secretary-General's Action for Peacekeeping initiative. The updates, which were undertaken under the leadership of the Office of Military Affairs, included revisions in the Explosive Ordnance Disposal Unit Manual to outline the necessary capabilities for peacekeeping operations to effectively address explosive hazard risks, including those related to improvised explosive devices. Additionally, the Department updated the Contingent-Owned Equipment Manual to ensure that troop-contributing countries could deploy, and be reimbursed for, equipment that is appropriate for the threats to their personnel.

The 2020 publications of the Department also included new reference manuals on related subjects. It developed the United Nations Manual on Ammunition Management, issued at the start of the year, to provide United Nations missions with standardized and comprehensive control measures that would improve the safety and security of stockpiles and ultimately decrease the likelihood of diversion of ammunition, including for the construction of improvised explosive devices. Furthermore, the Department created standardized training materials on the disposal of improvised explosive devices to support the inter-operability of explosive ordnance disposal operators in United Nations

peacekeeping operations, improve performance and strengthen the safety and security of peacekeepers.⁶⁷

Separately, the United Nations Mine Action Service established the Improvised Explosive Device Threat Mitigation Mobile Training Team, based in Entebbe, to support regional training centres and fulfil training requests from Member States. In addition to conducting “train-the-trainer” courses, the Team was expected to partner with NATO to provide additional expert trainers and curriculum review for the Alliance’s Defence and Related Security Capacity Building Initiative.

The Mine Action Service also continued working through its field programmes to provide Member States and troop-contributing countries with training in response to the threat of improvised explosive devices. By providing such training, as well as related equipment, mentoring and technical advice, the Mine Action Service aimed to assist national authorities in developing the necessary technical capacity to safely handle such devices, coordinate mitigation responses and comply with relevant international standards.

Explosive weapons in populated areas

Addressing the humanitarian impact of the use of explosive weapons in populated areas remained a priority for States throughout 2020, as the devastation caused to civilian lives and infrastructure by such use continued to command international attention. The prior year, civilians made up over 90 per cent of those killed and injured by the use of explosive weapons in population centres like cities and towns, according to new research published in 2020.⁶⁸

During the year, humanitarian actors raised particular alarm about the reported use of heavy explosive weapons—like heavy artillery and multiple rocket launchers—in populated centres in various conflicts. After renewed fighting broke out in Nagorno Karabakh in September, for example, numerous reports emerged about the destruction of homes, schools and hospitals, as well as damage to infrastructures such as roads, electricity and communication networks.⁶⁹ Likewise, after armed conflict erupted in Ethiopia’s Tigray region in early November, international observers raised specific concerns over the effect of explosive weapons on essential civilian infrastructure in populated areas, such as schools, health-care facilities, and water and sanitation installations. Responding to those concerns, the United Nations Children’s Fund called upon all parties to the conflict to refrain from using explosive weapons in populated areas. Then, in December, the High Commissioner for Human Rights reported that she had

⁶⁷ See United Nations Department of Peace Operations, “Specialised Training Materials for United Nations Military Explosive Ordnance Disposal Unit”.

⁶⁸ Jennifer Dathan, *Explosive Violence Monitor 2019* (London, Action on Armed Violence, 2020).

⁶⁹ International Committee of the Red Cross, “Nagorno-Karabakh conflict: ICRC condemns attacks causing civilian deaths and injuries”, 4 October 2020.

received “allegations concerning violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law [in Tigray], including artillery strikes on populated areas, the deliberate targeting of civilians, extrajudicial killings and widespread looting”.

In his annual report⁷⁰ to the Security Council on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, the Secretary-General highlighted how the use of explosive weapons with wide-area effects had impacted civilians and civilian objects in populated parts of Afghanistan, Libya, Myanmar, Nigeria and the Syrian Arab Republic. Concluding that urban warfare would remain a defining feature of armed conflict in the years to come, he called upon all parties to conflict to recognize the high risk that using explosive weapons in populated areas would lead to indiscriminate harm. He also underscored the fundamental need for States to commit to avoiding the use of explosive weapons with wide-area effects in populated areas and to develop operational policies against such use.

Informal consultative process to develop a political declaration

States continued an informal process, initiated the prior year, to develop a political declaration for ensuring the protection of civilians from humanitarian harm caused by the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. On 10 February, Ireland convened a second consultation to that end in Geneva. There, the country presented a paper⁷¹ it had prepared with input from States, international organizations and non-governmental organizations on elements for a draft declaration. Participants widely agreed that the paper provided a solid basis for further deliberations.

Discussion of the paper centred on various aspects of a declaration, including its primary focus, its structure and its consideration of international humanitarian law. Reflecting on what key policy commitment the declaration should contain, several States joined a number of United Nations entities and non-governmental organizations in calling for a clear commitment to avoid the use of explosive weapons with wide-area impacts in populated areas. Differences persisted on related details; while the International Committee of the Red Cross argued in favour of an “avoidance policy” requiring that explosive weapons not be used unless sufficient mitigation measures are taken to limit their wide-area effects, other participants called for a primary focus on distinguishing lawful from unlawful use. Some advocated for a focus on the broader challenges of the conduct of hostilities in urban areas rather than on the use of particular weapons systems.

Addressing other aspects of a future political declaration, some participants called for a stronger focus on the conduct of non-State actors, including by calling for greater compliance with international humanitarian law. Participants

⁷⁰ [S/2020/366](#).

⁷¹ Department of Foreign Affairs of Ireland, “[Elements of a political declaration to ensure the protection of civilians from humanitarian harm arising from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas](#)”.

also discussed data collection, awareness-raising, the gendered impacts of the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, and international cooperation and assistance.

Owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, Ireland subsequently postponed the third consultation in March and a conference planned in Dublin for May. Instead of additional in-person consultations, the country prepared a draft political declaration⁷² that it circulated to States and other interested stakeholders in March for written comments, indicating that those responses would inform its preparation of a revised version. Ireland said that it would draft the revised declaration in order to hold face-to-face consultations in Geneva as soon as circumstances permitted.

Pandemic-related restrictions also forced the First Committee of the General Assembly to cancel the thematic debate of its seventy-fifth session. As a result, States issued no joint statement to the Committee in 2020 on the topic of explosive weapons in populated areas, marking a departure from the previous two years (for more information on the First Committee, see chap. VII).

Data collection and civilian casualty recording

Led by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, United Nations entities continued working in 2020 to document the types of arms used in individually documented, conflict-related deaths, following the formal approval of a methodological and data collection framework for those efforts.⁷³ Meanwhile, United Nations entities continued working to develop the framework in order to cover all conflict-related deaths. The resulting annual global reporting process, it was hoped, would contribute to greater availability and standardization of data in that area.

Meanwhile, as a contribution to the 2020 report⁷⁴ of the Secretary-General on progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, United Nations entities gathered data on conflict-related civilian deaths in 12 of the world's deadliest armed conflicts from 2015 to 2017. Where data was available, it showed that most recorded deaths had been caused either by heavy weapons and explosive munitions (34.8 per cent), planted explosives and unexploded ordnance (24.2 per cent) or small arms and light weapons (13.0 per cent). The cause of death remained

⁷² Department of Foreign Affairs of Ireland, "[Draft Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from Humanitarian Harm arising from the use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas](#)".

⁷³ In 2019, the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators approved the [Technical Guidance Note](#) for Sustainable Development Goal indicator 16.1.2, "Number of conflict-related deaths per 100,000 population disaggregated by age, sex and cause of death", to help measure progress towards significantly reducing all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere.

⁷⁴ [E/2020/57](#).

unknown in 22.5 per cent of those cases, and 5.5 per cent were attributed to other weapons.⁷⁵

Transparency in conventional arms transfers and military expenditures

United Nations Register of Conventional Arms

To promote transparency in international conventional-arms transfers, Member States voluntarily reported to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms their imports and exports of conventional arms during the prior year in seven categories: (a) battle tanks; (b) armoured combat vehicles; (c) large-calibre artillery systems; (d) combat aircraft and unmanned combat aerial vehicles; (e) attack helicopters; (f) warships; and (g) missiles and missile launchers. Member States were also encouraged to report on imports and exports of small arms and light weapons, and they were invited to provide, as background information, additional data on procurement through national production, military holdings and national policies on arms transfers.

Annual report on the Register

In 2020, 30 States submitted reports on transfers of conventional arms that had taken place in 2019. Those reports were included in the relevant report⁷⁶ of the Secretary-General and made available in the Register's [database](#). The number of reports submitted in 2020 decreased from 37 reports submitted in 2019.

Of the 30 reports received in 2020, 2 were “nil reports,” in which the submitting States indicated that they had no transfers of weapons in the Register's seven categories in 2019. Of the other reports, 17 contained information on exports, and 18 contained information on imports in the seven categories. In addition, 11 States provided background information on military holdings, 4 on procurement through national production and 26 on international transfers of small arms and light weapons.

The rate of participation by Member States differed significantly from region to region, as in previous years, and the reporting rate of each region showed little change in 2020. The number of reports submitted by African States fell from 2 in 2019 to 1 in 2020, and the number submitted by States in Latin America and the Caribbean decreased from 5 to 3 between those years. Likewise, the number of reports received from the rest of the regions dropped: from 14 to 13 for Western

⁷⁵ See United Nations Statistics Division, “[Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels](#)”.

⁷⁶ [A/75/152](#). Late submissions do not figure in the report but are included in the Register's [database](#).

European and other States; from 4 to 3 for States of Asia and the Pacific; and from 12 to 11 for Eastern European States.

Database

The information provided by States was made available on the Register's interactive, map-based information platform, "[The Global Reported Arms Trade](#)", which presents information submitted to the Register since 1992. The site allows users to compare data, including details on any transfer submitted by the exporting and importing States.

Objective information on military matters, including transparency of military expenditures

United Nations Report on Military Expenditures

The General Assembly established the United Nations Report on Military Expenditures in 1980 to increase transparency in military spending. By the resolution entitled "Objective information on military matters, including transparency of military expenditures", the Assembly calls Member States to voluntarily provide information on their military expenditures for the latest fiscal year for which data are available. Member States are encouraged to provide such information in the templates⁷⁷ developed by the United Nations or, for those Member States that did not have military expenditures, to provide nil reports. A "single-figure" form, adopted following a recommendation of the 2016–2017 Group of Governmental Experts to review the Report, may be used by Member States that wish to report only the total amount of their military expenditure. The United Nations makes the submitted information publicly available in reports of the Secretary-General and an [online database](#).

Annual report on military expenditures

In accordance with the General Assembly's most recent resolution on objective information on military matters, including transparency of military expenditures (72/20), the Office for Disarmament Affairs sent a note verbale in January to all Member States calling for the submission by 30 April of reports on military expenditures. In response, States submitted 33 reports (including 1 nil report) in 2020, which is five more than the total in 2019. Those national reports were included in the report⁷⁸ of the Secretary-General on the matter, and the United Nations placed all the reports received in an [online database](#).

Rates of participation in 2020 varied greatly between regions, as in previous years and as with the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. The regional distribution of the States that reported in 2020 was as follows: none from Africa

⁷⁷ Standardized and simplified forms were developed to allow States to submit information on military expenditures.

⁷⁸ [A/75/140](#).

(unchanged since 2016); 3 from Asia and the Pacific (unchanged since 2019); 2 from Latin America and the Caribbean (up from 1 in 2019); 15 from Eastern Europe (up from 11 in 2019); and 13 from Western Europe and other States (unchanged since 2019).

Export controls

Wassenaar Arrangement

Despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Participating States of the Wassenaar Arrangement on Export Controls for Conventional Arms and Dual-Use Goods and Technologies continued their efforts in 2020 to promote transparency and greater responsibility in the transfer of conventional arms and dual-use goods and technologies in order to prevent destabilizing accumulations.

Although the pandemic forced the cancellation of all Wassenaar Arrangement meetings planned for 2020, Participating States adopted several decisions to ensure the continued implementation of the Arrangement's work programme and the functioning of its secretariat. They also agreed on a framework to conduct, in 2021, a sixth internal assessment of the Arrangement, including a wide-ranging review and evaluation of its overall functioning.

As there was no opportunity for Participating States to undertake their usual in-depth technical review of the Wassenaar Arrangement Control Lists, they decided that those adopted by the December 2019 plenary would remain in force while the States continued to discuss proposed updates put forward in 2020 and 2021. Participating States also agreed to a 2021 programme of activities to commemorate the Arrangement's twenty-fifth anniversary, including through ongoing outreach to non-Participating States.

It was further decided that from 1 January 2021, Hungary would assume the Chair of the Plenary, with the following States chairing these respective bodies: the United States (General Working Group); Malta (Experts Group); and Italy (Licensing and Enforcement Officers Meeting). The next regular Plenary meeting was scheduled to take place in Vienna in December 2021.

United Nations Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation

The United Nations Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation was established in 2013 as the first facility dedicated solely to financing activities across the globe on controlling small arms. In 2020, assistance needs continued to be matched with resources from donors through the flexible funding mechanism, which enabled recipients to implement quick-impact, short-term, small-scale projects that complemented—at the national, regional and international levels—work by Governments on issues regarding small arms.

To promote good practices, implementing partners⁷⁹ were required to ensure specific project outputs and outcomes to support relevant agendas and initiatives of the General Assembly, Security Council and other relevant United Nations entities, including the following:

- Coordinated provision of international assistance in the implementation of the Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons and its International Tracing Instrument
- Data collection for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
- Promotion of gender considerations, including in connection with the women, peace and security agenda
- Application of, and compliance with, global guidelines on small arms and ammunition—namely, MOSAIC and the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines
- Implementation of the Secretary-General’s Agenda for Disarmament, *Securing Our Common Future*.

As at the end of 2020, with the financial and policy support of 14 donors,⁸⁰ a cumulative total of \$12.5 million had been mobilized and allocated through the Trust Facility in support of 94 projects. A total of 143 countries had benefited from activities funded through the Trust Facility since its launch in 2013.

In 2020, the Trust Facility funded 14 new projects. Although the COVID-19 pandemic contributed to delays in the full implementation of those activities, all implementing partners reaffirmed their commitment to carrying out the following projects (for information on the Trust Facility’s gender-related projects, see chap. VI):

- Bilateral technical assistance
 - Supporting stockpile management projects (Bosnia and Herzegovina, El Salvador and Somaliland)
- Support for capacity-building in globally and regionally coordinated efforts
 - Strengthening implementation of regional instruments on small arms (Central and Southern Africa)
 - Enhancing national coordination on weapons-related international assistance (South-East Asia)

⁷⁹ Project implementing partners included relevant national authorities, regional organizations, research institutions, United Nations entities and civil society organizations.

⁸⁰ Australia, Canada, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Japan, Netherlands, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

- Arms transfer control
 - Preventing arms diversion through South-South Cooperation (Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay) and stronger controls over illicit arms transfers (Asia-Pacific)
 - Promoting effective implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty
- Support for civil society and parliamentarians and advocacy for youth
 - Promoting effective civil society participation in the seventh Biennial Meeting of States on the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons
 - Enhancing parliamentary support for the implementation of the Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
 - Developing youth capacities in disarmament, peace and security (Middle East and North Africa)
- Data collection at regional and global levels
 - Collecting data for target 16.4 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Central Africa)
 - Updating a global database ([GunPolicy.org](https://www.gunpolicy.org/)) with gender-specific evidence on armed violence

In addition, nine projects⁸¹ initiated in 2019 continued to be implemented in 2020.

Despite the challenging circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Trust Facility received 31 applications for funding in response to its 2020 call for proposals. The selected proposals⁸² were announced on its web page.

The Trust Facility also continued to ensure effective, efficient and regular monitoring and evaluation. To help avoid duplication in funding and to seek synergies in project outcomes, the Trust Facility's administrators coordinated with stakeholders such as the Arms Trade Treaty Secretariat.⁸³ They also worked with managers of European Union programmes sharing common donors and a substantive focus on small arms and light weapons.

⁸¹ See UNODA, "[UNSCAR 2019 Call for Proposals - selected applications](#)".

⁸² UNODA, "[UNSCAR 2020 Call for Proposals - Selected projects to be implemented in 2021 \(actual funding is subject to conclusion of respective Financial Agreements\)](#)".

⁸³ The administrators coordinated with the Arms Trade Treaty Secretariat about matters related to the Arms Trade Treaty Voluntary Trust Fund.

Confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms

The development of military confidence-building measures continued to be recognized as an essential tool for preventing and resolving conflict.⁸⁴ It was understood that measures to increase transparency could assist in preventing military escalation, arms competition and excessive military spending.

In accordance with the General Assembly's biennial resolution entitled "Information on confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms" (75/54),⁸⁵ the Office for Disarmament Affairs continued working to strengthen understanding of the topic, including by providing substantive and procedural advice and assistance to interested States and regional bodies. In that connection, Member States informed the Office of their interest in building on previous efforts to facilitate regional dialogue on military confidence-building measures in support of Action 23⁸⁶ of the Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament.

Meanwhile, the Office maintained and expanded its online [repository of military confidence-building measures](#) in the areas of communication and coordination, observation and verification, military constraint, training and education, and cooperation and integration.

Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons

The Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons⁸⁷ entered into force in 1983 to ban or restrict, 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

⁸⁴ In his Agenda for Disarmament, the Secretary-General observed that "transparency and confidence-building mechanisms designed to prevent arms competition remain underutilized and underdeveloped".

⁸⁵ In resolution 75/54, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to assist Member States, at their request, in the organization of seminars, courses and workshops aimed at enhancing developments in that field.

⁸⁶ By Action 23, the Secretary-General committed the Office, inter alia, to "explore opportunities for regional dialogue on building confidence on military matters" in partnership with relevant entities.

⁸⁷ 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 entered into force with its first three protocols (on fragments undetectable by X-ray, landmines and other devices, and incendiary weapons) on 2 December 1983. Protocol IV, on blinding laser weapons, and Protocol V, on explosive remnants of war, entered into force in 1998 and 2006, respectively. In 2014, the High Contracting Parties to the Convention began discussions on questions related to emerging technologies in the area of lethal autonomous weapon systems. For the [Convention's text and adherence status](#), see the UNODA Disarmament Treaties Database.

to address new weapon technologies or developments in armed conflict.⁸⁸ As at 31 December, the Convention had 125 High Contracting Parties.

The COVID-19 pandemic, coupled with continued financial difficulties, posed ongoing complications for activities under the Convention. Only some of the scheduled meetings could ultimately be held during the year, using a hybrid format that combined virtual and in-person elements. Meanwhile, a continued funding shortage allowed only for partial and temporary staffing of the Convention's Implementation Support Unit.⁸⁹ The Chair of the 2020 Meeting of the High Contracting Parties, Robbert Jan Gabriëlse (Netherlands), cooperated with the United Nations Office at Geneva, the Office for Disarmament Affairs and the High Contracting Parties on developing proposals to improve both the Secretariat's support to the Convention and the Convention's financial sustainability.

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

Owing to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Group of Governmental Experts on Emerging Technologies in the Area of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems could not develop and agree on a substantive report in 2020 for consideration by the High Contracting Parties of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons.

The Group was nonetheless able to make progress in its substantive work. It held meetings and consultations in hybrid and virtual formats as it considered its agenda and programme of work. It also collected national commentaries, and delegations prepared working papers.⁹⁰ Complementary activities also contributed to advancing the Group's deliberations. Examples included a seminar⁹¹ convened by Brazil on 20 February, a forum⁹² convened by Germany on 1 and 2 April, and three webinars⁹³ convened jointly by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research and the Office for Disarmament Affairs from 26 to 28 October.

On 24 March, the Chair of the Group, Jānis Kārklīņš (Latvia), invited the High Contracting Parties to submit commentaries on the operationalization of

⁸⁸ The umbrella treaty sets the framework for all protocols, each of which serves as a stand-alone legal instrument and addresses a specific type of conventional weapon in accordance with the specific approach required by the weapon. To adhere to the Convention, a State should join the umbrella convention and at least two of its protocols.

⁸⁹ For the decision on the establishment of the Convention's Implementation Support Unit and its core tasks, see [CCW/MSP/2009/5](#), para. 36.

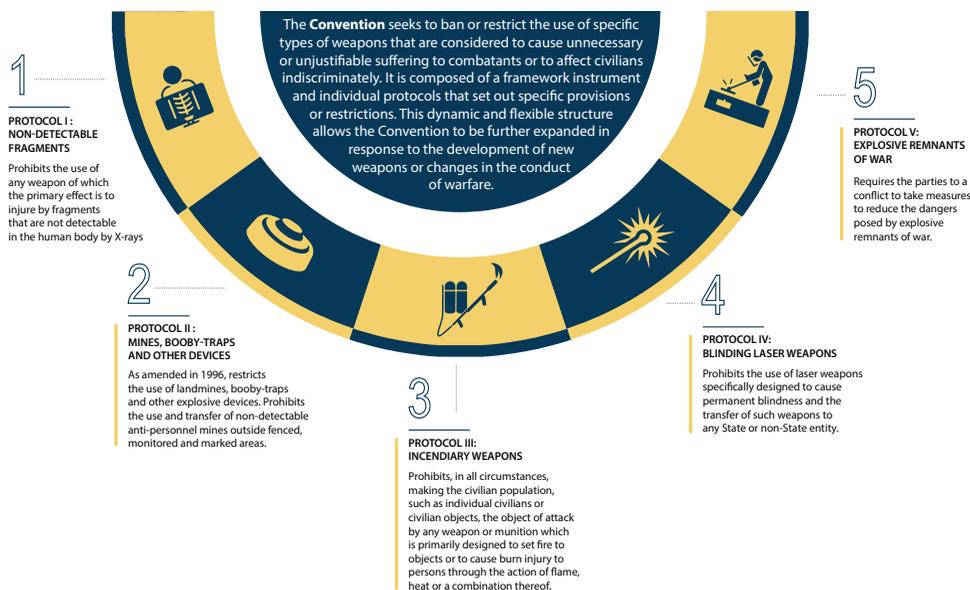
⁹⁰ UNODA Meetings Place, "[Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons – Group of Governmental Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems: Working papers](#)".

⁹¹ Alexandre de Gusmão Foundation, "[Rio Seminar on Autonomous Weapons Systems](#)".

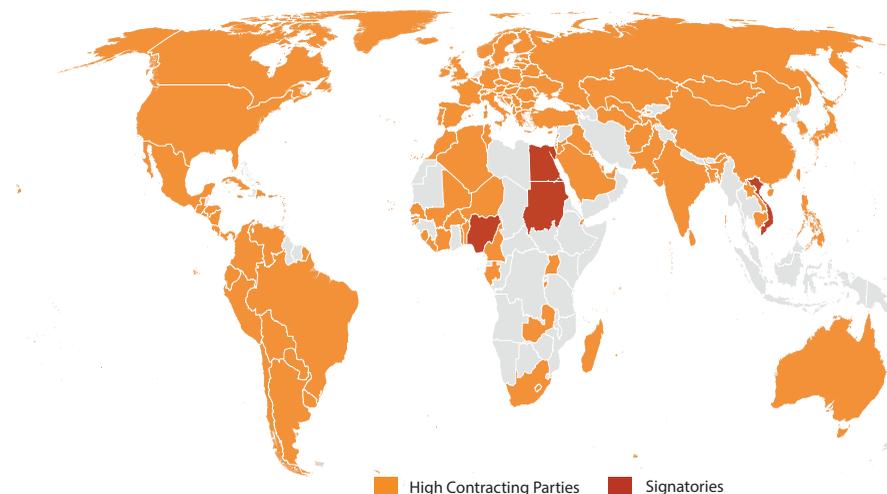
⁹² Federal Foreign Office of Germany, [documents](#) of the Berlin Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems Forum.

⁹³ United Nations Institute for Disarmament Affairs, "[Webinar series on the technological, military and legal aspects of lethal autonomous weapon systems](#)".

Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons



The Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons: High Contracting Parties and signatories



The map above shows the High Contracting Parties and signatories to the framework agreement of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. For information on adherence to the Convention's Protocols and Amendments, refer to the [Disarmament Treaty Database](#).

The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. 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 Republic of Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan has not yet been determined. Final status of the Abyei area is not yet determined.

Map source: United Nations Geospatial Information Section.

previously adopted guiding principles at the national level. In their submissions,⁹⁴ States addressed views on (a) the status and role of the guiding principles, and (b) the operationalization of the guiding principles, including information on relevant national practice. Aiming to highlight possible areas of convergence, the Chair issued on 15 September a “commonalities paper”⁹⁵ containing summarized elements from the commentaries.

With Ljupčo Jivan Gjorgjinski (North Macedonia) as its Chair from mid-September through the end of the year, the Group convened a meeting from 21 to 25 September to carry out substantive discussions based on a draft agenda⁹⁶ and provisional programme of work.⁹⁷ The meeting took place despite the objection of a High Contracting Party, which maintained that there was no consensus on the meeting’s modalities and that the topic required in-person participation by experts from national capitals.

On 30 November, the Chair issued a proposal on the way forward. In the document, he solicited written contributions from the High Contracting Parties on the preparation of a Chair’s summary of the year’s discussions, to be submitted under the Chair’s authority to the forthcoming Meeting of High Contracting Parties.

Meanwhile, the Secretary-General continued to highlight issues related to lethal autonomous weapons systems. Addressing the Security Council in his 2020 report⁹⁸ on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, he urged States to move “expeditiously” to address concerns over such systems.

⁹⁴ UNODA Meetings Place, “[Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons – Group of Governmental Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems: National commentaries on the 11 guiding principles of the GGE on LAWS](#)”.

⁹⁵ UNODA, “[Group of governmental experts on emerging technologies in the area of lethal autonomous weapons systems: Commonalities in national commentaries on guiding principles](#)”.

⁹⁶ The draft agenda consisted of the following items: (a) an exploration of the potential challenges posed by emerging technologies in the area of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems to International Humanitarian Law; (b) characterization of the systems under consideration in order to promote a common understanding on concepts and characteristics relevant to the objectives and purposes of the Convention; (c) further consideration of the human element in the use of lethal force, as well as aspects of human-machine interaction in the development, deployment and use of emerging technologies in the area of lethal autonomous weapon systems; (d) review of potential military applications of related technologies in the context of the Group’s work; (e) possible options for addressing the humanitarian and international security challenges posed by emerging technologies in the area of lethal autonomous weapon systems in the context of the objectives and purposes of the Convention without prejudging policy outcomes and taking into account past, present and future proposals; and (f) consensus recommendations in relation to the clarification, consideration and development of aspects of the normative and operational framework on emerging technologies in the area of lethal autonomous weapons systems.

⁹⁷ UNODA, “[Provisional Programme of Work](#)”, 21 September 2020.

⁹⁸ [S/2020/366](#).

Protocol V: Meeting of Experts and the fourteenth Conference of the High Contracting Parties

The Convention's Protocol V,⁹⁹ 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. It had 96 High Contracting Parties as at the end of 2020.

On 28 September, those States convened a [Meeting of Experts](#), held with the objection of one High Contracting Party. The Meeting, chaired by President-designate Yury Ambrazevich (Belarus), primarily addressed five topics: universalization efforts; national reporting; the clearance of explosive remnants of war and technical assistance; the recording, retaining and transmission of information under article 4; and victim assistance.¹⁰⁰ Owing to the ongoing pandemic, the meeting was held in a hybrid format, with Geneva-based delegates physically present in the conference room and panellists participating remotely.

To underscore the importance of achieving the Protocol's universalization, participants in the Meeting recalled the need for international cooperation to minimize the risks and effects of explosive remnants of war. Participants further underscored the centrality of victim assistance in implementing the Protocol, including the need for a comprehensive gender-sensitive approach.

The fourteenth Annual Conference, originally scheduled for 9 November, could not be held owing to the ongoing pandemic. Nonetheless, the President-designate continued efforts to support the Protocol's effective functioning, including by consulting the High Contracting Parties on adopting minimum operational decisions through a silence procedure. He also reached out to States not party to the Protocol in order to promote universalization.

Amended Protocol II: Group of Experts and twenty-second Annual Conference of the High Contracting Parties

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 arms by requiring all feasible precautions by parties to protect civilians from their use. As at the end of 2020, the Protocol had 106 High Contracting Parties.

A [Group of Experts](#) met from 29 to 30 September, with the objection of one High Contracting Party. The ongoing pandemic prompted delegates to hold the

⁹⁹ For the [Protocol's text and adherence status](#), see the UNODA Disarmament Treaties Database.

¹⁰⁰ The meeting included two panel discussions, the first on clearance and technical assistance and the second on victim assistance.

meeting in a hybrid format, with some delegates participating from the Palais des Nations in Geneva and panellists joining remotely. The Coordinators on improvised explosive devices, Colombia and France, issued a report¹⁰¹ after the meeting about its discussions on those weapons.

Building on its work on improvised explosive devices since 2009, the Group held discussions consisting of a general exchange of views, as well as updates by the coordinators on the compilation of existing guidelines and best practices. It also considered proposed revisions to the 2015 questionnaire¹⁰² on international cooperation against the threat. The Group held three thematic panel discussions that addressed the following issues: (a) new types of improvised explosive devices; (b) methods of clearance; (c) protection of civilians; (d) risk education and other methods; and (e) relevant developments in other forums.¹⁰³

Throughout the expert discussions, delegations expressed their concern over the continued widespread use of improvised explosive devices and their detrimental impact on civilians. Participants stressed the following: the severe humanitarian implications of those devices, particularly in urban environments; the negative effects of such weapons on security, stability, socioeconomic development and effective delivery of humanitarian aid; and the frequent use of improvised explosive devices to perpetrate terrorist acts. Furthermore, many delegations underscored the need for a comprehensive approach, awareness-raising on the scope and characteristics of threats posed by improvised explosive devices, and increased international cooperation and information sharing at the national and multilateral levels. Accordingly, delegations called for the universalization of Amended Protocol II, and they commended the ongoing discussions and information exchange within the framework of the Group of Experts as an important contribution towards that end. The Group also welcomed the ongoing efforts by United Nations agencies to strengthen their coordination on improvised explosive devices, thus helping to ensure a whole-of-system approach, as laid out in the Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament.

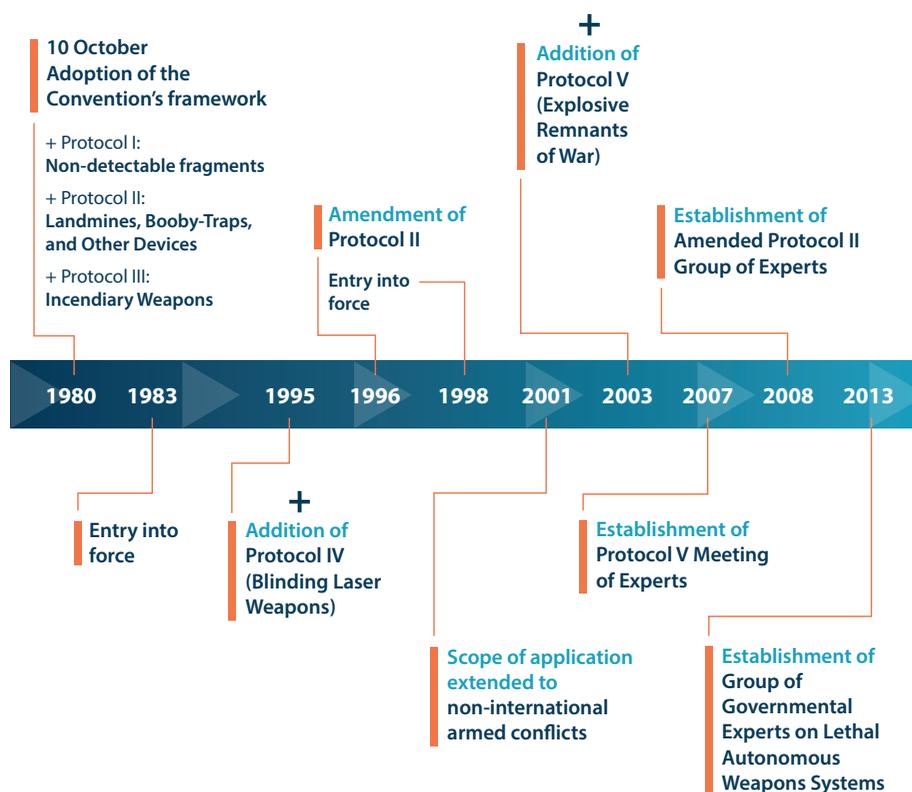
The twenty-second Annual Conference was originally scheduled to take place on 10 November under the overall responsibility of President-designate Maria Teresa T. Almojuela (Philippines), but the meeting could not be held, owing to the ongoing pandemic. Nonetheless, the President-designate continued efforts to support the Protocol's effective functioning, including by consulting the High Contracting Parties on adopting minimum operational decisions through a silence procedure. She also reached out to States not party to the amended Protocol in order to promote universalization.

¹⁰¹ [CCW/AP.II/CONF.22/2](#).

¹⁰² [CCW/AP.II/CONF.17/WP.1](#).

¹⁰³ The coordinators actively engaged in efforts to achieve gender parity among the panellists, in accordance with a decision by the twenty-first Annual Conference to "recognize the importance of a balanced involvement of women and men in the Group of Experts" in addressing the threats posed by improvised explosive devices ([CCW/AP.II/CONF.21/5](#), para. 35).

The Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons at 40



The Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, adopted in 1980, entered into force in 1983 with the aim of banning or restricting the use of specific types of weapons considered to cause unnecessary or superfluous suffering to combatants or to affect civilians indiscriminately.

The flexible design of the Convention, which contained only a framework treaty and three protocols (Protocols I–III) at its inception, subsequently allowed the agreement to evolve in response to emerging challenges, weapons developments and a changing international climate.

The addition of Protocol IV, on blinding laser weapons, in 1995 marked the first pre-emptive ban on a weapon yet to be used on the battlefield.

Then, in 2003, States parties added Protocol V, on explosive remnants of war, the first multilateral agreement to deal with the problem of unexploded and abandoned ordnance after the cessation of hostilities.

Other changes included a 1996 amendment to Protocol II in response to the humanitarian consequences of landmines, as well as a decision in 2001 to broaden the scope of the Convention and its protocols to apply to non-international armed conflicts.

In the following years, the international community continued to actively discuss issues ranging from improvised explosive devices and incendiary weapons to lethal autonomous weapons systems, seeking to progressively develop norms and rules that ban or restrict weapons that could not be used in conformity with the principles of international humanitarian law.

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

Owing to in-person meeting restrictions resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020 Meeting of the High Contracting Parties could not be convened. It was originally scheduled to take place from 11 to 13 November, with Robbert Jan Gabriëse (Netherlands) designated as President. Nonetheless, the President-designate continued efforts to support the Convention's effective functioning, including by consulting the High Contracting Parties on adopting minimum operational decisions through a silence procedure. He also reached out to States not party to the Convention to promote universalization.

Work of the Implementation Support Unit of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons

Owing to a continuing lack of funds, the Convention's Implementation Support Unit was only partially staffed throughout the year. With extensive support from the Office for Disarmament Affairs, the Unit continued to engage in implementation activities for the Convention as necessary and as requested by the High Contracting Parties.¹⁰⁴

In 2020, the Unit engaged in five areas of work: (a) secretariat support for meetings and consultations, including hybrid and virtual meetings facilitated by remote conferencing platforms; (b) communication and information management; (c) coordination; (d) universalization; and (e) outreach and public information. In particular, the Unit liaised with relevant United Nations departments to inform and advise the Convention's 2020 office holders on different options for carrying out their work during the pandemic.

Regarding secretariat support, the Implementation Support Unit assisted office holders in the following activities: (a) convening informal consultations; (b) organizing hybrid meetings; (c) preparing and distributing various meeting documents, papers and proposals; (d) analysing and interpreting procedural requirements; and (e) identifying office holders for upcoming meetings. The Unit also managed the Convention's website migration, including by revising content and updates to its databases¹⁰⁵ of national annual reports on compliance with the Convention, Amended Protocol II and Protocol V. In addition, the Implementation Support Unit helped monitor the Convention's financial situation and undertake related planning in coordination with the United Nations Office at Geneva. The Unit provided information on the Convention directly to States not party to the Convention and supported the universalization efforts of office holders.

¹⁰⁴ The High Contracting Parties requested UNODA in 2018 to provide temporary staff support to the Convention's Implementation Support Unit.

¹⁰⁵ UNODA, "[CCW Compliance annual reports database](#)", "[Amended Protocol II National Annual Reports and Database](#)" and "[Protocol V National Annual Reports and Database](#)."

In the area of outreach and public information, the Implementation Support Unit designed and organized several activities to mark the fortieth anniversary, on 10 October, of the adoption of the Convention, including through messages by the Secretary-General and the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs. The Unit also supported the preparation of webinars on key issues in the framework of the Convention in order to enable stakeholders to deepen their understanding of those matters in the absence of in-person meetings.

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. As at the end of 2020, the Convention had 110 States parties.¹⁰⁶

Second Review Conference of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions

Pursuant to General Assembly resolution [74/62](#) of 20 December 2019,¹⁰⁷ the Secretary-General convened the second Review Conference of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions from 23 to 27 November at the SwissTech Convention Center in Lausanne, Switzerland. Two preparatory meetings for the second Review Conference were also convened, in Geneva, on 8 June and 4 September.

Owing to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, the first Preparatory Meeting was postponed, by silence procedure, to 29 June.¹⁰⁸ The second Preparatory Meeting took place on 4 September, as scheduled.¹⁰⁹

States parties also agreed, by silence procedure, to hold the second Review Conference in two parts, the first from 25 to 27 November 2020 in a virtual format and the second in February 2021 as a hybrid meeting.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶ For the [Convention's text and adherence status](#), see the UNODA Disarmament Treaties Database.

¹⁰⁷ In its resolution [74/62](#), the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General "to convene the second Review Conference of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions and to continue to render the necessary assistance and to provide such services as may be necessary to fulfil the tasks entrusted to him under the Convention and in the relevant decisions of the Meetings of States Parties and the first Review Conference".

¹⁰⁸ See [CCM/CONF/2020/PM.1/2](#).

¹⁰⁹ See [CCM/CONF/2020/PM.2/2](#).

¹¹⁰ The second part of the Conference was scheduled to be held on 4 and 5 February 2021 in a hybrid format at the United Nations Office in Geneva. It was subsequently postponed to a later date, however, to comply with public health measures in the host country.

The first part of the Review Conference took place with the participation of 76 States, including 3 signatories and 13 non-signatory States, under the presidency of Félix Baumann (Switzerland).¹¹¹ Pursuant to a recommendation by States parties at the first Preparatory Meeting, the Conference also elected four Vice-Presidents by acclamation.¹¹² The meeting opened with a [video message](#) from the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Izumi Nakamitsu. Then, in the thematic discussion that followed, the Conference thanked Switzerland for its effort that led to the General Assembly resolution entitled “Implementation of the Convention on Cluster Munitions” (75/62) being adopted without any votes against for the first time. In addition, the Conference welcomed the accession of Maldives, Niue and Saint Lucia, as well as the ratification of Sao Tome and Principe, while also reiterating the importance of universalization efforts.

In addition, the Review Conference assessed requests by Bulgaria and Peru for extensions of their respective deadlines to complete the destruction of cluster munition stockpiles in accordance with article 3.2 of the Convention. In its interim report,¹¹³ the Conference recommended taking a decision to extend the deadlines for Bulgaria and Peru until 1 October 2022 and 1 April 2024, respectively.¹¹⁴ The decision on the extensions would be adopted during the second part of the Conference.

Additionally, the Conference assessed requests by Bosnia and Herzegovina, Chile and Lebanon for extensions of their respective deadlines to finish clearing and destroying cluster munition remnants in accordance with article 4.1 of the Convention. In its interim report, the Conference recommended taking a decision, during its second part, to extend the deadlines for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Chile and Lebanon until 1 September 2022, 1 June 2022¹¹⁵ and 1 May 2026, respectively.¹¹⁶

The Review Conference also approved the 2021 budget and workplan of the Convention’s Implementation Support Unit.¹¹⁷ Furthermore, in its interim report, the Conference recommended taking a decision, during its second part, to approve the Unit’s budget and workplan for the period 2021–2025.¹¹⁸ It also approved the

¹¹¹ The observers in attendance included the United Nations Mine Action Service, the European Union, the HALO Trust, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Humanity & Inclusion (Handicap International), James Madison University, Mines Advisory Group and Norwegian People’s Aid. UNODA served as the secretariat of the Conference. For the full list of participants, see [CCM/CONF/2020/INF.1](#).

¹¹² The Vice Presidents were from the Netherlands, Germany, Nicaragua and Sri Lanka.

¹¹³ [CCM/CONF/2020/L.1](#).

¹¹⁴ See also [CCM/CONF/2020/5](#) and [CCM/CONF/2020/6](#).

¹¹⁵ The Conference recommended to take a decision to extend the deadline for Chile up to 1 June 2022 pending a detailed workplan and budget in a subsequent extension request to be considered at the tenth Meeting of States Parties.

¹¹⁶ See also [CCM/CONF/2020/15](#), [CCM/CONF/2020/8](#) and [CCM/CONF/2020/7](#).

¹¹⁷ [CCM/CONF/2020/3](#).

¹¹⁸ [CCM/CONF/2020/2](#).

estimated costs of the tenth Meeting of States Parties, scheduled to take place in Geneva from 20 to 23 September 2021.¹¹⁹

Anti-personnel mines

Anti-personnel mines are inherently indiscriminate weapons that continue to kill and maim civilians many years after the end of a conflict. A complete prohibition on that category of weapons took effect with the entry into force, on 1 March 1999, 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), which was adopted in 1997.

The Convention's implementation activities include a particular focus on destroying existing mine stocks and clearing all contaminated areas before an established deadline; promoting and sustaining the Convention's unique spirit of assistance and cooperation for achieving its goals; and meeting the needs of survivors, their families and communities in the context of the Convention's strong victim-assistance framework. As at the end of 2020, the Convention had 164 States parties.¹²⁰

Intersessional activities and the eighteenth Meeting of the States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention

Pursuant to article 11 of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and the relevant decisions of its fourth Review Conference,¹²¹ the eighteenth Meeting of the States Parties took place from 16 to 20 November. The Meeting built on three days of informal intersessional meetings held in Geneva earlier in the year, as well as work by the Convention's four committees.¹²² Its President, Osman Abufatima Adam Mohammed (Sudan), also convened the Convention's fifth Pledging Conference in Geneva on 25 February,¹²³ seeking to bolster the financial stability of the Convention's Implementation Support Unit and its 2020 workplan, as well as the Convention's Sponsorship Programme. Owing to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, the eighteenth Meeting of the States Parties and most of the Convention's other 2020 meetings were held in a virtual format.¹²⁴

The informal intersessional meetings took place virtually from 30 June to 2 July. The President of the eighteenth Meeting of the States Parties briefed

¹¹⁹ [CCM/CONF/2020/WP.2](#).

¹²⁰ For the [Convention's text and adherence status](#), see the UNODA Disarmament Treaties Database.

¹²¹ See the final document of the fourth Review Conference ([APLC/CONF/2019/5](#)).

¹²² Committee on Article 5 Implementation, Committee on Cooperative Compliance, Committee on Victim Assistance, and Committee on the Enhancement of Cooperation and Assistance.

¹²³ The fifth Pledging Conference was held pursuant to the relevant decision of the fourteenth Meeting of States Parties ([APLC/MSP.14/2015/33](#), para. 33).

¹²⁴ Additional costs were covered through voluntary contributions or by a 15 per cent contingency included in the Convention's budget since 2017.

participants on universalization activities under the Convention, progress by States parties towards fulfilling obligations under article 4 on stockpile destruction, the status of mines retained under article 3 and compliance with the reporting obligations under article 7. In addition, attendees heard updates on the Convention's four committees from their respective Chairs, as well as preliminary observations of those bodies from their newly established gender focal points.¹²⁵ The meetings also included exchanges of views on extension requests provided for under article 5 that had been presented informally by States parties with obligations under that article.¹²⁶ Separately, participants discussed preparations for the eighteenth Meeting of the States Parties, as well as the Convention's financial status.

Several panel discussions on the following topics also took place during the intersessional meetings:

- “Effective implementation for all: gender and diverse needs in practice”, organized by the gender focal points of the Convention's Committees
- “Aligning donor coordination to support implementation of the Oslo Action Plan”, organized by the Committee on the Enhancement of Cooperation and Assistance
- “Safety and protection of mine survivors in situations of risks and humanitarian emergencies”, organized by the Committee on Victim Assistance
- “Addressing anti-personnel mines of an improvised nature under the Convention's framework”, organized by the Committee on Article 5 Implementation
- “Cooperative compliance and the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention”, organized by the Committee on Cooperative Compliance.

The participants of the informal intersessional meetings also heard general observations from the Convention's four committees. In carrying out their respective mandates, the committees met regularly throughout the year to review information from States parties on their implementation of commitments contained in the Oslo Action Plan¹²⁷ of the fourth Review Conference in 2019.

¹²⁵ Pursuant to the relevant decisions of the fourth Review Conference ([APLC/CONF/2019/5](#), para. 34), each Committee appointed a focal point among its members to provide advice on gender mainstreaming and ensure that the diverse needs and experiences of people in affected communities were being taken into account in the implementation of the Conference's Oslo Action Plan ([APLC/CONF/2019/5/Add.1](#)).

¹²⁶ 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 that it will be unable to destroy or ensure the destruction of all such anti-personnel mines within that 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.

¹²⁷ [APLC/CONF/2019/5/Add.1](#).

The committees also undertook an ongoing examination of options to increase and strengthen their coordination, such as examining the implementation activities of States parties in a more holistic manner and jointly adopting conclusions on the status of the Convention's implementation. In the "Progress report 2019–2020",¹²⁸ the committees further explained their overall work in 2019 and 2020 to achieve the aims of the Oslo Action Plan.¹²⁹

Supporting the President of the eighteenth Meeting of the States Parties, eight countries served as Vice-Presidents: Austria, Canada, Chile, Iraq, Italy, Switzerland, Turkey and the United Kingdom.

Pursuant to the established practice, the Meeting was opened with a high-level ceremony that featured messages from the Minister of Defence of the Sudan, Yassin Ibrahim Yassin Abdel; the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet Jeria; the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Izumi Nakamitsu, delivered by Radha Day, Chief of the Geneva Branch of the Office for Disarmament Affairs; the Vice-President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Gilles Carbonnier; the Assistant High Commissioner for Protection of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Gillian Triggs; the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, delivered by Stephen Goose, Executive Director of the Human Rights Watch Arms Division; the President of the Council of Foundation of the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining, Barbara Haering; and mine survivors, represented by Luz Dary Landazury, a specialist in mine risk education from Colombia.

Owing to limitations in the Meeting's virtual platform, the States parties had less time than usual to conduct their plenary deliberations. As a result, its discussions on the operation and status of the Convention were focused primarily on several requests by States parties to extend their respective deadlines for destroying mines in mined areas, as required under article 5. In their interventions, States parties shared updates on activities to fulfil their obligations under article 5, with Chile and the United Kingdom announcing that they had met their respective mine-clearance commitments. Following the established procedure,¹³⁰ and considering the requests submitted under article 5 and the accompanying analyses presented by the Committee on Article 5 Implementation, the Meeting granted the extension requests of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mauritania, the Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, South Sudan and Ukraine. Meanwhile, it expressed concern that Eritrea had not presented an extension request and would be in a situation of non-compliance with article 5

¹²⁸ [APLC/MSP.18/2020/6/Rev.1](#). See also the priorities for and status of implementation ([APLC/MSP.18/2020/7](#) and [APLC/MSP.18/2020/8](#)).

¹²⁹ The Coordinating Committee also held regular monthly meetings throughout the year to manage work from, and related to, formal and informal events of the States parties, as well as to implement its responsibilities related to the accountability of the Implementation Support Unit.

¹³⁰ [APLC/MSP.7/2006/5](#).

following its 31 December 2020 deadline. The Meeting called on Eritrea to submit a request as soon as possible and to engage with the Committee on Article 5 Implementation.¹³¹

In addressing the updates of States parties that had indicated responsibility for significant numbers of landmine survivors, the Meeting expressed particular concern about the continuing high number of victims of anti-personnel mines in different parts of the world over the last two years. It condemned the use of anti-personnel mines by any actor and appealed to States in non-compliance with article 4 of the Convention to intensify their efforts for the completion of their respective stockpile-destruction obligations.

As reflected in its final report,¹³² the Meeting took stock of the current status of the Convention's implementation, as well as progress made and remaining challenges in the pursuit of its aims. It also warmly welcomed the three reports on the work of the Convention for the period 2019–2020¹³³ as an important means of supporting the application of the Oslo Action Plan 2019–2024 and establishing a baseline value for all Plan indicators using data reported in the first year of the Plan's implementation.

In addition, as per the relevant decision of the fifteenth Meeting of the States Parties¹³⁴ and the fourth Review Conference,¹³⁵ the Meeting addressed the continuing precarious financial situation resulting from late payment and arrears of assessed contributions. In that regard, it underlined the importance of ensuring full compliance with obligations under article 14, and once again appealed to all States parties and States not party participating in the meetings to promptly pay their share of the estimated costs upon receiving assessment invoices. To support related efforts by the Chair of the nineteenth Meeting of the States Parties, the Meeting requested the United Nations and the Convention's Implementation Support Unit to continue raising awareness and ensuring transparency on the status of contributions by making information available every month and sending periodic reminders.

In addition, as the Convention's delicate financial situation had impacted the availability of documentation in all official languages in recent years, the Meeting reiterated the fundamental role of multilingualism in facilitating inclusive participation and decided that all official documents of the formal meetings of the Convention should be translated in all languages of the Convention.

¹³¹ In particular, the Meeting reiterated the importance of submitting extension requests promptly, as late submission impeded the efforts of the Committee on Article 5 Implementation and limited the opportunities for an interaction between the members of the Committee and the requesting State party seeking extension request. That resulted in the late completion of some analyses, thus affecting the ability of all States parties to make informed decisions on those requests.

¹³² [APLC/MSP.18/2020/10](#).

¹³³ [APLC/MSP.18/2020/6/Rev.1](#), [APLC/MSP.18/2020/7](#) and [APLC/MSP.18/2020/8](#).

¹³⁴ [APLC/MSP.15/2016/10](#), para. 38.

¹³⁵ [APLC/CONF/2019/5](#), paras. 34 (vi) and 42.

Regarding the operation of the Convention, the Meeting decided on the following matters: the composition of the Convention's committees;¹³⁶ the timing of the 2021 intersessional meetings;¹³⁷ holding the nineteenth Meeting of the States Parties in Noordwijk, Netherlands, from 29 November to 3 December 2021 and the twentieth Meeting of the States Parties in Geneva during the week of 28 November 2022; and the cost estimate¹³⁸ for the twentieth Meeting of the States Parties, to be held in 2022.

¹³⁶ Committee on Victim Assistance—Sweden and Thailand (in 2021) and Algeria and Ecuador (in 2021 and 2022); Committee on Article 5 Implementation—Norway and Zambia (in 2021) and Belgium and Sri Lanka (in 2021–2022); Committee on the Enhancement of Cooperation and Assistance—Colombia and Germany (in 2021) and Japan and the Sudan (in 2021–2022); and Committee on Cooperative Compliance—Panama and Poland (in 2021) and Chile and Spain (in 2021–2022).

¹³⁷ The meeting was set to 22 to 24 June 2021 in Geneva.

¹³⁸ [APLC/MSP.18/2020/9](#).



Chapter IV

Regional disarmament



At a regional seminar, held in Kathmandu in March 2020, on gun violence and illicit small arms trafficking from a gender perspective.

CHAPTER IV

Regional disarmament

Despite the restrictions posed by COVID-19, the three regional centres for peace and disarmament quickly adapted to ensure the uninterrupted implementation of their activities in support of Member States in their respective regions.

IZUMI NAKAMITSU, UNITED NATIONS HIGH REPRESENTATIVE FOR DISARMAMENT AFFAIRS¹

Developments and trends, 2020

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC posed an unprecedented challenge to all regions of the world in 2020, leading to restrictions on travel and in-person interaction that disrupted a wide range of regional activities for disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. Yet regional and subregional efforts to advance international peace and security continued—the United Nations used virtual and hybrid methods to engage, coordinate and facilitate cooperation among States, regional and subregional organizations, relevant international organizations and civil society. As a result, many dialogues, capacity-building projects, information campaigns and other activities in the field of disarmament could proceed during the pandemic.

The global security environment continued deteriorating, however, with persistent tensions among major powers introducing further geopolitical complications at the regional and subregional levels. Total global military expenditure increased to almost \$2 trillion, representing the largest year-on-year increase in military spending as a share of gross domestic product since 2009.² Although military expenditure fell in South America and the Middle East, it rose in Asia and the Pacific, North America, Europe and sub-Saharan Africa.

More hopefully, significant progress was attained at the regional and subregional levels, with growing adherence by Member States to multilateral treaties and regional conventions.

In the field of weapons of mass destruction, 21 States ratified, acceded to or signed the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons during the year. In Africa,

¹ Opening [statement](#) to the First Committee of the General Assembly at its seventy-fifth session, New York, 9 October 2020.

² According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (“[World military spending rises to almost \\$2 trillion in 2020](#)”, 26 April 2021), total global military expenditure rose to \$1.981 trillion in 2020, an increase of 2.6 per cent in real terms from 2019.

five States ratified the Treaty and four signed it.³ In Asia and the Pacific, four States ratified and one acceded to it.⁴ In addition, five Latin American States and two Western European States ratified the Treaty.⁵ Separately, Cabo Verde ratified the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty in February, while Saint Kitts and Nevis acceded to the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism in August. In September, Bosnia and Herzegovina acceded to the Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies.

In the area of conventional weapons, States made progress in adherence to two key international instruments. In Africa, Namibia ratified the Arms Trade Treaty. In Latin America and the Caribbean, Sao Tome and Principe ratified both that Treaty and the Convention on Cluster Munitions; Saint Lucia acceded to that Convention; and the Plurinational State of Bolivia acceded to the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition (Firearms Protocol) of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. In Asia and the Pacific, Afghanistan and China acceded to the Arms Trade Treaty, while Niue acceded to both that Treaty and the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

Despite the pandemic, States parties to the treaties that established nuclear-weapon-free or nuclear-free zones continued their efforts to strengthen those territories. In particular, the first meeting of the States Parties to the 1985 South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty (Rarotonga Treaty) was convened on 15 December, pursuant to a call in 2019 by the leaders of the Pacific Islands Forum to operationalize the agreement's provisions.⁶ Meanwhile, States in nuclear-weapon-free zones continued building the capacities of their implementation agencies—particularly in the areas of nuclear safety, security and safeguards—while also enhancing cooperation between and among the zones. In addition, the States parties of the Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone continued consulting with the five nuclear-weapon States to resolve outstanding issues and obtain assurances against using or threatening to use nuclear weapons in the zone. Regarding the fourth Conference of Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones and Mongolia, originally scheduled for 24 April, the General Assembly decided to postpone the meeting owing to the pandemic.

³ Among the African States, Benin, Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia and Nigeria ratified the Treaty on the Prohibition on Nuclear Weapons, and Mozambique, the Niger, the Sudan and Zimbabwe signed it.

⁴ Among the States in Asia and the Pacific, Fiji, Malaysia, Nauru and Tuvalu ratified the Treaty, and Niue acceded to it.

⁵ Among the Latin American and Caribbean States, Belize signed and ratified the Treaty, and Honduras, Jamaica, Paraguay, and Saint Kitts and Nevis ratified it. As for the Western European States, Malta signed and ratified the Treaty, and Ireland ratified it.

⁶ The meeting was attended by 13 States parties (Australia, Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu), as well as other Forum members who participated as observers (French Polynesia, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), New Caledonia and Palau).

In 2020, the Office for Disarmament Affairs and its three regional centres continued working with regional and subregional organizations to strengthen relevant existing platforms for regional cooperation. Having promptly adapted their activities to an online format, the centres assisted States and regional organizations in acceding to or implementing multilateral and regional treaties and conventions while also building their capacities to help prevent and eradicate the illicit manufacturing and trade of conventional weapons and ammunition. In December, the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa held its fiftieth ministerial meeting in a virtual format.⁷ Participants adopted at that meeting the [Malabo Declaration on the impact of the coronavirus disease pandemic \(COVID-19\) on peace and support for the implementation of the COVID-19 regional response strategy for Central Africa](#).

Regional and subregional organizations also continued their efforts to advance disarmament. In Africa, Heads of State and Government presented a compelling vision for peace and security through their “Silencing the Guns in Africa” flagship initiative and the [Lusaka Master Road Map](#). The United Nations joined several concrete efforts to support those initiatives, such as providing technical assistance on mediation and disarmament capacities and supporting the voluntary surrender of weapons in connection with “Africa Amnesty Month”. In July, the Caribbean Community Implementation Agency for Crime and Security joined the United Nations⁸ to develop 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](#).

Meanwhile, the Security Council considered issues related to regional and subregional disarmament on several occasions during the year. It met to discuss United Nations cooperation with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in January, the European Union in February and May, the International Organization of la Francophonie in September, and the African Union in December. The Council also received semi-annual briefings on Central Africa, West Africa and the Sahel, and Central Asia.

Furthermore, the European Union, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, as well as the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, continued collaborating with the Office for Disarmament Affairs and its regional centres in undertaking capacity-building projects and outreach activities at the regional and subregional levels.

⁷ The Conference originally had been scheduled to take place in Malabo in May 2020.

⁸ The Implementation Agency for Crime and Security developed the Roadmap in cooperation with the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Nuclear-weapon-free zones

Nuclear-weapon-free zones remained a key element in strengthening global norms for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament at the regional level, as well as promoting regional and international peace and security. The Charter of the United Nations and its language concerning “regional arrangements or agencies” to deal with maintaining international peace and security constitute the legal foundation for such zones. Their importance is recognized in article VII of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty), stating, “nothing in this Treaty affects 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”. In the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, they are described as measures that “enhance global and regional peace and security, strengthen the nuclear non-proliferation regime and contribute towards realizing the objective of nuclear disarmament”.

More than 100 States were parties or signatories to nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties as at the end of the year, representing nearly 60 per cent of the membership of the United Nations. Five regional nuclear-weapon-free zones had been established under the following treaties: (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). In 2020, the General Assembly reaffirmed Mongolia as a self-declared, single-State nuclear-weapon-free zone in its biennial resolution entitled “Mongolia’s international security and nuclear-weapon-free status” (75/41), first adopted in 1998.

During the first part of its seventy-fifth session, the General Assembly adopted three resolutions on those zones: “African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty” (75/30), “Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia” (75/67) and “Mongolia’s international security and nuclear-weapon-free status” (75/41).

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the General Assembly adopted decision 74/549, postponing the fourth Conference of Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones and Mongolia from 24 April to a later date to be decided by the General Assembly during its seventy-sixth session. Following the decision to delay the Conference, States parties and signatories to the treaties establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones continued, with Mongolia, to hold informal consultations on organizational and substantive preparations. Mongolia facilitated those talks in its capacity as the Conference’s designated Coordinator.

In 2020, the nuclear-weapon States of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty maintained varying positions on adhering to the above-mentioned treaties. Under relevant protocols to each of the agreements, those States could commit to respecting the nuclear-weapon-free status of the respective specified areas and

could undertake not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against States parties. In prior years, all five nuclear-weapon States had adhered to Additional Protocol II to the Treaty of Tlatelolco. Four of the nuclear-weapon States had 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 had signed all those protocols but had not yet ratified them as at the end of the year.

Meanwhile, none of the five nuclear-weapon States had signed the Protocol to the Bangkok Treaty as of 2020. During the general debate of the General Assembly First Committee, the five States reiterated their commitment to the aims and objectives of the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone and welcomed further discussions on the Protocol.

The following table presents the status of adherence to the protocols providing negative security assurances.

Status of ratification of the protocols to the treaties establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones as at 1 December 2020

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

Note: The status of signature and ratification of the treaties and protocols are available from the [Disarmament 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 for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (Treaty of Tlatelolco)

The year 2020 marked the fifty-third anniversary of the Treaty of Tlatelolco. To recognize that occasion, the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean issued a communiqué⁹ on 14 February to highlight the full implementation of the Treaty and its contribution towards nuclear disarmament.

The Agency also engaged in regional- and international-level activities throughout the year. In March, its Secretary-General delivered remarks¹⁰ during a seminar on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty's second pillar, concerning non-proliferation. The seminar, which was organized by the Office for Disarmament Affairs, took place at the United Nations Headquarters in New York in preparation for the Treaty's tenth Review Conference. In another contribution, the Agency's member States submitted a memorandum from its secretariat as a working paper of the Review Conference.¹¹

In July, the sixth edition of the [Summer School on Nuclear Disarmament and Non-proliferation for Diplomats from Latin America and the Caribbean](#) was held online, drawing 63 diplomats from 24 countries of the region. The course featured keynote speakers from the Office for Disarmament Affairs, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and non-governmental organizations. Despite taking place virtually as an exception, the annual exercise was the most-attended event in the programme since its creation in 2012. Enrolment also approached gender parity, with 31 women participants.

At the sixty-fourth General Conference of IAEA in September, Peru, as the Agency's coordinator in Vienna, delivered a statement¹² on behalf of its Secretary-General.

On the occasion of the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons on 26 September, the Agency's member States issued a declaration,¹³ demanding that nuclear weapons not be used again by any actor under any circumstances. Those States also reiterated the call on all States, particularly nuclear-weapon States, to (a) eliminate the role of nuclear weapons in their

⁹ Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL), document [Inf.02/2020Rev.7](#).

¹⁰ Flávio Roberto Bonzanini, OPANAL Secretary-General, [remarks](#) at the seminar "Towards the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) Thematic Seminar on Pillar II: non-proliferation" (Inf.12/2020), New York, 2 March 2020.

¹¹ The working paper ([NPT/CONF.2020/2](#)) was submitted in accordance with a decision by the Conference's Preparatory Committee concerning background documentation. See [NPT/CONF.2020/1](#), annex VI.

¹² Eric Anderson Machado (Peru), [statement](#) to the General Conference delivered on behalf of the Secretary General (Inf.28/2020), Vienna, September 2020.

¹³ OPANAL, document [Inf.23/2020.Rev8](#).

security and defence doctrines and policies, and (b) comply fully with their legal obligations and unequivocal commitments to eliminate nuclear weapons without further delay. The Agency's member States also reiterated their continued commitment to promoting dialogue and cooperation between the nuclear-weapon-free zones and Mongolia through the plan to hold, in 2021, the fourth Conference of Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones and Mongolia.

During the General Assembly First Committee session in October, the Secretary-General of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean delivered a pre-recorded video statement,¹⁴ stressing the importance that the Agency placed on strengthening the norm that established nuclear-weapon-free zones. In addition, he highlighted a significant increase in recent years in the collaboration and communication between the nuclear-weapon-free zone in Latin America and the Caribbean and its counterpart zones and Mongolia. In that context, he credited the Agency's member States with maintaining a frank and fruitful dialogue to establish a formal and more permanent framework to strengthen and increase cooperation.

On 24 October, the Agency's Secretary-General issued a [communiqué](#) to mark the fiftieth ratification of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. In the message, he underscored that the Treaty would complement the norm established by the Treaty of Tlatelolco, as well as other international instruments strengthening the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime.

South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty (Rarotonga Treaty)

The Rarotonga Treaty entered into force in 1986 after leaders of the Pacific Islands Forum had adopted it the year before. Considered the Forum's primary contribution to the global nuclear non-proliferation framework, the Treaty was used to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone that banned manufacturing, possessing, stationing and testing nuclear explosive devices within the zone, as well as dumping nuclear waste at sea.

In 2020, States parties to the Treaty observed the [thirty-fifth anniversary](#) of its adoption on 6 August, as well as the thirty-fourth anniversary of its entry into force on 11 December. To commemorate those occasions, and to answer a call in 2019 by leaders of the Pacific Islands Forum to operationalize the Treaty's provisions,¹⁵ the States parties convened their first [meeting](#) on 15 December.¹⁶ Participants reflected on the Treaty's achievements and discussed further steps to advance its objectives and implementation, thus further strengthening the Pacific region's contribution to the non-proliferation and elimination of nuclear weapons.

¹⁴ OPANAL, document [Inf.33/2020.Rev.](#)

¹⁵ Pacific Islands Forum, document [PIF\(19\)14](#), para. 28.

¹⁶ The Pacific Islands Forum member States not party to the Treaty, the Office for Disarmament Affairs, the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean, and the African Commission on Nuclear Energy were invited to participate in the meeting as observers.

As an outcome of the meeting, the States parties issued a ministerial statement¹⁷ in which they, *inter alia*, renewed their commitment to the following: (a) continued cooperation with other nuclear-weapon-free zones in pursuit of common interests and objectives, including through close consultation in the lead-up to the tenth Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference in 2021; (b) a nuclear-free Pacific and a nuclear-weapon-free world, further reaffirming their determination for a region free of environmental pollution from radioactive wastes and other radioactive matter; and (c) in 2021, convening the Consultative Committee, pursuant to article 10 and annex 3 of the Rarotonga Treaty, to consider practical means of operationalizing the Treaty.

Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone (Bangkok Treaty)

The Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone, signed on 15 December 1995 in Bangkok, remained the key instrument of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) dealing with disarmament and non-proliferation.

In 2020, ASEAN convened its thirty-sixth and thirty-seventh summits in June and November, respectively. At the two virtual meetings, 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 leaders also reaffirmed their commitment to engaging continuously with the nuclear-weapon States, as well as intensifying ongoing efforts to resolve all outstanding issues in accordance with the objectives and principles of the Treaty.

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, ASEAN continued implementing the five-year Plan of Action to Strengthen the Implementation of the Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone (2018–2022).¹⁸ In that regard, ASEAN continued its active efforts to promote nuclear safety, security and safeguards, including through the ASEAN Network of Regulatory Bodies on Atomic Energy.

Meanwhile, under its practical arrangements with IAEA, ASEAN continued working to ensure that the region's peaceful nuclear sector could benefit from IAEA regional projects, especially in the areas of capacity-building, education and training, information-sharing and best practices. In that context, ASEAN placed particular focus on relevant law and adherence to international legal instruments. The ASEAN Network of Regulatory Bodies on Atomic Energy, for example, continued developing a regional preparedness and response plan for a nuclear or radiological emergency. Other relevant sectoral bodies—including the ASEAN Nuclear Energy Cooperation Sub-Sector Network and the ASEAN Committee of Science, Technology and Innovation—also considered how to train their personnel to further support peaceful applications of nuclear science and technology.

¹⁷ Pacific Islands Forum, “[Ministerial Statement of the First Meeting of the States Parties to the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty](#)”, 15 December 2020.

¹⁸ ASEAN, “[Plan of Action to Strengthen the Implementation of the Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone \(2018–2022\)](#)”, 4 August 2017.

ASEAN also submitted a memorandum of activities concerning the Bangkok Treaty to the secretariat of the tenth Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference, which had been rescheduled to 2021 owing to the COVID-19 pandemic.

African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty (Pelindaba Treaty)

As the world commemorated the [eleventh anniversary](#) of the African Nuclear Weapon-Free-Zone Treaty entering into force, the African Commission on Nuclear Energy—the Treaty’s main implementing body—continued developing partnerships with international organizations and other nuclear-weapon-free zones. In that context, the Commission sought to consolidate and strengthen activities to support nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and peaceful applications of nuclear science and technology, particularly through enhanced South-South cooperation.

In 2020, the Commission formalized new cooperation agreements with the State Atomic Energy Corporation “[Rosatom](#)”, the [Global Centre for Nuclear Energy Partnership](#) (Department of Atomic Energy of India) and the [African Regional Cooperative Agreement for Research, Development and Training related to Nuclear Science and Technology](#). Additionally, it consolidated its relationship with the African Union Commission, specifically by participating in relevant [expert-](#) and [ministerial-level](#) meetings.

Throughout the year, the African Commission on Nuclear Energy also engaged in numerous activities to support the Pelindaba Treaty.

From 25 to 28 February, the Commission joined Wilton Park and Canada to convene a [regional conference](#) in South Africa with the theme “In support of Africa’s Agenda 2063: Pathways for expanding peaceful uses of nuclear energy and nuclear technology in Africa”.¹⁹

Then, in May, the Commission launched an effort to designate eligible institutions in States signatories as [regional collaborating centres](#), qualifying them to help implement activities to improve nuclear safeguards or nuclear safety and security.

To mark the International Day against Nuclear Tests on 29 August, the African Commission on Nuclear Energy joined the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization to [call](#) for a renewed commitment to strengthening the global norm against nuclear tests and irreversibly closing the door on such tests.

The following month, the African Commission on Nuclear Energy took several steps for the development of Africa’s peaceful nuclear energy sector. On 7 September, it formalized an [arrangement](#) with another entity—the secretariat of the African Regional Cooperative Agreement for Research, Development and Training related to Nuclear Science and Technology—to cooperate in support of

¹⁹ That event took place in preparation for the tenth Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference, which was subsequently postponed to 2021 owing to the COVID-19 pandemic.

peaceful applications of nuclear science and technology in Africa.²⁰ Three days later, the Commission joined the International Science and Technology Center, based in Kazakhstan, to co-convene a [webinar](#) entitled “Uranium in Africa: exploration, exploitation and cooperation opportunities”. Then, on 16 September, the Commission’s Executive Secretary participated in the launch of “[Women in Nuclear Africa](#)”, a new regional chapter of a global non-governmental organization dedicated to supporting women professionals in the nuclear sector.²¹ Later in the year, the Commission collaborated with that chapter to convene a virtual event on “[African women’s contribution to socio-economic development through peaceful uses of nuclear energy](#)”. Participants in the event included the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Izumi Nakamitsu; the IAEA Director General, Rafael Mariano Grossi; and representatives of other regional and international organizations.

The Commission also continued to prioritize implementing and operationalizing national-level nuclear safeguards, thus helping African States parties fulfil the obligations of their comprehensive safeguards agreements with IAEA. In that connection, the Commission joined the IAEA Department of Safeguards to co-organize, on 23 November, a webinar on “[Fostering and Sustaining Non-Proliferation Verification Systems through Development of National and Regional Nuclear Safeguards Capacities](#)”.²² In addition, from 24 November to 7 December, the Commission held a virtual [meeting](#) between leaders of its thematic working groups and experts from IAEA, the Forum of Nuclear Regulatory Bodies in Africa, and the African Regional Cooperative Agreement for Research, Development and Training related to Nuclear Science and Technology. Participants reviewed the Commission’s mid-term 2021–2025 Strategic Plan, exchanged information and experiences and discussed high-priority, flagship programmes for Africa.

In addition, the Commission’s Executive Secretary participated as an observer in the first Meeting of the States Parties to the Rarotonga Treaty, held on 15 December. In a statement,²³ the Executive Secretary expressed support for the Treaty and further cooperation between existing zones.

Separately, Cameroon delivered on behalf of the African Group a statement to the General Assembly First Committee during its seventy-fifth session. In the

²⁰ That initiative was based on [articles 8 and 13 of the Pelindaba Treaty](#), concerning cooperation for purposes of advancing, promoting and improving the quality, effectiveness and efficiency of peaceful nuclear applications and nuclear science and technology implementation in the African region.

²¹ During the event, the Executive Secretary underscored the high importance that the African Union Commission placed on gender, development and women’s contributions to disarmament, non-proliferation and peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

²² Messaoud Baaliouamer, Executive Secretary of the African Commission on Nuclear Energy, also delivered a [statement](#), on behalf of the African Union Commission, to the sixty-fourth IAEA General Conference from 21 to 25 September 2020.

²³ Messaoud Baaliouamer, [statement](#) to the Meeting, 15 December 2020.

remarks, the Group highlighted the tenth anniversary of the Pelindaba Treaty's entry into force while also reiterating their collective commitment to the disarmament and non-proliferation norms of the agreement that established the African nuclear-weapon-free zone. The traditional resolution entitled "African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty" (75/30) was adopted without a vote, as in previous years.

Also during the First Committee session, the Commission released a press statement²⁴ on the occasion of the fiftieth ratification of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which would allow the Treaty to enter into force. Welcoming that development, the Commission encouraged African States to further support the landmark disarmament instrument.

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

At the seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly First Committee, Kyrgyzstan delivered a joint statement²⁵ on behalf of the five States parties to the Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia. The Committee later adopted, without a vote, the resolution on the Treaty (75/67), marking the thirtieth anniversary of the closure of the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site and reaffirming the importance of deepening cooperation between nuclear-weapon-free zones.

On 24 November, the States parties to the Treaty participated in an online annual [consultative meeting](#), organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kyrgyzstan.²⁶ At the meeting, which took place virtually owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, the States parties identified the following main priorities for 2020 and 2021: (a) preparing for the tenth Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference; (b) strengthening coordination within the zone; (c) developing cooperation with other nuclear-weapon-free zones, including through the African Commission on Nuclear Energy and the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean; and (d) further elaborating a draft "Treaty on cooperation in preventing illicit trafficking in nuclear materials and combating nuclear terrorism among the States Parties to the Central Asian Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty". The Central Asian States also agreed to continue holding regular consultations with the United States regarding its ratification of the Protocol to the Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia.

The States parties decided to hold their next meeting in 2021 in Dushanbe, Tajikistan.

²⁴ African Commission on Nuclear Energy, [press release](#) on the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, 26 October 2020.

²⁵ Mirgul Moldoisaeva, Permanent Representative of the Kyrgyz Republic to the United Nations, [intervention](#) on behalf of States Parties of the Treaty on Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Republic of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan), New York, 9 October 2020.

²⁶ Kyrgyzstan succeeded Kazakhstan as Chair of the Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia for the 2020–2021 cycle.

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

At the first session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, held in New York in 2019, the participating States²⁷ decided, *inter alia*, that the President should undertake efforts in consultation with States to prepare for the second session. They also agreed that representatives of existing organizations of nuclear-weapon-free zones should be invited to share good practices and lessons learned on implementing treaties establishing such zones before the second session of the Conference.²⁸

In that regard, the Office for Disarmament Affairs organized, in consultation with the participating States, an informal workshop series in July 2020 on good practices and lessons learned concerning existing nuclear-weapon-free zones. With financial support from the United Nations Peace and Development Trust Fund, the Office held the workshops to support the participating States of the Conference in implementing the outcome of its first session and preparing for the second session.

Owing to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the first [informal workshop](#) was held virtually, from 7 to 9 July. Sima Sami I. Bahous (Jordan), President of the first session of the Conference, opened the event, and the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs delivered opening remarks.²⁹ Representatives of existing organizations supporting the implementation of nuclear-weapon-free zones, State parties to the zones, relevant international organizations and academia delivered presentations on several thematic topics: adapting the zones to the regional context; general obligations and provisions in view of global disarmament and non-proliferation objectives; how the zones address relations with external States, including security assurances; and how to address issues such as transit, visitation and overflight, and the regulation of exclusive economic zones and the high seas.

The workshop offered practical and useful experiences from existing nuclear-weapon-free zones on those key issues, generating interesting discussions among the participants. Attendees provided positive feedback, particularly on the event's informal setting conducive to candid exchanges of views and the utility of information presented on key substantive issues. Building on the success of that workshop, the Office for Disarmament Affairs planned to hold a second informal workshop in February 2021 to facilitate a more in-depth exchange of views on key issues relevant to a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.

²⁷ Algeria, Bahrain, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, State of Palestine, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

²⁸ At its first session, the Conference decided to hold future sessions for one week in New York, starting each year on the third Monday in November. For more information, see [A/CONF.236/6](#) and its annex.

²⁹ Izumi Nakamitsu, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, [opening remarks](#) at the first Informal Workshop on Good Practices and Lessons Learned of Existing Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones, New York, 7 July 2020.

Participating States had decided at the first session of the Conference that the second session would be held in New York from 16 to 20 November 2020. However, considering the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on United Nations conferences and meetings, participating States decided to postpone the second session to 2021.³⁰

United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs regional centres

United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa

In 2020, the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa continued its activities to tackle peace and security challenges in the region, particularly to prevent and counter the proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons. For those activities, it partnered with Member States, at their request, and cooperated with African regional and subregional organizations, intergovernmental organizations and civil society groups.

Owing to restrictions from the COVID-19 pandemic, the Centre scaled up its use of virtual meetings to carry forward essential interactions and consultations with Member States, United Nations entities and other stakeholders.

During the first quarter of 2020, the Centre held intensive consultations with the Economic Community of Central African States and the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa to develop plans for a joint project on strengthening the implementation of 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 (Kinshasa Convention).³¹ It would follow on from the [project](#) launched in December 2018, which ended in December 2019, within the framework of the African Union's initiative on Silencing the Guns in Africa. The initial project was aimed, inter alia, at guiding interested States parties in implementing the agreement.

In the same vein, the Centre aided the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, at its request, in planning a project to advance the implementation, by the Authority's eight member States,³² of Security Council resolution [1540 \(2004\)](#).

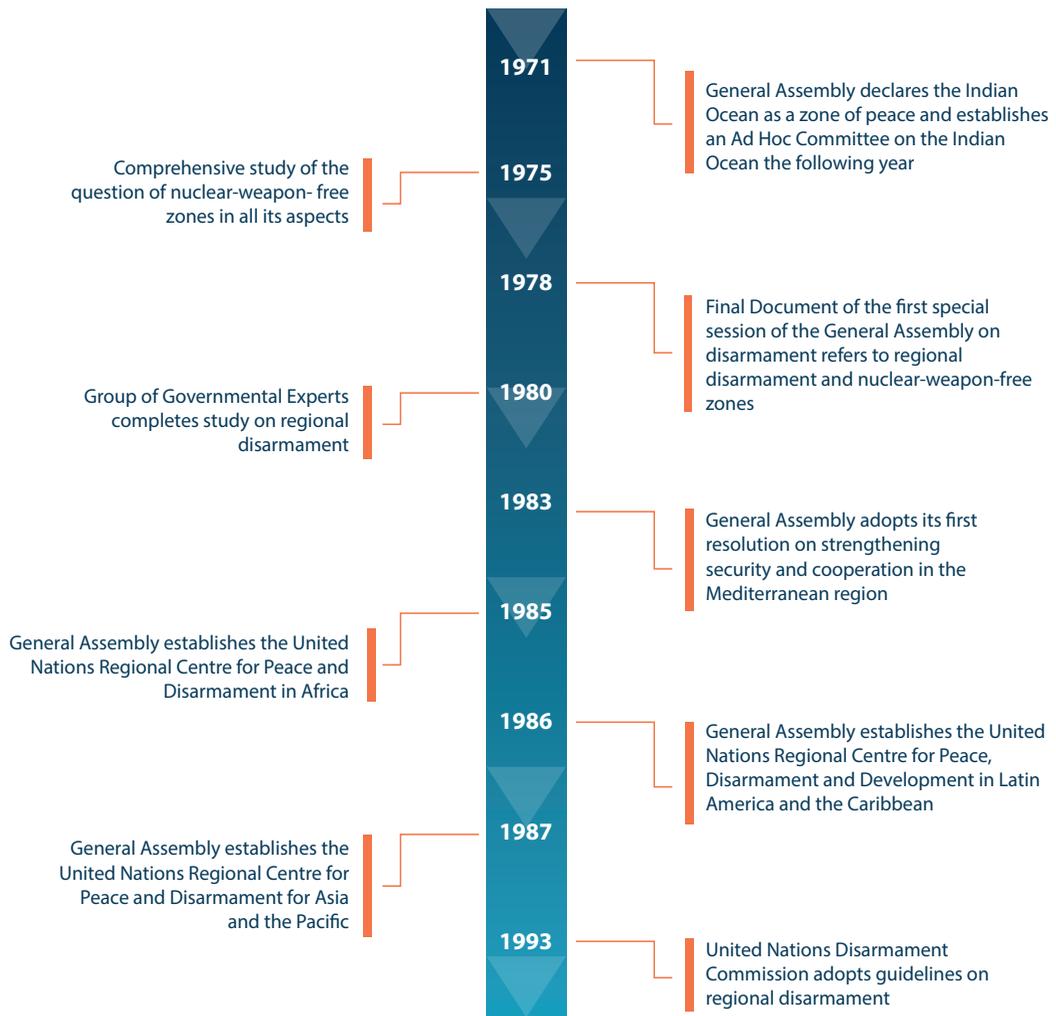
The Centre also assisted the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa in organizing the fiftieth meeting of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, held virtually from

³⁰ [A/CONF.236/DEC.5](#).

³¹ At the forty-ninth session of the United Nations Standing Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, held in November 2019 in Luanda, its member States called on the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa to explore, with the Economic Community of Central African States and the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa, ways and means to develop and implement a multi-year successor to the project to assist the Economic Community in implementing the Kinshasa Convention.

³² Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Uganda.

Some important regional disarmament efforts of the United Nations



2 to 4 December.³³ During the meeting's expert- and ministerial-level sessions, representatives from the Economic Community's 11 member States³⁴ focused their deliberations on the pandemic's impact on peace and security in Central Africa.

On 14 July, the Centre participated in a virtual meeting of the African Union-Regions Steering Committee on Small Arms and Light Weapons and Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration. The purpose of the meeting was to enhance cooperation and information-sharing between the African Union Commission, African regional economic communities, the United Nations and other international organizations, specifically on efforts in Africa to control illicit small arms and light weapons or to implement disarmament, demobilization and reintegration initiatives.

In addition, the Centre implemented in-country training programmes in the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo as part of the Office for Disarmament Affairs' flagship project on [gender and small arms control](#) (for more information, see chap. VI).

Ministerial meetings of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the fiftieth ministerial meeting of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa could not be held in Malabo in May, as originally scheduled. It instead took place virtually, from 2 to 4 December, with Equatorial Guinea presiding.

Participants discussed ongoing and emerging peace and security trends in the subregion, particularly emphasizing the impact of the pandemic while considering how they could address common challenges collectively. Additionally, countries reviewed progress in implementing previous recommendations by the Committee, and they shared information and analysis on the geopolitical and security situation in Central Africa.

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on peace and security, the Committee discussed growing threats from terrorist groups, including Boko Haram; acts of maritime piracy in the Gulf of Guinea; and the pandemic's implications for sustainable peace and security in Central Africa, as well as for regional integration. Participants also exchanged views on electoral cycles in the subregion, devoting particular attention to developments in the Central African Republic, human rights across the subregion and women's leadership in promoting peace and security during the global health crisis.

Member States unanimously agreed on the need to organize a regional forum on maritime security and ensure the effective implementation of the

³³ Given the COVID-19 pandemic, the Committee convened only once in 2020 instead of its traditional schedule of meeting twice each year.

³⁴ Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Rwanda, and Sao Tome and Principe.

regional strategy of the Economic Community of Central African States against COVID-19. The meeting adopted two declarations: the first on the implementation of the Community's regional strategy against COVID-19³⁵ and the second on elections in Central Africa.

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

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean strove to deliver uninterrupted support to States for advancing peace and security through disarmament. By swiftly transferring all its information materials to an online format early in the pandemic, the Centre was able to conduct 62 training courses, workshops and webinars throughout the year.

As the health emergency brought renewed attention to the importance of robust biosafety and biosecurity measures, the Centre centred its efforts on providing States with technical and legal support in implementing 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 one highlight of the year, the Centre cooperated with Chilean authorities to develop and draft regulations complementing the new law³⁶ enacted in July on implementing the Biological Weapons Convention and the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction (Chemical Weapons Convention).

Meanwhile, the Regional Centre continued assisting States with the technical, policy and legal aspects of combating the illicit trade in small arms and ammunition, in line 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) and other international instruments. In that regard, the Centre carried out an array of virtual activities on managing and controlling ammunition, investigating arms-related crime scenes, addressing conventional-arms transfers, marking and tracing arms and ammunition, banning weapons at entry and exit points, and addressing firearms use and possession in school settings.

³⁵ Malabo Declaration on the impact of the coronavirus disease pandemic (COVID-19) on peace and support for the implementation of the COVID-19 regional response strategy for Central Africa (A/76/274, annex II).

³⁶ Cámara de Diputadas y Diputados de Chile, "Implementa la Convención sobre la Prohibición del Desarrollo, la Producción, el Almacenamiento y el Empleo de Armas Químicas y sobre su Destrucción y la Convención sobre la Prohibición del Desarrollo, la Producción y el Almacenamiento de Armas Bacteriológicas (Biológicas) y Tóxicas y sobre su Destrucción" (Tramitación, 30 de julio 2020).

Additionally, in a collaborative effort undertaken throughout the year with the Caribbean Community Implementation Agency for Crime and Security, the Centre helped guide Caribbean States in elaborating a regional plan against illicit trafficking of firearms and ammunition. Adopted in June by the Permanent Secretaries of National Security in the Caribbean, 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) provided States with new, consensus guidance developed and owned by the member States of the Caribbean Community and the Dominican Republic.³⁷ The Regional Centre and the Caribbean Community Implementation Agency for Crime and Security, as the Roadmap's main implementing partners, conducted over 20 consultations with those States from March to June in the lead-up to its adoption. Then, in the second half of 2020, the Centre and the Agency assisted Caribbean States in elaborating their national action plans for implementing the Roadmap domestically.

Meanwhile, in the context of the Roadmap and other United Nations activities on weapons and ammunition management, the Centre undertook a [legal review](#) of the arms control framework of Haiti, including a draft law on firearms. As a result, the Centre identified gaps in existing legislation and highlighted important ways for Haiti to harmonize its national framework with global and regional commitments on conventional arms control. As at the end of 2020, the country was reviewing the findings and recommendations.

The Centre also published a regional legislative working paper³⁸ on national measures and practices for ammunitions control, thus contributing towards stronger national-level capacities for control and regulation for conventional ammunition. The paper was aimed, in particular, at supporting the safe, secure and accountable management of ammunition to reduce the risk of diversion for illicit use. The Centre used the study, in part, to highlight existing international guidelines and cooperation frameworks, most notably the United Nations SaferGuard Programme and its International Ammunition Technical Guidelines.

Separately, in June, the Centre finished translating the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines into Spanish. With that step, it laid the groundwork to substantially expand their use by practitioners and control authorities throughout Latin America, thus contributing to a safer region (for more information on the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines, see chap. III).

³⁷ The Caribbean Firearms Roadmap was designed to facilitate progress following commonly agreed standards of performance. It was also created to outline the commitments required at the strategic, policy and operational levels among the participating States. It originated from political commitments and actions adopted by Caribbean Community leaders at the nineteenth special meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government on Issues related to Firearms, convened in May 2019.

³⁸ “[Control de Municiones en América Latina y el Caribe](#)”.

In another effort to help States combat illicit trafficking in arms and ammunition, the Regional Centre delivered expert online training to Argentina and Costa Rica on properly handling evidence at crime scenes where arms and ammunition were used.³⁹ By building the capacity of States to effectively process crime scenes and evidence in line with the International Tracing Instrument, the Centre acted to reduce impunity for firearms-related crimes. In addition, the Regional Centre launched its Specialized Course on Firearms Investigations from a Gender Perspective (for more information, see chap. VI). Furthermore, Caribbean States, particularly Barbados, received intensive virtual training from the Centre on managing ballistic intelligence, which would substantially enhance their capacity to process firearms-related evidence.

To strengthen national-level legal frameworks and institutional architectures on conventional-arms transfers, the Centre worked with Chile and the Dominican Republic to advance their implementation of Arms Trade Treaty provisions related specifically to risk-assessment methodologies and transfer evaluations.

The Centre also delivered specialized training for Chile, Colombia and El Salvador, bolstering the capacity of their national authorities to mitigate weapons diversion using X-ray identification and apply international standards when investigating and prosecuting arms-related cases. In addition to that targeted training, the Centre helped build the capacity of the three States to meet responsibilities for marking and record-keeping under the Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons and the International Tracing Instrument.

In Peru, the Centre guided national authorities on the theoretical and technical aspects of marking arms and ammunition. It focused that assistance, in particular, on highlighting such marking as a vital measure to combat illicit trafficking, in line with international instruments, technical guidelines, standards and regional best practices (e.g., the Modular Small-arms-control Implementation Compendium (MOSAIC) and the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines). Furthermore, to help standardize practices in that area, the Centre supported Peru in developing regulations on marking that were consistent with its national law on controlling arms and ammunition.

The Centre also continued its work from the previous year to assist the region's States in tackling the growing incidence of firearms possession and use in schools. In 2020, the Centre undertook a systematic review of media across the region and shared the resulting findings at a series of national and regional online webinars. During those events, participants discussed regional and international best practices for public policies, initiatives against firearms in schools, and responses to related challenges.

Throughout the year, the Centre also undertook outreach activities to empower youth, particularly young women professionals in the field of

³⁹ The Centre made the course available for firearms investigative units in virtual and in-person formats.

disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. In December, the Centre held a virtual conference entitled “Inspiring a new generation of youth: women leaders in disarmament share their experiences, challenges and recommendations with future generations” to celebrate the tenth anniversary of General Assembly resolution 65/69 on women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control, as well as the first anniversary of General Assembly resolution 74/64 on youth, disarmament and non-proliferation. Through the conference, the Centre aimed to introduce young people in the region to the stories and reflections of women in the field of disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation, as reflected in the [fourth edition](#) of the publication *Forces of Change*,⁴⁰ launched on 8 December.

United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific

In 2020, the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific assisted States in strengthening national-level implementation of the Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons and the Arms Trade Treaty, particularly in line with the women, peace and security agenda. The Centre also supported States’ efforts in addressing the issue of weapons of mass destruction.

Throughout the year, the Centre engaged with parliamentarians, members of civil society and national authorities in Asia-Pacific States to promote transformative, gender-responsive approaches to reducing armed violence. It also sought to highlight opportunities from the convergence of various international agendas, notably on sustainable development, small arms control and women, peace and security.

In March, the Centre concluded its multi-year, regional project on “Gun Violence and Illicit Small Arms Trafficking from a Gender Perspective”, funded by the European Union.⁴¹ At the project’s [concluding seminar](#), held in Kathmandu, officials from 18 Asia-Pacific States⁴² joined members of parliament and women leaders from civil society to learn about recommendations on the practical application of key international instruments on arms control (e.g., the Arms Trade Treaty and the Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons). In addition, they considered how implementing those recommendations could support elements of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the women, peace and security agenda. Furthermore, to help guide future national- and regional-level activities on gender and small arms and light weapons, the Centre published

⁴⁰ *Forces of Change: Latin American and Caribbean Women Promoting Disarmament, Non-proliferation and Arms Control*, fourth edition (United Nations publication, 2020).

⁴¹ The project comprised a series of interactive discussions to promote the development of gender-responsive measures to effectively address gun violence, including through enhanced partnerships between civil society and parliamentarians.

⁴² Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Myanmar, Nepal, New Zealand, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Timor-Leste and Vanuatu.

an online compendium⁴³ of discussions, outcomes and recommendations collected over the course of the project. It also produced a series of video testimonials to showcase the experiences of participants as advocates for gender approaches in arms control laws and policies, women's empowerment in disarmament-related initiatives, and youth involvement in peace and security.

Meanwhile, the Centre completed a project to build the capacities of Timor-Leste and Sri Lanka to implement the Programme of Action and potentially accede to the Arms Trade Treaty in the future.⁴⁴ Funded by the United Nations Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation, the project included assessments of both the countries' national legislation for small arms control and their technical regulations for physical security and stockpile management, including provisions for on-site visits.⁴⁵ After discussing implementation challenges and needs for assistance with national stakeholders, as well as conducting its assessments, the Centre contracted technical and legal experts who produced detailed reports, with clear recommendations, on strengthening each State's national controls on small arms and light weapons. In another project outcome, the Centre developed and proposed measures for those countries to include in national action plans on implementing the Programme of Action and, potentially, the Arms Trade Treaty.

The Regional Centre also continued actively collaborating with the Hiroshima office of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research in implementing the Training Programme on Nuclear Disarmament and Non-Proliferation, held in Hiroshima from 24 to 28 February. In the programme's sixth iteration, held in person, organizers provided 20 mid-level diplomats and military personnel from 10 Asian States⁴⁶ with expert training on the pillars of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, as well as the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones, military confidence-building measures, and other global and regional measures to promote nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

Additionally, the Centre delivered an online subregional training session about implementing Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) to 50 delegates from four South Asian States⁴⁷ and Mongolia. Held as a webinar series because of the pandemic, the training ran from 1 to 15 December and included a self-paced online education module and complementary live online interactions with 15

⁴³ *Compendium—UNRC PD Project on Gun Violence and Illicit Small-Arms Trafficking from a Gender Perspective: Activities, Outcomes, Recommendations* (United Nations publication, 2020).

⁴⁴ The Technical and Legal Assistance Project to Support the Implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action and the Arms Trade Treaty was implemented in Timor-Leste from November 2019 to February 2020 and in Sri Lanka from February to May 2020.

⁴⁵ Additionally, in response to the request from Timor-Leste, the Centre conducted a one-day workshop to explain synergies between provisions of the Programme of Action and the Arms Trade Treaty.

⁴⁶ Bangladesh, Cambodia, Kazakhstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Timor-Leste.

⁴⁷ Bangladesh, Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka.

experts from international organizations. Participants gained new insights on, inter alia, improving regulatory frameworks, controlling imports and exports, and implementing relevant national-level measures. States also presented national remarks on their status and experience in implementing the resolution. In the live interactive sessions, presentations by experts were followed by lively discussions and question-and-answer periods between course participants and experts. Organized by the Centre in partnership with the Department of State of the United States through its Export Control and Related Border Security Program, the webinar series was the first part of a larger project to improve the implementation of Security Council resolution [1540 \(2004\)](#) in the subregion.

The Centre also co-organized, with the French think tank *Fondation pour la recherche stratégique*, an online workshop on the Hague Code of Conduct Against the Proliferation of Ballistic Missiles. Conducted on 18 December, the workshop drew 15 officials from China, Nepal and the Republic of Korea. Those participants discussed, inter alia, the status of ballistic missile proliferation in the region; perspectives on new States subscribing to the Code of Conduct; and specifics of the Code itself, including how its provisions and the measures of other non-proliferation instruments could be mutually reinforcing.

Disarmament and arms regulation at the regional level

Africa

Economic Community of Central African States

As they continued implementing the Kinshasa Convention in 2020, States members of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) made tangible progress in countering the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Central Africa.

Meanwhile, the ECCAS Commission continued assisting member States in ratifying the Arms Trade Treaty, considering complementarities between that agreement and the Kinshasa Convention. Sao Tome and Principe became a State party to the Arms Trade Treaty on 28 July, which brought the number of States parties in the Central African subregion to four.⁴⁸ As at the end of the year, a total of nine ECCAS member States had signed the Treaty.

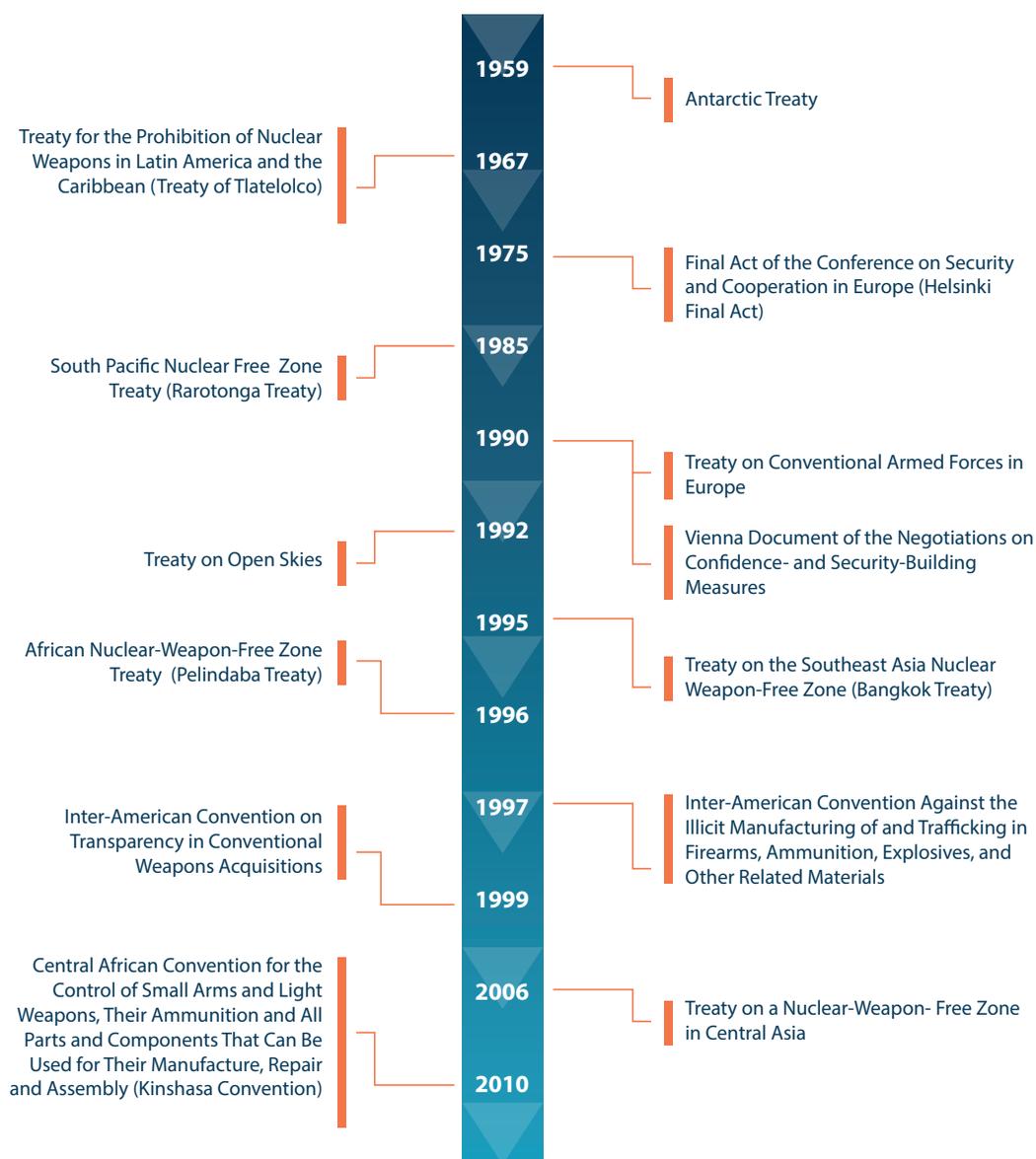
The ECCAS Commission also joined the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime to conduct case studies in four member States⁴⁹ on harmonizing national firearms laws with the Kinshasa Convention and the Firearms Protocol of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, and Sao Tome and Principe.

⁴⁹ Cameroon, Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo and Gabon.

⁵⁰ The studies were undertaken following the outcome of the regional conference on the harmonization of national laws in accordance with the Kinshasa Convention and the Firearms Protocol, held from 20 to 21 November 2019 in Kinshasa.

Regional disarmament instruments



They aimed to carry out in-depth analyses of the current firearms laws of those States, identifying their weaknesses and strengths and proposing concrete ways to align them with the Convention and the Protocol. They also considered how to harmonize those laws with similar legal frameworks, including the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, the Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons and the Arms Trade Treaty.

In addition, the ECCAS Commission continued functioning as a coordination mechanism for the Kinshasa Convention at the subregional level, including through activities to support establishing national commissions in member States.

As at the end of 2020, five countries in the ECCAS zone—Angola, Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda—had fully established such commissions. In addition, three States had taken legal steps to that end; the Congo and Chad each designated entities as national focal points pending the establishment of their national commissions, and Equatorial Guinea authorized the establishment of such a commission. Three other States—Cameroon, Gabon, and Sao Tome and Principe—had started the process without taking legal steps.

Economic Community of West African States

Activities related to arms control

In 2020, the member States of the Commission of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) approved the third five-year implementation plan (2021–2025)⁵¹ for the ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and Other Related Materials (Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons). The Commission drafted the plan with support from the Bonn International Center for Conversion, a technical agency of the Federal Foreign Office of Germany. To support monitoring and evaluation, the plan included clearly defined key performance indicators for each activity.

Activities related to peace, security and disarmament

As part of its ongoing partnership with the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), the ECOWAS Commission joined the Institute in an outreach mission to government functionaries and other stakeholders in the Gambia. They informed key heads of Gambian ministries, departments and agencies, as well as parliamentarians, about the objectives of weapons and ammunition management as a field, including the need for a baseline assessment of the country's current practices.

The Commission also procured and delivered a variety of equipment for record-keeping, arms destruction and other purposes to the 15 member States

⁵¹ ECOWAS, “[Support to the 5-Year Plan of Action for the Implementation of ECOWAS Convention on \[Small Arms and Light Weapons\] \(2021-2025\)](#)”, lecture, Cotonou, Benin, 25 November 2020.

of ECOWAS, in line with article 21 of the ECOWAS Convention on domestic harmonization of the Convention. That critical assistance was made possible with the support of the European Union. Meanwhile, the European Commission in Brussels expressed willingness to partner with ECOWAS, through the Office for Disarmament Affairs, to help mobilize further resources as required under that article. The three parties expressed willingness to work together in promoting and supporting the arms control efforts of ECOWAS through its plan of action for 2021 to 2025.

Regional Centre on Small Arms in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa

In 2020, the Regional Centre on Small Arms in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa⁵² marked the fifteenth anniversary of the adoption and implementation of the Nairobi Protocol.⁵³ Despite significant disruptions from the COVID-19 pandemic affecting operations, the Centre's secretariat coordinated and implemented several activities in African States. Those efforts concerned either conventional arms—especially the Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons, the Arms Trade Treaty and the Nairobi Protocol—or broader issues of peace, security and disarmament in Africa.

Activities related to conventional arms

In 2020, the Centre's secretariat carried out the following interventions and activities in line with the Programme of Action, the Arms Trade Treaty, the Nairobi Protocol and the African Union's Silencing the Guns initiative:

- Partnered with the African Union and the Office for Disarmament Affairs to assist seven African countries in collecting, marking, managing and either destroying or safely storing weapons to mark Africa Amnesty Month and support the Silencing the Guns initiative (for more information on activities carried out by the African Union and the Office for Disarmament Affairs as part of Africa Amnesty Month, see chap. III)
- Provided technical support to South Sudan towards developing a national strategy to ratify and implement the Arms Trade Treaty

⁵² The Regional Centre on Small Arms in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa is an intergovernmental organization comprising 15 African member States. It was established in June 2005 and mandated to coordinate the implementation of the Nairobi Protocol for the Prevention, Control and Reduction of Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa.

⁵³ For the treaty text and status of adherence, see Regional Centre on Small Arms in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa, "[Nairobi Protocol for the Prevention, Control and Reduction of Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region, the Horn of Africa and Bordering States](#)".

- Helped train 100 officials on weapons and ammunition management, using best practices in that area drawn from civilian and military law enforcement agencies in Kenya
- Supported the provision, delivery and installation of five portable armouries, equipped with gun racks, to strengthen the security and safety of weapons, ammunition and equipment held by border police units of Kenya
- Aided Uganda in destroying 171 tons of unexploded ordnance
- Facilitated an awareness-raising visit, by relevant national authorities in the Central African Republic and South Sudan, to the commission of Burundi to combat the proliferation of small arms and light weapons
- Helped to provide the national institutions to control small arms and light weapons in the Central African Republic and South Sudan with office equipment—including computers, printers, furniture, servers and photocopiers—to strengthen their operational capacity in implementing nationally mandated activities
- Assisted Rwanda in procuring a firearms-crushing machine for environmentally friendly disposal initiatives
- Helped translate the *Physical Security and Stockpile Management Handbook* into Swahili, leading to the distribution of 200 copies in that language to the United Republic of Tanzania for use in training at the Tanzania Police School-Moshi
- Provided the Central African Republic and Ethiopia with technical support for the customized record-keeping software used by the Centre
- Monitored and evaluated the implementation of the Nairobi Protocol in six countries: Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan and the United Republic of Tanzania
- Held meetings on a regional strategy for small-arms control and disarmament with different partners, including the African Union, the Office for Disarmament Affairs, the East African Legislative Assembly, the African Development Bank, the Eastern Africa Police Chiefs Cooperation Organization, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, the Committee of Intelligence and Security Services of Africa, and member States of the Centre.

Activities related to peace, security and disarmament

The Centre's secretariat carried out the following interventions and activities related to peace, security and disarmament:

- Helped implement different public education and awareness activities, including (a) country-wide media campaigns for the voluntary surrender of

firearms and ammunition in selected countries;⁵⁴ (b) information-sharing and awareness-raising workshops for security forces on community policing; and (c) distribution of information, education and communication materials, with key messages and slogans, to promote the voluntary surrender and collection of firearms and ammunition

- Supported the continued development of a regional communication toolkit⁵⁵ to enhance the capacity of member States to cooperate effectively on initiatives for disarmament and the control of small arms and light weapons
- Delivered a variety of equipment to the Ministry of Peace in Ethiopia, contributing towards the Ministry's capacity to lead national-level programmes and initiatives for peacebuilding
- Supported the development and public dissemination of information materials—including through print and broadcast platforms, social media and the Centre's website—to raise awareness about disarmament and the control of small arms and light weapons
- Met with parliamentarians of the East African Legislative Assembly and the Pan-African Parliament on issues related to small arms and the Arms Trade Treaty.

The Centre also participated in several additional virtual and in-person meetings at both regional and international levels. Those events included the tenth session of the Conference of States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime; a meeting of the Arms Trade Treaty Expert Group; the first meeting of the African Union-Regions Steering Committee on Small Arms and Light Weapons and Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration; a meeting convened by UNIDIR to discuss weapons and ammunition management in Africa; and the seventh Africa Security Symposium.

Furthermore, the Centre's secretariat made significant progress in facilitating the national-level implementation of regional and relevant international instruments and mechanisms, including the Programme of Action, the Arms Trade Treaty, the Silencing the Guns initiative and the Nairobi Protocol. As at the end of the year, however, the COVID-19 pandemic and other challenges continued to seriously threaten the effective coordination and implementation of efforts to control small arms and light weapons in the subregion.

Southern African Development Community

The Southern African Development Community coordinated several subregional initiatives to strengthen the capacity of its member States to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit proliferation, trafficking and circulation of small

⁵⁴ Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia and Kenya.

⁵⁵ A draft version of the toolkit was under review as at the end of 2020.

arms and light weapons. In 2020, it carried out that work despite travel restrictions imposed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which prevented completing several planned activities requiring face-to-face meetings.

During the year, the Community undertook a review of its Protocol on the Control of Firearms, Ammunition and Other Related Materials.⁵⁶ The aims of that review included broadening the scope of the Protocol's application; aligning the Protocol with relevant international conventions; and incorporating into the text language on contemporary proliferation threats in the subregion, as well as best practices and standards for preventing and combating the illicit proliferation, circulation and trafficking of firearms, ammunition and related materials.

Following the review, the Heads of State and Government of member States approved the Agreement Amending the Protocol on the Control of Firearms, Ammunition and Other Related Materials at a summit held in August.

The Community then completed a second review to align the standard operating procedures for the Protocol's implementation with the revisions finalized in August. The organization's Ministerial Committee of the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation was expected to take up the proposed changes in June 2021 for possible adoption.

Meanwhile, to further enhance the capacity of member States to prevent, combat and eradicate illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons, the Community collaborated with the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) to harmonize the training modules of the Small Arms and Light Weapons Investigators Course with the INTERPOL Illicit Arms Records and Tracing Management System. The partners planned to begin implementing a joint training programme upon approval by the Ministerial Committee of the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation, anticipated in June 2021.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Community continued supporting the work of "forced disarmament" in the context of operations by the [Intervention Brigade](#), a combat force in the United Nations stabilization mission in the country. Before destruction, small arms and light weapons recovered from non-State actors were traced to their origins through their serial numbers, which could also identify potential suppliers.

The Community carried out the work described above to support the African Union's Silencing the Guns initiative in and beyond the subregion.

⁵⁶ For the Protocol's [text and adherence status](#), see United Nations Treaty Collection, "[Protocol on the control of firearms, ammunition and other related materials in the Southern African Development Community \(SADC\) region](#)". See also Southern African Development Community, "[Protocol on the Control of Firearms, Ammunition and Other Materials \(2001\)](#)". The Protocol entered into force on 8 November 2004.

Americas

Caribbean Community

Activities related to peace, security and disarmament

In 2020, the Caribbean Community Implementation Agency for Crime and Security implemented and supported several arms control activities to support peace, security and disarmament. Owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Agency used a dedicated virtual training platform (“[CBSI-Connect](#)”) to take forward most of its capacity-building and training programmes during the year.

In partnership with the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, the Agency assisted Caribbean States to develop the [Caribbean Firearms Roadmap](#). As the Roadmap’s main implementing partners, the Agency and the Centre provided States in the region with technical assistance in elaborating and executing national action plans to implement the Roadmap.

From 11 to 13 August, the Agency partnered with the World Customs Organization to train national authorities in techniques to detect illicit weapons at national ports of entry. Over 154 participating customs and law enforcement officials considered their respective roles in addressing illicit trafficking through targeted, non-intrusive inspections, as well as in identifying and tracing seized firearms. They also considered how they could strengthen their cooperation with one another.

In August and September, the Agency partnered with the Women’s Institute for Alternative Development, a non-governmental organization based in Trinidad and Tobago, to consult with Caribbean Community member States and civil society stakeholders about how to provide more effective gender-sensitive responses to armed violence.

The Agency also collaborated with the Organization of American States to train national authorities from its member States on best practices for physical security and stockpile management. A total of 126 officials benefited from the training, held from 3 to 6 November.

In addition, the Agency formalized a memorandum of understanding with the Small Arms Survey, an independent research organization. As of the end of the year, they were collaborating on an in-depth study of problems posed by firearms in the Caribbean, critically analysing related issues in Caribbean Community member States to ensure a more targeted, evidence-based approach to tackling the subregion’s illicit arms trade.

On 14 December, the Agency partnered with INTERPOL to convene an awareness-raising workshop, on regional and global firearms tools, for investigators and operators of the proprietary Integrated Ballistics Identification System. Its 81 participants focused on the Caribbean Community’s Regional Integrated Ballistic Information Network. They also covered the Ballistic

Information Network and the Illicit Arms Records and Tracing Management System, which are operated by INTERPOL.

Organization of American States

Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives and Other Related Materials

As at the end of 2020, 31 of the 35 member States of the Organization of American States were party to the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives and Other Related Materials, according to the Convention's Technical Secretariat.⁵⁷

On 17 December, the States parties held the twentieth Regular Meeting of the Consultative Committee of the Convention at the headquarters of the Organization of American States in Washington. The Meeting took place under the leadership of Mexico as Chair, with support from the Convention's Technical Secretariat.

Countering the illicit proliferation and trafficking of small arms, light weapons and ammunition, and their impact in Latin America and the Caribbean

The organization's Department of Public Security, with support from the European Union, continued assisting member States in strengthening their capacity to meet their obligations under the Convention. The Department focused its support on the following: (a) strengthening physical security and stockpile management systems for national militaries; (b) building national capacity to destroy confiscated small arms, light weapons and ammunition held unsafely or in excess; (c) enhancing national capacity to mark and trace small arms and light weapons while also fostering relevant regional cooperation; (d) supporting legislative reforms to improve mechanisms and regional coordination on the transfer of small arms, light weapons and related information systems; and (e) promoting socially responsible behaviours in selected communities, targeting groups severely affected by armed violence.

Despite challenges and restrictions from the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department trained representatives of 12 countries⁵⁸ in physical security and stockpile management in 2020, leading to the certification of 110 officials in best practices for that area. The Department also assessed specific situations affecting physical security and stockpile management in four States⁵⁹ to improve conditions.

In Peru, the Department's training bolstered the capacity of national authorities to destroy small arms and light weapons, supporting the destruction

⁵⁷ The Technical Secretariat was a joint operation of the Department against Transnational Organized Crime and the Department of Public Security, two offices of the organization's Secretariat for Multidimensional Security.

⁵⁸ Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Grenada, Jamaica, Panama, Peru, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago.

⁵⁹ Ecuador, El Salvador, Panama and Peru.

of 12,000 weapons during the year. The Department also trained officers from Guyana, Peru and the Plurinational State of Bolivia in firearms marking and tracing. Furthermore, it collaborated with the Ministry of Defence of Spain to help 16 officials from 11 countries of the region to achieve level-3 certification in explosive ordnance disposal.

In addition to those operational activities, the Department worked to improve legal frameworks on firearms in member States. In that regard, it assisted Ecuador and Jamaica in reviewing the alignment of their firearms laws with standards under the Inter-American Convention. It also launched an online platform for information exchange on small arms and light weapons, drawing the active participation of 12 countries in the region.

In a separate effort to help prevent violence related to small arms, the Department supported an extracurricular education programme in Tela, Honduras. Eighty local students attended orchestral and choral music classes as part of the effort, which was aimed at developing their skills to prevent youth violence. The students received electronic tablets in addition to musical instruments, enabling them to start the classes virtually during the pandemic. The project also led to an assessment of gun and domestic violence in the participating municipality, helping to identify existing services for victims.

Humanitarian demining

Humanitarian demining organizations accredited by the Government of Colombia cleared approximately 1.5 million square metres of land in 2020. As part of that work, they concluded their activities in 133 formerly mined areas.

Under its programme for “Comprehensive Action against Antipersonnel Mines”, the Department provided accreditation support, external monitoring and quality control of all humanitarian demining activities in the country. Despite a suspension of field activities from March to July owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department conducted 5,281 visits to humanitarian demining organizations throughout the year. It monitored technical and non-technical mine surveys and clearance operations during those trips, helping build confidence that decontaminated areas were indeed safe for use. Through the programme, the Department also assisted 36 landmine survivors in their physical and psychosocial rehabilitation, and socioeconomic reintegration.

Meanwhile, the Organization of American States conducted 27 mine-risk education campaigns for women, men, girls and boys in 29 landmine-affected municipalities. It also offered logistical and administrative support for national demining in the Colombian departments of Sucre and Bolivar.

Supporting the implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004)

In 2020, the Inter-American Committee against Terrorism of the organization’s secretariat offered legislative and technical support to assist its

member States in updating national laws, in line with their obligations under Security Council resolution [1540 \(2004\)](#). The Committee also assisted countries in drafting national action plans to implement the resolution's mandates.

With support from the European Union, the Committee also launched a three-year project to help strengthen biosafety and biosecurity in eight beneficiary States in the region, in line with resolution [1540 \(2004\)](#). The project included legislative and technical assistance, capacity-building, outreach, peer-review activities, research, and the development of two massive open online courses for scientists and policymakers.

Furthermore, with support from the United States, the Committee launched a year-long project to strengthen strategic trade controls in the Dominican Republic and Panama. That support comprised legislative and technical assistance, as well as relevant capacity-building activities.

The Committee also continued its close cooperation with the Office for Disarmament Affairs, the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution [1540 \(2004\)](#) (1540 Committee) and its Group of Experts. For example, it organized a virtual national workshop in the Plurinational State of Bolivia with the participation of two of the Committee's experts.

Asia

Association of Southeast Asian Nations

The Bangkok Treaty, signed on 15 December 1995 by the 10 ASEAN member States, remained the organization's most important instrument for disarmament and non-proliferation.

At the fifty-third ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting, held by videoconference on 9 September, the Ministers stressed the importance of the Treaty's full and effective implementation, including under the [Plan of Action to Strengthen the Implementation of the Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone \(2018–2022\)](#).⁶⁰

The thirty-seventh ASEAN Summit took place on 12 November, also by videoconference. The ASEAN leaders reaffirmed their commitment to preserving South-East Asia as a region free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction, as enshrined in the Bangkok Treaty and the ASEAN Charter.⁶¹

Owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, the ASEAN Regional Forum could not convene its twelfth Inter-Sessional Meeting on Non-Proliferation and Disarmament. It was tentatively rescheduled for 2021.

Meanwhile, ASEAN work to address illicit small-arms trafficking remained early in development within its broader efforts on transnational crime. In 2020,

⁶⁰ ASEAN, "[Joint communiqué of the 53rd ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting](#)", 9 September 2020.

⁶¹ ASEAN, "[Chairman's Statement of the 37th ASEAN Summit](#)", 12 November 2020.

ASEAN carried forward relevant activities through its Working Group on Arms Smuggling⁶² and a component, to address arms smuggling, within its work programme to implement the [ASEAN Plan of Action in Combating Transnational Crime](#).

Pacific Islands Forum

South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone (Rarotonga Treaty)

On 15 December, the first Meeting of the States Parties to the Rarotonga Treaty was convened following a statement issued in 2019 by the leaders of the Pacific Islands Forum.⁶³ The Meeting was attended by the Treaty's 13 States parties⁶⁴ and by five Forum members⁶⁵ not party to the Treaty. Other observers included representatives of the Office for Disarmament Affairs, other nuclear-weapon-free zones, the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean and the African Commission on Nuclear Energy.

In a ministerial statement,⁶⁶ the States parties commemorated two key milestones—namely, the thirty-fifth anniversary of the Treaty's adoption and the thirty-fourth anniversary of its entry into force. Noting that the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone was the world's second nuclear-weapon-free zone in a populated area, the States parties said that they were encouraged by the existence of five nuclear-weapon-free zones, as such zones reflected an important provision of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. In addition, the parties committed to continuing their cooperation with other nuclear-weapon-free zones in pursuit of common interests and objectives.

The States parties also discussed ongoing challenges, underlining grave concern over the continuing threat of the proliferation of nuclear weapons to global peace and security. They made several calls for action to further advance the objectives and implementation of the Rarotonga Treaty, both as an important framework for regional and international cooperation on nuclear issues and as a subregional contribution to the common global goal of the non-proliferation and elimination of nuclear weapons.

⁶² ASEAN member States established the Working Group in 2017 at the ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crime. It was intended as a platform for member States to (a) build capacity and share information on trends, policies and best practices for curbing arms smuggling, and (b) explore collaborations with ASEAN Dialogue Partners and the private sector.

⁶³ At their fiftieth Meeting, the leaders of the Pacific Islands Forum called, inter alia, for operationalizing the provisions of the Rarotonga Treaty (1985). See Pacific Islands Forum, "[Forum Communiqué, Fiftieth Pacific Islands Forum, 13–16 August 2019](#)".

⁶⁴ Australia, Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

⁶⁵ French Polynesia, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), New Caledonia (France) and Palau.

⁶⁶ Pacific Islands Forum, "[Ministerial Statement of the First Meeting of the States Parties to the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty](#)", 15 December 2020.

The States parties also reaffirmed their commitment to the Treaty and the objective that all Forum members become parties to the Treaty, in accordance with article 12 (3), in order to secure the Blue Pacific⁶⁷ against nuclear contamination and other threats, given ongoing nuclear-legacy issues. Accordingly, they welcomed and encouraged other Forum members to accede to the Treaty.

In pursuit of universal disarmament, the States parties reaffirmed the importance of key multilateral treaties, in particular the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which represented a binding multilateral commitment by the nuclear-weapon States to the goal of disarmament. The parties therefore called on all nuclear-weapon States to comply with that Treaty's article VI and with the commitments of its Review Conferences.

The States parties of the Rarotonga Treaty committed to working in close consultation with other States and organizations, including those of other nuclear-weapon-free zones, in the lead-up to the tenth Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference. Furthermore, they reiterated ongoing calls by Forum leaders for remaining countries to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

Given the impending entry into force, in January 2021, of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, Pacific Islands Forum members recalled the signature and ratification or accession of that Treaty by the Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Samoa, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. In that context, they encouraged individual members to advance efforts as they deemed appropriate.

The States parties also agreed to convene, in 2021, the Consultative Committee of the Rarotonga Treaty to consider practical means for its operationalization.⁶⁸

Nuclear legacy issues in the Pacific

Pacific Island Forum leaders also remained committed to addressing all outstanding nuclear-legacy issues in the Pacific, including ongoing threats of nuclear contamination to the Pacific Ocean.⁶⁹

In 2020, the States parties to the Rarotonga Treaty acknowledged Japan's efforts and its engagement with IAEA in relation to the situation at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant. Recalling concerns about the environmental impact of the accident in 2011 involving the site's nuclear reactors, they urged Japan to take all steps necessary to address any potential harm to the Pacific.

⁶⁷ Pacific Islands Forum, "[The 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent](#)".

⁶⁸ Convening the Committee was pursuant to the Treaty's article 10 and annex 3.

⁶⁹ In 2019, leaders endorsed the commissioning of an appropriate body to undertake a comprehensive, independent and objective scientific assessment of the contamination issue in the Pacific, including in the nuclear test site at the Runit Dome in the Marshall Islands.

In August, the Pacific Islands Forum established the Taskforce on Nuclear Legacy Issues in the Pacific. The Taskforce comprised representatives of key Forum member States, as well as regional agencies in the Pacific. They worked together to advance efforts to address impacts to the environment, health and human rights caused by the historical nuclear-testing programmes conducted in the Pacific.

Europe

European Union

The [Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy](#), unveiled in June 2016, continued guiding the actions of the European Union throughout 2020.⁷⁰ The Union was also guided by its strategy, entitled “Securing arms, protecting citizens”,⁷¹ against illicit firearms, small arms, light weapons and their ammunition, as well as its Strategy against Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction.⁷²

Activities related to weapons of mass destruction, including the implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004)

In 2020, the European Union financed two thematic seminars for all States parties to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Funded through a decision⁷³ adopted in 2019 by the Council of the European Union, the seminars dealt with nuclear disarmament (in Geneva on 29 and 30 January) and nuclear non-proliferation (in New York on 2 and 3 March). The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in the postponement of several activities planned under the decision, which prompted the Council to extend the implementation period for six additional months, until 16 April 2021, on a no-cost basis.⁷⁴

The European Union also continued supporting IAEA in carrying out its responsibilities related to nuclear non-proliferation, energy, safety, security and technical cooperation. The Union continued calling for universal adherence to comprehensive safeguards agreements together with additional protocols, considering those instruments as the current verification standard.⁷⁵

⁷⁰ In the document, the European Union acknowledged the growing threat of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems while reaffirming its strong commitment to the universality, full implementation and enforcement of multilateral disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control treaties and regimes.

⁷¹ European Union, document [13581/18](#), pp. 5–32.

⁷² European Union, document [15708/03](#).

⁷³ European Union, Council decision (CFSP) [2019/615](#) of 15 April 2019, *Official Journal of the European Union*, L 105 (16 April 2019), pp. 25–30.

⁷⁴ European Union, Council decision (CFSP) [2020/906](#) of 29 June 2020, *Official Journal of the European Union*, L 207 (29 June 2020), p. 36.

⁷⁵ The Union and its member States attached high importance to the worldwide implementation and continuous improvement of nuclear safety. In that regard, the Union had given legal force

In 2020, the European Union decided to grant an additional €11.58 million for IAEA activities from 2020 to 2023 to achieve effective nuclear security during the period, including assistance in universalizing relevant legal instruments and advancing related international cooperation.⁷⁶ Together with its member States, the European Union was the second-largest donor to the IAEA Nuclear Security Fund. The Union and its member States also continued their strong support for the IAEA Technical Cooperation Programme, including through substantial contributions to the Technical Cooperation Fund and the Peaceful Use Initiative. The Technical Cooperation Programme is an important tool to enable the safe, secure and peaceful use of nuclear technology and to meet the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Meanwhile, the Council of the European Union adopted a decision⁷⁷ to further promote the benefits and contribution of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty to peace, security, disarmament and non-proliferation, including in the Treaty's civil applications. By that decision, the Union continued its financial support to strengthen the monitoring and verification capabilities of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization, allocating €6.28 million for that purpose in the funding cycle from 2020 to 2023. The European Union and its member States also contributed towards maintaining and further strengthening the Treaty's verification regime by providing technical support and advice to the Preparatory Commission's Working Group on verification issues, as well as for other workshops and seminars. Furthermore, the Union actively participated in the Preparatory Commission's two Working Groups throughout the year.⁷⁸

By a 2018 Council decision,⁷⁹ the European Union also continued promoting the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism and the Amendment to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material as fundamental elements of the global nuclear security and anti-terrorism architecture. In that area, the Union maintained its support for activities implemented by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the United

to the objectives of the Vienna Declaration on Nuclear Safety through its amended Nuclear Safety directives [2009/71/EURATOM](#) and [2014/87/EURATOM](#).

⁷⁶ That funding was in addition to €325 million that the European Union had previously allocated for the work of IAEA for the period 2014–2020 to support the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, promote nuclear safety and radiation protection, and apply efficient and effective safeguards in third countries.

⁷⁷ European Union, Council decision (CFSP) Council Decision (CFSP) [2020/901](#) of 29 June 2020, *Official Journal of the European Union*, L 207 (30 June 2020), pp. 15–29.

⁷⁸ Working Group A deals with budgetary and administrative matters, such as the annual budget, financial and staff regulations, and rules and legal issues. Working Group B deals with the examination of verification issues.

⁷⁹ European Union, Council decision (CFSP) Council Decision (CFSP) [2018/1939](#) of 10 December 2018, *Official Journal of the European Union*, L 314 (11 December 2018), pp. 41–46.

Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism.⁸⁰ Likewise, by a 2017 Council decision,⁸¹ the Union continued financially supporting activities of the Office for Disarmament Affairs to help African, Asian, Latin American and Caribbean countries attend consultations and other activities for potential negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, based on document [CD/1299](#) and the mandate contained therein.

The European Union marked 16 January as the fourth anniversary of the Implementation Day of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. The Union's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy continued to serve as Coordinator of the Joint Commission overseeing the Plan of Action. Designed to provide the international community with the necessary assurances on the exclusively peaceful nature of the nuclear programme of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Plan of Action remained a key element of the global nuclear non-proliferation architecture—crucial for regional, European and international security. Its full implementation remained essential. In 2020, the European Union continued affirming its commitment to the Plan of Action and its determination to keep working with the international community to preserve the Plan, which the Security Council unanimously endorsed by resolution [2231 \(2015\)](#). The European Union also planned to continue its full support for IAEA in monitoring and verifying the nuclear commitments of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The European Union also continued supporting the implementation of Security Council resolution [1540 \(2004\)](#) in line with a 2017 decision⁸² of the European Council. The aim was to help enhance relevant national and regional efforts and capabilities to implement that resolution, which was adopted to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery to non-State actors. Such implementation support would primarily include training, capacity-building and facilitation among relevant European Union entities and other stakeholders.⁸³

The European Union also maintained its strong, ongoing support for the Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation, to which all its member States had subscribed. By a European Council decision⁸⁴ in 2017

⁸⁰ The European Union also continued to support the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism and its mission to strengthen global capacity to prevent, detect and respond to nuclear terrorism. The Union and its member States were actively involved in all areas of the Initiative's work: nuclear detection, nuclear forensics and response, as well as mitigation.

⁸¹ European Union, Council decision (CFSP) [2017/2284](#) of 11 December 2017, *Official Journal of the European Union*, L 32 (12 December 2017), pp. 32–37.

⁸² European Union, Council decision (CFSP) [2017/809](#) of 11 May 2017, *Official Journal of the European Union*, L 39 (12 May 2017), pp. 39–44.

⁸³ The Council decision was also intended to ensure synergies and complementarity, as well as to contribute to the practical implementation of specific recommendations of the 2009 comprehensive review on the status of the resolution's implementation ([S/2010/52](#)) and the outcome of the comprehensive review conducted in 2016 ([S/2016/1038](#)).

⁸⁴ European Union, Council decision (CFSP) [2017/2370](#) of 18 December 2017, *Official Journal of the European Union*, L 28 (19 December 2017), pp. 28–33.

to support the Code, and with support from the independent *Fondation pour la recherche stratégique*, the Union continued ensuring financial and political support for promoting the Code's universalization and full implementation. In the context of a temporary suspension of related in-person activities resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, the Union supported the following virtual outreach events: (a) "Rockets, Missiles, and Space: Lessons from the Hague Code of Conduct and Beyond", held with UNIDIR on 3 June; (b) an event entitled "The State of Ballistic Missile Proliferation Today", held with the *Fondation pour la recherche stratégique* on 29 October on the margins of the General Assembly First Committee session; (c) an expert mission to Viet Nam on 10 December; and (d) a regional seminar with China, Nepal and the Republic of Korea. Moreover, the Union supported the publication of several papers and short papers (i.e., issue briefs) related to ballistic-missile proliferation.

Additionally, the Council of the European Union adopted a decision⁸⁵ in June to provide €6 million in new assistance to help strengthen biosafety and security in Ukraine and several countries in Latin America, supporting the Secretary-General's Mechanism for Investigation of Alleged Use of Chemical and Biological Weapons. The project would also contribute to the universalization and full and effective implementation of the Biological Weapons Convention. As at the end of 2020, the Union had devoted nearly €10 million in financial support for core activities under the Convention, including efforts to promote national implementation, universalization and intersessional programmes, as well as regional and national awareness of the impact of science and technology on biosafety and biosecurity.

Since 2004, the European Union had provided €34.5 million for key activities of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) to promote universalization and verification, as well as international cooperation and assistance, within the framework of the Chemical Weapons Convention. The Union continued contributing to OPCW activities through the following Council decisions:

- Council decision [2019/538](#), to support the key OPCW activities from 2019 to 2022, including the establishment of the new Centre for Chemistry and Technology (€11.6 million)
- Council decision [2017/2303](#), to support the continued implementation of Security Council resolution [2118 \(2013\)](#) and OPCW Executive Council decision [EC-M-33/DEC.1](#) on the destruction of chemical weapons of the Syrian Arab Republic through the provision of satellite imagery (€1 million)

⁸⁵ European Union, Council decision (CFSP) [2020/732](#) of 2 June 2020, *Official Journal of the European Union*, L 172I (3 June 2020), pp. 5–14.

Activities related to conventional weapons

In the context of the European Union strategy entitled “Securing arms, protecting citizens”, the European Council adopted a decision⁸⁶ in July to support the development of an internationally recognized system for the validation of arms and ammunition management following open international standards.

In addition, the Union continued implementing the following Council decisions in 2020:

- Council decision [2019/1298](#), to support dialogue and cooperation between Africa, China and Europe on preventing the diversion of arms and ammunition in Africa
- Council decision [2019/2009](#), to support Ukraine’s efforts to combat illicit trafficking in weapons, ammunition and explosives, in cooperation with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
- Council decision [2019/2111](#), to support the disarmament and arms control activities of the South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons
- Council decision [2019/2191](#), to support a global reporting mechanism on illicit small arms and light weapons and other illicit conventional weapons and ammunition to reduce the risk of their illicit trade (“iTrace IV”)
- Council decision [2018/1788](#), to support the South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons for the implementation of the regional road map⁸⁷ on combating illicit arms trafficking in the Western Balkans
- Council decision [2018/2010](#), countering illicit proliferation and trafficking of small arms, light weapons and ammunition and their impact in Latin America and the Caribbean in the framework of the European Union Strategy entitled “Securing arms, protecting citizens”
- Council decision [2018/2011](#), to support gender-mainstreamed policies, programmes and actions in the fight against small arms trafficking and misuse, in line with the women, peace and security agenda
- Council decision [2018/1789](#), to support combating the illicit trade in and proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the member States of the League of Arab States

⁸⁶ European Union, Council decision (CFSP) [2020/979](#) of 7 July 2020, *Official Journal of the European Union*, L218 (8 July 2020), pp. 1–9.

⁸⁷ South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons, *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*, 2 September 2020.

- Council decision [2017/1428](#), to support the implementation of the Maputo Action Plan for the implementation 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) of 1997
- Council decision [2017/1424](#), to support activities of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe relating to the reduction of small arms, light weapons and conventional ammunition in North Macedonia and Georgia.

Meanwhile, in line with its long-standing support for the Arms Trade Treaty, the European Union continued through various political dialogues to promote the Treaty's universalization and effective implementation. The Union also provided technical assistance to countries in Latin America, Africa, Central and South-East Asia, and Eastern Europe, aiming to strengthen their national systems in line with the Treaty's requirements.

The Union also maintained its long-running support for the implementation of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and mine action. For more than two decades, European Union institutions and member States had been supporting mine clearance, stockpile destruction, assistance to victims, awareness-raising, advocacy and research and development for detecting and clearing mines for humanitarian and development purposes.

Other relevant activities or institutional developments

The European Union Non-Proliferation Consortium of think tanks continued receiving assistance provided in the framework of Council decision [2018/299](#), covering the period 2018–2021. The ninth European Union Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Conference took place on 12 and 13 November 2020 in an online setting.

North Atlantic Treaty Organization

In 2020, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Allies reaffirmed the importance of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control while continuing their efforts to preserve, strengthen and modernize conventional-arms control in the Euro-Atlantic region. NATO Allies collaborated to, inter alia, reinvigorate the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, modernize the Vienna Document 2011 on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures, and improve the utility and viability of the Treaty on Open Skies.

The Alliance redoubled its efforts to support the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in 2020. To mark the Treaty's fiftieth anniversary on 5 March, the NATO North Atlantic Council issued its first stand-alone [statement](#) on the agreement. Then, in December, the Council reaffirmed its view that the Treaty remained the only credible path to nuclear disarmament, whereas the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons did not reflect the increasingly challenging international

security environment and was at odds with the existing disarmament and non-proliferation architecture.⁸⁸

In November, NATO held its sixteenth annual Conference on Weapons of Mass Destruction Arms Control, Disarmament and Non-Proliferation. Hosted by Romania and held online, the Conference drew nearly 250 participants to identify new areas of work and discuss approaches to the tenth Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference.

Meanwhile, NATO continued supporting the implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty and the Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons. Specifically, it assisted States in developing capacities to combat the illicit trade in those weapons while also contributing towards establishing and strengthening relevant regional and cross-regional cooperation.

Furthermore, the Alliance maintained its previous support for national and regional efforts against such illicit proliferation. In that regard, it relied particularly on initiatives carried out within the frameworks of the NATO Trust Fund, the road map for controlling small arms and light weapons in the Western Balkans and the Mediterranean Dialogue, as well as on increased cooperation with partners in the Middle East and North Africa.

By the end of 2020, NATO and its partners had destroyed 626,000 small arms and light weapons, 46,750 tons of various ammunition, 5.65 million anti-personnel mines and 3,530 tons of chemical weapons. Meanwhile, despite the postponement of many activities owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Alliance successfully conducted numerous training courses—at the NATO School in Oberammergau, Germany—on small arms, arms control, and defence and non-proliferation activities targeting chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear threats.

Separately, NATO launched a new baseline assessment of actions by Allies to integrate [gender perspectives](#) into their work on disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. Undertaken in the context of the women, peace and security agenda and led by the Alliance's Special Representative for Women, Peace and Security, the new initiative was expected to be followed by a second analysis that would provide a basis for further work.

Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

Non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction

In 2020, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) continued to assist participating States in implementing Security Council resolution [1540 \(2004\)](#).

With funding from the European Union and the United States, OSCE finalized a series of [chemical safety and security projects](#) in Ukraine and launched

⁸⁸ NATO, [press release \(2020\) 131](#), 15 December 2020.

a new initiative to [strengthen biological safety and security](#) in the country. It also continued collaborating with the Office for Disarmament Affairs on implementing technical assistance and awareness-raising activities on resolution [1540 \(2004\)](#) within the OSCE region. Furthermore, in close cooperation with the 1540 Committee and its Group of Experts, OSCE began preparing its contribution to the [comprehensive review in 2021](#) of the resolution's implementation.

Small arms, light weapons and stockpiles of conventional ammunition

Regarding small arms and light weapons, OSCE participating States continued their efforts to (a) streamline and update regional norms, best practices and mechanisms for combating the proliferation of those arms, and (b) strengthen the safety and security of stockpiles of conventional ammunition. They addressed those efforts, in particular, at the second [biennial meeting](#) to assess the implementation of the relevant OSCE documents.⁸⁹ As a result, the participating States adopted an updated version of the OSCE *Best Practice Guide: Minimum Standards for National Procedures for the Deactivation of Small Arms and Light Weapons*.⁹⁰ In addition, the 57 participating States were expected to consider adopting updates made to OSCE best-practice guides on (a) national procedures for the destruction of small arms and light weapons; (b) national procedures for stockpile management, security and destruction of portable air-defence systems; and (c) procedures for managing stockpiles of conventional ammunition.

Meanwhile, the participating States continued exchanging information on small arms and light weapons to implement various commitments in that area, including those related to the Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons. To decrease the reporting burden for participating States and encourage a coordinated approach to information-sharing, OSCE reformatted its reporting template to more closely align with the 2020 United Nations reporting template on the Programme of Action. In parallel, OSCE and the Office for Disarmament Affairs continued to jointly promote a previously launched online tool for reporting such information to both organizations at once. Additionally, in preparation for the seventh Biennial Meeting of States to review the implementation of the Programme of Action, OSCE submitted its report for 2018 and 2019 on the implementation of the Programme of Action and its International Tracing Instrument.

In 2020, OSCE also assisted participating States in meeting their commitments to address various security and safety risks posed by small arms and light weapons and stockpiles of conventional ammunition within their respective territories. After mobilizing the necessary financial resources, it developed and implemented 19 targeted-assistance projects that involved, inter alia, destroying

⁸⁹ OSCE, “[OSCE Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons](#)” (document FSC.DOC/1/00/Rev.1), and “[OSCE Document on Stockpiles of Conventional Ammunition](#)” (document FSC.DOC/1/03/Rev.1).

⁹⁰ [FSC.DEL/250/17/Rev.4](#) (Vienna, OSCE, 2020).

surplus conventional ammunition, explosive material and detonating devices; disposing of rocket-fuel components; improving infrastructure and practices for physical security and stockpile management; clearing and disposing of explosive hazards; and combating illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects.

Activities related to general security and disarmament

In 2020, OSCE focused its Structured Dialogue process on military transparency, risk reduction and incident prevention.⁹¹ Owing to the pandemic, it held meetings for the process in a hybrid or virtual format.

Separately, to help increase women's participation in relevant policymaking, planning and implementation processes, OSCE and the Office for Disarmament Affairs jointly conducted their third nine-week training programme, called the Scholarship for Peace and Security, on arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation in the OSCE area. Intended to promote equal opportunities for young professionals and reduce the generation gap in that professional field, the programme had graduates from 48 participating States and eight Partners for Co-operation of OSCE in 2020. The programme also provided participants with numerous networking and post-training opportunities, facilitating women's career development and engagement.

Considering the COVID-19 pandemic, OSCE issued an appeal for all participating States to refrain from or postpone verification activities under the auspices of the Vienna Document 2011 whenever possible. As a result, most participating States suspended verification activities to help mitigate the spread of COVID-19. As it was temporarily not possible for the participating States to fulfil their obligations under agreed confidence- and security-building measures, all 57 participating States instead shared their experiences and lessons learned in tackling the pandemic, including those with bearing on the future implementation of arms control measures.

Despite limitations and restrictions resulting from the pandemic, OSCE participating States continued their military information exchange, sometimes solely by electronic means. The Organization also continued supporting the implementation of the Agreement on Sub-Regional Arms Control⁹² through assistance to its States parties.

⁹¹ Recognizing the need to reverse negative developments concerning conventional arms control and Europe's architecture of confidence- and security-building measures, OSCE established the "Structured Dialogue" process in 2016 to help foster understanding on security issues that could serve as a common basis for a way forward. Its launch followed the adoption that year of the OSCE declaration on the twentieth anniversary of the framework for arms control.

⁹² General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Dayton Agreement) (A/50/790-S/1995/999, attachment), article II, annex 1-B.

Other relevant activities or institutional developments

OSCE continued developing its Arms Control Information Management and Reporting System application, providing participating States with more comprehensive access to shared military information, as well as new analytical tools.

South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons*Activities related to conventional arms*

Despite challenges and limitations resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, the South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons⁹³ continued efforts to strengthen the capacities of national stakeholders to control and reduce the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in South-East Europe. Support from the European Union, Germany and the United States made its work possible.

In 2020, the Clearinghouse supported authorities in the Western Balkans in implementing the seven goals of their regional road map⁹⁴ for controlling small arms and light weapons. In that context, it coordinated and monitored the road map's implementation, acting on behalf of the European Union and in close cooperation with Germany and France. Its contributions in that area included organizing regular [local and regional meetings](#) for officials of the Western Balkans to coordinate and exchange information with international and regional organizations,⁹⁵ as well as key donors. The Clearinghouse also regularly [reported on progress](#) in the road map's implementation by authorities of the region and by international organizations. Distribution of resources took place through a dedicated [multi-partner trust fund](#) established by the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

The Clearinghouse's achievements in 2020 included the following:

- Increasing operational cooperation, information-sharing and knowledge transfer in the subregion through the [South East Europe Firearms Experts Network](#), a long-standing regional platform
- Strengthening police capacities to carry out analysis in investigations involving firearms, particularly by supporting the establishment of [firearms](#)

⁹³ The Clearinghouse is a joint initiative of the United Nations Development Programme and the Regional Cooperation Council.

⁹⁴ South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons, *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*.

⁹⁵ Participating entities included the European Union, NATO, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

[focal points](#) in South-East Europe and by holding a five-day workshop on [open-source intelligence](#)

- Enhancing South-East Europe law-enforcement capacities to [mark and trace firearms](#), specifically by installing marking machines and training personnel in their use
- Helping to harmonize legal frameworks to control small arms, light weapons and explosives in the Western Balkans with European Union law through tailored workshops, meetings and technical advice, as well as through a gap analysis carried out in several jurisdictions
- Enhancing evidence-based and data-driven policies on arms control through the [Armed Violence Monitoring Platform](#), a web-based platform collecting daily reports on firearms-related incidents from the region
- Increasing transparency in arms exports through the publication of a [twelfth regional report](#),⁹⁶ covering Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia
- Providing other regions with [knowledge](#) acquired in South-East Europe on mainstreaming gender in small-arms control, in cooperation with the United Nations regional centres for peace and disarmament in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Asia and the Pacific
- Providing [border police services](#) with standard operating procedures, equipment and training to counter illicit possession and trafficking of small arms and light weapons, in line with the findings of a needs assessment conducted in 2019
- Destroying 1,864 small arms, light weapons and related parts and components previously stockpiled in the region.

Activities related to peace, security and disarmament in general

In 2020, the Clearinghouse continued supporting cooperation for incorporating gender considerations into processes for security sector reform in the Western Balkans. The work, which was funded by Norway and Slovakia from 2019 to 2021, represented the second phase of the Clearinghouse’s [“Gender Equality in the Military”](#) project.⁹⁷

Using two unique platforms—the [Regional Meeting of Gender Equality Mechanisms](#) and the [Regional Network of Gender Military Trainers](#)—the Clearinghouse continued [supporting](#) the ministries of defence and armed forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia in advancing gender equality in their militaries while also implementing broader elements of the

⁹⁶ South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons, *Regional Report on Arms Exports in 2018* (Belgrade, 2020).

⁹⁷ The Clearinghouse completed the project’s initial phase from 2012 to 2016 in close cooperation with the ministries of defence and armed forces in the Western Balkans.

women, peace and security agenda. By supporting gender awareness, information-sharing and knowledge exchange on integrating gender considerations into defence policies and practices, the Clearinghouse aimed to contribute towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular Goal 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions and Goal 5 on gender equality.

The Clearinghouse also carried out several other activities related to gender. For example, it continued implementing a [gender coach programme](#) launched in 2019 with participation by high-level defence officials in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro. The Clearinghouse also supported the development of a [regional manual for combating gender-based discrimination, sexual harassment and abuse](#), as well as a [second regional study](#) entitled *The Position of Women in the Armed Forces in the Western Balkans*. Furthermore, the Clearinghouse assisted the ministries of defence in [Montenegro](#), [North Macedonia](#), and [Serbia](#) in small-scale projects on gender equality and combating gender-based discrimination.

Regional Arms Control Verification and Implementation Assistance Centre-Centre for Security Cooperation

In 2020, the Regional Arms Control Verification and Implementation Assistance Centre-Centre for Security Cooperation organized seven meetings and workshops, which 234 experts and participants attended.⁹⁸

Activities related to weapons of mass destruction

The Centre organized the events for its Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction Network⁹⁹ with continuous support from the United States European Command. That assistance facilitated the participation of experts from the Defense Threat Reduction Agency of the United States, the International Counterproliferation Program, the Proliferation Security Initiative and Croatia.

In February, the Centre conducted a three-day meeting entitled “Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction Strategies—Nuclear Material and Security”, seeking to further facilitate and review the development of related national strategies and action plans. At the event, 26 representatives of participating States joined 14 other experts to examine recent trends and emerging technologies posing possible

⁹⁸ The Centre was established in 2000 as a regionally owned entity with diplomatic status under the Vienna Convention of 1961. Since then, it has been promoting peace and stability in the South-East European region. Its programme is structured around four main areas: (a) cooperative security environment; (b) countering weapons of mass destruction; (c) countering transnational security threats; and (d) security sector governance. As at the end of 2020, there were nine members—Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Romania, Serbia and Turkey—as well as 14 associate members and 6 observers.

⁹⁹ The Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction Network was launched in 2015, in cooperation with the Defense Threat Reduction Agency of the United States, to facilitate the development of national weapons of mass destruction counter-proliferation strategies and response plans of the South-East European countries.

proliferation risks while also discussing various issues related to nuclear materials and security. The participants received access to a dedicated web portal designed to further enhance relevant regional cooperation and information-sharing.

Then, from 21 to 24 September, the Centre held a “strategic context” workshop focused specifically on the development of the following four projects, each created under the second phase of its Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction Network:

- “Development of a Regional Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction Risk Atlas”, led by North Macedonia
- “Creation of a Common Approach to Bio-Security and the Malicious Use of Life Sciences”, led by Romania
- “Creation of a Regional Dual-Use and Emerging Technologies Hub”, led by Croatia, Montenegro and Kosovo¹⁰⁰
- “Annual Trends Assessment Conference”, led by Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In the workshop’s first part, experts participated in open discussions, case studies and presentations, group activities and a table-top exercise. Its second part, called “Senior Leadership Day”, brought together senior officials from ministries of foreign affairs and defence of participating States to view presentations on the four proposed regional projects, as well as a plan of work. Afterwards, the officials expressed their full support and consent for proceeding with the second phase of the Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction Network, particularly through further development of the above-mentioned projects. The event brought together more than 50 participants.

The Centre also partnered with OPCW to hold the fifteenth annual Chemical Weapons Convention Workshop in Zagreb on 25 and 26 February, providing a broad overview of the agreement and its implementation procedures. Participants primarily focused on advanced approaches to addressing chemical safety and security management using scenario-based planning, specifically the elaboration of conclusions reached in 2019. In addition, participants from eight countries in South-East Europe joined a table-top exercise conducted within the workshop’s framework.

Activities related to conventional arms control

Owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Centre held only the theoretical component of its recurring Open Skies Treaty Aerial Observation Course. Supported by the Ministry of Defence of Hungary and by verification centres in Croatia, Germany and Hungary, as well as by the Permanent Mission of Germany to OSCE, the three-day online course was intended to help prepare

¹⁰⁰ References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999). Since October 2014, Kosovo has been invited to participate in all activities and meetings of the Centre permanently at all levels and on equal terms.

national authorities in South-East Europe to plan, organize and execute an aerial observation mission based on the Treaty's provisions, thus increasing their administrative capacity for security cooperation. Participants also addressed relevant aspects of practical planning. In addition, presenters discussed the Treaty on Open Skies within the wider context of arms control, providing several insights concerning the Treaty's fourth Review Conference, held in Vienna from 7 to 9 October. Thirty officials from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Slovenia and Turkey participated with support from nine specialists and experts.

As the only organization providing practical training to carry out verification inspections under the Dayton Agreement, the Centre convened an online conference on 9 December entitled "Conventional Arms Control in Europe with focus on Sub-Regional Arms Control Agreement". Participants considered, inter alia, the Agreement in the context of its relevance to South-East Europe, as well as implementation difficulties encountered during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Conference brought together 30 participants, including relevant government representatives, parliamentarians and arms control experts from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Germany, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey, as well as OSCE and the South-Eastern Europe Brigade.

Peace, security and disarmament-related activities

On 15 December, the Centre convened a seminar entitled "Current Physical Security and Stockpile Management Issues and Ammunition Management in a Nutshell". Its aims were to (a) brief participants about the field of physical security and stockpile management for small arms and light weapons, emphasizing its current status and expectations for the future, and (b) provide a short overview of ammunition management. The lecturers, which included experts from relevant international organizations¹⁰¹ and South-East Europe national authorities, discussed current issues, challenges for efficiently reducing stockpiles of small arms and light weapons, the status of ongoing projects, views from the field, risk management, and monitoring and evaluation of ammunition storage facilities. Participants also had the opportunity to discuss related developments in their respective countries, as well as national plans, needs and expectations. The event brought together 30 participants, military personnel and civilians involved in managing national stockpiles of small arms, light weapons or conventional ammunition in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Germany, North Macedonia, Slovenia and Turkey. Other attendees included representatives of

¹⁰¹ The participating organizations included the Ammunition Management Advisory Team of the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining, the Bundeswehr Verification Centre, the Golden West Humanitarian Foundation, the International Trust Fund Enhancing Human Security, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Small Arms Survey, the South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons and the Office for Disarmament Affairs.

the European Union Force in Bosnia and Herzegovina, OSCE, the South-Eastern Europe Brigade and the United States European Command.

Additionally, the Centre organized its tenth annual arms control symposium on “Current Issues in Arms Control and Nuclear Non-proliferation”, seeking to reveal new perspectives on military confidence-building measures in Europe. The objectives of the online event were the following: examine recent and future challenges in arms control, both in general and from a regional point of view; consider the role of non-proliferation and arms control in resolving outstanding security issues in Europe; and examine recent trends and developments in the area of nuclear non-proliferation. The symposium drew 30 national representatives, experts and scholars from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Germany, Italy, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Romania and Turkey,¹⁰² as well as OSCE, the Defense Threat Reduction Agency of the United States, Corvinus University of Budapest, the National University of Public Service in Budapest and the Benelux Arms Control Agency.

Middle East

League of Arab States

In 2020, the League of Arab States continued its work to coordinate and elaborate a unified regional and international position among its 22 member States on issues concerning disarmament and arms control. The COVID-19 pandemic, however, forced the League and its partners to limit or postpone several activities originally scheduled for 2020.

Activities addressing weapons of mass destruction

During the year, the League of Arab States convened two meetings of its Arab Senior Officials Committee in Charge of Nuclear Weapons and other issues related to weapons of mass destruction. Based on the Committee’s recommendations, the Council of the League of Arab States adopted resolution 8481 of 4 March and resolution 8549 of 9 September, both entitled “Establishing a Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and other Weapons of Mass Destruction in the Middle East”. The resolutions addressed, inter alia, preparations for the tenth Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference; planning for the second session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction; Arab coordination for the sixty-fourth IAEA General Conference; and the dangers of the nuclear reactor of the Islamic Republic of Iran at Bushehr. The League participated in the sixty-fourth IAEA General Conference and a webinar convened by UNIDIR in October, entitled “Lessons from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action for the Middle East Weapons of Mass Destruction-Free Zone and Regional Security”.

¹⁰² References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

Activities addressing conventional arms

In 2020, the League of Arab States and the European Union continued implementing a 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 technical support from INTERPOL, Small Arms Survey and the World Customs Organization. It also convened in February a subregional workshop in Abu Dhabi where West Asian member States could exchange information and best practices related to illicit small arms and light weapons.

United Nations Development Programme

In 2020, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) achieved further progress in its regional activities related to small arms and light weapons, despite the COVID-19 pandemic and political and security complications from presidential elections in three participating countries.

In West Africa, UNDP cooperated with ECOWAS to address challenges posed by small arms and light weapons in the subregion. Through a project funded by the European Union entitled “Organized Crime: West African Response to Trafficking”, UNDP and ECOWAS assisted nine States¹⁰³ in reducing illicit small-arms trafficking by focusing on the following: strengthening regional and cross-border cooperation; improving national- and community-level structures and capacities to control small arms and light weapons; reducing the availability and proliferation of those weapons, especially through border communities; and providing social services to facilitate the voluntary surrender of weapons.

The initiative’s achievements included (a) deepening social cohesion within communities through outreach to 5,000 residents in the nine participating States, especially women and youth; (b) establishing cross-border teams to carry out community-level arms collection; (c) co-leading two weapons and ammunition management assessments in Ghana and the Niger; and (d) providing technical support to the national small-arms commissions of six States,¹⁰⁴ strengthening their operational capacity to conduct regional planning and implement the ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and Other Related Materials.

UNDP also completed its first mapping study of interventions on small arms and light weapons within the ECOWAS area. Its findings—including critical evidence and country-specific information on actors, arms dynamics, interventions, successes, impacts and lessons learned—would feed into the [ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework Database](#) and its programmes on preventing violent extremism. The study’s results and data would also provide a

¹⁰³ Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria and Sierra Leone.

¹⁰⁴ Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Niger and Sierra Leone.

foundation for developing the first disaggregated database for ECOWAS policy and programming related to small arms and light weapons.

Through the same programme, UNDP supported ECOWAS to fight cross-border arms trafficking by decentralizing the control and management of small arms and light weapons in critical border areas. With that assistance, the countries established the first local offices for that purpose at locations¹⁰⁵ in Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea and the Niger.

Separately, UNDP coordinated an innovative awareness-raising campaign in Ghana to tackle electoral violence. Called “Ballots without Bullets”, the initiative involved mapping out conflict hot spots in the country and advocating for preventive measures through engagement with political actors, traditional leaders, women’s groups and youth. Following the intervention, almost no armed incidents were recorded at key hotspots during or after Ghana’s elections. As at the end of the year, several countries within ECOWAS and the Economic Community of Central African States were considering similar campaigns for their future elections.

UNDP also contributed to initiatives for community violence reduction providing development incentives in return for voluntary disarmament. Through such efforts, the Niger’s national commission on small arms and light weapons collected 85 illicit military-grade arms and 2,000 rounds of ammunition in the jurisdictions of Tillabery and Tahoua, storing them for destruction in line with international standards contained in the Modular Small-arms-control Implementation Compendium (MOSAIC). Similarly, in Sierra Leone, UNDP destroyed 72 light weapons and a cache of ammunition collected in the Falaba and Sulima chiefdoms.

Meanwhile, UNDP pushed to increase women’s participation and inclusion in all its planned activities, particularly considering the role of small arms and light weapons in many acts of gender-based violence. For example, it helped establish a new “armed violence observatory” to collect reliable data on domestic violence against women and girls, armed violence and inter-community violence. Furthermore, UNDP trained 20 women-led non-governmental organizations working on small arms and light weapons issues in Côte d'Ivoire, seeking to enhance their collective capacity to counter small-arms proliferation in border regions.

In Kosovo, UNDP continued its ongoing partnership with the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Kosovo Police under a regional road map¹⁰⁶ by equipping

¹⁰⁵ Ferkessédougou, Nielle and Zouan-Hounien in Côte d'Ivoire; Faranah (at Kissidougou) and N'Zérékoré (at Guéckédou, Macenta, N'Zérékoré, Lola, Beyla and Yomou) in Guinea; and Diffa, Tahoua and Tillabéri in the Niger.

¹⁰⁶ South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons, “Roadmap for a Sustainable Solution to the Illegal Possession, Misuse and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons”, 1 February 2018.

those entities with specialized database and analysis software.¹⁰⁷ Intended to help build individual and institutional capacities in response to the pandemic, the system was in use at local, regional and national levels of the country as at the end of 2020.

The Border Department of the Kosovo Police and the National Center for Border Management of the Ministry of Internal Affairs would use the system in tackling illicit arms trafficking or possession, specifically to conduct faster, more accurate research and risk analysis on illicit arms trafficking in border areas.¹⁰⁸ As for the Investigation Department of the Kosovo Police, the software could be used to more effectively analyse illicit arms trafficking, armed robberies and other criminal acts using open-source intelligence.

Separately, UNDP trained 105 police officers on special techniques for firearms investigations, control of small arms and light weapons, and cooperation within and between countries using firearms focal points and international law enforcement coordination units. It also provided 36 police analysts with specialized training on problem profiling, risk analysis,¹⁰⁹ open-source intelligence and data visualization.

In the area of cybersecurity, UNDP provided cybercrime investigators in the Kosovo Police with educational sessions on ethical computer hacking. It also organized a [virtual international conference on cybersecurity](#), bringing together international and local experts to share relevant knowledge and best practices.

Additionally, UNDP supported Kosovo's Regulatory Authority of Electronic and Postal Communications and the National Cyber Security Unit in bolstering their respective operational and incident-response capacities. As a result, the Unit received a new, specialized electronic platform to perform the following functions: collect, detect and analyse threats from third parties; pool information to help identify and characterize ongoing and emerging Internet threat behaviours; and generate incident reports for submission to stakeholders.

In a separate outcome of its collaboration with UNDP, the Kosovo Police finished the year in possession of five dogs trained and certified to detect unfired or polymer-based weapons while keeping potential evidence intact.

¹⁰⁷ In direct response to the pandemic, UNDP provided IBM Security i2 iBase and Analyst's Notebook—respectively, a database application and a tool for configuring, capturing, controlling, analysing and displaying complex information—to the Ministry of Internal Affairs (Inter-Institutional Crisis Management Group), including tools and digital solutions that allowed institutional partners to work remotely and safely.

¹⁰⁸ The software also enabled staff of the Ministry's Inter-Institutional Incident Management Group to work remotely during the pandemic.

¹⁰⁹ Based on the Common Integrated Risk Analysis Model, version 2.0.

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime continued, through its Global Firearms Programme, to promote the ratification and implementation of the Firearms Protocol to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. In 2020, the Programme provided normative and secretariat support to the Conference of the Parties to the Convention and its working group on firearms, as well as other subsidiary bodies. The Office also provided technical assistance to countries in Eastern and South-East Europe, Central Asia, Latin America, and West and Central Africa, contributing towards achieving target 16.4 of the Sustainable Development Goals.

The Office's legal and policy activities during the year included developing tailored legislative assessments and gap analyses. It also provided related support for, *inter alia*, Albania, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Honduras, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, North Macedonia, Serbia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. The Office gave similar assistance to the national commission on small arms and light weapons of the Central African Republic: preparing a thorough evaluation of its relevant legislation and international commitments, organizing expert workshops, and providing support in establishing a drafting committee. The country's National Assembly subsequently adopted a new law on controlling conventional arms, as well as their parts, components and ammunition.

In the context of growing concern over the role of illicit firearms in transnational organized crime and armed conflict, the Office continued assisting Member States in implementing preventive and security measures envisaged in the Firearms Protocol and other relevant instruments. In addition to procuring firearms-marking machines for countries in Africa and South America, the Office continued developing record-keeping software that would help States track firearms throughout their life cycle, in line with their commitments under the Firearms Protocol, the Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons and the International Tracing Instrument. To the same end, the Office organized a meeting of experts to discuss experiences and best practices related to firearms registries in different regions.

To strengthen national capacities to implement the Firearms Protocol, the Office continued training for detecting, investigating, prosecuting and adjudicating cases of firearms trafficking, reaching practitioners in 14 States.¹¹⁰

Furthermore, the Office partnered with INTERPOL in an operation called “[KAFO II](#)” to intercept illicit firearms, ammunition and explosives, and disrupt the trafficking networks used to supply terrorists across West Africa and the Sahel. In the operation, 260 front-line officers from Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali and

¹¹⁰ Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea, Mali, Niger, Paraguay, Senegal and Ukraine.

the Niger checked more than 12,000 individuals, vehicles, containers and goods against international criminal databases; arrested several suspected terrorists; and seized 50 firearms, 40,593 sticks of dynamite, 28 detonator cords and 6,162 rounds of ammunition.¹¹¹

In addition, the Office on Drugs and Crime joined the Office of Counter-Terrorism to launch a joint project on the connection between terrorism, organized crime and illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons in Central Asia. The project's aims were (a) to enhance criminal justice activities on preventing and combating such illicit trafficking, including to terrorist groups, and (b) to facilitate the implementation of, inter alia, the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, the Firearms Protocol and Security Council resolution 2370 (2017). In that context, both offices, with the support of the Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate, began preparations to conduct joint "deep dive" assessments of the legislative and regulatory frameworks of five Central Asian countries,¹¹² including their operational and technical capacity to address the arms-crime-terrorism nexus.

Meanwhile, the Office continued promoting regular exchanges among practitioners of firearms control and criminal justice. To that end, it organized an event on the margins of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, seeking to further adapt the activities of its [community of practitioners](#) to the needs and interests of members. The Office also launched the development of a dedicated peer-to-peer learning portal for the community of practitioners, scheduled for release in 2021.

In the context of its [initiative to monitor illicit arms flows](#), the Office launched its third campaign to collect data on seized and trafficked firearms and associated items, receiving responses from more than 50 countries and territories.

The Office also published its *Global Study on Firearms Trafficking 2020*, using data from its previous two collection cycles that included details on seizures in 81 countries.¹¹³ To help further disseminate the findings, the Office held a series of regional and subregional webinars in East, Southern, West and Central Africa; Latin America and the Caribbean; and Europe. Participants discussed illegal firearms trafficking, particularly how it occurred; how such trafficking was related to other types of crime; and how firearms entered the illicit market.

To link the data-collection exercise with concrete investigative efforts, the Office trained practitioners in Paraguay and Ukraine in the use of its guiding templates¹¹⁴ for firearms-related investigations. Furthermore, the Office

¹¹¹ Preparations for a similar operation planned in Latin America for 2021, called "Trigger VI", were under way as at the end of the year.

¹¹² Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

¹¹³ The study also benefited from data provided by the Office for Disarmament Affairs and the World Customs Organization.

¹¹⁴ *Guiding Templates for Firearms-related Investigations* (United Nations publication, 2020).

contributed data collected through its [illicit arms flows questionnaire](#) towards monitoring global progress under Sustainable Development Goal indicator 16.4.2, which reads: “Proportion of seized, found or surrendered arms whose illicit origin or context has been traced or established by a competent authority in line with international instruments”.



Chapter V

Emerging, cross-cutting and other issues

Participants at the event “Investment in Equality in Science, Technology and Innovation in the Era of Digitalization for Sustainable Development”, convened in New York on the occasion of the International Day of Women and Girls in Science on 11 February 2020.

UN Photo/Manuel Elías

CHAPTER V

Emerging, cross-cutting and other issues

Safeguarding the digital space is not only about international security. Digital technologies increasingly impact every aspect of our lives, and therefore making cyberspace more secure is also about safeguarding human rights, promoting safety, human security and sustainable development. The message of a secure and safer cyberspace in every aspect—and that is the benefit and responsibility of all—needs to continue to grow and reverberate.

IZUMI NAKAMITSU, HIGH REPRESENTATIVE FOR DISARMAMENT AFFAIRS¹

Developments and trends, 2020

IN 2020, DESPITE THE IMPACTS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC and the consequent postponement of many multilateral disarmament and arms control processes, the international community achieved progress on several emerging challenges related to developments in science and technology and their implications for international peace and security.

On the issue of outer space, the General Assembly embarked on the development of a new approach, initiated by the United Kingdom, aimed at gaining a better understanding of threats to space systems and seeking proposals to address those threats through norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviour. Meanwhile, however, the United Nations Disarmament Commission could not convene its substantive session for a second consecutive year owing to the pandemic. As a result, the Commission could not make progress in preparing recommendations for the practical implementation of transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities to prevent an arms race in space.

Work continued in two intergovernmental processes on information and communications technologies in the context of international security. The Open-ended Working Group established pursuant to General Assembly resolution [73/27](#) of 5 December 2018 held its second substantive session from 10 to 14 February 2020 in New York. The Group of Governmental Experts established by General Assembly resolution [73/266](#) of 22 December 2018 held its second substantive session from 24 to 28 February 2020 in Geneva. Owing to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, neither of the two groups could hold its third planned formal meeting. However, the Chair of each process convened informal virtual meetings in which delegations and experts could continue their discussions.

¹ [Remarks](#) to the Virtual Dialogue on Implementation of the Secretary-General's Roadmap for Digital Cooperation, New York, 15 June 2020.

Separately, the Group of Governmental Experts on Emerging Technologies in the Area of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems was able to make progress in its substantive work through meetings and consultations held in hybrid and virtual formats. The Chairs of the 2020 session were able to produce, respectively, a paper summarizing commonalities contained in national commentaries on the operationalization of the guiding principles at the national level, as well as a comprehensive Chair's summary of the Group's work and discussions during the year (for more information, see chap. III).

Regarding missiles, the international community continued to explore options for advancing new efforts to address concerns about the continued proliferation and use of ballistic missiles.

Emerging issues

Current developments in science and technology and their potential impact on international security and disarmament efforts

In 2020, the Office for Disarmament Affairs prepared the third report² of the Secretary-General on current developments in science and technology and their potential impact on international security and disarmament efforts.³ In preparing that third edition, the Office returned to the comprehensive format of the original and developed a [graphically enhanced version](#) to facilitate outreach. In the document, the Secretary-General addressed scientific and technological developments in the following areas: (a) artificial intelligence and autonomous systems; (b) digital technologies; (c) biology and chemistry; (d) aerospace technologies; (e) electromagnetic technologies; and (f) materials technologies. The report included an analysis of the broader implications of those developments for security and disarmament, as well as for efforts to limit the humanitarian consequences of armed conflict. The conclusions in the document were aimed, inter alia, at encouraging Member States to continue seeking ways to integrate reviews of developments in science and technology into their work, including through review processes of treaties and within the primary United Nations disarmament organs.⁴

Outer space

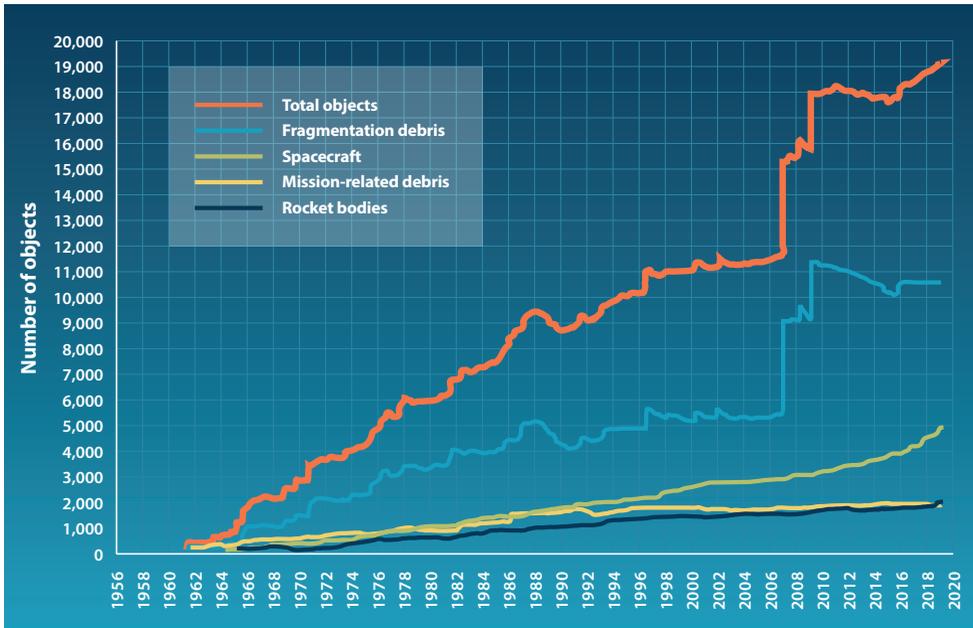
At the seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly First Committee, the United Kingdom introduced a new resolution entitled “Reducing space threats

² [A/75/221](#).

³ In his previous reports on the subject ([A/73/177](#) and [A/74/122](#)), the Secretary-General provided an overview of recent developments in science and technology of relevance to the means and methods of warfare. The second of those reports, issued in 2019, constituted an update to the initial report on developments in relevant intergovernmental forums.

⁴ Conference on Disarmament, First Committee of the General Assembly and United Nations Disarmament Commission.

Monthly number of objects in low Earth orbit



through norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours”.⁵ In introducing the resolution, the United Kingdom expressed hope that it would contribute to efforts to prevent an arms race in outer space. Moving that process forward, it said, would require Member States to find new ways of understanding, characterizing and regulating the threats in outer space in an open, inclusive and organic way. The country also expressed hope that that new approach would build a better understanding of existing threats in space and on Earth and enable a discussion of how threats to space systems could be addressed. It also acknowledged that that approach could contribute to further consideration of legally binding instruments in that area.

On 7 December, the General Assembly adopted the text as resolution [75/36](#) by a vote of 164 to 12, with 6 abstentions. In the resolution’s operative paragraphs, the Assembly encouraged Member States to do the following, inter alia: study threats and risks to space systems, including those arising from actions, activities or systems in outer space or on Earth; characterize what actions could be considered responsible, irresponsible or threatening and their potential impact on international security; and share ideas for the further development and implementation of norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours in outer space. By the same resolution, the General Assembly requested a substantive

⁵ [A/C.1/75/L.45](#).

report by the Secretary-General, based on views submitted by Member States, to be submitted to the Assembly's seventy-sixth session for further discussion by Member States.

The Assembly also acted on several recurring resolutions on outer space. In that regard, it adopted its resolution entitled "Prevention of an arms race in outer space" (75/35) by a vote of 185 to 2, with no abstentions, and its resolution entitled "No first placement of weapons in outer space" (75/37) by a vote of 132 to 34, with 21 abstentions. Additionally, by a vote of 152 to 3, with 30 abstentions, the Assembly decided to place on the agenda of its seventy-sixth session the item "Further practical measures for the prevention of an arms race in outer space", under which the [2018–2019 Group of Governmental Experts](#) was convened.

Developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security

Open-ended Working Group

During the term of Jürg Lauber (Switzerland) as Chair, the Open-ended Working Group on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security held its second session from 10 to 14 February, where the Group continued to consider the substantive issues contained in paragraph 5 of General Assembly resolution 73/27.⁶ By that resolution, the Assembly mandated the Working Group to do the following: (a) further develop the rules, norms and principles of responsible behaviour of States listed in paragraph 1 of the resolution, and the ways for their implementation, and, if necessary, to introduce changes to them or elaborate additional rules of behaviour; and (b) study the possibility of establishing regular institutional dialogue with broad participation under the auspices of the United Nations. Furthermore, to promote common understandings, the Group was mandated to continue to study the following: (a) existing and potential threats in the sphere of information security and possible cooperative measures to address them; (b) how international law applies to the use of information and communications technologies by States; (c) confidence-building measures; (d) capacity-building; and (e) the concepts referred to in paragraph 3 of the resolution.

To continue its work during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Group held four informal virtual meetings in 2020 on the following dates: 15, 17 and 19 June and 2 July; 29 September to 1 October; 17 to 19 November; and 1 to 3 December. In addition, the Open-ended Working Group process was the focus of an informal dialogue series convened from 4 to 10 December with stakeholders from civil society, academia, the private sector and the technical community.

⁶ For the documents of the Working Group, see Office for Disarmament Affairs, "[Open-ended Working Group](#)".

Group of Governmental Experts

During the term of Guilherme Patriota (Brazil) as Chair, the [Group of Governmental Experts on Advancing Responsible State Behaviour in Cyberspace in the Context of International Security](#) held its second formal session from 24 to 28 February in Geneva.

To promote common understandings and effective implementation, the Group continued to study possible cooperative measures to address existing and potential threats in the sphere of information security, including norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviour of States, confidence-building measures and capacity-building, as well as how international law applies to the use of information and communications technologies by States. Those activities were done in accordance with resolution [73/266](#).

To continue its work during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Group held virtual meetings from 31 August to 4 September, on 10 and 11 December and from 14 to 16 December.

Missiles, including developments in long-range conventional strike

After a delay caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, on 7 September, the International Institute for Strategic Studies held the second meeting of its Missile Dialogue Initiative,⁷ initiated in 2019 in partnership with Germany. Participants sought to address missile technology trends and their implications, proliferation of missile technology to State and non-State actors, regional security dynamics and action/reaction patterns relating to missile technology.

During her keynote address⁸ at the event, the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs outlined five possible independent pathways for modernizing approaches to missile controls: (a) sustaining progressive momentum towards the elimination of strategic delivery systems; (b) checking destabilizing new technologies, including through greater transparency on the nature of hypersonic glide vehicles; (c) greater transparency and the mainstreaming of norms to all weapons with the potential to harm civilians, such as surface-to-air missiles; (d) development of a common lexicon for missiles by a group of governmental experts; and (e) exploration of regional approaches to addressing missile concerns.

Armed uncrewed aerial vehicles

At the seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly, several States continued to call for new efforts to address concerns related to armed uncrewed aerial vehicles, including measures to increase transparency, accountability and oversight over their possession and use, as called for by the Secretary-General in

⁷ For the report of the second Missile Dialogue Initiative, see International Institute for Strategic Studies, "[Research Stream: Missile Dialogue Initiative](#)" (7–9 September 2020).

⁸ Izumi Nakamitsu, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, [keynote address](#) at the second meeting of the Missile Dialogue Initiative, 7 September 2020.

his Agenda for Disarmament. However, due in part to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, no new multilateral initiatives were pursued in 2020.

Cross-cutting issues

Relationship between disarmament and development

On 7 December, the General Assembly adopted its annual resolution entitled “Relationship between disarmament and development” (75/43). As in previous years, Indonesia tabled the text on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. While similar in content to previous versions, the resolution remained a crucial showcase for the linkage between disarmament and development, which was supported in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and further expounded upon by the Secretary-General in his Agenda for Disarmament.

By the resolution, the General Assembly recalled the importance of the “symbiotic relationship” between disarmament and development and noted with concern the continued rise of global military expenditure to the detriment of resources allocated to socioeconomic development. That concern was magnified by the COVID-19 pandemic, the reallocation of resources in response and the Secretary-General’s appeal for a global ceasefire. The Assembly also urged the international community to use resources that became available through disarmament and arms limitation agreements in the service of economic and social development.

In his report⁹ to the General Assembly submitted pursuant to the resolution’s previous iteration, the Secretary-General underlined the importance of redirecting resources from military purposes to development, as well as further strengthening the relationship between disarmament and development within the United Nations system. In highlighting relevant efforts to advance the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development—particularly Sustainable Development Goal 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions—the Secretary-General emphasized in particular the work of the Coordinating Action on Small Arms mechanism, an internal United Nations platform comprising 25 United Nations entities. Chaired by the Office for Disarmament Affairs, that mechanism had exchanged views and coordinated field actions in support of, notably, the implementation of activities under Sustainable Development Goal indicator 16.4.2,¹⁰ for which the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the Office for Disarmament Affairs were co-custodians.

⁹ The report of the Secretary-General (A/75/114), issued on 16 June 2020, contained replies by six Member States and the European Union to a note verbale, sent in January 2020 to all Member States, in which the Office for Disarmament Affairs called for the submission of information in accordance with General Assembly resolution 74/57.

¹⁰ Sustainable Development Goal indicator 16.4.2: “Proportion of seized, found or surrendered arms whose illicit origin or context has been traced or established by a competent authority in line with international instruments.”

The Secretary-General said that strengthening the strategic role of the Coordinating Action on Small Arms mechanism, as well as building cohesion among relevant country-level programmes, could help further integrate small-arms-control efforts into development processes, in line with decision 2020/28 of the Secretary-General's Executive Committee (for more information, see chap. III).

Terrorism and disarmament

The United Nations continued its wide-ranging support for counter-terrorism efforts around the world, focusing in particular on the areas of weapons of mass destruction, conventional arms and improvised explosive devices.

As part of its efforts to address potential terrorist threats involving weapons of mass destruction, the Office for Disarmament Affairs continued to maintain a roster of experts and laboratories provided by Member States in support of the Secretary-General's Mechanism for Investigation of Alleged Use of Chemical and Biological Weapons. Under the Mechanism, the Secretary-General could call upon the rostered experts to carry out fact-finding activities in response to reports that may be brought to his attention by any Member State concerning the alleged use of chemical and biological weapons, including by non-State actors (for more information on the Mechanism, see chap. II).

On 7 December, the General Assembly adopted, without a vote, new iterations of its resolutions on measures to prevent terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction (75/58) or radioactive sources (75/70). As in prior versions, the Assembly urged all Member States to take and strengthen national measures, as appropriate, to prevent terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction, their means of delivery and materials and technologies related to their manufacture. It also called upon Member States to support international efforts to prevent the acquisition and use by terrorists of radioactive sources and, if necessary, suppress such acts in accordance with their national legal authorities and legislation and consistent with international law.

Throughout the year, the Security Council and its subsidiary bodies continued their work to tackle terrorism threats. For example, the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004)—aimed at preventing the proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons to non-State actors—began its third five-year comprehensive review. In addition, the Security Council Committees established pursuant to resolutions and 1267 (1999), 1373 (2001), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) published a joint report¹¹ on actions taken by Member States to disrupt terrorist financing. Separately, by its resolution 2560 (2020), the Security Council further reaffirmed the need to combat, by all means, threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts. In that regard, the Council stressed the important role the United Nations played in leading and coordinating that effort.

¹¹ S/2020/493, annex.

Work of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact

Led by the Office of Counter-Terrorism, the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact (Counter-Terrorism Compact) remained at the centre of United Nations efforts to provide coherent and coordinated support to Member States in their implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy,¹² as well as other relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. In February, the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research became the latest signatory to the Counter-Terrorism Compact, joining 39 other United Nations entities, as well as the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the World Customs Organization.

Despite practical challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Counter-Terrorism Compact continued throughout the year to leverage the expertise of its 43 entities¹³ in supporting legislative, policy and operational measures to prevent and counter terrorism. Its eight inter-agency working groups held 62 meetings to strengthen information exchange, undertake joint planning and programming, and consider emerging threats and challenges. Those efforts were facilitated through the launch, in March, of the online [United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Platform](#). Developed by the Office of Counter-Terrorism, the Platform served as a password-protected virtual environment for information

¹² General Assembly resolution 60/288 of 8 September 2006.

¹³ 1267 Committee Monitoring Team; 1540 Committee Expert Group; Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization; 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; Department of Safety and Security; Executive Office of the Secretary-General Rule of Law Unit; International Civil Aviation Organization; International Labour Organization; International Maritime Organization; International Organization for Migration; Inter-Parliamentary Union; INTERPOL; Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs; Office for Disarmament Affairs; Office of Information and Communications Technology; Office of Legal Affairs; Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights; Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth; Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons; Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide; Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms while Countering Terrorism; Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict; Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict; Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children; United Nations Alliance of Civilizations; United Nations Children's Fund; United Nations Development Programme; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization; United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women; United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research; United Nations Institute for Training and Research; United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute; United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism; United Nations Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Africa; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime; United Nations System Staff College; World Customs Organization; and World Health Organization.

exchange, coordination and collaboration among Counter-Terrorism Compact entities, and engagement with Member States.

In the area of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control, the Working Group on Emerging Threats and Critical Infrastructure Protection¹⁴ provided a forum for participants to coordinate the activities of Counter-Terrorism Compact entities to support relevant work by Member States. That work included efforts to prevent and respond to the misuse of chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear materials, as well as enhance the protection of critical infrastructure, including infrastructure related to such materials.

In addition to regular coordination meetings, the working group held three thematic workshops,¹⁵ organized a webinar and produced a final report within the framework of a joint project entitled “Technology and Security: Enhancing Knowledge about Advances in Science and Technology to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction Terrorism”. Those activities were funded and co-implemented by the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre (part of the Office of Counter-Terrorism) and the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute.

The Working Group also facilitated a series of focused meetings, thematic discussions and briefings. The United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute led two of those events, entitled “The potential misuse of unmanned aerial systems by terrorist and criminal groups” and “Strategies to deploy unmanned aerial systems to prevent, detect, respond to and recover from weapons of mass destruction terrorist attacks”. The Office for Disarmament Affairs, for its part, held an informational briefing on Security Council resolution [1540 \(2004\)](#). In addition, INTERPOL and the World Customs Organization organized a webinar on the role of customs and other law enforcement in chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and explosive material security and their links with counter-terrorism efforts. Meanwhile, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime held an event on the international legal framework against biological terrorism.

Meanwhile, within the Working Group on Border Management and Law Enforcement relating to Counter-Terrorism, participants engaged in strategic and practical discussions on, inter alia, the illicit trafficking of weapons and the nexus between terrorism and transnational organized crime, as well as the use of explosives for terrorist purposes. In 2020, the Working Group achieved notable

¹⁴ The Working Group was chaired by INTERPOL. The Office for Disarmament Affairs, the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute and OPCW were its Vice-Chairs.

¹⁵ Three virtual expert workshops organized in the framework of the working group were dedicated to discussions on the use of new technologies to improve Member States’ capabilities to prevent, detect and respond to terrorist use of chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear weapons. The workshops focused on innovative technologies, including “Big Data Analytics”, blockchain, virtual reality, uncrewed aerial systems and biotechnology.

progress in implementing a joint project, with catalytic funding from the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre, on developing guidelines for Member States to facilitate the implementation of Security Council resolution 2370 (2017) and the relevant international standards and good practices on preventing terrorists from acquiring weapons. The effort was co-implemented by the Security Council's Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate, the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research and the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre.

Work of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism and its United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre

Through its multi-year programme entitled “Preventing and Responding to Weapons of Mass Destruction/Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Terrorism”, the Office of Counter-Terrorism organized a series of outreach and capacity-building activities in 2020, benefiting 1,000 officials from 100 Member States. Held at the global, regional and national levels, those activities included a webinar on COVID-19 and the risk of bioterrorism; an interactive discussion on pandemics and bioterrorism during the Office's virtual Counter-Terrorism Week; an international workshop on countering nuclear terrorism in South-East Asia; an expert meeting on the nexus between terrorism, arms and crime in Central Asia; and national training on countering biological and chemical terrorism in Iraq. The United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre implemented those events in partnership with the European Union and the United States, as well as the Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate, the Office for Disarmament Affairs, the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

The Centre also cooperated with two Counter-Terrorism Compact working groups¹⁶ on efforts aimed at tackling the misuse of science and technology for chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear terrorism, as well as preparing guidelines for Member States to help prevent terrorists from acquiring weapons.

In addition, the Centre partnered with INTERPOL to launch the first phase of a study of global threats from non-State actors, including their potential use of chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear or explosive materials. The study ultimately would comprise five phases, respectively covering the Middle East and North Africa; sub-Saharan Africa; South-East Asia; Western, Central and Southern Asia; and the Americas.

The United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre also continued its close cooperation with other United Nations entities, international organizations and initiatives. Within the United Nations system, its partners included the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004), the International Atomic Energy Agency, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization,

¹⁶ The Working Group on Emerging Threats and Critical Infrastructure Protection and the Working Group on Border Management and Law Enforcement relating to Counter-Terrorism.

the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), the United Nations Office of Legal Affairs, the World Customs Organization, the World Health Organization and the Biological Weapons Convention Implementation Support Unit housed within the Office for Disarmament Affairs. Furthermore, the Centre coordinated with multilateral political initiatives that included the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism, the Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction and the Nuclear Security Contact Group, as well as the Nuclear Threat Initiative, a non-governmental organization.

The United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre also produced four videos¹⁷ during the year on the threats of chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear terrorism. Focused on the theme “Keeping Weapons of Mass Destruction out of Reach”, those videos were watched more than 6,800 times in 2020, including by key stakeholders in Member States, regional and international organizations and civil society.

Work of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime on the prevention and suppression of chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear terrorism

In line with its mandate to promote adherence to and implementation of the international legal instruments against terrorism,¹⁸ the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime continued in 2020 to work on a three-year joint project—launched in 2019 with the European Union and the Office of Counter-Terrorism—to promote the universalization and effective implementation of the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism. The Office also continued, with support from Canada, to implement a project on promoting the universalization and effective implementation of that Convention and other nuclear-security legal instruments, including the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material and its Amendment of 2005.

Implementing those projects was a priority for the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime throughout the year. To that end, the Office convened two national workshops, the first in the Philippines in February and the second in Uganda in March. At the regional level, its activities included a workshop held in Barbados in February for member States of the Caribbean Community, as well as an online workshop held in November for English-speaking African countries not party to the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism. In addition, the Office organized an intergovernmental expert

¹⁷ United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, “Counter-Terrorism Centre EXPO” (Keeping Weapons of Mass Destruction Out of Reach): “[Radiological and Nuclear Threat—Illicit Trafficking](#)”, “[Biological Threat—Misuse of Biotechnology](#)”, “[Chemical Threat—Clandestine Laboratories](#)” and “[Countering Clandestine Labs in 360°](#)” (videos).

¹⁸ Those instruments include seven on chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear terrorism. The General Assembly most recently reiterated and reinforced the relevant mandate of the Office by its resolution [74/175](#), “Technical assistance provided by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime related to counterterrorism”, adopted on 18 December 2019 without a vote.

group meeting to discuss, develop and test scenarios and documents for use in a simulated criminal investigation and mock trial related to the Convention.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime also continued to provide technical assistance to Member States in 2020. For example, it reviewed the national legislation of one Member State in relation to the country's efforts to implement the International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings, as well as the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material and its Amendment.

The Office also launched a series of webinars on "Countering chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear terrorism: international legal approaches and criminal justice responses". Hosted on the Office's [Counter-Terrorism Learning Platform](#), the webinars were designed to help Member States strengthen their capacity to detect and respond to the threat of non-State actors acquiring chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear materials or weapons; familiarize participants with the main provisions of instruments in the international legal framework against terrorism involving such materials or weapons; and enhance the capacities of criminal justice officials and other relevant national stakeholders to investigate, prosecute and adjudicate relevant cases of terrorism. In 2020, the Office carried out 11 webinars in three United Nations official languages (English, French, Spanish). The e-learning module was made available in all six United Nations official languages, as well as Portuguese, and over 1,200 practitioners from over 90 countries had completed it by the end of the year.

In September 2020, amid mounting concerns about the potential use of biological agents by terrorist groups, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime developed and held an online event on the international legal framework against biological terrorism. The activity was intended to raise awareness about the existing international legal instruments relevant to the threat, as well as to explore and discuss related synergies and complementarities.

The Office also participated in several external events during the year. In February, it joined the International Atomic Energy Agency's International Conference on Nuclear Security and delivered a presentation at the Agency's "High Level Panel 3: International Legally and Non-legally Binding Instruments for Nuclear Security". In addition, the Office held an event on the margins of the conference entitled "The contribution of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime to the prevention of nuclear terrorism", co-hosted by Canada and the European Union. Furthermore, it took part in a panel discussion on "Radiological Source Security", co-hosted by Finland and the Henry L. Stimson Center.

Meanwhile, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime undertook several additional efforts as part of its work to counter threats from chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear terrorism. In that regard, the Office contributed to the "Rogue Tango" exercises of the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism, carried out in March by the Initiative's working groups on nuclear forensics and

on response and mitigation. The Office also briefed OPCW on its work to counter chemical terrorism, highlighting opportunities for potential collaboration. Then, in November, it participated in a joint meeting of the Nuclear Safety and Security Group and the working group on nuclear and radiological security of the Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction. During the discussions, the Office informed participants about its efforts to promote the universalization and effective implementation of international legal instruments against nuclear terrorism.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime also cooperated regularly with, inter alia, the Office for Disarmament Affairs, the Office of Counter-Terrorism, the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution [1540 \(2004\)](#) and its Group of Experts, the International Atomic Energy Agency, the Nuclear Security Contact Group and the Nuclear Threat Initiative. The Office invited such entities to its relevant event, while also contributing expertise to several of their activities.

Contribution of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons to global counter-terrorism efforts

Within the framework of the Chemical Weapons Convention, the OPCW Executive Council's Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism remained the primary forum for States parties to discuss how OPCW could advance its contribution to global counter-terrorism.

In 2020, the Working Group convened two meetings where participants discussed cooperating with other international organizations active in countering chemical terrorism. At the first of those meetings, held on 9 March, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime highlighted work by its Terrorism Prevention Branch to support Member States in implementing international legal instruments against chemical terrorism. In remarks to the meeting, the Office said that that effort complemented OPCW activities in support of the Chemical Weapons Convention. At the second meeting, held online on 2 October, the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism briefed participants on its support for Member States in countering chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear terrorism, as well as its related cooperation with OPCW.¹⁹

Meanwhile, the OPCW Technical Secretariat continued to lead a project on ensuring effective inter-agency interoperability and coordinated communication in case of chemical and/or biological attacks. The project was jointly developed with the Biological Weapons Convention Implementation Support Unit, INTERPOL, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute, and the World Health Organization. Furthermore, OPCW served as Vice-Chair of the Counter-Terrorism

¹⁹ A third meeting of the Working Group, originally planned for July 2020, was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Compact's Working Group on Emerging Threats and Critical Infrastructure Protection, chaired by INTERPOL. The United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute and the Office for Disarmament Affairs also served as Vice-Chairs of the Working Group.

Promotion of multilateralism in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation

In its resolution [75/47](#) of 7 December, the General Assembly called upon all Member States to renew and fulfil their individual and collective commitments to multilateral cooperation as an important means of pursuing and achieving their common objectives in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation. In addition, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to seek the views of Member States on the issue of promoting multilateralism in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation and to submit a report on the matter to the Assembly at its seventy-sixth session. Pursuant to resolution [74/55](#) of 12 December 2019, the Secretary-General submitted to the Assembly at its seventy-fifth session his report²⁰ on the subject, with replies from nine Governments.

Observance of environmental norms in the drafting and implementation of agreements on disarmament and arms control

Emphasizing the importance of observing environmental norms in preparing and implementing disarmament and arms limitation agreements and mindful of the detrimental environmental effects of the use of nuclear weapons, the General Assembly adopted without a vote resolution [75/53](#) on 7 December. In the resolution, the Assembly called upon States to pursue unilateral, bilateral and multilateral measures to ensure the application of scientific and technological progress in international security, disarmament and other related spheres without detriment to the environment or to attaining sustainable development. The Assembly also invited Member States to communicate to the Secretary-General the measures they had adopted to promote objectives envisaged in its language, requesting that he submit a report containing that information to the General Assembly at its seventy-sixth session. For the seventy-fifth session, the Secretary-General included replies received from six Governments in his report²¹ submitted to the General Assembly pursuant to resolution [74/52](#) of 12 December 2019.

Implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004)

Status of implementation

On 28 December 2020, the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution [1540 \(2004\)](#) (1540 Committee) submitted to the Security Council its

²⁰ [A/75/116](#).

²¹ [A/75/94](#).

annual review²² of the implementation of the resolution. The Committee, chaired by Dian Triansyah Djani (Indonesia), reported on all aspects of its work throughout 2020 to facilitate and monitor the national-level implementation of resolution [1540 \(2004\)](#). That work was facilitated by the Committee's four working groups, dealing respectively with monitoring and national implementation, assistance, cooperation with international organizations, and transparency and media outreach. The Office for Disarmament Affairs provided administrative and substantive support.

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in the cancellation or postponement of various events planned by the Committee—as well as by States, international and regional organizations and civil society—related either to the implementation of resolution [1540 \(2004\)](#) or to the next comprehensive review of its implementation.

To mitigate the pandemic's risks, the 1540 Committee took several precautionary measures, such as conducting business through virtual meetings. In that context, the Committee held three formal and three informal sessions during the year.

National implementation

In 2020, the Committee finalized an update and systematic review of all country-specific matrices containing details on each Member State's implementation of resolution [1540 \(2004\)](#). The aim was to prepare that information for the third comprehensive review of the resolution's implementation. Such reviews are mandated by resolution [1977 \(2011\)](#) to take place every five years, and the next one was due to be completed by 25 April 2021, when the Committee's mandate was scheduled to expire.

As part of an ongoing effort to achieve universal reporting on national implementation of resolution [1540 \(2004\)](#), in line both with that measure and with resolution [2325 \(2016\)](#),²³ the Committee continued to actively encourage States that had not yet submitted such a report to do so without delay. As at 31 December, 184 of the 193 Member States had submitted their first report.

Governments also continued to provide the Committee with other details on their implementation of resolution [1540 \(2004\)](#), as the Security Council had encouraged by resolution [2325 \(2016\)](#). For example, 36 States²⁴ submitted additional information in 2020 on their implementation of resolution [1540](#)

²² [S/2020/1308](#), annex.

²³ By its resolution [2325 \(2016\)](#), the Security Council called upon all States that had not yet done so to submit the first report to the 1540 Committee without delay.

²⁴ Algeria, Argentina, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Canada, Colombia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Honduras, Hungary, India, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Netherlands, New Zealand, Niger, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Russian Federation, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Turkey, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United States, Viet Nam and Zambia.

(2004), including through their laws, regulations and effective practices. Along similar lines, Colombia and the Dominican Republic each submitted their second voluntary national implementation action plans to the Committee; as at the end of the year, 35 States had submitted such plans since 2007.²⁵

Owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, however, the 1540 Committee could not undertake visits to States in 2020.²⁶ In the absence of official trips, the Committee organized informal virtual consultations with 24 Member States to discuss and clarify additional relevant information they had provided, as well as to discuss one assistance request. The participating States could clarify implementation-related details they had provided to the Committee, as well as engage in discussions to further enhance their understanding of obligations under resolution 1540 (2004).

Also in 2020, 42 States named or provided updates on their points of contact for resolution 1540 (2004). By the end of the year, 127 Member States had designated points of contact, up from 119 the previous year.²⁷ Although the Committee had aimed in its nineteenth programme of work²⁸ to strengthen the capacity of those points of contact to assist in implementing the resolution, no training courses could be held for them in 2020 owing to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In its programme of work, the Committee also recognized the need to promote peer reviews and other means of sharing experience, as such knowledge exchange could help States to evaluate and reinforce effective practices and lessons learned on implementation. In 2020, the Committee received reports on the outcome of two peer reviews organized the previous year by the Dominican Republic and Panama and by Paraguay and Uruguay, respectively. As at the end of 2020, five such peer reviews had taken place globally.

Assistance

In 2020, States submitted five new requests for assistance²⁹ to the Committee. In carrying forward its clearing-house function, the Committee continued to post on its website summaries of requests for assistance from Member States, as well as offers of assistance from Member States; international, regional and subregional organizations; and other entities. The Committee relayed those responses to the States concerned.

²⁵ In its resolution 2325 (2016), the Security Council, *inter alia*, (a) encouraged States to provide additional information on their implementation of resolution 1540 (2004), including through their laws, regulations and effective practices; and (b) encouraged States to voluntarily develop national implementation action plans mapping out their priorities and plans for implementing the key provisions of resolution 1540 (2004).

²⁶ By resolution 2325 (2016), the Security Council recognized the importance of the Committee continuing to engage actively in dialogue with States on their implementation of resolution 1540 (2004), including through visits to States at their invitation.

²⁷ By resolution 2325 (2016), the Council also encouraged States to inform the Committee of their points of contact for resolution 1540 (2004).

²⁸ S/2020/120, annex.

²⁹ Chile, Colombia and Zambia, and two from Mongolia.

Cooperation with international, regional and subregional organizations

In 2020, the 1540 Committee continued to enhance its collaboration with relevant international, regional and subregional organizations, as well as other relevant United Nations bodies. In that regard, the Committee collaborated with and participated in relevant meetings of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum, the Organization of American States, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Caribbean Community, the International Atomic Energy Agency, OPCW, the Implementation Support Unit of the Biological Weapons Convention, INTERPOL, the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Office, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, and the Office for Disarmament Affairs.

In addition, the 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 that regard, the Committee participated in the joint briefing of the Security Council by those entities in November.

Transparency and outreach

In 2020, the Committee participated in 19 outreach events 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.

Regarding industry, the Committee participated in one event, hosted by Japan in February. There, industry representatives could learn about opportunities to work with the Committee and about their sector's obligations under national laws.

The 1540 Committee also continued to maintain its website, both as a tool to raise public awareness and as a key source of information and resources relating to resolution [1540 \(2004\)](#) for use by Member States, Committee members, civil society and industry. In 2020, the website experienced a 2 per cent increase in page views from the previous year.



COACHING PROGRAMME

Gender and Small Arms



Chapter VI

Gender and disarmament

Office for Disarmament Affairs staff complete, in April 2020, the coaching programme on gender and small arms and light weapons, run by the Office's Conventional Arms Branch and the United Nations Development Programme's South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons.

CHAPTER VI

Gender and disarmament

A new approach to disarmament should recognize and address the gendered impact of different weapon types and systems and the impact certain weapons have on the prevalence of gender-based violence. It should underscore that ensuring the equal, full and effective participation of women in all decision-making processes related to disarmament is essential for the promotion and attainment of sustainable peace and security.

IZUMI NAKAMITSU, UNITED NATIONS HIGH REPRESENTATIVE FOR DISARMAMENT AFFAIRS¹

Developments and trends, 2020

IN 2020, THE WORLD MARKED MAJOR ANNIVERSARIES for three key contributions to gender equality and women's participation in disarmament: 20 years since the adoption of Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) on women, peace and security; 10 years since the General Assembly adopted resolution [65/69](#) on women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control; and 25 years since the adoption of the [Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action](#),² following the fourth World Conference on Women.

However, public health restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic limited the opportunities to discuss linkages between gender equality and disarmament. Meanwhile, as Governments around the world imposed stay-at-home orders in response to the pandemic, the Secretary-General called for action to address a “horrifying global surge in domestic violence” directed towards women and girls, underscoring the urgency of efforts to utilize arms control as a means of reducing gender-based violence.

In that context, the international community sought to continue promoting women's leadership and full and effective participation in disarmament processes, including virtual meetings. It also endeavoured to strengthen analysis and approaches aimed at advancing the role of gender-responsive disarmament in pursuing sustainable peace and security for all.

¹ [Remarks](#) at the lecture with the theme “Securing our Common Future: Why disarmament matters today as much as ever” at the University of Ottawa, 19 February 2020.

² The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action on the empowerment of women is the outcome document of the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in September 1995.

The Office for Disarmament Affairs continued throughout the year to integrate gender considerations into all its activities,³ while also undertaking targeted initiatives to help Member States integrate gender perspectives and elements of the women, peace and security agenda into their disarmament and arms control activities. In that regard, the Office achieved further progress in its flagship project on gender and small arms and light weapons. In addition, it continued to promote and monitor progress towards the equal, full and effective participation of women in disarmament forums, a prerequisite to tackling new global challenges and to fully exploring how gender intersects with other identities that risk leading to exclusion in the field of disarmament. The Office also undertook a study on disability, disarmament and arms control, laying the groundwork for an internal action plan on disability inclusion.

The United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) took a lead role in raising awareness and pursuing policy-relevant research about the gender dimensions of disarmament, including impacts of weapons use that differ by gender, as well as the enduring gender imbalance in multilateral disarmament forums. Through its dedicated gender and disarmament programme, established in 2018 to help diplomats apply a gender lens to their work on disarmament, UNIDIR produced research and proposed practical ideas to further incorporate gender considerations in specific processes for arms control, building on existing expertise in the disarmament field. In 2020, the Institute's work under the programme included briefings on gender for attendees of important disarmament-related meetings, including a regional workshop in Uganda, tailored to national practitioners from African countries. In addition, UNIDIR produced resources on key topics in arms control and disarmament, while also continuing to regularly update its [gender and disarmament online resource hub](#).⁴ In 2020, the online hub attracted 1,634 views per month on average.

Additionally, the Geneva-based International Gender Champions [Disarmament Impact Group](#)⁵ continued to promote gender perspectives in disarmament. Working with UNIDIR, the Group launched an updated version of the [Gender and Disarmament Resource Pack for Multilateral Practitioners](#), a publication covering the relevance of gender perspectives to arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament, as well as practical ideas for diplomats to

³ In 2020, 70 per cent of the 36 reported meetings, workshops, panel discussions, training sessions, presentations, publications and projects organized or co-organized by the Office for Disarmament Affairs integrated a gender perspective to some degree, including 11 in which gender equality was the main theme or principal objective.

⁴ Launched in 2019, the gender and disarmament online hub contains practical suggestions for making multilateral meetings more gender-inclusive, as well as a compilation of relevant resources.

⁵ The International Gender Champions Disarmament Impact Group seeks to promote dialogue, shared knowledge and the pursuit of concrete opportunities to advance gender-responsive action within disarmament processes. The Group is co-chaired by the Director of UNIDIR and the Permanent Representatives of Ireland, Namibia and the Philippines to the United Nations at Geneva.

apply a gender lens to their work. (For more information on the UNIDIR gender and disarmament programme, see chap. VIII.)

General Assembly First Committee

Gender perspectives and women's participation were each raised as subjects at the seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly First Committee and its general debate, where references to one or both themes appeared in statements by 29 Member States and regional groups.

On 7 December, the General Assembly adopted its seventh resolution on women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control (75/48), sponsored by Trinidad and Tobago.⁶ For the first time, the Assembly used the resolution to (a) recognize, *inter alia*, women not just as victims, but as active and key players in advocating for arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation; (b) acknowledge the negative impact of COVID-19 on gender equality and gender-based violence; and (c) reference the [Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action](#). Furthermore, the General Assembly referenced the commitments of the Secretary-General, in his Agenda for Disarmament, to supporting the equal, full and effective participation of women.⁷ It also highlighted mentoring and networking as means to empower women.⁸

In 2020, the General Assembly adopted 17 other First Committee resolutions with gender language, consistent with the two previous years.⁹ The First Committee introduced new language on gender equality in one resolution (75/36), recognizing the importance of the full involvement and equal participation of women and men in discussions on reducing space threats and the need to assess the possible differentiated impacts of space threats. Meanwhile, the Office for Disarmament Affairs coordinated with the International Gender Champions

⁶ The year 2020 marked the tenth anniversary of the first such resolution (65/69), by which the Assembly recognized women's valuable contribution in promoting disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control, and encouraged the promotion of equitable representation of women in all decision-making.

⁷ In operative paragraph 6, the General Assembly took note of Action 36, on the full and equal participation of women in decision-making processes, and Action 37, on gender parity in disarmament bodies established by the United Nations Secretariat.

⁸ Pursuant to resolution 73/46 of 5 December 2018, the Secretary-General submitted to the Assembly at its seventy-fifth session his report on the subject (A/75/133), with replies from seven Governments and three international organizations, as well as the Office for Disarmament Affairs and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

⁹ The total excludes resolution 65/69. When the resolution was adopted in 2010, only three other First Committee resolutions referred to gender or women—the resolutions on the United Nations disarmament fellowship, training and advisory services; the implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction; and regional confidence-building measures: activities of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa.

Ten years of resolutions on women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control

The year 2020 marked the tenth anniversary of the General Assembly resolution on “Women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control” (65/69), sponsored by Trinidad and Tobago. In December 2020, the Assembly adopted the seventh resolution on this subject (75/48). In the resolution, the Assembly encouraged the promotion of women in decision-making, reaffirmed the full and effective participation of women in disarmament as an essential factor for sustainable peace and security, and called for the empowerment of women, including through capacity-building efforts. It links this area with several other frameworks, including Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security; the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action; the Arms Trade Treaty; the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; and the Secretary General’s Agenda for Disarmament. In celebration of the resolution’s anniversary, the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean launched in December 2020 the fourth edition of its *Forces of Change* publication, featuring more than 80 women in disarmament in Latin America and the Caribbean.

65/69

- Equitable representation of women in decision-making processes on disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control
- Effective participation of women in organizations in the field of disarmament

67/48

- Equal opportunities in decision-making processes on disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control, particularly the prevention and reduction of armed violence and armed conflict
- Link to the women, peace and security agenda
- Women’s empowerment through training
- Promotion of the role of women in preventing, combating and eliminating the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons

68/33

69/61

- Link to the Arms Trade Treaty
- Understanding the effects of armed violence, particularly those of the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons on women and girls by strengthening the collection of disaggregated data
- Formulation of national risk assessment criteria to prevent the use of arms to commit acts of violence against women and children

71/56

- Link to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
- Understanding the effects of armed violence and the illicit trafficking of arms on women and girls by developing national action plans on women, peace and security
- Funding for programmes and policies that consider the different effects of the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons on women, men, girls and boys

73/46

- Recognizing the role of civil society

75/48

- Link to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action
- Link to the Secretary-General’s Disarmament Agenda and Actions 36 and 37 of the Agenda
- Link to resolution 74/64 on youth and the reaffirmation of the contribution of young people
- Mention of the negative impact of COVID-19 on gender equality and gender-based violence
- Mentoring and networking highlighted as a means to empower women
- Importance of seeing women as active players, rather than only as victims

2010

2012

2013

2014

2016

2018

2020

Source: United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, *Forces of Change* (United Nations publication, 2020).

Disarmament Impact Group in Geneva to produce internal guidance to support consistent and meaningful gender language in First Committee resolutions.

Conference on Disarmament

The topic of gender equality also was discussed in the Conference on Disarmament, during its second presidency¹⁰ of 2020. On 10 March, the forum's first formal plenary meeting¹¹ on integrating gender perspectives into disarmament was convened. On that occasion, the Conference heard remarks from the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, Tatiana Valovaya, who emphasized that women's equal, full and effective participation in all disarmament-related decisions was essential for promoting and attaining sustainable peace and security. Renata Hessmann Dalaqua, the UNIDIR programme lead on women's participation and gender equality in arms control and disarmament, delivered a presentation¹² to the Conference. In addition, States members shared experiences and lessons learned in implementing their respective national action plans on women, peace and security; discussed progress in considering the gendered impact of weapons, particularly conventional arms; and called for gender balance and greater diversity in disarmament forums.

During its presidency in September, Australia proposed a technical update¹³ to the Conference's rules of procedure to render them gender-neutral. However, the proposal to replace male pronouns and possessive adjectives was ultimately not presented for adoption.

Women's equal participation in disarmament and arms control

Women's leadership and participation in multilateral disarmament forums remained low in 2020.¹⁴ In the General Assembly First Committee, 35 per cent of heads of delegation were women, up from 32 per cent in 2019. Only 24 per cent of statements by Member States were delivered by women, down from 25 per cent in the previous year.¹⁵ In her [opening statement](#) to the First Committee, the United Nations High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Izumi Nakamitsu, highlighted

¹⁰ The second President of the Conference on Disarmament for 2020 was Germán Edmundo Proffen (Argentina).

¹¹ [CD/PV.1539](#).

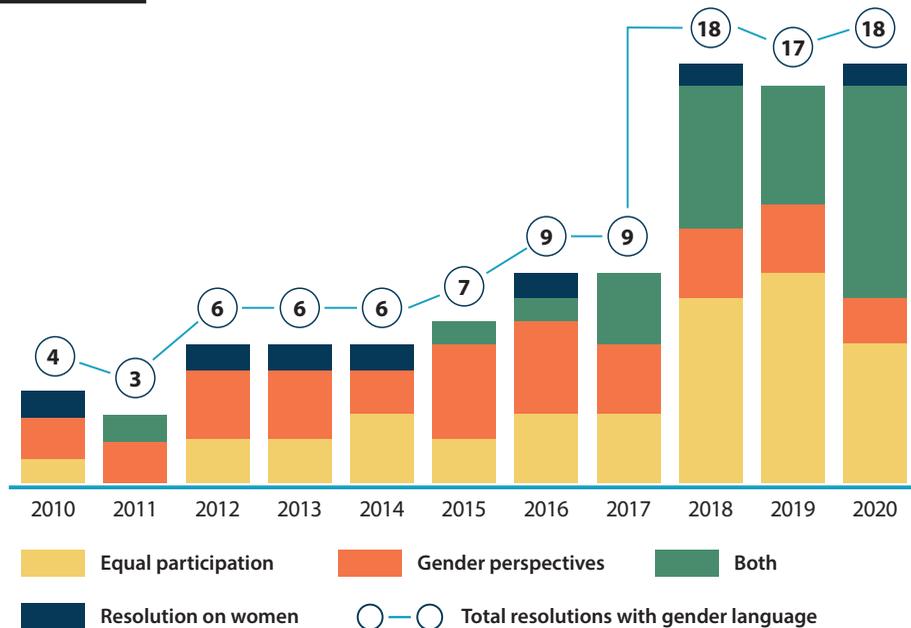
¹² See United Nations Office at Geneva, "[Conference on Disarmament Discusses Gender Equality and Participation of Women in Disarmament](#)", 10 March 2020.

¹³ [CD/2198](#).

¹⁴ Owing to the COVID-19 crisis, several planned disarmament meetings and conferences were postponed or took new forms.

¹⁵ According to the list of participants, 38 per cent of delegates were women, an increase in women's representation from 2019. However, because the Committee met in different formats in 2020 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the change did not reflect an actual increase in the number of delegates present.

Gender perspectives in General Assembly First Committee resolutions, 2010–2020



Resolution on women: The first women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control resolution (65/69) is adopted in 2010, followed by successors in 2012 (67/48), 2013 (68/33), 2014 (69/61), 2016 (71/56), 2018 (73/46) and 2020 (75/48)

Participation: Gender parity, women's participation, role or representation

Gender perspectives: Substantive gender aspects and mainstreaming, including the gendered impact of weapons and gender-based violence

Both: References to both of the above

The graph above excludes resolutions with secondary references to gender (e.g., Sustainable Development Goals and Arms Trade Treaty).

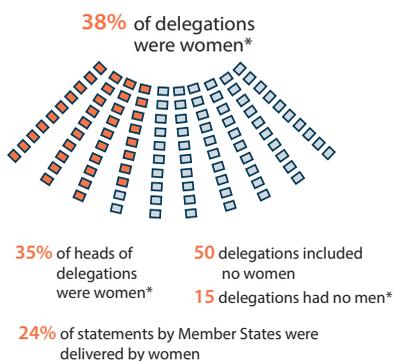
When the first resolution on women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control (65/69) was adopted in 2010, only three other First Committee resolutions referred to gender or women. In the subsequent years, gender perspectives were brought into an increasing number of other disarmament areas, with a notable leap in 2018 when the General Assembly adopted 18 First Committee resolutions that included mentions of gender perspectives or women's participation. In 2020, the total number of such resolutions remained at 18. The only new paragraph on gender equality that year was introduced in the new resolutions on reducing space threats, in which the importance of the full involvement and equal participation of women and men and the need to assess the differentiated impacts of such threats were recognized. During the year, the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs produced gender-mainstreaming guidance, including an information session for the Office's staff to support consistent and meaningful gender language in First Committee resolutions.

that women remained chronically under-represented in the disarmament field, not least in decision-making and leadership. To accelerate progress, she called for setting standards and ensuring accountability in reaching parity targets.

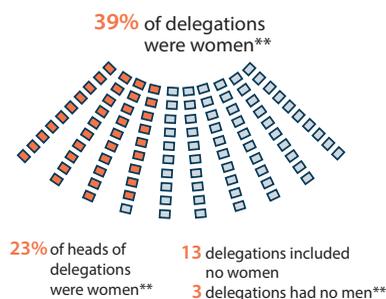
Elsewhere, including in the Conference on Disarmament, 15 of the 65 heads of delegation for States members were women (23 per cent). In the first part of the second Review Conference of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions, 32 of the 80 speakers were women (40 per cent).

Gender balance in multilateral disarmament forums

2020 General Assembly First Committee



2020 Conference on Disarmament



* Including one-person delegations. Owing to COVID-19, physical presence in the sessions was reduced.

Source: First Committee list of participants ([A/C.1/75/INF/2](#))

** Out of a total of 64 delegations.

Source: Conference on Disarmament list of participants ([CD/INF.79/Rev.2](#))

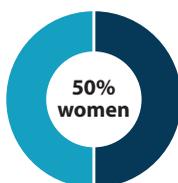
In 2020, women remained under-represented as leaders and participants in multilateral disarmament forums, despite calls by Member States, the United Nations and civil society for the equal, full and effective participation of women in all decision-making in disarmament. On International Women's Day on 8 March 2020, the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs suggested in a [podcast](#) that all Member States pledge to send gender-balanced delegations to multilateral disarmament meetings. In her [opening statement](#) at the seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly First Committee, she highlighted that women remained chronically underrepresented in decision-making and leadership and called for accelerating progress on the issue by setting standards and ensuring accountability in reaching parity targets.

In her capacity as an International Gender Champion, the High Representative remained committed to equal representation and meaningful participation of women and men in the activities of the Office for Disarmament Affairs, as well as in multilateral disarmament mechanisms. The aim was to systematically include gender criteria in decisions on the organization and composition of events, panels, groups of governmental experts and related mechanisms. Of the two disarmament-

related groups of governmental experts that held sessions in 2020, one achieved gender parity: the Group on problems arising from the accumulation of conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus. The second Group, on advancing responsible State behaviour in cyberspace, comprised 10 women and 15 men. The Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters also achieved gender parity in 2020 (for more information on the Advisory Board, see chap. VII).

Gender parity and women's empowerment in disarmament

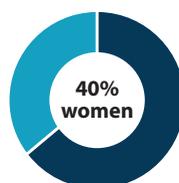
Group of Governmental Experts on ammunition



9 women and 9 men

Group of Governmental Experts on problems arising from the accumulation of conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus

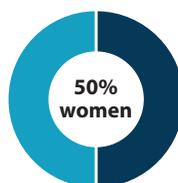
Group of Governmental Experts on cyberspace



10 women and 15 men

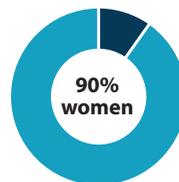
Group of Governmental Experts on advancing responsible State behaviour in cyberspace

Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters



8 women and 8 men

Scholarship for Peace and Security



137 women and 15 men

The Scholarship targets under-represented groups in the disarmament field

In his 2018 Agenda for Disarmament, the Secretary-General called for the full and equal participation of women in all decision-making processes related to disarmament and international security, and he committed to working to achieve gender parity in all panels, boards, expert groups and other bodies established under his auspices in the field of disarmament. In 2020, both the Group of Governmental Experts on problems arising from the accumulation of conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus and the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters achieved gender parity. A second Group of Governmental Experts, on advancing responsible State behaviour in cyberspace, had 40 per cent women experts. The Scholarship for Peace and Security targets women and under-represented groups to support a pipeline of disarmament leaders and experts.

Within the framework of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, High Contracting Parties made targeted efforts to integrate gender perspectives and encourage women's equal participation in their activities, despite added challenges from the COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁶ The 2020 Group of Experts on Amended Protocol II of the Convention achieved gender parity among panellists, with 11 men and 11 women participating.¹⁷

Furthermore, the Office for Disarmament Affairs and UNIDIR achieved parity in events that included a jointly organized [webinar](#) on military aspects of lethal autonomous weapons systems, held on 27 October. In another positive development, Member States developed the [Women and International Security in Cyberspace Fellowship](#), aimed at promoting women's participation in discussions at the United Nations on international security issues related to information and communications technology. Based on the findings of UNIDIR in its 2019 report entitled *Still Behind the Curve*,¹⁸ the programme provided sponsorships that helped 35 women diplomats in cybersecurity negotiations to participate in the meetings of the Open-ended Working Group on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security.¹⁹

The Office for Disarmament Affairs also continued working to empower and build the capacity of women in disarmament. They included administering the Scholarship for Peace and Security for a third year, in cooperation with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe and with support from the Governments of Andorra, Finland, Germany, Ireland and Switzerland. Through the Scholarship, 152 students and young professionals—90 per cent of them women—participated in a rigorous online training programme (for more information on the Scholarship for Peace and Security, see chap. VIII).

The Office's contributions extended to Latin America and the Caribbean, where the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean continued to promote women's involvement in disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control by setting targets for their participation in all its events. For the first time since its creation in 1986, the Centre surpassed its target for gender parity with women making up 55 per cent²⁰ of all participants in its events during the year.

¹⁶ Owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, most of the activities related to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons had to be carried out in a hybrid format, with only one in-person participant per delegation allowed in the conference room.

¹⁷ In 2019, High Contracting Parties referred in the Group's mandate to the importance of having balanced involvement by women and men in its efforts to address the threat from improvised explosive devices.

¹⁸ The publication's authors were Renata Hessmann Dalaqua, Kjølvs Egeland and Torbjørn Graff Hugo.

¹⁹ The Fellowship included a training session in February organized by the United Nations Institute for Training and Research and sponsored by Canada. The High Representative for Disarmament Affairs delivered [opening remarks](#) in which she called for inclusion and diversity within cyber policy and for properly addressing gender bias.

²⁰ Of 2,789 participants, 1,526 were women.

As the world marked 45 years since the entry into force of the Biological Weapons Convention, the Office for Disarmament Affairs used the occasion to highlight important work by women against the threat of biological weapons. In the framework of the European Union Council decision 2019/97 in support of the Convention, the Office produced a video²¹ on the experiences of three young women scientists who had participated in the first Biosecurity Diplomacy Workshop for Young Scientists from the Global South, held in 2019. In the video, the scientists explained how they were helping to reduce biological-weapon threats through their contributions to the fields of bioethics, biochemistry, science communication and molecular biology.

The Convention's Implementation Support Unit, based within the Office, also ensured that women made up almost half of all panellists in five webinars it organized to prepare for the Convention's Meetings of Experts.²² It also encouraged States parties to the Convention to nominate women to participate in a two-week virtual training course for Biological Weapons Convention national contact points in South-East Asia, co-organized with Japan, resulting in women comprising 90 per cent of the trainees. The Unit instructed them on the practical implementation of the Biological Weapons Convention, provided skills training and guidance related to the roles and responsibilities of national contact points, and connected them with a network of contact points for the Convention in South-East Asia.

To commemorate International Women's Day on 8 March, the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs released a video²³ on challenges and opportunities for women in the work of disarmament. In a separate podcast²⁴ on women's contributions to that work, she called for Member States to send gender-balanced delegations to multilateral disarmament meetings, as well as for Member States, civil society and the United Nations Secretariat to recommit to advancing gender parity. Throughout the year, the High Representative also participated in interviews²⁵ with international media on gender parity and the

²¹ Office for Disarmament Affairs, "UNOG BWC 5 women 01 04", United Nations Geneva, YouTube video.

²² The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in the postponement of the Meetings of Experts from their scheduled dates of 25 August to 3 September. For more information, see chap. II.

²³ Available from https://front.un-arm.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/USG-IZUMI-NAKAMITSU-International-Womens-Day-2020_v.3-3.mp4.

²⁴ Office for Disarmament Affairs, "A conversation with the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs on International Women's Day 2020", Disarmament Today podcast, 8 March 2020.

²⁵ "「最前線で」軍縮「を守る」市民の安全「と」世界の平和「」, *Elle Japan*, February 2020; "「いかに異常か気づいてほしい」中満泉・国連事務次長が海外から見た日本の現状", *Mainichi*, 26 February 2020; "Japan's 'career or family life' choice is abnormal: UN Under-Secretary-General", *Mainichi*, 2 March 2020; "Gender gaps deeply ingrained in Japan society: U.N. official", *Kyodo News*, 6 March 2020 (republished in the *Japan Times*, 6 March 2020, and *47 News*, 9 March 2020; and quoted in "Japan prefecture to stop hiring female 'tea squad' for meetings", *Guardian*, 6 March 2020); "危機対応で政治行政に問われるものは 国連 中満事務次長に聞く", *NHK*, 29 May 2020; "We are in danger of entering a new cold war", *New Zealand*

role of women in disarmament. In addition, she published a commentary²⁶ on the European Leadership Network website about how to close the gender gap. She discussed the role of women in disarmament at a webinar convened on 24 June by the Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament, the World Future Council and the Women Legislators' Lobby.²⁷

Gender and disarmament education

As part of its continued work to promote disarmament and non-proliferation education in line with the recommendations of the 2002 United Nations study on disarmament and non-proliferation education, the Office for Disarmament Affairs added a course on gender perspectives on disarmament to its publicly available [Disarmament Education Dashboard](#). The programme comprised two modules, one on gender perspectives on disarmament and the other on women, peace and security. The Dashboard was accessed by more than 5,000 users during the year, 65 per cent of whom identified as women.

Regional outreach and capacity-building on gender and disarmament

In 2020, the Office for Disarmament Affairs carried out several capacity-building and outreach initiatives at the regional level, aiming to foster gender equality and empower women in disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control, as well as related fields. Those initiatives included extensive work on gender and small arms control by the Office's three regional centres. (For more information on the Office's project on gender and small arms, see p. 220.)

In November, the Office carried out four remote round-table discussions to help build disarmament education capacity among educators from South and South-East Asia. Of the educators who participated, 13 were women and 12 were men. Participants at those events tackled issues that included gender gaps in the field of disarmament, as well as the gendered impacts of arms.

Meanwhile, the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific continued to collaborate with civil society within various regional and national frameworks aimed at raising awareness among academics and practitioners about how gender is linked with peace and disarmament. In October, the Centre contributed to a webinar series on peace and gender organized by the Prajnya Trust and Sansristi, two India-based civil society organizations seeking to empower women in the fields of peace and development while

International Review, 20 June 2020; and “[Interview with UN Under-Secretary General Izumi Nakamitsu, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs](#)”, *Seikyo Shimbun*, 20 October 2020.

²⁶ European Leadership Network, “[Women in disarmament: Q&A with High Representative Izumi Nakamitsu](#)”, 2 December 2020.

²⁷ “[United Nations 2020: Enhancing peace, disarmament & the role of women: A global webinar commemorating the 75th anniversary of the UN Charter](#)”, remarks at the webinar, New York, 24 June 2020.

fostering research and dialogue on gender-related issues. At the virtual event, university students and professors discussed the gendered aspects of armed conflict and security, the role of gender norms in influencing the professional field of disarmament and arms control, and ongoing efforts to address gender through initiatives to tackle weapons threats at the international and regional levels.

In December, the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean conducted a high-level [symposium](#) on women and disarmament for 141 participants. Held to commemorate the General Assembly's first resolution on women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control (65/69), the virtual event highlighted disarmament-related contributions, challenges and achievements by women in the region, while also providing different perspectives on efforts to strengthen women's participation. The Centre also used that discussion to virtually launch the fourth edition of its publication *Forces of Change*, featuring more than 80 women from the region involved in disarmament.

Additionally, the Regional Centre carried out a virtual conversation with young people and students to commemorate both the tenth anniversary of resolution 65/69 and the first anniversary of General Assembly resolution 74/64, on youth, disarmament and non-proliferation. The virtual conversation highlighted the contributions, challenges and achievements of Latin American and Caribbean women working in that area, providing inspiration to youth, particularly young women, who were interested in working in those areas.

To help further integrate gender considerations into work related to small arms, the Regional Centre also shared its regionally based experiences at an international conference held in February by the Gender Equality Network for Small Arms Control. During the discussion, participants considered how gender-responsive programming in small-arms control was linked with the women, peace and security agenda. By engaging with that international network of representatives from Governments, regional and subregional organizations, civil society and the United Nations system, the Centre contributed towards global awareness about how gender can be linked to armed violence within a particular region.

Furthermore, with a view to building capacity and engagement among disarmament stakeholders around the world, UNIDIR organized a regional workshop in Uganda through its gender and disarmament programme, bringing together national officials and experts from 15 African countries. The Institute presented the key takeaways, as well as recommendations, in its report *Gender Perspectives in Arms Control and Disarmament: Views from Africa*,²⁸ available in English and French.

²⁸ The publication's author was Christine Butegwa.

Connecting disarmament with the women, peace and security agenda

In his 2020 report²⁹ on women, peace and security, the Secretary-General welcomed efforts to raise awareness about disarmament as an area vital to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, realizing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and implementing the women, peace and security agenda. He called for sustained investment in gender analysis, expertise and research to actively incorporate gender perspectives in disarmament policies and programmes, including on the issues of nuclear non-proliferation and autonomous weapons.

To mark the twentieth anniversary of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs and the Chair of the United Nations Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters, Selma Ashipala-Musavyi (Namibia), stated in a joint opinion article³⁰ that putting gender equality at the core of all peace work was necessary to build a future that benefited everyone, in line with the women, peace and security agenda. The authors explained how fundamental gender inequalities and the wide availability of weapons were obstacles to achieving both gender justice and peace, and they outlined four concrete and actionable ways women and men could contribute towards building peace and security. Their article was widely published around the world, in eight languages.

In another effort to raise awareness about the linkages between disarmament and the women, peace and security agenda, the Office for Disarmament Affairs organized a virtual [webinar](#) at the 2020 Torino Forum for Sustaining Peace in September, engaging more than 65 people in interactive exercises and discussions about how to leverage disarmament approaches together with the agendas for women, peace and security and for youth, peace and security.³¹ Participants in the discussion also considered new opportunities for collaborative efforts between the different policy communities for those three areas.

At the end of 2020, 84 States had adopted a total of 143 national action plans on women, peace and security, 56 of which included themes related to disarmament or arms control (39 per cent). During the year, the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific participated in the second part of the consultation and validation of Nepal's second national action plan for women, peace and security, providing inputs related to disarmament.

Meanwhile, UNIDIR launched a research project to explore opportunities for integrating the women, peace and security agenda into arms control and disarmament processes. The Institute presented its research findings and recommendations in its report *Connecting the Dots*, available in English, French

²⁹ S/2020/946.

³⁰ “Women share immense stake in ending armed violence”, *Jakarta Post*, 3 November 2020.

³¹ For more information, see Youth4Peace, “UNSCR 2250: Introduction”.

and Spanish. The research included a proposal for an original approach to gender-responsive arms control and disarmament, structured around the agenda's four pillars of participation, prevention, protection, and relief and recovery. According to the findings, further integration could bring benefits to both fields, providing disarmament practitioners with new structure and guidance to fully integrate gender perspectives into their work while helping other policy actors and practitioners to better understand concrete aspects of operationalizing the women, peace and security agenda. Insights gathered in the course of the research were discussed in articles published by the *Strategist*³² and the European Leadership Network.³³

On 28 October, UNIDIR co-hosted an event,³⁴ held on the margins of the First Committee session, on connecting the women, peace and security agenda with disarmament. Organized together with seven Member States³⁵ and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the event brought together high-level speakers who included the former president of Ireland, Mary Robinson, and the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Izumi Nakamitsu. Panellists called for experts on women, peace and security and on disarmament to reinforce connections between their fields and better integrate disarmament matters into national action plans for women, peace and security.

To build further momentum in integrating priority themes for women, peace and security and disarmament, UNIDIR produced a series of short videos—available through its [YouTube channel](#)—to highlight best practices in gender-responsive arms control and explain how those practices could help advance the broader goal of gender equality in international security. In 2020, the videos attracted more than 5,800 views on the Twitter and YouTube accounts of UNIDIR.

Military expenditures

In his 2020 report³⁶ on women, peace and security, the Secretary-General called on States to reverse the upward trajectory in global military spending with a view to encouraging greater investment in social infrastructure and services that buttressed human security as one of five key goals for the next decade of action for women, peace and security.³⁷ He encouraged women, peace and security and

³² Renata Dwan, “[The road less travelled: women and disarmament](#)”, *Strategist*, 2 July 2020.

³³ Renata H. Dalaqua, “[Lost in translation? Understanding the relevance of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in the field of arms control and disarmament](#)”, European Leadership Network, 30 November 2020.

³⁴ “[Connecting The Women, Peace & Security And Disarmament Agendas](#)”, UNIDIR, 29 October 2020, YouTube video.

³⁵ Australia, Canada, Ireland, Namibia, Philippines, Sweden and United Kingdom.

³⁶ [S/2020/946](#).

³⁷ The other four overarching goals were ensuring women's meaningful participation in peace processes, defending women's rights and human rights defenders, dedicating a minimum of

Disarmament and arms control in national action plans on women, peace and security

National action plans on women, peace and security that incorporate disarmament and arms control

By the end of 2019, 84 States had adopted a **total of 143 national action plans**, **57 of which contained one or more references to disarmament or arms control**.*
The diagram below shows the years in which those 57 plans were adopted.

The Security Council called on Member States to create national action plans (NAPs) for implementing the women, peace and security agenda



* For the purposes of this illustration, a “reference” is a use of one of the following terms: small arms and light weapons, the Arms Trade Treaty, landmines, cluster munitions or other explosive remnants of war, weapons of mass destruction or cyberwarfare.

Abbreviations: DRC=Democratic Republic of the Congo; NAP=national action plan.
Source: United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, “Connecting the Dots”, 2020.

October 2020 marked 20 years since the Security Council adopted resolution 1325 (2000), its first resolution on women, peace and security. In later years, the Council adopted nine supporting resolutions on the topic.

Disarmament and arms control converge on all pillars of the women, peace and security agenda, a matter explored through [webinars](#), articles, social media outreach and other activities in 2020. Of the 143 national action plans on women, peace and security, which 84

States had adopted by the end of 2019, 57 national action plans (as shown above) contain references to themes related to disarmament or arms control, according to the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research.

In 2020, the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific supported the preparation of Nepal’s second national action plan on women, peace and security by suggesting the inclusion of disarmament-related elements.

disarmament actors to join forces to develop evidence-based analysis, policy recommendations and advocacy that linked savings in military spending to investments in economic and social development.

Goals to reverse global military spending had long been included in multilateral statements for gender equality, including the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action of 1995. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, global military expenditure reached almost \$2 trillion in 2020.³⁸ States are continuously encouraged to report on their military expenditures to the [United Nations Report on Military Expenditures](#) to reduce military expenditures by increasing transparency and building confidence (for more information, see chap. III).

Meanwhile, the Office for Disarmament Affairs published an Occasional Paper in April on *Rethinking Unconstrained Military Spending*,³⁹ exploring feminist approaches for addressing excessive military spending in a chapter authored by the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. In the publication, authors also addressed the issue of military spending through the lenses of its impact on international security, its relationship with efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and past economic conversion movements.

Conventional weapons

Women and men participate in and are affected by conflict and armed violence differently. Therefore, understanding and addressing the gendered impacts of conventional arms and ammunition flows remained central in efforts to achieve gender equality, as well as arms control and disarmament objectives.

In 2020, the Office for Disarmament Affairs continued to pursue three core priorities in its work on gender and conventional arms and ammunition: (a) pursuing women's equal and meaningful participation in all decision-making and prevention efforts related to arms control and ammunition management, at both political and operational levels; (b) mainstreaming gender considerations in arms control initiatives, policies and programmes, in line with a deepening understanding of the gendered impacts of arms and ammunition flows; and (c) linking disarmament and arms control with wider agendas for peace and gender equality, particularly the women, peace and security agenda.

15 per cent of official development assistance to conflict-affected countries, and closing gender data gaps on peace and security.

³⁸ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "[World military spending rises to almost \\$2 trillion in 2020](#)", 26 April 2021.

³⁹ United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs Occasional Papers, No. 35, April 2020.

Small-arms control

The role of gender in small-arms control remained a critical cross-cutting focus of the United Nations in 2020. However, despite a degree of progress in establishing a gender-responsive approach to small arms during the year, such weapons continued to be used around the world in acts of gender-based violence, particularly intimate-partner violence and femicides. In that context, the United Nations system and individual States continued some activities aimed at integrating small-arms control into efforts to address and prevent such violence, including during the pandemic.⁴⁰

The Coordinating Action on Small Arms mechanism, created by the Secretary-General to foster coherent policies on small arms and light weapons across the United Nations system, continued to exchange information on gender-related activities implemented by United Nations partners (for more information about the mechanism, see chap. III).

The Office for Disarmament Affairs, for its part, launched a dedicated web page⁴¹ on gender-responsive approaches to small-arms control. In addition, the Office prepared a social media campaign⁴² in support of the Global 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, observed each year from 25 November to 10 December. In 40 social media posts it published in English, French and Spanish for that campaign, the Office participated in the Secretary-General's "Orange the World" initiative, highlighted how disarmament and arms control could help eliminate gender-based violence, and showcased the wide-ranging nature and relevance of the Office's work on the issue.

During the year, a growing number of programmes, projects and initiatives on mainstreaming gender in small-arms control was carried out, reflecting an increasing willingness among donors to fund such activities. In one example, the Office for Disarmament Affairs initiated an informal coordination mechanism to support and maximize the impact of front-line actors on gender and small-arms issues. Launched in the second half of 2020, the mechanism was intended to facilitate information-sharing, strengthen collaboration and ensure that the initiatives of participants reinforced one another. Another aim was to identify remaining gaps in that area and explore new avenues for work.

⁴⁰ With financial support from Canada and the European Union, the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean published a paper in 2020 entitled *Preventing violence against women through arms control in Latin America and the Caribbean: Recommendations during the COVID-19 crisis*.

⁴¹ "Gender and small arms control".

⁴² "UNODA joins global efforts for 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence", 17 December 2020.

Project on gender and small arms

In 2020, the Office for Disarmament Affairs continued to implement its flagship project⁴³ on gender and small-arms control. That global project is funded by the European Union to help incorporate gender considerations in policies, programmes and actions against small-arms trafficking and misuse, in line with the women, peace and security agenda. By promoting a gender-responsive framework for small-arms control and advocating for women's full and effective participation in all related decision-making, the project was intended to enhance the discipline's effectiveness and contribute to international peace, security, gender equality and sustainable development.⁴⁴

On 30 October, the Office held an [event](#) on the margins of the First Committee session with the European Union to highlight the project's global, regional and national capacity-building initiatives to make small-arms control both more gender-responsive and more effective overall. Ninety people participated in the virtual event, which included speakers from the Office's regional centres and its implementing partner, the International Action Network on Small Arms.

In another part of the project, the Office for Disarmament Affairs further strengthened gender expertise at its three regional centres by hiring dedicated gender and small-arms experts and launching a dedicated coaching programme, carried out in collaboration with the South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons, which is part of the United Nations Development Programme. The aim was to further enhance each centre's capacity to design and conduct gender-responsive initiatives for small-arms control, as well as in other areas, through interventions tailored to national priorities.

Each regional centre also carried out its own extensive work under the project.⁴⁵

United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa

The Regional Centre in Lomé supported African States as they integrated gender perspectives into their national activities on small-arms control, in line with their global commitments.⁴⁶

⁴³ [“Supporting gender mainstreamed policies, programmes and actions in the fight against small arms trafficking and misuse, in line with the Women, Peace and Security agenda”](#).

⁴⁴ For a comprehensive overview of the project's activities, publications, outreach efforts and partnerships, see Office for Disarmament Affairs, [“Supporting gender mainstreamed policies, programmes and actions in the fight against small arms trafficking and misuse, in line with the Women, Peace and Security agenda”](#).

⁴⁵ In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, some planned in-country activities were adapted to include virtual meetings and desk research.

⁴⁶ In that regard, the Regional Centre helped national commissions on small arms and light weapons in Africa to incorporate gender considerations in activities carried out under their respective national action plans on small-arms control.

In the Central African Republic, the Centre carried out an in-person [training session](#) in Bangui from 13 to 15 October for government officials working on small-arms control, disarmament, national security and gender equality, as well as civil society practitioners. The participants discussed concerns and good practices for countering small-arms proliferation, illicit circulation and misuse, including for analysing their gendered impacts. They highlighted priorities that included the following: (a) conducting baseline assessments of national small-arms programmes and policies to identify gender constraints and opportunities within security and arms control institutions; (b) reinforcing collaboration between the national commission on small arms and light weapons and the Ministry for the Promotion of Women, Family and Child Protection; and (c) developing a gender-responsive mechanism for monitoring implementation of the national action plan on small-arms control. The training included two sessions facilitated by UN-Women: on gender concepts, gender analysis and techniques for measuring the impacts of small arms on different gender and age groups; and on linkages between conflict-related sexual violence, gender-based violence and arms control, and the relationship of the relevant national legal framework to the women, peace and security agenda.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Regional Centre conducted a similar [training session](#) in Kinshasa from 23 to 25 November. Organized in collaboration with the National Commission for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons and the Reduction of Armed Violence, the training brought together participants from the following: the Commission's provincial offices; the ministries of the interior, gender, justice and foreign affairs; the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; and civil society. Attendees identified challenges to further integrating gender considerations in the country's framework for small-arms control, including insufficient documentation of sexual violence facilitated by small arms and a lack of sex-disaggregated data on small-arms access, ownership, demand and misuse. After the training, the Regional Centre helped the Commission to develop stringent monitoring and reporting tools to both facilitate information exchange and advance in-country coordination on implementing the national action plan on small arms.

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

In August and September, the Regional Centre in Lima successfully e-launched its new Specialized Course on Firearms Investigations from a Gender Perspective, reaching 81 national security and justice officials in Argentina and Costa Rica, 58 per cent of them women.⁴⁷ The objective was to bolster the capacity of law enforcement officials and legal operators to apply a gender lens

⁴⁷ The training for [Argentina](#) took place from 18 to 31 August, and the training for [Costa Rica](#) took place from 25 August to 4 September.

as a complementary method of investigating firearms-related crimes, both in crime scene analysis and evidence management. By using a gender perspective in those contexts, investigators are better able to construct case theories that account for violence against women where it is present, thus reducing impunity for such violence and increasing its visibility.

The Centre also conducted extensive, region-specific research at the nexus of gender equality and small-arms control. As part of that work, it mapped relevant regional and subregional initiatives related to small-arms control and violence against women, highlighting linkages between programmes, policies, declarations, projects and model legislation in those two areas.

In addition, the Centre produced a policy paper⁴⁸ on opportunities in the region to further integrate small-arms control into emergency measures adopted by countries to prevent or counter violence against women during the COVID-19 pandemic. Drawing on public media reports, government announcements, decrees and legislative amendments, the authors identified language on small arms and recommended additional ways to incorporate small-arms control. The Regional Centre presented the paper at a July webinar that drew 220 people, 54 per cent of them women, from 23 countries. The Centre also discussed the findings in four country-specific webinars, held in October for authorities of El Salvador and Peru, in November for Argentina, and in December for Mexico.

The Regional Centre also continued a subregional legal review of links between national laws on firearms and domestic violence in South America, reviewing legislation in Argentina, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Paraguay, the Plurinational State of Bolivia and Uruguay.⁴⁹ It presented the findings in several national- and regional-level webinars to audiences in Argentina, El Salvador, Mexico and Peru, among others. In the webinars, the Centre discussed policy, legal and programmatic perspectives on preventing and countering armed violence against women.

United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific

The Regional Centre in Kathmandu continued to engage with national authorities, parliamentarians and civil society representatives to (a) promote transformative, gender-responsive approaches to reducing armed violence; and (b) encourage synergies between United Nations priorities in different areas, with a significant focus on the women, peace and security agenda.

In March, the Centre conducted the final [seminar](#) in its regional workshop series on gun violence and illicit small-arms trafficking viewed from a gender perspective. The event brought together representatives from 18 countries in Asia

⁴⁸ [Preventing violence against women through arms control in Latin America and the Caribbean: Recommendations during the COVID-19 crisis](#) (United Nations publication, 2020).

⁴⁹ Comparative studies for Peru and Colombia were conducted in previous years.

and the Pacific, including government officials, legislators and representatives of civil society organizations. Participants discussed and finalized practical recommendations for developing effective, gender-responsive measures against gun violence, seeking in particular to enhance partnerships between parliamentarians and civil society.⁵⁰ The Centre published outcomes from the project in an online [compendium](#) to inform further national- and regional-level activities in that area.

In addition, the Centre produced a series of [video testimonials](#) from legislators and civil society representatives on their experiences as advocates for gender-responsive legal and policy approaches to small-arms control. In their statements, participants discussed the empowerment of women in disarmament-related initiatives, as well as the role of youth in advancing international peace and security.

The Regional Centre also undertook desk research aimed at helping States to further align their small-arms-control initiatives with the women, peace and security agenda and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. To that end, it reviewed national legislation and relevant national action plans to identify the priorities of States on gender and small-arms control.

Separately, the Centre began preparations to hold a series of training sessions aimed at boosting national-level capacity to mainstream small-arms control. In preparing for those sessions, which were tentatively scheduled for 2021, the Centre received extensive support from other United Nations agencies. Drawing on their experiences operating in the countries, those partner agencies helped align the training project with the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework.

Silencing the Guns in Africa by 2020: Africa Amnesty Month

Gender dimensions were crucial to activities by the Office for Disarmament Affairs to support seven African States in implementing the 2020 Africa Amnesty Month. Specifically, the different impacts of armed violence on men, women, boys and girls was a prerequisite to supporting the voluntary handover of small arms in urban and communal settings. Meanwhile, national authorities in the participating countries worked closely with civil society organizations to emphasize gender dimensions in related activities, such as building law-enforcement capacity. In another example, Burkina Faso, Cameroon and the Central African Republic raised awareness about the gendered aspects of armed violence in community-oriented workshops co-organized with traditional leaders and associations for women and youth.

⁵⁰ That exchange was built on earlier discussions from subregional seminars held in 2018 and 2019.

Ammunition management

Women, men, girls and boys are affected differently by unplanned ammunition depot explosions, as well as by conflict, violence and crime resulting from ammunition diversion. To better understand and respond to those differences, the Office for Disarmament Affairs launched a project in 2020 to develop gender-responsive guidance for managing ammunition in an effective, safe and secure manner.

As part of that effort, the Office collaborated with Small Arms Survey, an independent research organization, to prepare a briefing paper⁵¹ on the gender dimensions of ammunition management. In the paper and its companion podcast,⁵² the author identified key opportunities to make the life-cycle management of ammunition a more gender-responsive field, while also increasing women's participation. The paper was presented on 29 October at a [virtual event](#) on the margins of the General Assembly First Committee session, and the findings later resulted in the approval of plans to conduct a comprehensive gender review of the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines.⁵³ The United Nations SaferGuard Technical Review Board, which approved the review at its annual meeting in December, also expressed support for developing stand-alone guidance on the topic of gender and ammunition management.

Gender dimensions of ammunition management

To better understand and respond to the different impacts of ammunition explosions and diversion on men, women, boys and girls, the Office for Disarmament Affairs initiated the development of gender-responsive guidance for the effective, safe and secure management of ammunition. Its activities in that area included collaborating with Small Arms Survey, a non-governmental research institute, to develop a briefing paper⁵⁴ on the gender dimensions of ammunition management. In that paper, the author identified key entry points for making the life-cycle management of ammunition more gender responsive, as well as for increasing women's involvement in that field.

The collaborating organizations presented the briefing paper, as well as the complementary podcast, at a [virtual launch event](#) held on the margins of the General Assembly First Committee meeting on 29 October. In December, the Technical Review Board considered the paper's findings at its annual meeting,

⁵¹ Emile LeBrun, *Making Room for Improvement: Gender Dimensions of the Life-cycle Management of Ammunition* (New York, United Nations and Small Arms Survey, 2019).

⁵² “#51: Gender Dimensions of the Life-cycle Management of Ammunition (LCMA)”, Small Arms Survey podcasts, 27 October 2020.

⁵³ The International Ammunition Technical Guidelines are an international frame of reference developed under the United Nations SaferGuard Programme to achieve and demonstrate effective levels of safety and security of ammunition stockpiles. For more information, see chap. III.

⁵⁴ LeBrun, *Making Room for Improvement*.

leading to the approval of plans to conduct a comprehensive gender review of the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines. In addition, the Board supported the development of stand-alone guidance on gender and ammunition management.

United Nations Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation

Through the United Nations [Trust Facility](#) Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation, the Office for Disarmament Affairs continued to support and promote gender considerations in programme selection, implementation and evaluation, in partnership with civil society, regional organizations and United Nations partners.

In 2020, the Office funded three projects with a specific, primary focus on gender in arms control. Civil society organizations proposed each of those projects, whose implementing partners would tackle matters such as gender-based violence (Control Arms); women, peace and security (Parliamentarians for Global Action); and the meaningful participation and representation in national arms control by women parliamentarians (Parliamentary Forum on Small Arms and Light Weapons).

Furthermore, the 14 [projects](#) funded in 2020 included gender-related components and outputs, such as reducing gender-based violence from an arms regulation perspective; promoting the meaningful participation and representation of women in policymaking, planning and implementation processes related to relevant instruments; collecting sex- and age-disaggregated data to help measure successful project implementation; supporting gender mainstreaming in arms regulation policies and programmes; accounting for gendered impacts of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons; and coordinating with women's civil society groups and relevant national authorities, such as national commissions on small arms and light weapons, and other authorities responsible for women's affairs or gender equality.

Weapons of mass destruction

Nuclear weapons

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in the postponement or cancellation of multiple events and initiatives on nuclear-weapon issues related to gender. For example, when States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty) decided to delay their tenth Review Conference, a high-profile event (that was to be held on the margins of the Conference) on the Treaty's gender dimensions was subsequently cancelled. The delay also affected plans to develop new working papers on nuclear weapons and

gender, building on documents submitted in 2019 to the Preparatory Committee for the Conference.⁵⁵

With support from the European Union, the Office for Disarmament Affairs organized a [seminar](#), held in Geneva on 29 and 30 January, where participants discussed the role of women in nuclear disarmament. In the exchange, representatives of States parties and civil society focused on women's participation in the meetings of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, as well as in other forums addressing nuclear disarmament. The participants also considered the gendered impact of nuclear weapons, including the disproportionate effect of ionizing radiation on women.

Meanwhile, a cross-regional group of States⁵⁶ known as the Stockholm Initiative on Nuclear Disarmament addressed gender in a ministerial declaration⁵⁷ that they issued on 27 February in support of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. To strengthen the Treaty and advance nuclear disarmament, the authors recommended that all States ensure women's full and effective participation and further integrate gender perspectives into all aspects of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation decision-making processes.

In October, Honduras became the fiftieth State to ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, triggering the Treaty's entry into force on 22 January 2021. On that date, the Treaty would become binding for States parties, including its provision on providing gender-sensitive assistance to individuals under their jurisdictions who were affected by the use or testing of nuclear weapons.⁵⁸

Other weapons of mass destruction

Similar to other meetings scheduled for 2020 to address nuclear-weapon issues, the International Women's Conference on Preventing the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction to Non-State Actors was indefinitely postponed. Its organizers, the Office for Disarmament Affairs and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, had previously planned to hold the conference in

⁵⁵ Separate collaborations between Member States and UNIDIR resulted in the submission of three working papers to the Preparatory Committee at its third session in 2019: "Improving gender equality and diversity in the Non-Proliferation Treaty review process" ([NPT/CONF.2020/PC.III/WP.25](#)); "Integrating gender perspectives in the implementation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons" ([NPT/CONF.2020/PC.III/WP.27](#)); and "Gender in the Non-Proliferation Treaty: recommendations for the 2020 Review Conference" ([NPT/CONF.2020/PC.III/WP.48](#)).

⁵⁶ Argentina, Canada, Finland, Germany, Indonesia, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Republic of Korea, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland.

⁵⁷ Embassy of Sweden, "[Ministerial meeting of the Stockholm Initiative for Nuclear Disarmament](#)", 27 February 2020.

⁵⁸ The Treaty also recognizes the disproportionate impact of nuclear weapons on women and girls, as well as the importance of equal, full and effective participation of both women and men in promoting and attaining sustainable peace and security.

Bangkok over three days. It aimed to strengthen women's participation in the security field, as well as their role in preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction to non-State actors, in line with Security Council resolution 1540 (2004).

Although the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) postponed its annual Symposium on Women in Chemistry, originally scheduled for July with the theme "The Role of Women in the Peaceful Use of Chemicals", the organization undertook other initiatives to promote gender equality in disarmament forums. In particular, it held a [webinar](#) in November on improving gender balance at OPCW and across other disarmament forums. Co-sponsored with the Government of Sweden, the event brought together 140 participants from 40 countries to view, among other things, a presentation by UNIDIR on its 2019 report, *Still Behind the Curve*. The discussion also included remarks from the OPCW Director-General, Fernando Arias, on the importance of diversity.

UNIDIR, for its part, launched a fact sheet on [gender and chemical weapons](#), building on findings from its 2019 report, *Missing Links*.⁵⁹ The fact sheet contained information on sex-specific and gendered impacts of chemical weapons, as well as ideas for integrating gender perspectives into the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Meanwhile, targeted efforts were made in 2020 to integrate gender perspectives and encourage women's equal participation in tackling biological threats. For example, UNIDIR researchers drew on the Institute's previous work on gender and biological weapons to analyse the gendered impacts of COVID-19. As a result, the Institute published a commentary entitled "[Pandemics Are Not Gender-Neutral, Gender Analysis Can Improve Response to Disease Outbreaks](#)", presenting several questions aimed at supporting the development of gender-responsive public health policies. Ideas in the commentary were also a focus of discussion and elaboration during a webinar organized by the Geneva Centre on Security Policy, entitled "[Gender, Bioweapons, COVID-19: Connecting the Dots](#)".

While most of the activities related to the Biological Weapons Convention took place virtually owing to the pandemic, gender equality was the focus in one session of a webinar addressing topics for the Meeting of Experts on Institutional Strengthening of the Convention (for more information on the webinar series, see chap. II).

⁵⁹ Renata Hessmann Dalaqua, James Reville, Alastair Hay and Nancy Connell, *Missing Links: Understanding Sex- and Gender-related Impacts of Chemical and Biological Weapons* (Geneva, UNIDIR, 2019).

Science and technology

New and emerging weapons technologies

The varying impacts of new and emerging weapons technologies on women, men, girls and boys were a subject of significant focus in 2020. Meanwhile, the Office for Disarmament Affairs continued prioritizing efforts towards women's equal and meaningful participation in work related to science, technology and international peace and security.

Within the framework of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, several High Contracting Parties underlined the need for gender diversity and analysis in all deliberations of the Group of Governmental Experts on Emerging Technologies in the Area of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems. High Contracting Parties also flagged the need to account for gender and other areas of data-related bias, as well as the problem of exacerbating, or establishing new systems of discrimination, including through possible gaps in the 11 previously agreed guiding principles.⁶⁰

Meanwhile, the Office for Disarmament Affairs convened a series of workshops to encourage responsible innovation by students in the science, technology, engineering and mathematics fields, as well as in other areas. The workshops were centred on issues of gender bias and discrimination, with exercises aimed at encouraging participants to assess the implications of any bias-rooted assumptions in a project during its design phase, and who is and is not involved in related discussions. The participants also examined how failing to consider such issues when designing general-use technologies could lead to negative impacts on international peace and security as the technologies proliferate. Separately, the Office participated in a panel discussion at the 2020 Stockholm Security Conference, where it addressed issues of data bias and the potential for new technologies to exacerbate problems of discrimination.

Information and communications technology

During the substantive discussions of the Open-ended Working Group on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security, several Member States underscored the need to integrate gender perspectives into norm implementation and capacity-building. Several delegations also highlighted the "gender digital divide", calling for specific measures to be taken at the national and international levels in support of gender equality and women's meaningful participation in relevant international discussions, decision-making and capacity-building.⁶¹ Furthermore, States expressed appreciation for programmes to facilitate women's participation in multilateral discussions on security matters related to information and

⁶⁰ CCW/MSP/2019/9, annex III.

⁶¹ It was envisaged that such measures would address, inter alia, the collection of gender-disaggregated data.

communications technology. The need to strengthen linkages between those matters and the women, peace and security agenda was also emphasized.

In that context, UNIDIR launched a research project to propose elements of possible gender-based approaches to cybersecurity. Although that effort remained under way at the end of 2020, its preliminary findings highlighted several gendered dynamics and assumptions prevalent in the field of cybersecurity. An examination of the sector, for instance, revealed that its threat models, advertising, and procedures for reporting and user control were more likely to downplay or omit cybersecurity threats, impose additional security burdens or deceptively advertise to people of a gender that was already more vulnerable in a given context. Researchers for the project presented those and other insights in an article entitled “[Advancing Gender Considerations in the Cyber OEWG](#)”.⁶² They also discussed the findings during a multi-stakeholder dialogue on “[Gender Approaches to Cyber Security](#)”, co-organized by UNIDIR, Canada, Chile and the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, a non-governmental organization.

Mine action

In 2020, the United Nations Mine Action Service continued to drive efforts towards gender equality and women’s participation in peacekeeping, peacebuilding and stabilization processes through gender-sensitive programmes that responded to the needs of men, women, boys and girls in its support to civil society, Governments, security institutions, regional organizations and communities.

The Service integrated gender considerations into its capacity-building activities throughout the year, contributing to holistic security sector reform and efforts to dismantle harmful stereotypes. In Burkina Faso, for example, the Service partnered with the Ministry of Security to provide relevant officials with gender-sensitive training on mitigating threats from explosive ordnance. Through that training, the Service helped address and counter bias towards women in the security sector, promoting women’s participation in the traditionally male-dominated mine action sector.

The Service prioritized gender in its support of civil society partners. In Afghanistan, for instance, the Service hired dedicated officers to support national partners in incorporating gender-inclusive approaches in their strategic documents, proposals and training materials.

Through demining training, the Service created alternative pathways to employment for women in post-conflict societies while also working to remove barriers to their participation in stabilization and peacebuilding. In October, an all-women demining team trained by the Service commenced clearance operations

⁶² The title contains a reference to the Open-ended Working Group on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security.

in Mosul, Iraq. By decontaminating areas of the city that had been used as defensive lines by Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), the team enabled residents to reclaim their livelihoods.

Education on the risks of explosive ordnance is a critical tool in areas experiencing high explosive threats, saving lives and supporting community-driven protection in countries and territories threatened by improvised explosive devices or contaminated by mines or explosive remnants of war. In 2020, the Service continued tailoring its risk-education activities to prioritize behavioural-change education for women and girls, many of whom suffered from both direct and indirect consequences of explosive violence. For example, in organizing a training programme on conflict preparedness and protection in Gaza, the Service designed its schedule to accommodate stay-at-home parents and women requiring access to childcare.

The Service also achieved further progress towards gender parity in its programmes in 2020, driven in particular by the launch of a new, global workplan on gender and diversity. Supported by 19 programme-specific action plans on the matter, that global workplan led to the introduction of targeted measures in support of gender parity, including reviews of programmatic terms of reference for gender-biased language and expanded **talent pools** for women. After its launch, women became better represented in the activities of the Service within United Nations peacekeeping missions. For example, the number of women in technical positions, including for explosive ordnance disposal or quality assurance, rose from 5 per cent in 2018 to 19 per cent in 2020, and women in leadership positions rose from 16 per cent in 2018 to 27 per cent in 2020.⁶³

The Service translated the revised version of the *United Nations Gender Guidelines for Mine Action Programmes* from English into Arabic, French and Spanish to widen the reach of that valuable tool. The Guidelines were designed to support the integration of gender considerations into the planning, implementation and monitoring of all programmes overseen by the Service.

Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration

In 2020, the implementation of integrated disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes contributed towards improving security and stability in conflict-affected regions. Women's active participation in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes ensured the sustainability of interventions. It was further understood that women's active participation would involve creating a protective environment, granting access to benefits and ensuring women's meaningful participation in the assessment, design and implementation of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration initiatives.

⁶³ The Secretary-General cited that positive trend in his latest report on women, peace and security (S/2020/946, para. 30).

To mark the twentieth anniversary of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security, the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Section within the Department of Peace Operations published a compilation⁶⁴ of good practices and lessons learned on promoting gender-responsive processes for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. The Section and the Security Sector Reform Unit, also within the Department of Peace Operations, produced the Entebbe outcome document⁶⁵ following consultations with women leaders from armed groups, national security forces and technical experts in United Nations peace operations in Mali, the Central African Republic and Colombia. The document contained strategic recommendations to Member States, the Security Council and United Nations peace operations on advancing the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda in processes for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and for security sector reform. Through both publications, the Department highlighted innovative approaches, promoted knowledge exchange and supported further gender mainstreaming in United Nations peace operations.

Although women combatants usually comprise a small portion of individuals in need of demobilization support, women benefited from projects for community violence reduction. Through disarmament, demobilization and reintegration activities, women were mobilized towards mitigating local conflict, preventing recruitment into armed groups and building community resilience, including the capacity to absorb former combatants.

In 2020, the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur continued to implement community stabilization projects in which women were 40 per cent of the direct beneficiaries. Furthermore, by conducting community needs assessments, women's broad participation in public life was promoted, including by women community leaders and through women-led groups and civil society organizations.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, women represented 4 per cent of demobilized combatants and 26 per cent of the direct beneficiaries of community violence reduction projects overseen by the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Section of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. To help ensure women's participation in community-based projects, that Mission continued to consult with its internal gender experts while enforcing relevant quotas.

In Mali, women made up 2 per cent of the registered demobilization cases and 49 per cent of the direct beneficiaries of the country's community violence

⁶⁴ For more information, see *Gender-Responsive DDR [Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration]: Promoting the Women, Peace and Security Agenda* (United Nations publication, 2020).

⁶⁵ *Consultation on "Strengthening UN peace operations support to gender-responsive disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and security sector reform: Leveraging opportunities and lessons learnt"* (United Nations publication, 2019).

reduction projects implemented by the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration component of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali. Additionally, women in central Mali played a key role in several project activities, such as hiring other women to be nurses or clerks in initiatives to prevent sexual and gender-based violence.

In the Central African Republic, women represented 5 per cent of demobilized combatants and 40 per cent of the direct beneficiaries of community violence reduction activities. The high rate of women's participation was attributable, in part, to a requirement that women make up 30 per cent of participants in activities of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic.

In Colombia, UN-Women worked intensively in 2020 to reintegrate women ex-combatants into civilian life.⁶⁶ In the area of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, UN-Women focused on promoting women ex-combatants' leadership to strengthen the reintegration process. It directed support through the María Cano Training School to enhance women ex-combatants' knowledge of their rights as women and as citizens, as well as their understanding of the opportunities and mechanisms offered by relevant institutional frameworks for their participation at the local and national levels.⁶⁷

UN-Women also promoted the meaningful participation of women in Colombia's economic reintegration programmes for ex-combatants. Specifically, it supported the following: (a) consolidating organizational and administrative capacities in local cooperatives; (b) strengthening the role of women in managing community childcare initiatives; and (c) implementing initiatives for sustainable production. Furthermore, UN-Women sought to bolster the organizational, social and economic autonomy of women ex-combatants, while also supporting their full participation in decision-making, their collective leadership and their reincorporation into communities.

Also in 2020, as part of its work on gender-responsive ex-combatants' reincorporation, UN-Women promoted positive masculinities, thus contributing to the deconstruction of patriarchal and war-oriented gender roles that could otherwise enable new acts of violence during reincorporation into civilian life. Meanwhile, in South Sudan, UN-Women signed a memorandum of understanding

⁶⁶ In undertaking these efforts, UN-Women benefited from the support of Norway, Sweden and the Peacebuilding Fund. It also collaborated closely with the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia and other United Nations entities, including the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund and the World Food Programme. In addition, UN-Women coordinated with the national Government, particularly the Agency for Reincorporation and Normalization and the Presidential Council for Stabilization and Consolidation.

⁶⁷ In a related development, Colombia's former Territorial Training and Reincorporation Sites received capacity-building support for their gender committees from the Commission on Women, Gender and Diversity of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia–Ejército del Pueblo, renamed “Comunes” in January 2021.

with the National Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission. Intended to ensure the integration of gender considerations into every stage of the country's ongoing disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process, the memorandum established three objectives: (a) provide the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission with technical expertise on gender; (b) support knowledge-sharing about trends in the status and needs of ex-combatants, particularly women associated with armed forces; and (c) generate sex-disaggregated data and analysis throughout the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process.

In connection with the latter objective, UN-Women helped the Commission to conduct national baseline assessments, both by providing a daily subsistence allowance to South Sudan's census workers and by making a gender expert available to analyse collected data. Through those efforts, UN-Women aimed to help the country ensure that its disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process responded to the different needs of ex-combatants, particularly women and children associated with armed forces.

Security sector reform

In 2020, the United Nations continued to assist countries in advancing women's meaningful participation in the security sector. In line with Security Council resolution [2553 \(2020\)](#), the Security Sector Reform Unit, located within the Office of Rule of Law and Security Institutions in the Department of Peace Operations, worked to advance the political commitment of Member States to accomplish the following: (a) identify and address barriers to women's recruitment, retention and promotion and (b) build the capacity of governance and security institutions to deliver effective and accountable security services, without discrimination and following human rights standards and the rule of law.⁶⁸ It also worked to enhance the performance, accountability and effectiveness of the United Nations' support in implementing security sector reform commitments arising from the Security Council's resolutions on women, peace and security.

The Security Sector Reform Unit, together with the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Section in the Department of Peace Operations, published a [report](#) on strengthening gender-responsive disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and security sector reform in peace operations. In the report, the Department provided guidance to field missions on implementing the Action for Peacekeeping commitments⁶⁹ on women, peace and security.

⁶⁸ The Security Sector Reform Unit works to advance norms, policy and guidance on gender-responsive security sector reform based on lessons learned and good practices. To that end, it facilitates dialogue with Member States and within the United Nations Security Sector Reform Inter-Agency Task Force.

⁶⁹ Department for Peace Operations, "[Action for Peacekeeping: Declaration of Shared Commitments on UN Peacekeeping Operations](#)", March 2018.

The Security Sector Reform Unit—together with UN-Women, the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe—organized a policy dialogue to mark the official launch of a new [Gender and Security Toolkit](#).

The Unit also took part in a high-level virtual panel discussion entitled “Championing Gender-Sensitive Security Sector Reform”, facilitated by the United Arab Emirates and the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security. The event brought together 400 participants who identified priority areas of work and committed to including more women in national security sectors.

The Security Council adopted resolution [2553 \(2020\)](#) on security sector reform, encouraging Member States for the first time to “remove legal, institutional and regulatory barriers to women’s equal participation in the security sector and increase their representation at all levels within the security sector”.

At the local level, the United Nations pursued an inclusive approach to security sector reform assistance across the spectrum of peacemaking, peacekeeping, peacebuilding and development. With dedicated teams in eight Member States⁷⁰ and two regional offices,⁷¹ the Unit undertook work anchored in the principles of Security Council resolution [2553 \(2020\)](#), the United Nations Integrated Technical Guidance Note on Gender-Responsive Security Sector Reform (2012)⁷² and the United Nations Defence Sector Reform Policy (2011).

In Mali, amid a political crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali scaled up its efforts to support the National Commission for Security Sector Reform in building the capacities of security institutions to respond to all forms of violence against women and girls.⁷³ Its contributions included building gender-sensitive security facilities in Kati, Bamako and Banankoro, Koulikoro, as well as facilitating training courses on preventing conflict-related sexual violence.

Meanwhile, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic provided financial and technical support to the national Armed Forces to achieve their goal of 10 per cent for the recruitment of women in the 2019–2020 campaign. Women made up 11.2 per cent (206 women and 1,637 men) of recruits, thus exceeding the quota of 10 per cent. The longer-term objective was to match the national target of 35 per cent

⁷⁰ Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gambia, Libya, Mali, Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen.

⁷¹ United Nations Office to the African Union and United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel.

⁷² *Security Sector Reform: Integrated Technical Guidance Notes* (United Nations publication, 2012), p. 35–60.

⁷³ That work took place through the Security Sector Reform-Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Section of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali.

for women's participation under the national parity law. In Libya, owing to a lack of women's representation in the Joint Military Commission established by the agreement on a ceasefire in Libya signed in October, the United Nations Support Mission in Libya supported women participants at the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum in issuing a statement containing principles and recommendations for improving women's participation in the political process and governance.

Separately, the United Nations Mission in South Sudan partnered with the World Food Programme, the World Health Organization and non-governmental organizations to initiate a project to reduce violence in Jonglei and the Greater Pibor Administrative Area. As part of that effort, young women and men in South Sudan would receive support in building consensus on community perceptions of the root causes of violence, as well as in identifying appropriate violence-reduction responses.⁷⁴

In Somalia, the United Nations Development Programme partnered with the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia to help national authorities⁷⁵ build the capacity of security sector officials to implement the women, peace and security agenda and the [Somali Women's Charter](#). Participants in the training learned about the importance of advancing gender equality through the security sector reform process in Somalia, as well as the need for women's rights to be enshrined both in the revised Constitution and in security, political and electoral frameworks. Furthermore, the Mission supported Somali women leaders in civil society, as well as the Ministry of Women and Human Rights Development, in advocating for the establishment of a quota of 30 per cent for women's participation in the Federal Parliament for the 2020–2021 election.

In South Sudan, UN-Women, in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Mission in South Sudan, launched the Gender Mainstreaming in Security Sector Reform Project in 2020. Supported through the Peacebuilding Fund, the project is intended to contribute to the planned security sector reform under the [Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan](#). The project was also aimed at supporting the gender-responsive transformation of security sector institutions to protect and promote the rights of all citizens of South Sudan, particularly women and girls, under the leadership of the Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity, formed in February.

⁷⁴ That initiative was funded by the United Nations Multi-Partner Trust Fund for Reconciliation, Stabilization and Resilience in South Sudan.

⁷⁵ Office of the Prime Minister and Ministries of Security for the federal member States of South-West State and Galmudug.



Chapter VII

Disarmament machinery

The General Assembly hears reports of the First Committee and adopts resolutions and decisions on disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control on 7 December 2020.

UN Photo/Evan Schneider

CHAPTER VII

Disarmament machinery

The Conference on Disarmament was established to serve as the premier international negotiating body for solving hard questions of arms and security. ... It is only natural that [the Conference] should be at the forefront of the strategic dialogue our world needs to secure our common future.

ANTÓNIO GUTERRES, SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS¹

Developments and trends, 2020

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC severely affected the functioning of the multilateral disarmament machinery in 2020. Shortly after the United Nations Headquarters was temporarily closed in March, the General Assembly postponed the annual session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission, which had been scheduled for April. Although the Headquarters in New York was reopened to a limited number of delegates and staff over the following months, substantial restrictions on in-person participation remained in place, including a full suspension of access by stakeholders from civil society and the public.² Similar restrictions at the United Nations Office at Geneva prompted the Conference on Disarmament to suspend and subsequently limit its work.

Despite the difficulties caused by the pandemic, the First Committee of the General Assembly fulfilled its mandate by approving 71 draft resolutions and decisions that, inter alia, ensured the continuity of its work and established new mandates on outer space and information and communications technologies. The body held its seventy-fifth session in an abridged format, having revised its programme of work and timetable to expand the general debate of its substantive session without holding a thematic debate. In place of its usual thematic debate, the Committee held informal virtual meetings for interactive thematic discussions. It also allowed Member States to submit, in writing, statements for the general debate and the thematic discussions, as well as statements to exercise their right of reply and explain their votes. In total, the Committee held 15 formal, in-person meetings from 8 October to 10 November.

¹ Message to the Conference on Disarmament, as delivered by Tatiana Valavaya, Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament. See [CD/PV.1525](#).

² As part of the United Nations risk assessment, each delegation was asked to limit its participation to one representative at the General Assembly Hall.

However, the Committee carried out its work in the shadow of a worsening global security environment. As in past years, its deliberations were marked by heightened tensions among major powers, in particular concerning nuclear weapons, the investigation of alleged chemical-weapon use, and processes for addressing issues on outer space and information and communications technologies.

In the Committee's deliberations on nuclear weapons, geopolitical rivalries surfaced during intense exchanges on, *inter alia*, the following: calls by the United States and its allies for China to participate in future arms control discussions; the inclusion of non-strategic nuclear weapons in such discussions; and a proposal by the Russian Federation for a moratorium on the deployment of intermediate-range missiles in Europe. In addition, deep divisions on the issue of nuclear disarmament persisted between nuclear-armed States and non-nuclear-weapon States, with the latter expressing grave concern both about the lack of progress and nuclear modernization programmes that were tantamount to a qualitative arms race between States possessing nuclear weapons. Discussions on the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons also remained contentious; as States possessing nuclear weapons and many of their allies reiterated their strong opposition to the Treaty, others welcomed the conditions for its entry into force being met during the Committee's 2020 session.³

As in recent years, the Committee witnessed bitter exchanges on the possession and use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic. Despite the universal expression of serious concern about the current challenge to the global norm against chemical weapons, Member States continued to present divergent views on how to investigate and attribute responsibility for the use of such weapons. Furthermore, condemnations of the use of the chemical agent Novichok in the attempted assassination of Alexei Navalny, a citizen of the Russian Federation, further intensified the Committee's rancorous deliberations in that area.

Despite heightened concerns about biosafety and bioterrorism against the backdrop of the pandemic, the First Committee did not approve a draft resolution submitted by the Russian Federation calling for an update of the Secretary-General's Mechanism for Investigation of Alleged Use of Chemical and Biological Weapons. In that connection, many States expressed concern about the proposal to transfer responsibility for relevant investigations to the Security Council, suggesting that that would undermine the right of any State to bring an allegation to the attention of the Secretary-General.

The pandemic also affected the deliberations of the First Committee on issues related to conventional weapons. In two important procedural decisions on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, the Committee postponed the seventh Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of

³ On 24 October, the conditions for the Treaty's entry into force were met when the fiftieth instrument of ratification or accession was deposited with the Secretary-General. For more information, see chap. I.

Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons and rolled over, to 2021, the mandate of the Group of Governmental Experts on Problems Arising from the Accumulation of Conventional Ammunition Stockpiles in Surplus. The pandemic also prompted many Member States to reflect on the world's surging military spending—estimated at almost \$2 trillion in 2020—and call for its reduction and diversion towards socioeconomic development, including effective responses to COVID-19. The Committee also heard growing expressions of support for the Arms Trade Treaty, with States welcoming progress made in its implementation, despite the pandemic.⁴

On outer space issues, the First Committee's deliberations reflected an increased sense of urgency in pursuing new measures considering technological developments and the rapidly expanding use of outer space. That urgency continued to be affected by persistent divisions among major powers, including on the initiation of negotiations on a legal instrument with a focus on the placement of weapons in outer space. In light of those dynamics, the Committee voted on all five draft resolutions on outer space, including a new, draft resolution sponsored by the United Kingdom entitled "Reducing space threats through norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours".

Regarding information and communications technologies, First Committee delegates expressed concern about an increase in malicious activity with the onset of the pandemic. The Committee also responded to the COVID-19 pandemic with the adoption, by consensus, of two procedural decisions to postpone the meetings of the two relevant ongoing processes: the Group of Governmental Experts on Advancing Responsible State Behaviour in Cyberspace in the Context of International Security; and the Open-ended Working Group on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security. In addition, based on a proposal by the Russian Federation, the Committee adopted a draft resolution to establish a new open-ended working group for five years starting in 2021.

Meanwhile, the Conference on Disarmament overcame a significant disruption by the pandemic, convening 25 formal meetings and 4 informal plenary meetings in 2020.⁵ However, the Conference again could not reach a consensus on a programme of work, despite concerted efforts and intense consultations led by the six presidents of its 2020 session, Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bangladesh and Belarus.

Separately, the United Nations Disarmament Commission held two informal meetings in February to prepare for its substantive sessions. Unable to reach an

⁴ In the context of pandemic-related public health restrictions, the Treaty's sixth Conference of States Parties had taken place by written procedure earlier in the year.

⁵ The Conference held the meetings of its 2020 session from 20 January to 27 March, from 25 May to 10 July and from 3 August to 18 September. The Conference was unable to convene any plenary meetings between 10 March and 29 June, owing to COVID-19 restrictions. Subsequently, the Conference was able to convene plenary meetings in a "hybrid" format using teleconference systems.

agreement on several organizational matters, the Commission decided to postpone its organizational meeting to a date on or before 6 April, when its substantive session was expected to begin. Shortly after the pandemic was declared, however, the General Assembly decided to postpone the Commission's upcoming substantive session to 2021.

The Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters held two sessions in 2020, as scheduled, beginning a two-year programme of work to reflect on alternative approaches and a potential new vision for nuclear disarmament and arms control. Meeting in Geneva in January and virtually in June, the Board discussed possible new approaches to revitalizing and modernizing the disarmament architecture and machinery, particularly in the context of an international security landscape characterized by growing political and technological complexity.

First Committee of the General Assembly

Organization of work

The First Committee of the General Assembly held its seventy-fifth session from 6 October to 10 November, with Agustín Santos Maraver (Spain) serving as Chair. Owing to restrictions on in-person participation resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, the Committee held its annual session in an abridged format that envisaged an expanded general debate without its usual thematic debate. In place of the thematic debate, the Committee held three virtual informal meetings devoted to interactive discussions on specific subjects. Delegations were asked to submit their thematic statements in writing.⁶

During the main part of its seventy-fifth session, the First Committee considered its 18 allocated agenda items⁷ in 18 meetings. Of those meetings, 10 took place formally and in person as part of the general debate; 3 were virtual informal meetings on thematic matters; and 5 were formal, in-person meetings to take action on draft resolutions and decisions.

The Committee heard 143 statements⁸ during the general debate, including from the President of the General Assembly, Volkan Bozkir, and the High

⁶ At its organizational session on 6 October—held five days after the original schedule owing to the limited availability of conference facilities under COVID-19 restrictions—the First Committee adopted a revised programme of work and timetable (A/C.1/75/CRP.1/Rev.1), reducing the total number of formal meetings from 27 to 17. It also adopted an indicative timetable for thematic discussions (A/C.1/75/CRP.2). Furthermore, by several other decisions contained in the note on logistical arrangements and organizational matters (A/C.1/75/CRP.3), the Committee allowed delegations to deliver statements for the general debate either in person, in writing or through video messages; exercise the right of reply in person or in writing; and submit written thematic statements.

⁷ A/C.1/75/1, annex.

⁸ United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs Meetings Place, “General Assembly First Committee: Statements”.

Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Izumi Nakamitsu.⁹ Member States submitted to the Committee a total of 18 written statements during the general debate and 49 written thematic statements.¹⁰

The First Committee held its three informal meetings for thematic discussions on 13, 26 and 30 October. At the first of those meetings, the Committee held an exchange with the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, as well as interactive dialogues with 16 representatives of non-governmental organizations.¹¹ At the second meeting, delegations heard briefings by and held informal exchanges with the Secretary-General of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean, Flávio Roberto Bonzanini;¹² the Chair of the Group of Governmental Experts on Advancing Responsible State Behaviour in Cyberspace in the Context of International Security, Guilherme Patriota (Brazil); and the Chair of the Open-ended Working Group on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security, Jürg Lauber (Switzerland). At its third meeting, the Committee heard briefings and held informal exchanges with the Chair of the Group of Governmental Experts on Problems Arising from the Accumulation of Conventional Ammunition Stockpiles in Surplus, Marcus Bleinroth (Germany); the Chief of the Regional Disarmament Branch of the Office for Disarmament Affairs; the respective Directors of the Office's three regional centres;¹³ the current President of the Conference on Disarmament, Yury Ambrazevich (Belarus); the Chair of the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters, Selma Ashipala-Musavyi (Namibia); and the Director of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, Renata Dwan.¹⁴

The First Committee considered a total of 74 proposals, including two new draft resolutions¹⁵ and four proposals¹⁶ to reschedule meetings postponed owing to the pandemic.¹⁷ Of the 71 draft resolutions and decisions it adopted in 2020,

⁹ The Committee imposed stringent time limits for live and pre-recorded statements—10 minutes for individual States and 15 minutes for groups of States—and concluded its general debate early, cancelling three meetings scheduled for the week of 26 October.

¹⁰ The statements submitted in writing were compiled and issued as [A/C.1/75/INF/5](#).

¹¹ United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs Meetings Place, “[General Assembly First Committee: Civil Society and NGO Statements](#)”, 13 October 2020.

¹² The Committee decided to ask regional groups to nominate their representative to brief the Committee during the thematic discussions. The group of Latin American and Caribbean States nominated their representative.

¹³ The Directors of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa, the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, and the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific each addressed the Committee in a pre-recorded video statement. The Directors also engaged in an informal exchange with delegates by videoconference.

¹⁴ The Chair of the Advisory Board briefed the Committee in a pre-recorded video message.

¹⁵ [A/C.1/75/L.45](#) and [A/C.1/75/L.65](#).

¹⁶ [A/C.1/75/L.44](#), [A/C.1/75/L.47](#), [A/C.1/75/L.60](#) and [A/C.1/75/L.67](#).

¹⁷ By the resulting resolutions and decisions, the General Assembly set new dates for the seventh Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects ([75/241](#)); the meetings of the Open-ended Working Group on Developments in

only 31 of them (44 per cent) were adopted as a whole without a vote, reflecting persistent divisions among Member States.¹⁸ Separate votes were requested for 75 paragraphs, up from 58 at the Committee's 2019 session. The First Committee ultimately did not adopt three of the proposals tabled: a draft resolution¹⁹ on the Secretary-General's Mechanism for Investigation of Alleged Use of Chemical and Biological Weapons, a draft decision²⁰ on the Disarmament Commission and a proposed amendment²¹ to another draft decision²² on the same subject.

On 7 December, the General Assembly adopted the 66 drafts approved by the First Committee, as well as a procedural decision on the provisional agenda of work and timetable of the Committee for 2021 (75/520). On 31 December, the General Assembly adopted five remaining draft proposals that had been approved by the First Committee but required the Fifth Committee's review and approval owing to their programme budget implications. (For voting results of action taken at the plenary meetings, see [Part I](#) of the *Yearbook*.)

While the issue of visas remained a matter of contention, it did not result in a delay of the Committee's proceedings under the exceptional circumstances of the pandemic.²³ However, the Russian Federation raised that issue when the Committee considered the future work of the United Nations Disarmament Commission, eventually disassociating itself from the adopted draft decision on the Commission's 2021 session (75/519).

Overview of key substantive discussions in the Committee

The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on the substantive discussions of the First Committee. In that connection, Member States noted the pandemic's negative consequences for global security, potentially heightened threats of biological weapons and malicious uses of information and communications technologies.

In addition, many countries stressed the continued need to advance the disarmament agenda during the pandemic, highlighting the vital importance of multilateralism in addressing global challenges that required greater international

the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security (75/550); the meetings of the Group of Governmental Experts on Advancing Responsible State Behaviour in Cyberspace in the Context of International Security (75/551); and the meetings of the Group of Governmental Experts on Problems Arising from the Accumulation of Conventional Ammunition Stockpiles in Surplus (75/552).

¹⁸ In 2019, the First Committee adopted 59 drafts, 22 of them (37 per cent) without a vote.

¹⁹ [A/C.1/75/L.65](#).

²⁰ [A/C.1/75/L.48](#).

²¹ [A/C.1/75/L.79](#).

²² [A/C.1/75/L.49](#).

²³ On behalf of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Cuba, the Russian Federation, the Syrian Arab Republic and itself, the Islamic Republic of Iran made a joint statement to support the legitimate right recognized by the Charter of the United Nations to participate in the work of the Organization on equal footing and without discrimination, rejecting the abuse by the United States of its status as a host country, in particular regarding its delay and outright denial in the issuance of visas, thus preventing access of United Nations delegates to the Headquarters. ([A/C.1/75/PV.1](#))

cooperation and concerted responses. In that regard, several States supported the Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire in March.

The pandemic also contributed to calls for a critical evaluation of the world's growing military expenditures to reallocate public resources to socioeconomic development.²⁴ At the first of the Committee's three virtual informal meetings on thematic matters, the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs focused her remarks on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in the field of disarmament. She drew attention to growing tensions between nuclear-armed States, the potential use of biological weapons, the need to rethink military spending and a surge in gender-based violence.

At the seventy-fifth session of the First Committee, many States continued to voice concern about the deterioration of the international security environment and the ongoing erosion of the global disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control architecture. References were made, in particular, to the demise 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 of 1987 (Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty) and to the uncertain future 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 Treaty).

Tensions were on prominent view throughout the session. The Russian Federation accused the United States of taking deliberate destructive actions based on a policy of dismantling the carefully constructed system of international agreements, as well as on defence and security doctrines that increased the role of nuclear arms and lowered the threshold for their use. It also said that the United States had based its decision to withdraw from the Treaty on Open Skies on false allegations concerning "violations" by the Russian Federation of that agreement.²⁵ China also criticized the United States, in particular for unilateral actions it considered to threaten strategic security. In that regard, it accused the United States of continuously withdrawing from international treaties and sabotaging the multilateral and bilateral arms-control and disarmament regime. Furthermore, China warned that the unrestrained development and deployment of a global missile-defence system of the United States, as well as its attempts to deploy land-based intermediate-range missiles in the Asia-Pacific region and Europe, threatened Chinese security while also undermining regional and global peace and security.²⁶

²⁴ On behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, Indonesia expressed concern about the increasing global military expenditure and urged all States to devote resources made available from there to address the new challenges for the international community in the fields of development, poverty eradication and the elimination of the diseases that afflicted humanity, including the COVID-19 pandemic. (A/C.1/75/PV.2)

²⁵ A/C.1/75/PV.3.

²⁶ A/C.1/75/PV.5.

In a more encouraging development, the Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament continued to receive positive references in the First Committee, with major regional groups and individual Member States expressing support. The Committee adopted six draft resolutions containing references to the Agenda; separate votes were requested for all paragraphs that included such references, as in 2018 and 2019, but large majorities of States voted in favour of each. In separate votes on such paragraphs contained in two draft resolutions on nuclear weapons, approximately 30 States abstained, and the United States alone voted against.²⁷ Specific references to the Agenda's pillar on conventional weapons received more support and fewer abstentions, as did references to the Agenda contained in the Committee's draft resolutions on disarmament and non-proliferation education and on women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control.²⁸

Nuclear weapons

The First Committee adopted 22 draft resolutions and decisions on nuclear weapons in 2020. Of those proposals, only 3 succeeded without a vote, highlighting continued divisions among States over how to achieve the goals of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. While the role of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in that context remained particularly contentious, with roughly two thirds of States voting in favour, delegates made widespread calls for a successful conclusion of the tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty), which had been postponed to 2021 by States parties. In addition, many States called for the New START Treaty to be extended before its imminent expiration, in February 2021.²⁹

The deliberations also underscored areas where the positions of nuclear-weapon States concerning future arms control talks diverged. For example, as the United States and its allies called for such talks to include China as a participant and

²⁷ The First Committee retained paragraphs containing references to the Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament in two resolutions on nuclear weapons: "Towards a nuclear-weapon-free world: accelerating the implementation of nuclear disarmament commitments" (75/65) by a vote of 135 to 1, with 31 abstentions; and "Follow-up to the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons" (74/66) by a vote of 137 to 1, with 29 abstentions.

²⁸ The First Committee retained paragraphs referencing the Secretary-General's agenda in the resolutions entitled "Arms Trade Treaty" (75/64) by a vote of 153 to none, with 17 abstentions; "Convention on Cluster Munitions" (75/62) by a vote of 144 to none, with 19 abstentions; "United Nations study on disarmament and non-proliferation education" (75/61) by a vote of 170 to none, with 3 abstentions; and "Women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control" (75/48) by a vote of 173 to none, with 4 abstentions.

²⁹ On 3 February 2021, the United States and the Russian Federation announced the completion of procedures to extend the New START Treaty for five years, until 5 February 2026. (Antony J. Blinken, Secretary of State of the United States, [press statement](#) on the extension of the New START Treaty with the Russian Federation, 3 February 2021; Russian Federation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "[Statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation on the extension of the Treaty on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms](#)", 3 February 2021)

for non-strategic nuclear weapons to be one area of focus, China reiterated that it had no immediate intention to join. It argued that calls for its involvement were merely a pretext for the United States to shirk its nuclear disarmament responsibilities.³⁰ Likewise, the Russian Federation reiterated its proposal for a moratorium on the deployment of intermediate-range missiles in Europe, although the United States had joined allies in rejecting that idea because intermediate-range missiles of the Russian Federation had already been deployed within range of European States.³¹

Meanwhile, the United States said that China was undertaking a nuclear weapons build-up unconstrained by any arms control limits, with potentially deadlier consequences for the world than COVID-19, all while refusing to engage in constructive dialogue.³² It also accused the Russian Federation of developing and deploying nuclear weapons unconstrained by the New START Treaty—including novel delivery systems and new non-strategic nuclear weapons—while also continuing to undermine international security frameworks to which it had agreed.

Bilateral and trilateral issues

The United States criticized what it called a failure by the Russian Federation to comply with its obligations under various international agreements, referring to that country as a serial violator of its obligations and commitments on arms control, disarmament, non-proliferation and European security.³³ Regarding calls to extend the New START Treaty, the United States said that it continued to engage with the Russian Federation on the way forward for an agreement that would address all nuclear warheads. It stressed, however, that the New START Treaty imposed limits only on strategic warheads and delivery systems, not battlefield and theatre-range systems that the Russian Federation was building, developing and fielding in the thousands. In that connection, the United States highlighted the need to address the deficiencies of an arms control treaty that allowed the Russian Federation to pursue a competitive military advantage despite being compliant with the treaty, thus undercutting the agreement's fundamental purpose.³⁴

³⁰ [A/C.1/75/PV.5](#).

³¹ Jens Stoltenberg, Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), [speech](#) at the High-level NATO Conference on Arms Control and Disarmament, Brussels, 23 October 2019.

³² Referring to its call for a new era of arms control, the United States emphasized that the bilateral approach to arms control taken during the cold war was no longer sufficient to address current geopolitical security challenges, as it constrained only the United States and the Russian Federation. In that context, the United States stressed the need for the three largest nuclear powers to begin cooperatively building a strong foundation for a future rigorously verifiable treaty that addressed all nuclear weapons. ([A/C.1/75/PV.4](#) and [A/C.1/75/INF/5](#), pp. 62–64)

³³ Referring to its annual compliance reports, the United States said that the Russian Federation had failed to comply with its obligations under the now-defunct Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, the Treaty on Open Skies, the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe and the Chemical Weapons Convention, in addition to undertaking activities that raised concerns about its compliance with the Treaty between the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the United States of America on the Limitation of Underground Nuclear Weapon Tests. See [A/C.1/75/INF/5](#).

³⁴ The United States noted that, while it had certified the Russian Federation's compliance with New START Treaty to the United States Congress every year since its entry into force, the

The United States also stressed the need to prevent a trilateral nuclear arms race. Noting the overall number of nuclear warheads in China's nuclear stockpile, as well as its delivery systems of increasing size and sophistication and its plans to more than double its number of warheads within the decade, the United States suggested that it may need to take a strategic decision to match the ongoing nuclear build-ups by the Russian Federation and China.

In the meantime, the Russian Federation expressed readiness to extend the New START Treaty without preconditions, and it invited the United States to do the same without artificial delays. In addition, the Russian Federation called on the international community to support its efforts to prevent the deployment of new missiles in various regions of the world. While stressing that nuclear disarmament could be reached only through the "step-by-step" approach and based on the principle of equal and indivisible security for all, the Russian Federation highlighted the need to pay serious attention to problems affecting strategic stability. Without solving such problems, the delegate said, it would be impossible to achieve the level of international security conducive to taking further steps in nuclear disarmament.³⁵

China criticized the United States over its spending to modernize its nuclear triad, developing and deploying low-yield nuclear weapons, expanding the scope of nuclear deterrence, lowering the threshold for nuclear-weapon use and discussing the resumption of nuclear tests. It also urged the United States to faithfully fulfil its special and primary responsibilities for nuclear disarmament, respond positively to the appeal by the Russian Federation for an extension of the New START Treaty, and make additional and substantial reductions to its nuclear arsenal to create conditions for other nuclear-weapon States to participate in multilateral nuclear disarmament. While emphasizing that it would never take part in any nuclear arms race with any other country, China stressed that it would never participate in any trilateral arms control negotiation, given the large gap in size between its nuclear arsenal and those of the United States and the Russian Federation. The country added that it would never submit to any coercion or blackmail.³⁶

Russian Federation had, during that same period, invested heavily in novel nuclear delivery systems and nuclear weapons that were not constrained by the Treaty. ([A/C.1/75/INF/5](#))

³⁵ [A/C.1/75/PV.3](#). In its thematic statement on nuclear weapons submitted in writing, the Russian Federation listed the following factors as those affecting strategic stability: unconstrained deployment of the United States global missile defence system; development of high-precision strategic non-nuclear offensive weapons; the prospective deployment of strike weapons in outer space; and attempts to reduce the defensive potential of other countries using illegitimate methods of unilateral pressure bypassing the United Nations Security Council. See [A/C.1/75/INF/5](#), pp. 268–269.

³⁶ China recalled recent statements of the United States naming China as "the third-largest nuclear power on earth", expressing alarm over a "nuclear arms race between the [United States], Russia and China" and proposing a so-called "trilateral arms-control negotiation". China dismissed those assertions as a trick to shift the focus of the international community, adding that the United States intended to find an excuse to shirk its own special and primary

Multilateral agreements

Member States continued to emphasize the vital importance of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty as the cornerstone of the international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. In that regard, many States referred to the Treaty's fiftieth anniversary and expressed hope for a successful conclusion of its tenth Review Conference, which had been postponed to 2021 owing to the COVID-19 pandemic.³⁷ Yet, as States parties reaffirmed their commitment to the Treaty, their statements highlighted the divergent views of nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States on priorities for its implementation.

Speaking on behalf of the five nuclear-weapon States recognized by the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, France reported to the Committee on progress made in their dialogue known as the P5 process, which was focused on the particular responsibilities of those States under the Treaty. France also reaffirmed their commitment under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty to pursuing good-faith negotiations on effective measures related to nuclear disarmament and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control. Reaffirming their support for a world without nuclear weapons with undiminished security for all, France expressed the intention to intensify its preparations for the Review Conference, including by implementing the joint roadmap from the 2019 Beijing Conference³⁸ and the priorities identified at the 2020 London Conference.³⁹

Non-nuclear-weapon States, meanwhile, called for the balanced implementation of the Treaty's three pillars, particularly by urging nuclear-weapon States to implement their obligations under article VI. The New Agenda Coalition⁴⁰ expressed deep concern about the slow pace of progress in the implementation of nuclear disarmament measures and the fulfilment of obligations and commitments within the framework of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. It was also concerned about existing and new international security challenges

responsibility for nuclear disarmament and seek a pretext to free its hands and gain absolute military supremacy. ([A/C.1/75/PV.5](#))

³⁷ In the wake of the outbreak of the pandemic, States parties of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty postponed its 2020 Review Conference to January 2021. In October, as the concerns about the risks of the pandemic remained unabated, they, again, decided to postpone the Review Conference to August 2021.

³⁸ For more information, see China, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "[Five Nuclear-weapon States Hold a Formal Conference in Beijing](#)", 30 January 2019.

³⁹ In that respect, France outlined the following six elements in the efforts of the five nuclear-weapon States: (a) dialogue on nuclear doctrines and strategic risk reduction; (b) readiness to negotiate a fissile material cut-off treaty; (c) Glossary of Key Nuclear Terms; (d) commitment to the aims and objectives of the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone; (e) commitment to share with the international community the many benefits of nuclear technology and its applications for peaceful purposes; and (f) their commitment to present their respective national implementation reports to the Review Conference. ([A/C.1/75/PV.10](#) and [A/C.1/75/INF/5](#), pp. 18–20)

⁴⁰ Brazil, Egypt, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand and South Africa.

that were being cited as justifications for the slow progress. In that context, the group stressed that the global security environment was not an excuse for inaction; rather, it reinforced the need for urgency.⁴¹ Other non-nuclear-weapon States, particularly advocates of a “step-by-step” approach to disarmament, continued the effort to build and sustain momentum for the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty through, inter alia, proposals aimed at contributing towards securing a successful outcome at its tenth Review Conference. Such efforts included the Stockholm Initiative on Nuclear Disarmament,⁴² led by Sweden, and the initiative “Creating an Environment for Nuclear Disarmament”, led by the United States.

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons also figured prominently in the First Committee’s deliberations on nuclear weapons, particularly as the conditions for its entry into force were met during the session.⁴³ However, the discussions reflected the persistent polarization of views on the Treaty, with nuclear-weapon States and their allies on one side and other non-nuclear-weapon States on the other. When 118 States on the Committee voted to adopt the draft resolution entitled “Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons” (75/40), introduced by Austria, the five nuclear-weapon States joined 38 other countries in voting against the proposal.⁴⁴ The nuclear-weapon States also voted against all six paragraphs containing references to the Treaty in four other draft resolutions.⁴⁵

Many States expressed hope for an early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, urging all States that had not yet signed

⁴¹ [A/C.1/75/PV.6](#).

⁴² Sweden recalled that the second ministerial meeting of the Stockholm Initiative for Nuclear Disarmament, held in Berlin in February 2020, had adopted a declaration annexed with concrete proposals for “stepping stones” for nuclear disarmament (Germany, Federation Foreign Office, “[The NPT at 50](#)” ([Stepping Stones for Advancing Nuclear Disarmament](#)), press release, annex, 25 February 2020). It said the proposed measures covered areas such as minimizing the risk of conflict and nuclear-weapon use, diminishing the role of nuclear weapons in policies and doctrines, and enhancing nuclear disarmament verification. ([A/C.1/75/PV.6](#))

⁴³ With the fiftieth ratification of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons by Honduras on 24 October 2020, the conditions for the Treaty’s entry into force were satisfied. Pursuant to its article 10, the Treaty was to enter into force 90 days thereafter, on 22 January 2021. When the First Committee took action on all nuclear-weapon proposals on 3 November, Austria announced that the Treaty had reached the necessary threshold for its entry into force. ([A/C.1/75/PV.11](#))

⁴⁴ The Committee adopted the resolution by a vote of 118 to 43, with 13 abstentions. On 7 December, the General Assembly formally adopted the resolution by a vote of 130 to 42, with 14 abstentions.

⁴⁵ The voting pattern on the resolution entitled “Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons” remained largely unchanged from 2019 (74/41) when it was adopted by a vote of 119 to 41, with 15 abstentions. The First Committee retained six separate paragraphs with references to the Treaty, appearing in the Non-Aligned Movement and the New Agenda Coalition resolutions on nuclear disarmament (75/63 and 75/65, respectively), the resolution led by Malaysia entitled “Follow-up to the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons” (75/66), and the resolution led by South Africa on “Ethical imperatives for a nuclear-weapon-free world” (75/73), with almost the same voting pattern as in 2019.

or ratified the agreement—particularly those whose ratification was needed for its entry into force—to do so as soon as possible. The Committee adopted the annual draft resolution entitled “Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty” (75/87)—introduced by Australia, Mexico and New Zealand—by a vote of 173 to 2, with 3 abstentions; the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea and the United States cast the only negative votes. The United States voted against that draft resolution for the first time since 2008, contending that the Treaty had failed to result in consequences for non-transparent, irresponsible nuclear-testing activities allegedly conducted by China and the Russian Federation.⁴⁶

Nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation

Many Member States recalled the seventy-fifth anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The nuclear-weapon States, on one hand, reaffirmed their commitment to nuclear disarmament and stressed their achievements, reiterating the view that nuclear disarmament could be achieved only through a gradual, step-by-step approach.⁴⁷ However, some non-nuclear-weapon States expressed deep concern about non-compliance by nuclear-weapon States with their legal obligations and unequivocal undertakings regarding nuclear disarmament, as well as the abrogation of some disarmament and arms control agreements. On behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, Indonesia said that the Movement remained extremely concerned about the threat to humanity posed by the continued existence of nuclear weapons and their possible use or threat of use. Stating that the nuclear-weapon States had failed to make concrete and systematic progress towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons through their “step-by-step” approach, the Movement called for a new and comprehensive approach to nuclear disarmament.⁴⁸

The Committee largely followed past voting patterns in adopting three long-running omnibus draft resolutions on nuclear disarmament, respectively introduced by the New Agenda Coalition, Myanmar and Japan. The New Agenda

⁴⁶ For the voting results, see [A/C.1/75/PV.11](#). For the explanation of the vote by the United States, see [A/C.1/75/PV.12](#). From 2017 to 2019, the United States abstained from voting on the resolution on the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. It sponsored the resolution from 2009 to 2016, while also co-sponsoring Security Council resolution [2310 \(2016\)](#). From 2001 to 2008, the United States consistently voted against the resolution. Australia, Mexico and New Zealand, the resolution’s lead sponsors in 2020, dropped a reference to Security Council resolution [2310 \(2016\)](#) after a separate vote was requested on the relevant paragraph.

⁴⁷ See the statements delivered to the First Committee during the general debate by China ([A/C.1/75/PV.5](#)), France ([A/C.1/75/INF/5](#)), the Russian Federation ([A/C.1/75/PV.3](#)), the United Kingdom ([A/C.1/75/INF/5](#)) and the United States ([A/C.1/75/INF/5](#)).

⁴⁸ The Non-Aligned Movement criticized nuclear-weapon States for not making progress in eliminating their nuclear weapons, not diminishing the role of nuclear weapons in their security, modernizing their nuclear arsenals and planning research on new nuclear warheads, and announcing their intention to develop new delivery vehicles for nuclear weapons ([A/C.1/75/PV.2](#)). The Movement noted that, despite tangible and indisputable positive developments on nuclear non-proliferation in past decades, forward movement on nuclear disarmament continued to be held hostage by misguided notions, including strategic stability. ([A/C.1/75/INF/5](#))

Coalition's annual draft resolution, entitled "Towards a nuclear-weapon-free world: accelerating the implementation of nuclear disarmament commitments" (75/65), was adopted by a vote of 128 to 34, with 15 abstentions. All five nuclear-weapon States voted against it, while other nuclear-armed States either voted against it or abstained.⁴⁹ The Committee approved the annual draft resolution, sponsored by Myanmar, entitled "Nuclear disarmament" (75/63) by a vote of 112 to 42, with 21 abstentions; China was the only nuclear-weapon State that supported it.⁵⁰ Japan's draft resolution on nuclear disarmament, entitled "Joint courses of action and future-oriented dialogue towards a world without nuclear weapons" (75/71), was approved by a vote of 139 to 5, with 33 abstentions.⁵¹ The draft resolution introduced by Japan received requests for separate votes on 15 paragraphs, the largest number of requests in one draft resolution, underscoring the pervasive divisions on a wide range of issues related to advancing nuclear disarmament efforts in line with article VI of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.⁵²

The members of the New Agenda Coalition also continued to promote the humanitarian initiative on nuclear disarmament. To that end, they co-sponsored two annual draft resolutions that the Committee subsequently approved: "Humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons" (75/39), introduced by Austria and adopted by a vote of 138 to 13, with 27 abstentions; and "Ethical imperatives

⁴⁹ India and Israel voted against that resolution, while the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Pakistan abstained.

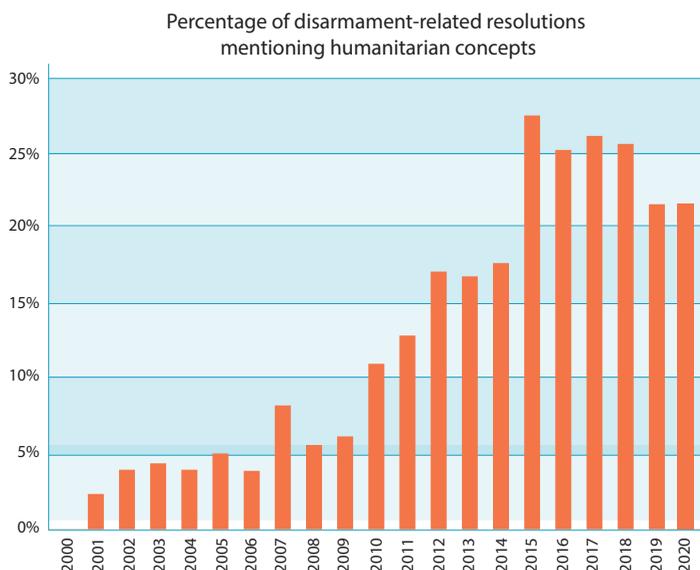
⁵⁰ The resolution continued to call upon nuclear-weapon States to cease immediately the qualitative improvement, development, production and stockpiling of nuclear weapons and take measures leading to their total elimination within a specified time frame. As in previous years, France, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States voted against it, along with their allies, particularly NATO Allies. China was the only nuclear-weapon State recognized by the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty that supported the resolution. Israel voted against it, while the Democratic Republic of Korea, India and Pakistan abstained.

⁵¹ Since 1994, Japan had annually introduced a comprehensive resolution on nuclear disarmament with various titles and iterations. In 2019, it introduced a new proposal adopted as resolution 74/63 of 12 December 2019, focusing on six courses of practical and concrete actions towards a successful conclusion of the 2020 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference. Those six courses of actions were: (a) transparency; (b) nuclear risk reduction; (c) the negotiation of a fissile material cut-off treaty; (d) the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty; (e) nuclear disarmament verification; and (f) disarmament and non-proliferation education.

⁵² It also received slightly less support in 2020, as several States abstained because they could not accept language reinterpreting existing obligations on nuclear disarmament and/or the language on the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty was not aligned with that of the resolution on the Treaty. The United Kingdom and the United States voted in favour of the resolution, while China and the Russian Federation cast negative votes, with France abstaining that year. Belgium, Canada, Chile, Germany, Netherlands, Norway and Switzerland abstained because the draft did not contain important principles to achieve the goals of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. So did Austria, Indonesia, Mexico and South Africa, all of which expressed concern about the weakening of language on nuclear disarmament obligations. Ireland also abstained, noting its concern about the weakened language on the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. ([A/C.1/75/PV.11](#) and [A/C.1/75/PV.12](#))

for a nuclear-weapon-free world” (75/73), introduced by South Africa and adopted by a vote of 126 to 37, with 13 abstentions. As in previous years, each draft resolution received support from a two-thirds majority of States, but nuclear-weapon States and many of their allies voted against or abstained from voting.

Humanitarian disarmament in the General Assembly



Preventing unnecessary suffering in armed conflict has been a goal of international law for nearly two centuries. In recent decades, many countries have been pushing to rein in specific means and methods of warfare based on their indiscriminate or disproportionate effects—particularly on civilians. Focusing their efforts on the humanitarian impact of certain weapons, those States progressively achieved the entry into force of treaties against anti-personnel landmines, cluster munitions and nuclear weapons.

During that same period, countries began referring to humanitarian principles in a growing number of General Assembly resolutions related to disarmament. Such references may reflect a growing understanding of “humanitarian disarmament” as an effective complement to approaches that pursue disarmament through measures such as strengthening confidence, trust and stability among States.

Meanwhile, the Non-Aligned Movement reaffirmed its principled positions on nuclear disarmament, including the call to convene a United Nations high-level international conference on nuclear disarmament as a follow-up to the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on that subject, held on 24 September 2013. The Committee adopted the relevant annual draft resolution (75/45), introduced by

Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (by a vote of 133 to 34, with 9 abstentions), with nuclear-weapon States and their allies either voting against it or abstaining.

Many States welcomed the successful convening, in November 2019, of the first annual session of the Conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction, pursuant to General Assembly decision 73/546 of 22 December 2018. Israel, however, reiterated that that initiative of the Arab Group went against the guidelines and principles, agreed upon by consensus, for nuclear-weapon-free zones.⁵³ As in 2018 and 2019, Israel and the United States voted against the draft resolution entitled “Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East” (75/33).⁵⁴ The Committee also adopted an annual draft resolution introduced by Egypt on behalf of the League of Arab States, entitled “The risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East” (75/84), by a vote of 147 to 6, with 23 abstentions. As in previous years, the United States and Israel voted against it.

Additionally, the Committee adopted several other draft resolutions on specific measures to promote nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Those included the draft resolutions entitled “Conclusion of effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons” (75/34), adopted by a vote of 119 to none, with 60 abstentions; “Reducing nuclear danger” (75/57), adopted by a vote of 116 to 49, with 12 abstentions; “Convention on the Prohibition of the Use of Nuclear Weapons” (75/75), adopted by a vote of 112 to 50, with 13 abstentions; “Follow-up to the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons” (75/66), adopted by a vote of 130 to 33, with 14 abstentions; and “Decreasing the operational readiness of nuclear weapons systems” (75/72), adopted by a vote of 166 to 5, with 4 abstentions. The Committee also adopted three draft resolutions on nuclear-weapon-free zones,⁵⁵ the only proposals on nuclear weapons approved without a vote.

The Committee also adopted two procedural decisions. “Nuclear disarmament verification” (75/516), introduced by Norway, was adopted by a vote of 174 to 2, with 2 abstentions.⁵⁶ “Treaty banning the production of fissile material

⁵³ In that regard, Israel added that any regional security framework could only result from a mutual political desire of all regional parties to engage with each other, taking into consideration the security concerns of every State and reflecting arrangements freely arrived at by all States concerned, as stipulated in the 1999 report of the United Nations Disarmament Commission. (A/C.1/75/PV.10)

⁵⁴ That resolution had been adopted by consensus annually until 2018 when the General Assembly adopted decision 73/546, by which it decided to convene a conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction.

⁵⁵ Those are the resolutions entitled “African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty” (75/30), “Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia” (75/67) and “Mongolia’s international security and nuclear-weapon-free status” (75/41).

⁵⁶ In 2019, the General Assembly adopted resolution 74/50, entitled “Nuclear disarmament verification”, by which it established another group of governmental experts to continue work

for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices” (75/515), introduced by Canada, Germany and the Netherlands, was adopted by a vote of 173 to 1, with 4 abstentions; Pakistan cast the only negative vote.

Many States continued to express their commitment to and support for the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action while criticizing the United States for its withdrawal and expressing concern about non-compliance by the Islamic Republic of Iran. China noted that the root causes of the current tensions related to the nuclear issue concerning the Islamic Republic of Iran were the United States’ (a) unilateral withdrawal from the Plan of Action, (b) reimposition of unilateral sanctions against the Islamic Republic of Iran, and (c) actions to prevent other parties from fulfilling their obligations under the Plan.⁵⁷ Furthermore, China expressed the view that the United States, having withdrawn from the Plan of Action, had no right to trigger the Security Council “snap back” mechanism.⁵⁸ Meanwhile, the Russian Federation warned that the United States’ withdrawal from the Plan of Action had jeopardized the agreement, further recalling that the Council had rejected the United States’ claim to the right to snap back previously lifted sanctions against the Islamic Republic of Iran.⁵⁹ Israel, however, supported the action of the United States to prevent the removal of the conventional arms embargo on the Islamic Republic of Iran, noting that the Security Council’s failure to extend the embargo gave the United States no choice but to exercise its legal right and initiate the snap-back mechanism.⁶⁰ Meanwhile, the European Union strongly urged the Islamic Republic of Iran to refrain from any further actions inconsistent with its commitments under the Plan of Action and return to full implementation of the agreement without delay.⁶¹

in 2021 and 2022. The Russian Federation voted against that resolution in 2019 and its follow-up decision in 2020.

⁵⁷ [A/C.1/75/PV.5](#).

⁵⁸ Security Council resolution [2231 \(2015\)](#), operative paras. 11–12.

⁵⁹ [A/C.1/75/PV.3](#).

⁶⁰ Israel elaborated on the Islamic Republic of Iran’s violations of its nuclear obligations relating to enrichment and stockpiling and research and development, as well as its commitment to the IAEA safeguards under the Additional Protocol. It also stressed that the Islamic Republic of Iran had continued concealing undeclared activities and violated its obligations under annex B of Security Council resolution [2231 \(2015\)](#) by continuing to proliferate advanced and destabilizing weapons to numerous terrorist organizations under its influence. That was referring to the uncrewed aerial vehicles and cruise missiles supplied by the Islamic Republic of Iran that were used in the various attacks on Saudi Arabia, including the attack on Aramco’s oil facilities, as confirmed in the report of the Secretary-General from June 2020. Israel also condemned dozens of tests by the Islamic Republic of Iran of ballistic missiles capable of carrying nuclear warheads. ([A/C.1/75/PV.10](#))

⁶¹ The European Union expressed grave concern about the Islamic Republic of Iran’s continued accumulation of low-enriched uranium, which was then more than tenfold over the limit of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, and the fact that its maximum enrichment level was above the limit set by the Plan of Action. The European Union also voiced concern about the continued enrichment in Fordow and the expansion of the Islamic Republic of Iran’s centrifuge research and development activities. ([A/C.1/75/PV.2](#))

Although the Committee's discussion on the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula was relatively subdued in tone, as in recent years, Member States continued to voice serious concern about the nuclear and ballistic-missile programmes of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea while calling for that country to fully comply with relevant Security Council resolutions. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea, for its part, referred to "undisguised acts of hostility" that continued to threaten peace in the southern half of the Korean Peninsula, including provocative joint military exercises and the steady introduction of modern, imported military hardware. Emphasizing the vital importance of self-defence capabilities as the fundamental guarantee for national security and development, the country vowed to continue building powerful defences and reiterated its possession of deterrent capabilities.⁶² Separately, the Republic of Korea noted with regret that the peace process of the Korean Peninsula had been stalled. Underscoring the importance of the milestone agreements reached between the leaders of the two Koreas and the United States in 2018, the Republic of Korea expressed hope that its neighbouring country would return to the negotiating table.⁶³ Meanwhile, China said that the United States bore the responsibility for the deadlock in its dialogue with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea regarding the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula. It further urged the United States to respond, with sincerity and concrete actions, to the legitimate concerns of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea over security and development.⁶⁴

In addition, the First Committee addressed missile-related issues during its deliberations on nuclear weapons, as it had for many years. Several States, expressing concern about the proliferation of missile technologies, called upon States to join the Hague Code of Conduct against ballistic-missile proliferation. Other States voiced concern that the development of hypersonic weapons could lead to unpredictability and increased likelihood of miscalculation. The Committee adopted the biennial draft resolution entitled "The Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation" (75/60), introduced by Switzerland, by a vote of 160 to 1, with 10 abstentions, with the Islamic Republic of Iran casting the only negative vote.⁶⁵ The Committee also approved a procedural decision entitled "Missiles" (75/518), introduced by the Islamic Republic of Iran, by a vote of 159

⁶² [A/C.1/75/PV.3](#).

⁶³ *Ibid.* During the seventy-fourth session of the First Committee, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea stated that it had no intention of repeating such negotiations until the United States took significant steps to completely and irreversibly cease its hostile policy towards it. ([A/C.1/74/PV.12](#))

⁶⁴ [A/C.1/75/PV.5](#).

⁶⁵ Explaining its negative vote, the Islamic Republic of Iran noted that the Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation was an offshoot of an exclusive and discriminatory export control regime, known as the Missile Technologies Control Regime, and that the Code was not, and could not be, considered an international instrument because it was negotiated outside the United Nations. ([A/C.1/75/PV.11](#))

to 3, with 9 abstentions, by which the General Assembly decided to include that item in the provisional agenda of its seventy-seventh session.⁶⁶

Other weapons of mass destruction

As in the previous several years, the First Committee witnessed tense exchanges over issues related to other weapons of mass destruction. While those exchanges particularly concerned how to respond to the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic, Member States also expressed sharp disagreement over an investigation into the use of Novichok in an attempt to assassinate Alexei Navalny, a citizen of the Russian Federation.

Although Member States continued to express support for the Chemical Weapons Convention,⁶⁷ the continued use of chemical weapons posed a serious challenge both to the Convention's authority and to the global norm against such weapons. The First Committee's consideration of other weapons of mass destruction thus underlined, as it had for the past several years, deep divisions over how the international community should respond to growing challenges to the total ban on chemical weapons enshrined in the Convention. Such divisions had become more pronounced in recent years, as incidents of chemical-weapon use occurred in locations beyond the Syrian Arab Republic, such as Iraq, Malaysia, the United Kingdom and, most recently, the Russian Federation. In particular, Member States were divided over how to investigate and attribute responsibility for the use of chemical weapons, including the appropriate role of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).

Many States expressed serious concern about the continued use of chemical weapons in violation of international law and with impunity, as well as the consequent erosion of the global norm against such weapons. Reiterating that the use of chemical weapons constituted a serious breach of international law, the European Union denounced the Syrian Arab Republic's continued violation of its obligations as a State party to the Chemical Weapons Convention. It stressed the importance of identifying and holding accountable the perpetrators of chemical attacks in the country.⁶⁸ Other States also demanded that those responsible for that atrocity must be held accountable, expressed support for the OPCW Technical Secretariat and underlined their confidence in its objectivity, impartiality, independence and technical expertise.

⁶⁶ Explaining its negative vote, the United States noted that it had traditionally refrained from actively participating in that decision, but could no longer sustain that course in the face of the destabilizing behaviour of the Islamic Republic of Iran. ([A/C.1/75/PV.11](#))

⁶⁷ Many States continued to urge the United States, as the only remaining State party possessing chemical weapons, to make concrete efforts to fulfil its obligations and complete the destruction of its chemical weapons by the specified deadline.

⁶⁸ The European Union strongly condemned the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian Arab Air Force as concluded by the first report of the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team on 8 April 2020. ([A/C.1/75/PV.2](#))

However, the Syrian Arab Republic insisted that it had not used and would not use chemical weapons. Noting that it had joined the Chemical Weapons Convention in 2013, it said that it had fulfilled its resulting obligations and no longer possessed such weapons.⁶⁹ Emphasizing its continued cooperation with the OPCW Technical Secretariat and the Declaration Assessment Team to ensure that the outstanding issues were resolved, the Syrian Arab Republic accused the United States and Western countries of politically targeting it by promoting illegal mechanisms, such as the OPCW [Investigation and Identification Team](#), and promoting and imposing lies with pressure and threats. China and the Russian Federation also expressed deep concern about the situation in OPCW, reiterating their opposition to political manipulation of the chemical-weapon issue concerning the Syrian Arab Republic for geopolitical purposes.

In addition, several States, particularly the United States and its allies, condemned the attempt by the Russian Federation to assassinate opposition leader Alexei Navalny with a nerve agent. Referring to the report⁷⁰ in which OPCW confirmed that he had been poisoned by a Novichok nerve agent, the United States expressed confidence in the organization's findings. It also called on the Russian Federation to provide a full accounting of the poisoning and fulfil its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention by completely declaring and destroying its chemical weapons programme under international verification.⁷¹ The Russian Federation, however, firmly rejected the allegations of an assassination attempt and maintained that they were not substantiated by any evidence.⁷²

Against the backdrop of the long-running divisions over the issue of chemical weapons concerning the Syrian Arab Republic and the poisoning of Alexei Navalny, the First Committee adopted—by vote for a seventh consecutive year—the annual draft resolution entitled “Implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and Their Destruction” (75/55), introduced by Poland, by a vote of 146 to 8, with 26 abstentions. By that resolution, the General Assembly, inter alia, reaffirmed its strongest condemnation of the use of chemical weapons by anyone under any circumstances. The Assembly also strongly condemned

⁶⁹ The Syrian Arab Republic stated that the Special Coordinator of the OPCW-United Nations Joint Mission on eliminating the country's chemical weapons programme, Sigrid Kaag, confirmed in her report submitted to the Security Council in June 2014 that the Syrian Arab Republic had fully fulfilled its obligations, and that its stocks of those weapons had been destroyed aboard the United States vessel *MV Cape May* and others, as confirmed by OPCW, which oversaw the destruction of all chemical weapons production sites. (A/C.1/75/PV.8)

⁷⁰ OPCW, document S/1906/2020.

⁷¹ The United States further called on the Russian Federation to be completely transparent regarding such events and cooperate fully with OPCW without delay, obfuscation and misinformation of the facts. It described the poisoning of Alexei Navalny as a deliberate, heinous act that tragically mirrored the earlier attempted assassination of Sergei and Yulia Skripal in Salisbury, United Kingdom, in March 2018. (A/C.1/75/INF/5)

⁷² See the statement of the Russian Federation in the right of reply made on 12 October. (A/C.1/75/PV.5)

the use of a toxic chemical as a weapon against Alexei Navalny, as well as the use of chemical weapons in Iraq, Malaysia, the Syrian Arab Republic and the United Kingdom, including as reported by the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism and the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team in their respective reports.⁷³ The Committee approved the draft resolution by a vote of 146 to 8, with 26 abstentions; China, the Russian Federation and the Syrian Arab Republic voted against it. In addition, separate votes were requested for six paragraphs, all of which the Committee adopted by similarly divided votes⁷⁴ (for more information on issues related to chemical weapons, see chap. II).

The Russian Federation introduced a new draft resolution entitled “United Nations Secretary-General’s Mechanism for Investigation of Alleged Use of Chemical and Biological Weapons”,⁷⁵ calling for a rare update of that Mechanism to, inter alia, transfer responsibility for its investigations to the Security Council. The Committee rejected the proposal of the Russian Federation by a vote of 31 to 63, with 67 abstentions.⁷⁶ In that context, Member States expressed continued confidence in the role of the Secretary-General and the United Nations Secretariat in investigating such allegations. Furthermore, some States perceived the Russian Federation’s proposal as an attempt to weaken that instrument by undermining the right of any State to bring an allegation to the attention of the Secretary-General.

The COVID-19 pandemic heightened political rhetoric and raised tensions between China and the United States, which traded scathing allegations during

⁷³ In its operative paragraph 3, the resolution contained specific reference to the reports of the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism of 24 August 2016 (S/2016/738/Rev.1), 21 October 2016 (S/2016/888) and 26 October 2017 (S/2017/904, annex), as well as the first report of the Investigation and Identification Team of 8 April 2020 (S/2020/310, annex). In those reports, the Joint Investigative Mechanism and the Investigation and Identification Team attributed several incidents of chemical-weapon use to the Syrian Arab Armed Forces or to Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da’esh).

⁷⁴ Those six paragraphs are the following: the sixth preambular paragraph, by which the General Assembly re-emphasized its unequivocal support for the decision of the Director General of OPCW to continue the mission to establish the facts surrounding the allegations of the use of chemical weapons; the second operative paragraph, by which the Assembly condemned the use of a toxic chemical as a weapon against Alexei Navalny in the Russian Federation; the third operative paragraph, by which the Assembly condemned the use of chemical weapons in Iraq, Malaysia, the Syrian Arab Republic and the United Kingdom; the fourth operative paragraph, by which the Assembly took note with great concern of the reports of the OPCW Fact-finding Mission regarding alleged incidents in Ltamenah, Saraqib and Douma in the Syrian Arab Republic; the fifth operative paragraph, by which the Assembly recalled the adoption of the decision (C-SS-4/DEC.3) of the fourth special session of the Conference of the States Parties, entitled “Addressing the threat from chemical weapons use”, of 27 June 2018, and stressed the importance of its implementation; and the seventeenth operative paragraph, by which the Assembly expressed grave concerns that OPCW Technical Secretariat could not fully verify the accuracy of the declaration submitted by the Syrian Arab Republic.

⁷⁵ A/C.1/75/L.65.

⁷⁶ A/C.1/75/PV.12.

the general debate. Quoting a speech⁷⁷ to the General Assembly by the President of the United States, Donald Trump, the United States delegation asserted that in the earliest days of the virus, China had locked down travel domestically while allowing flights to leave China and “infect the world”.⁷⁸ China, vehemently denying the United States’ accusation, stated that the international community was highly concerned with the biological programmes of the military of the United States. In that context, China urged the United States to act in an open, transparent and responsible manner and fully clarify its activities in numerous biological laboratories overseas.⁷⁹

As the pandemic had highlighted the importance of biosafety and biosecurity, bringing into relief the need for strong global biosecurity governance, many States expressed support for the Biological Weapons Convention and underlined the importance of its universal adherence and full implementation. In addition, several States called for the resumption of multilateral negotiations to conclude a non-discriminatory, legally binding protocol to the Convention with an effective verification mechanism.⁸⁰ The Russian Federation called for the establishment of an open-ended working group to that end. It also urged Member States to support its initiatives to consolidate the Convention’s institutional foundation, create mobile biomedical units and a scientific advisory committee within its framework, and upgrade confidence-building measures to adopt relevant decisions at the next Review Conference in 2021.⁸¹

As in previous years, the Committee adopted, without a vote, the draft resolution entitled “Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction” (75/88), introduced by Hungary. The Committee also approved the biennial draft resolution entitled “Measures to uphold the authority of the 1925 Geneva Protocol” (75/46), introduced by Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, by a vote of 179 to none, with 3 abstentions (for more information on issues related to biological weapons, see chap. II).

The potential for terrorist threats involving weapons of mass destruction continued to receive significant international focus. Member States expressed serious concern about the potential acquisition of such weapons by non-State actors and underscored the need to fully implement Security Council resolution 1540 (2004). The Committee adopted two draft resolutions on that issue without a

⁷⁷ United States, Department of States, “Remarks by President Trump to the 75th Session of the United Nations General Assembly”, 22 September 2020.

⁷⁸ A/C.1/75/INF/5.

⁷⁹ A/C.1/75/PV.5.

⁸⁰ China urged the United States to stop impeding the resumption of such negotiations. It stressed the need to establish a scientific advisory body within the framework of the Biological Weapons Convention and develop a voluntary code of conduct to better regulate biological research activities and promote the sound development of biotechnologies. (A/C.1/75/PV.10)

⁸¹ See the statement of the Russian Federation on other weapons of mass destruction submitted in writing to the Committee (A/C.1/75/INF/5, pp. 270–271).

vote—namely, the annual draft resolution entitled “Measures to prevent terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction” (75/58), introduced by India, and the biennial draft resolution entitled “Preventing the acquisition by terrorists of radioactive sources” (75/70), introduced by France and Germany.

Conventional weapons

The First Committee considered a wide range of issues related to conventional weapons, including the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, conventional ammunition, the Arms Trade Treaty, anti-personnel landmines, cluster weapons and the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. In response to the situation concerning the COVID-19 pandemic, the Committee postponed the seventh Biennial Meeting of States to consider the national, regional and global implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons and decided to convene it from 26 to 30 July 2021.⁸² It also adopted, without a vote, a procedural decision to postpone to 2021 the work of the Group of Governmental Experts on Problems Arising from the Accumulation of Conventional Ammunition Stockpiles in Surplus (75/552), noting the impact of the pandemic on the Group’s ability to convene for 10 working days, as scheduled.⁸³

Member States also reiterated their strong support for the Programme of Action. The Committee adopted, without a vote, the annual omnibus draft resolution entitled “The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects” (75/241), introduced by Japan on behalf of three lead sponsors, Colombia, South Africa and itself. The issue of ammunition remained contentious, however, as Israel and the United States again voted against its seventh preambular paragraph, on the outcome document⁸⁴ of the third Review Conference of the Programme of

⁸² At the seventy-fourth session, the General Assembly decided to convene the seventh Biennial Meeting of States from 15 to 19 June by resolution 74/60, entitled “The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects”. On 14 May, pursuant to its decision 75/544 on the procedure for taking decisions during the pandemic, the Assembly adopted decision 75/552 through silence procedure, thereby postponing the seventh Biennial Meeting of States to a later date to be decided by the General Assembly during its seventy-fifth session. On 31 December 2020, the General Assembly adopted, without a vote, draft resolution “The Illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects” (75/241) after the Fifth Committee considered its programme budget implications.

⁸³ At the seventy-second session, by resolution 72/55, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to convene a group of governmental experts in 2020 on problems arising from the accumulation of conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus, and, at the seventy-fourth session, by resolution 74/65, requested him to report to the General Assembly on the work of the group upon its completion by resolution. On 31 December 2020, the General Assembly adopted, without a vote, the draft decision entitled “Problems arising from the accumulation of conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus” (75/552) after the Fifth Committee considered its programme budget implications.

⁸⁴ A/CONF.192/2018/RC/3, annex.

Action, owing to their opposition to that document's language on ammunition.⁸⁵ Divergent views were expressed in the Committee on whether ammunition should be addressed in the framework of the Programme of Action. However, Member States continued to affirm their support for the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines, as well as the ongoing General Assembly-mandated process to address the question of conventional ammunition, including the work of the Group of Governmental Experts established pursuant to resolution 72/55.

The majority of Member States continued to express strong support for the Arms Trade Treaty. In particular, by acceding to the Treaty in July, China was seen to have created significant impetus towards universal adherence.⁸⁶ Meanwhile, several States continued to express opposition to and reservations about the Treaty, stressing their concerns about its lack of balance between arms exporters and importers, a lack of clear definitions, and legal gaps. The Committee adopted the draft resolution entitled "The Arms Trade Treaty" (75/64), introduced by Sierra Leone, by a vote of 150 to 1, with 28 abstentions, with the United States casting the only negative vote.⁸⁷ By that resolution, the General Assembly noted the devastating global effect of the COVID-19 pandemic; welcomed the decisions taken by the sixth Conference of States Parties to the Treaty, held by written procedure from 17 to 21 August 2020; and noted that the seventh Conference of States Parties would be held in Geneva from 30 August to 3 September 2021 (for more information on the Arms Trade Treaty, see chap. III).

Additionally, the Committee adopted, without a vote, two annual draft resolutions, respectively entitled "Countering the threat posed by improvised explosive devices" (75/59), introduced by Afghanistan, and "Assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons and collecting them" (75/56), introduced by Mali. The Committee also approved the biennial draft resolution entitled "Information on confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms" (75/54), introduced by Argentina, without a vote.

The issue of anti-personnel landmines continued to attract the serious attention of the First Committee, as States expressed strong support for the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention following the twentieth anniversary in

⁸⁵ Explaining its vote, the United States said the issue of ammunition was outside the scope of the Programme of Action. (A/C.1/75/PV.3)

⁸⁶ In its statement during the general debate, China noted that its accession to the Arms Trade Treaty was a significant step in its active efforts to promote global arms trade governance and to safeguard international and regional peace and security. It further stated that, as a State party, China would faithfully fulfil its obligations and work closely with all parties to promote the universality and effectiveness of the Treaty. It expressed its readiness to assist developing countries within its capacity. (A/C.1/75/PV.5)

⁸⁷ Opposition to the Treaty was also indicated by the separate votes for all paragraphs referring to the Treaty in other resolutions on conventional arms, such as those entitled "The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects" (75/241) and "Assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons and collecting them" (75/56). Both resolutions were adopted without a vote as a whole.

2019 of its entry into force.⁸⁸ Iceland, on behalf of Nordic countries, welcomed the successful outcome⁸⁹ of the Convention's fourth Review Conference and called upon other States to join efforts to achieve a mine-free world by 2025. The Committee approved the draft resolution entitled "Implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction" (75/52), introduced by Norway and the Sudan, by a vote of 163 to none, with 17 abstentions. By the draft resolution, the General Assembly recalled the work of the fourth Review Conference⁹⁰ and invited and encouraged all interested parties to attend the eighteenth Meeting of the States Parties, to be held in Geneva from 16 to 20 November 2021.

The issue of cluster munitions drew renewed attention in light of allegations of their use in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, although neither Armenia nor Azerbaijan was party to the Convention on Cluster Munitions.⁹¹ The Committee adopted the draft resolution entitled "Implementation of the Convention on Cluster Munitions" (75/62), introduced by Switzerland, by 137 votes to none, with 39 abstentions. By that resolution, the General Assembly, noting that 2020 marked the tenth anniversary of the Convention's entry into force, invited and encouraged all interested parties to attend the second Review Conference of States Parties of the Convention, to be held in Lausanne, Switzerland, from 23 to 27 November 2020.⁹²

The Committee also adopted, without a vote, the annual draft resolution introduced by Pakistan entitled "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" (75/85). By that resolution, the Assembly recalled the decisions of the Convention's fifth Review Conference and 2019 Meeting of the High Contracting Parties.⁹³ It also noted that the two

⁸⁸ In addition, there were heated exchanges between Bangladesh and Myanmar on the alleged placement of landmines in their border areas. (A/C.1/75/PV.10).

⁸⁹ Final document of the fourth Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction (APLC/CONF/2019/5).

⁹⁰ At the fourth Review Conference of the States Parties, held in Oslo in November 2019, States parties reviewed the implementation of the Convention and adopted a declaration and an action plan for the period 2021–2024 to support the Convention's enhanced implementation and promotion.

⁹¹ The issue of cluster munitions was raised in broader accusations between Armenia and Azerbaijan regarding their military conflict, which began in September. For the statement by Armenia to the general debate, see A/C.1/75/PV.4. For the statement by Azerbaijan, see A/C.1/75/PV.8.

⁹² Owing to the COVID-19 situation, States parties agreed that the second Review Conference would take place in two parts: from 25 to 27 November 2020, in a virtual format, and from 4 to 5 February 2021 at the United Nations Office at Geneva. The first part of the Review Conference was held, but States parties agreed to further postpone the second part until the health situation allowed it to be held safely.

⁹³ At their meeting in 2019, the High Contracting Parties to the Convention adopted by consensus the 11 guiding principles recommended by the Group of Governmental Experts on emerging

sessions of the Group of Governmental Experts on Emerging Technologies in the Area of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems had to be rescheduled owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, along with their Meeting of the Group of Experts on Amended Protocol II to the Convention and the Meeting of Experts on Protocol V.

Member States also continued to express concern about the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, particularly in current conflicts in violation of international humanitarian law. Austria noted with satisfaction that the momentum built during the Vienna Conference on Protecting Civilians in Urban Warfare, convened in October 2019, continued during the consultations, held in Geneva and led by Ireland, on a political declaration. Ireland, having led work to elaborate a political declaration, as supported in Action 14 of the Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament, informed the Committee that a draft political declaration had been prepared following consultations in Geneva. It added that, although face-to-face work to conclude the declaration had been interrupted by the pandemic, participants were working to maintain momentum to hold final consultations as soon as possible (see chap. III for more information on conventional arms issues and chap. V for more information on autonomous weapons).⁹⁴

Other issues

Outer space

The First Committee's consideration of issues related to outer space (disarmament aspects) underscored an increased interest in taking forward effective measures despite divisions between Member States over the focus and form of such measures. Those divisions were reflected, as in past years, in a fundamental difference of views on the need for a new arms control treaty on outer space. China and the Russian Federation continued to steadfastly advocate—based on a draft treaty⁹⁵ they had introduced in 2008—for a legal ban on placing weapons in outer space and on using or threatening force against outer space objects. But the United States and its allies described the draft treaty as flawed while supporting the pursuit of measures to address all threats to space systems, whether they emanated from satellites or the Earth.

Despite those divisions, the Committee adopted a new draft resolution, introduced by the United Kingdom and entitled “Reducing Space Threats through Norms, Rules and Principles of Responsible Behaviours” (75/36). By the new resolution, the General Assembly, *inter alia*, encouraged Member States to study existing and potential threats and security risks to space systems, as well as requested the Secretary-General to seek the views of Member States and to submit

technologies in the area of lethal autonomous weapon systems, as well as the decision to continue discussions and work on recommendations towards the Review Conference of the Convention in 2021.

⁹⁴ A/C.1/75/PV.4.

⁹⁵ CD/1839.

a substantive report to the General Assembly at its seventy-sixth session. The Committee adopted that draft resolution by a vote of 150 to 12, with 8 abstentions. China and the Russian Federation did not support the draft resolution⁹⁶ (for more information, see chap. V).

The deliberations in the Committee were otherwise marked by mutual accusations among the major space-faring States. The United States, for example, asserted that the Russian Federation had tested space-based weapons twice in recent years, even as it proposed measures to prevent the weaponization of space through legally binding arms control.⁹⁷ The Russian Federation, for its part, said the United States was taking actions aimed at ensuring “dominance [and] military superiority” to gain “total supremacy in outer space”. Noting that the United States and its Western allies increasingly regarded outer space as an arena for combat operations, the Russian Federation stressed the continued role of the United States in blocking negotiations on a legally binding treaty on preventing an arms race in outer space.⁹⁸ China, echoing the criticism by the Russian Federation, condemned the United States for describing outer space as a new war-fighting domain,⁹⁹ establishing an independent Space Force and a space command, and planning to deploy a missile-defence system in space. In that context, China urged the United States to stop impeding the arms control process and join multilateral efforts to negotiate an international legal instrument based on the draft treaty proposed by the Russian Federation and China.¹⁰⁰

Reflecting those divisions, the Committee adopted all five draft resolutions concerning outer space issues by a vote. The annual draft resolutions entitled “Prevention of an arms race in outer space” (75/35) and “Transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities” (75/69) received overwhelming support.¹⁰¹ Both sponsored by the Russian Federation, the draft

⁹⁶ In an attempt to block action on the United Kingdom draft, the Russian Federation proposed a no-action motion because the text was not related to preventing an arms race in outer space. It further argued that the text was focused on measures related to the work of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and that the resolution should therefore be addressed in the Fourth Committee. That no-action motion was defeated by a vote of 102 to 15, with 33 abstentions. (A/C.1/PV.13)

⁹⁷ In that context, the United States also referenced the resolution on “No first placement of weapons in outer space” (75/37), introduced each year by the Russian Federation. See the United States thematic statement on outer space submitted to the Committee in writing (A/C.1/75/INF/5, pp. 309-310).

⁹⁸ A/C.1/75/PV.3.

⁹⁹ United States, The White House, “Remarks by President Trump at Signing Ceremony for S.1790, National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020”, Prince George’s County, Maryland, 20 December 2019.

¹⁰⁰ A/C.1/75/PV.5.

¹⁰¹ The First Committee adopted the draft resolution entitled “Prevention of an arms race” by a vote of 174 to 2 and the draft resolution entitled “Transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities” by a vote of 169 to 2, with 6 abstentions. The United States and Israel voted against both, in line with voting patterns from 2018 and 2019. (A/C.1/75/PV.13)

resolution entitled “No first placement of weapons in outer space” (75/37) was adopted by a vote of 122 to 32, with 21 abstentions,¹⁰² and the procedural decision entitled “Further practical measures for the prevention of an arms race in outer space” (75/514) was approved by a vote of 139 to 2, with 33 abstentions.

Information and communications technologies

International security issues concerning information and communications technologies continued to receive considerable attention in the First Committee, with States expressing concern about an increase in malicious activities during the COVID-19 pandemic. While the Committee adopted two procedural decisions without a vote to postpone meetings of the relevant ongoing processes owing to the pandemic,¹⁰³ it separately adopted two draft resolutions on information and communications technologies by a vote, underscoring continuing divisions over related questions.

The First Committee approved the draft resolution sponsored by the United States entitled “Advancing Responsible State Behaviour in Cyberspace in the Context of International Security” (75/32) by a vote of 153 to 11, with 9 abstentions. By that measure, the General Assembly would decide on any future work after considering the outcomes of the relevant Group of Governmental Experts and Open-ended Working Group, both of which were established in 2018 and due to finish their work in 2021.¹⁰⁴ The Russian Federation, however, introduced a new version of the draft resolution entitled “Developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security” (75/240), by which the General Assembly would establish another open-ended working group for a period of five years starting in 2021 after the

¹⁰² Explaining their vote against that resolution, the United States, speaking also on behalf of Canada, France and the United Kingdom, stated that the resolution had failed to define what constituted a weapon in outer space and would increase mistrust and misunderstanding. Germany noted, on behalf of the European Union, that it did not support the resolution and highlighted the importance of transparency and confidence-building measures, referring to the previous work of the Union for an international code of conduct. (A/C.1/75/PV.13)

¹⁰³ Those two draft decisions—namely, “Open-ended Working Group on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security established pursuant to General Assembly resolution 73/27 of 5 December 2018” (75/550) and “Group of Governmental Experts on Advancing Responsible State Behaviour in Cyberspace in the Context of International Security established pursuant to General Assembly resolution 73/266 of 22 December 2018” (75/551)—were adopted by the General Assembly on 31 December, following a review of their respective programme budget implications by the Fifth Committee. Thereby, the Assembly approved the new schedules of those groups established by their previous resolutions on those subjects.

¹⁰⁴ In 2018, the First Committee adopted resolutions to establish separate processes for addressing issues related to information and communications technologies: an open-ended working group set up by the resolution entitled “Developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security” (73/27), sponsored by the Russian Federation; and a group of governmental experts mandated by the resolution entitled “Advancing responsible State behaviour in cyberspace in the context of international security” (73/266), sponsored by the United States.

conclusion of the current Open-ended Working Group's work. The Committee adopted that draft resolution by a vote of 104 to 50, with 20 abstentions. Several opposing or abstaining States expressed uneasiness both about the proposal's long time frame and the possibility of prejudging the outcomes of the two current groups that had yet to complete their work. In addition, some States expressed concern that establishing a new five-year process on information and communications technologies would undermine, for the foreseeable future, the prospect of returning to one consensus resolution on the issue.¹⁰⁵

Despite serious remaining differences over how to address issues related to information and communications technologies, the Committee again saw general agreement among Member States over the conclusions contained in the relevant reports¹⁰⁶ of previous groups of governmental experts. In particular, Member States reiterated that international law, in particular the Charter of the United Nations, was applicable and essential to the maintenance of peace and stability and to the promotion of an open, secure, stable, accessible and peaceful environment with respect to information and communications technologies. Furthermore, there was broad agreement that the separate processes established by two competing resolutions in 2018—on an open-ended working group and a group of governmental experts—had proven to be mutually beneficial and could serve complementary functions, as they had developed a cooperative and synergetic relationship since their creation (to learn more on information and communications technologies, see chap. V).

Other disarmament measures

The COVID-19 pandemic prompted many Member States to reflect on the significant resources allocated to militaries and the potential benefits of reducing and diverting such expenditures towards socioeconomic development. In the First Committee, several States voiced concern about global military expenditures, which had their largest increase in a decade in 2019. In that regard, the Committee adopted the annual draft resolution entitled “Relationship between disarmament and development” (75/43), sponsored by the Non-Aligned Movement, without a vote.¹⁰⁷

The Committee also adopted two annual draft resolutions sponsored by the Non-Aligned Movement: “Observance of environmental norms in the drafting and implementation of agreements on disarmament and arms control” (75/53), adopted without a vote; and “Promotion of multilateralism in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation” (75/47), adopted by a vote of 125 to 4, with 50 abstentions. The Movement also adopted the biennial resolution entitled “Effects of the use

¹⁰⁵ [A/C.1/75/PV.14](#).

¹⁰⁶ [A/65/201](#), [A/68/98](#) and [A/70/174](#).

¹⁰⁷ None of the discussions on the consequences of the pandemic or their implications for military spending was reflected in that resolution, as the text was a technical rollover from the previous year without substantive updates.

of armaments and ammunition containing depleted uranium” (75/42) by a vote of 150 to 4, with 23 abstentions.

Additionally, the annual draft resolution entitled “Role of science and technology in the context of international security and disarmament” (75/38), introduced by India, was adopted without a vote, and the draft resolution submitted by the Russian Federation entitled “Strengthening and developing the system of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation treaties and agreements” (75/68) was approved by a vote of 179 to none, with 3 abstentions. The Committee also adopted a procedural decision entitled “Compliance with non-proliferation, arms limitation and disagreements and commitments” (75/517), introduced by the United States, by a vote of 169 to 1, with 10 abstentions, thus postponing to the seventy-sixth session consideration of the eponymous triennial resolution last adopted as resolution 72/32 of 4 December 2017.

In the area of training, information and outreach, the Committee also adopted, without a vote, the biennial draft resolutions entitled “United Nations disarmament fellowship, training and advisory service” (75/74), “United Nations Disarmament Information Programme” (75/80) and “United Nations studies on disarmament and non-proliferation education” (75/61).

In 2020, the world marked the twentieth anniversary of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security, as well as the tenth anniversary of General Assembly resolution 65/69 on women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. In that context, many delegations continued to emphasize the importance of promoting gender equality and women’s meaningful participation in all aspects of work in the field of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control.¹⁰⁸ Yet, while the First Committee adopted, without a vote, the biennial draft resolution entitled “Women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control” (75/48), introduced by Trinidad and Tobago, the Committee took separate votes on four paragraphs in the text. Of those paragraphs, one contained the statement that women should be perceived not only as victims but as essential in preventing armed violence. Another paragraph contained the statement that the pandemic had further exacerbated the socioeconomic conditions of vulnerable groups, resulting in an alarming increase in domestic and gender-based violence.¹⁰⁹ States made no joint statement on gender and disarmament during the

¹⁰⁸ Sweden, for example, noted that, as a champion for dialogue and gender, it would continue to work with the United Nations, Member States and civil society in promoting the Secretary-General’s Agenda. It added that applying a gender equality perspective in all aspects of arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament would help improve the collective work on the issue and strengthen international peace and security. (A/C.1/75/PV.6)

¹⁰⁹ The Committee also voted on the paragraph containing a reference to actions 36 and 37 of the Secretary-General’s agenda for disarmament on the full and equal participation of women in decision-making processes and gender parity in disarmament bodies established by the Secretariat. It also voted on the paragraph by which States parties of the Arms Trade Treaty were encouraged to ensure the full and equal participation of women and men in pursuing the

Committee's seventy-fifth session, departing from recent past practice¹¹⁰ (for more information on gender, see chap. VI).

Regional disarmament

The First Committee adopted three annual draft resolutions on regional disarmament introduced by Pakistan. Two of them entitled "Regional disarmament" (75/49) and "Confidence-building measures in the regional and subregional context" (75/51) were approved without a vote. The third draft resolution, entitled "Conventional arms control at the regional and subregional levels (75/50), was adopted by a vote of 159 to 1, with 2 abstentions; India cast the only negative vote, as in previous years.¹¹¹

The Committee also adopted the annual draft resolution entitled "Strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region" (75/86), introduced by Algeria, by 160 to none, with 2 abstentions, as well as the procedural decision entitled "Maintenance of international security—good-neighbourliness, stability and development in South-Eastern Europe" (75/513), introduced by North Macedonia, without a vote.

Disarmament machinery

The COVID-19 pandemic prompted the First Committee and the Conference on Disarmament to curtail the scope of their work while also resulting in the cancellation of the substantive session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission. Amid those significant challenges to the disarmament machinery, Member States demonstrated their determination to fulfil the various mandates, adapting their working modalities as necessary.

Nonetheless, Member States continued to voice grave concern over the prolonged stagnation of two principal multilateral disarmament bodies—namely, the Conference on Disarmament and the United Nations Disarmament Commission—calling urgently for the revitalization of their work. In particular, States expressed disappointment that the Conference on Disarmament had again concluded its session without reaching consensus on a programme of work,

objective and purpose of all provisions of the Treaty, including those on serious acts of gender-based violence. See [A/C.1/75/PV.14](#).

¹¹⁰ In 2018, a joint statement on gender and disarmament was delivered by Namibia on behalf of 50 States. In 2019, a similar statement was delivered by Trinidad and Tobago on behalf of 79 delegations.

¹¹¹ India also voted against its paragraph requesting the Conference on Disarmament to consider the formulation of principles that could serve as a framework for regional agreements on conventional arms control. Explaining its vote, India stated that there was no need for the Conference to engage in formulating principles on regional disarmament. It noted that, as the world's single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum, the Conference should negotiate disarmament instruments of global application. It also said that the United Nations Disarmament Commission had, in 1993, adopted consensus guidelines and recommendations on regional disarmament. ([A/C.1/75/PV.15](#))

preventing substantive work from commencing. Several States recognized and expressed appreciation for the coordinated efforts of the six presidents of the 2020 session, particularly under pandemic restrictions that had disrupted the Conference's work for over three months. Additionally, States encouraged the six presidents-designate for 2021¹¹² to bring forward a proposal for a programme of work while calling upon all Conference delegations to support the presidents' effort by exercising flexibility and showing creativity. The Committee adopted, without a vote, the annual draft resolution entitled "Report of the Conference on Disarmament" (75/83), introduced by Belarus in its capacity as current President of the Conference. The Committee also approved the triennial draft resolution entitled "Prohibition of the development and manufacture of new types of weapons of mass destruction and new systems of such weapons: report of the Conference on Disarmament" (75/31), introduced by Belarus, by a vote of 170 to 3, with Israel, Ukraine and the United States voting against it.

Meanwhile, First Committee delegates expressed frustration and disappointment that the United Nations Disarmament Commission was not able to hold its substantive session in 2020 for a second consecutive year, especially after its 2019 session had been cancelled owing to the non-issuance of visas to representatives of certain Member States. The General Assembly had decided in April to postpone the Commission's substantive session to a later date to be decided by the General Assembly during its seventy-fifth session.¹¹³

At the seventy-fifth session, however, the non-issuance of visas by the host country again emerged as the central issue in the First Committee's consideration of future work by the Disarmament Commission. Australia submitted a draft decision entitled "Disarmament Commission",¹¹⁴ by which the General Assembly would decide to hold a substantive session for a period not exceeding three weeks in 2021, namely 5 to 23 April. The Russian Federation also submitted a competing draft decision, entitled "2021 session of the Disarmament Commission",¹¹⁵ proposing the same dates as in Australia's draft while expressing serious concern regarding the non-issuance of entry visas to certain Member States. By the Russian Federation's draft, the Assembly would also request the Secretary-General to deal with the problems with the issuance of visas to representatives of Member States and call upon the host country to ensure the issuance of visas to representatives of Member States in accordance with the Headquarters Agreement.¹¹⁶ In addition,

¹¹² Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Canada and Chile.

¹¹³ On 2 April, pursuant to its decision 74/544 on the procedure for taking decisions during the pandemic, the General Assembly adopted decision 74/546 through silence procedure, thereby postponing the 2020 session of the Disarmament Commission to a later date to be decided by the General Assembly during its seventy-fifth session.

¹¹⁴ [A/C.1/75/L.49](#).

¹¹⁵ [A/C.1/75/L.48](#).

¹¹⁶ General Assembly resolution 169 (II) of 31 October 1947, entitled "[Agreement between the United Nations and the United States of America regarding the Headquarters of the United Nations](#)".

the Russian Federation proposed amending Australia's draft decision to insert the paragraphs contained in its own draft decision¹¹⁷ on the issue of visas.

The Committee adopted the draft decision submitted by Australia entitled "Disarmament Commission" (75/519) without a vote, despite a request for a vote by the Russian Federation.¹¹⁸ The Committee also rejected both the amendment¹¹⁹ proposed by the Russian Federation to the draft decision sponsored by Australia by a vote of 56 to 16, with 70 abstentions, and the Russian Federation's draft decision entitled "2021 session of the Disarmament Commission"¹²⁰ by a vote of 55 to 34, with 67 abstentions. As in the previous year, many States concurred with the Russian Federation on the importance of unimpeded access to the United Nations Headquarters and equal participation in the work of the Commission, but their votes on the Russian Federation's draft decision and amendment indicated that they did not necessarily agree with its insistence that the issue be discussed by the First Committee. In that regard, some States expressed the view that the Committee on Relations with the Host Country and the Sixth Committee should deal with the matter.¹²¹

In considering proposals on the disarmament machinery, the First Committee adopted the annual draft resolution entitled "Convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament" (75/44), introduced by Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, by a vote of 169 to none, with 3 abstentions. It also approved the quinquennial draft resolution entitled "Fortieth anniversary of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research" (75/82), sponsored by France and Germany, by a vote of 171 to none, with 2 abstentions, with Israel and the United States abstaining.¹²² The Committee additionally adopted, without a vote, four annual draft resolutions on the United Nations regional centres for peace and disarmament,¹²³ as well as the annual draft resolution entitled "Regional confidence-building measures: activities of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central

¹¹⁷ [A/C.1/75/L.48](#).

¹¹⁸ The Russian Federation dissociated itself from the consensus on Australia's draft decision ([A/C.1/75/L.49](#)), as it considered that it did not add value. The Russian Federation reiterated that position when the General Assembly adopted the draft decision (75/519) without a vote at the plenary meeting held on 7 December 2020. ([A/C.1/75/PV.15](#) and [A/75/PV.37](#))

¹¹⁹ [A/C.1/75/L.79](#).

¹²⁰ [A/C.1/75/L.48](#).

¹²¹ [A/C.1/75/PV.15](#).

¹²² The United States also voted against the resolution's eighth operative paragraph inviting the Secretary-General to propose an increase in the Institute's subvention, with Colombia, Israel and Japan abstaining. ([A/C.1/75/PV.15](#))

¹²³ The four resolutions are entitled "United Nations regional centres for peace and disarmament" (75/81), introduced by Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement; "United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa" (75/76), introduced by Nigeria on behalf of the Group of African States; "United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean" (75/77) introduced by Peru on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States; and "United Nations Regional Centres for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific" (75/78) introduced by Nepal.

Africa” (75/79), introduced by Angola on behalf of the members of the Economic Community of Central African States.

United Nations Disarmament Commission

The United Nations Disarmament Commission was unable to convene its substantive session in 2020 owing to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Commission met twice in February to prepare for its substantive session, which was to be held in April, but the body could not proceed to address organizational issues owing to the objection of a Member State.¹²⁴

The Commission held its first meeting of 2020 on 18 February.¹²⁵ As no chair was elected for its 2019 session, the meeting was opened and chaired by the Director and Deputy to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs.

At the outset, the Russian Federation informed the Commission that a situation concerning the non-issuance of visas to part of its delegation had not changed since 2019.¹²⁶ Stating that the visa issue called into question the ability of the Russian Federation to take meaningful part in the Commission’s work, the country proposed postponing the organizational meeting until the matter was resolved. Responding to a question on that position, the delegation of the Russian Federation clarified that the Commission should postpone its organizational meeting at least until the Committee on Relations with the Host Country held an extraordinary meeting to address the visa issue. Furthermore, it stressed that there was currently no consensus on holding the organizational meeting.

The Acting Chair attempted to proceed in addressing organizational matters, such as electing the next chair, but there was no agreement to do so among Member States. The European Community, supporting the Acting Chair’s effort, urged Member States to launch the Commission’s work by electing its chair and instead raise the visa issue at the Committee on Relations with the Host Country. Likewise, Australia and Japan called on Member States to proceed with the organizational meeting and elect a chair. The Russian Federation received support for its proposal from Belarus, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, China, Cuba, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Nicaragua and the Syrian Arab Republic, meanwhile underlining that the Disarmament Commission had always emphasized the importance of consensus for the past 42 years.

¹²⁴ At its seventy-fourth session, the General Assembly decided, by its decision [74/511](#) of 12 December 2019, that the Disarmament Commission would hold a substantive session for a period not exceeding three weeks during 2020, from 6 to 24 April. It further noted that the Commission, for organizational reasons, had been unable to commence its substantive session and submit its report in 2019, as requested in its resolution [73/82](#).

¹²⁵ For details on the meeting, see its verbatim record [A/CN.10/PV.376](#).

¹²⁶ The Russian Federation criticized the United States for actively hindering the arrival of the head of its delegation, Konstantin Vorontsov, and requested that the meeting be delayed until the United States resolved that situation, allowing all delegations to fully participate in the substantive session. ([A/CN.10/PV.376](#))

Following a divisive and inconclusive debate on deferring the organizational meeting, the Commission agreed to suspend discussion for the next 10 days, as the Committee on Relations with the Host Country addressed the visa issue.¹²⁷

On 28 February, the Disarmament Commission was again convened to resume the consideration of organizational matters.¹²⁸ At the suggestion of the Russian Federation, the Chair of the Committee on Relations with the Host Country briefed the Commission on the latest deliberations of the Committee.¹²⁹ Then, after informing the Commission that the visa situation remained unchanged, the Russian Federation proposed postponing the organizational meeting for a “reasonable and finite” time to provide the United States with the opportunity to fulfil its obligations.¹³⁰

Australia objected to the motion to postpone the organizational meeting and called for a procedural vote thereon, pursuant to Rule 118 of the rules of procedures of the General Assembly.¹³¹ Denying having put forward such a motion in accordance with the rules of procedure, the Russian Federation insisted that it was calling for common sense. In that context, it requested support for postponing all preparatory and substantive negotiations of the Commission until all delegations could attend the session in the composition decided by their capitals.

Pointing out that the Russian Federation had confirmed that it was not making a procedural motion to suspend or adjourn the meeting, the United States

¹²⁷ Cyprus, then Chair of the Committee on Relations with the Host Country, proposed a 10-minute suspension for consultations. Following the suspension, the Russian Federation agreed to a proposal to postpone the meeting for 10 days with a view to a meeting of the Committee on Relations with the Host Country. No objection was raised to that proposal, although Australia noted that the outcome of the meeting of that Committee should have no bearing on the work of the Disarmament Commission. (A/CN.10/PV.376)

¹²⁸ At the outset, the Acting Chair announced that the Group of Asia-Pacific States endorsed the candidatures of the delegates from the Philippines and Jordan as Vice-Chairs. But the Russian Federation, exercising the point of order, objected to moving to their election because the Commission first needed to address the situation that still did not allow the country to participate fully in the body’s work. (A/CN.10/PV.376 (Resumption 1))

¹²⁹ The Permanent Representative of Cyprus, in his capacity as Chair of the Committee on Relations with the Host Country, reported that at the request of the Russian Federation, he had convened a meeting of the Committee. At that meeting, the Legal Counsel informed its members that he and the Secretary-General had been engaged with the host country authorities about visa delays and travel restrictions. He added that the Secretary-General had been fully briefed and that he had met with the Permanent Representative of the United States regarding that matter. (A/CN.10/PV.376 (Resumption 1))

¹³⁰ The Russian Federation stated that, following the meeting of the Committee on Relations with the Host Country, it had concluded that the host country was once again refusing the delegation of the Russian Federation the right to participate at the appropriate expert level in the substantive discussions of the Disarmament Commission. It believed that that was a blatant violation of the United States’ obligations. (A/CN.10/PV.376 (Resumption 1))

¹³¹ Rule 188 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly stipulates: “During the discussion of any matter, a representative may move the suspension or the adjournment of the meeting. Such motions shall not be debated but shall be immediately put to the vote. The Chairman may limit the time to be allowed to the speaker moving the suspension or adjournment of the meeting.”

suggested proceeding with the organizational meeting scheduled for that day, as well as the provisional agenda. In that connection, it called for a vote on a motion it had formally put forward to proceed with the election of the chair and other officers of the Bureau.

Restating its opposition to taking a decision by a vote in the Disarmament Commission, the Russian Federation, referring to paragraph 118 (b) of the final document of the tenth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament,¹³² asked for a vote to be called on whether consensus was the basis for decision-making in the Disarmament Commission.

Challenging the Russian Federation's request as out of order,¹³³ Australia stressed that that was not a question within the competence of the Commission, but rather a question of whether the Russian Federation's proposal could be considered at that moment. In that connection, Australia insisted that the Disarmament Commission was subject to its rules of procedure contained in the final document of the tenth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament.

At that point, the Acting Chair underscored the need for a chair from a Member State to conduct consultations on such matters.

The Russian Federation then suggested returning to its original proposal to postpone the meeting for a reasonable period, but its motion to vote on the Commission's decision-making mechanism instead triggered a debate on the body's competence to take decisions on its rules of procedure established by the General Assembly. The exchange thus highlighted differences as to whether the Commission must preserve the practice of consensus, as well as whether the visa issue was substantive or procedural in nature.

Egypt, presenting its perspective, emphasized that the Disarmament Commission was not competent to reopen the outcomes of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. In that regard, it expressed concern that the Commission, by voting on its decision-making mechanism, would directly or indirectly imply that it was imposing an interpretation of the rules of procedure contained in the final document of the special session.¹³⁴

¹³² Paragraph 118 (b) of the Final Document of the tenth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (resolution [S-10/2](#)) reads: "The Disarmament Commission shall function under the rules of procedure relating to the committees of the General Assembly with such modifications as the Commission deem necessary and shall make every effort to ensure, insofar as possible, decisions on substantive issues be adopted by consensus."

¹³³ Australia maintained that the Russian Federation would have to raise that matter under the agenda item "Any other business", an item the Commission could not take up owing to the objection of the Russian Federation to adopting an agenda. ([A/CN.10/PV.376 \(Resumption 1\)](#))

¹³⁴ Explaining one possible implication of imposing a new interpretation of rule 118, Egypt stressed the possibility of inadvertently eliminating the distinction between substantive and procedural matters under the rules of procedure of the General Assembly. In that context, it expressed concern that, if the Disarmament Commission adopted the proposal of the Russian Federation and Member States were all in favour of continuing the practice of consensus in

Malaysia, acknowledging the point raised by Egypt, also questioned whether the Disarmament Commission was competent to take a decision on those rules. Japan and Mexico echoed the concern, but the Russian Federation maintained that putting the question of consensus to a vote would clarify, not change, the decisions of the tenth special session.

Member States went on to largely reaffirm positions they had expressed 10 days earlier, both on the visa issue and the rules of procedure relating to the Commission's decision-making.

The United States reiterated the view, also shared by Angola on behalf of the Group of African States, that the appropriate forum for addressing concerns about visas was not the Disarmament Commission, but the Committee on Relations with the Host Country.

However, other States—particularly Cuba,¹³⁵ the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Syrian Arab Republic—supported the view of the Russian Federation that the visa issue was substantive, as it involved the principles of States' sovereign equality and full participation in the work of the United Nations. Those States thus expressed support for the Russian Federation's proposal, as it would provide more time to hold consultations and undertake diplomatic measures to resolve all organizational issues. China proposed that the Secretariat and the parties concerned engage in constructive mediation to resolve the relevant issues as soon as possible.

The ensuing discussion further highlighted the divergent views of States on the relevant rules of procedure. The United States joined Mexico to assert that the matter was clearly procedural. Meanwhile, Japan, Malaysia¹³⁶ and Mexico¹³⁷ expressed support for Australia's proposal to move on with planned business by voting both on the Russian Federation's proposal for a postponement and on the motion by the United States to proceed with electing a chair and other officers of the Bureau.

the Commission's decision-making, the body would establish the precedent of not taking a decision on any procedural matter by a vote. (A/CN.10/PV.376 (Resumption 1))

¹³⁵ Cuba said that, as a State affected by and victim to arbitrary, discriminatory and illegal policy in the implementation of the Headquarters Agreement, it condemned the use by the United States of its role as host country to selectively and arbitrarily apply the Agreement to prevent participation in the Commission's work under equal conditions by delaying or denying visas for representatives of a Member State. (A/CN.10/PV.376 (Resumption 1))

¹³⁶ Malaysia noted that its delegation had been guided by the outcome of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament in 1978, by which the Assembly provided for the Commission to make every effort to ensure that, insofar as possible, it adopted decisions on substantive issues by consensus. (A/CN.10/PV.376 (Resumption 1))

¹³⁷ Mexico said that a visa was not a substantive issue and there was no possibility of ensuring consensus, stressing the need to abide by the rules of procedure of the General Assembly. It also asked delegations to consider organizational decisions if the Commission could not continue moving forward on the substantive issues, and proposed making use of and profiting from the rules of procedure of the General Assembly in accordance with the decisions taken at the tenth special session of the General Assembly. (A/CN.10/PV.376 (Resumption 1))

Other States, including Belarus, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, China, Cuba and the Islamic Republic of Iran, instead stressed the need to preserve the practice of consensus, particularly as the issue under question was not a procedural concern but a matter of substance. Cuba, maintaining that there was no clear definition or agreed interpretation of the applicability of Rule 118, expressed support for the Russian Federation's proposal to suspend the meeting temporarily.

As the available time had expired, the Acting Chair ruled that the organizational meeting would be suspended to a later date, either on or before 6 April. There was no objection.

After the COVID-19 pandemic was declared, the President of the General Assembly, Tijjani Muhammad-Bande, decided to cancel all in-person meetings of the processes mandated by the General Assembly during its seventy-fourth session scheduled between 17 March and 17 April, including the 2020 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission.¹³⁸ On 2 April, pursuant to its decision [75/544](#) of 27 March on the procedure for taking decisions during the pandemic,¹³⁹ the Assembly adopted draft resolution [74/546](#) through silence procedure, thereby postponing the 2020 session of the Disarmament Commission to a later date to be decided by the General Assembly during its seventy-fifth session.¹⁴⁰

In October, during the seventy-fifth session of the First Committee, Australia, in its capacity as the last elected chair of the Commission, introduced a draft decision entitled "Disarmament Commission".¹⁴¹ On 10 November, the Committee adopted the Australian draft decision¹⁴² without a vote, thereby deciding that the Disarmament Commission shall hold a substantive session for a period not exceeding three weeks in 2021, namely from 5 to 23 April. The Committee adopted neither the competing draft decision, entitled "2020 session

¹³⁸ In his letter dated 17 March 2020 to Member States (United Nations, General Assembly, "[COVID-19 – Updates as of March 17](#)"), the President of the General Assembly informed them of that decision and, acknowledging that the postponement of the upcoming substantive session of the Disarmament Commission required the General Assembly's concurrence, attached a draft decision to postpone it to a period in 2021 to be decided by the Assembly at its seventy-fifth session.

¹³⁹ In his letter to Member States dated 24 March 2020 (United Nations, General Assembly, "[Procedure for Taking Decisions of the General Assembly During the Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) Pandemic](#)"), the President of the General Assembly proposed a draft decision to enable the General Assembly to adopt essential decisions by silence procedure, which was adopted as decision [74/544](#) on 27 March 2020.

¹⁴⁰ In his letter to Member States dated 2 April 2020 (United Nations, General Assembly, "[Disarmament Commission](#)"), the President of the General Assembly informed them that the silence procedure for the draft decision of the General Assembly on the Disarmament Commission ([A/74/L.43](#)) had been completed without any objection on that day. It was thus considered adopted by the Assembly as decision [74/546](#).

¹⁴¹ [A/C.1/75/L.49](#).

¹⁴² The Russian Federation dissociated itself from the consensus on Australia's draft decision (*ibid.*), as it considered that it did not add value. ([A/C.1/75/PV.15](#))

of the Disarmament Commission”,¹⁴³ nor a draft amendment to Australia’s draft decision,¹⁴⁴ both submitted by the Russian Federation.

On 7 December, the General Assembly formally adopted decision [75/519](#), entitled “Disarmament Commission”, without a vote.¹⁴⁵

Conference on Disarmament

The COVID-19 pandemic severely impacted the 2020 session of the Conference on Disarmament, resulting in reducing the number of plenary meetings and altering their format. While the first two presidents of the Conference were able to hold regular plenary meetings, the COVID-19 pandemic prevented any such meetings from being convened during the third presidency. In June, during the session’s fourth presidency, the introduction of new teleconferencing systems allowed the Conference to restart its plenary meetings in a hybrid format, becoming the first forum in the intergovernmental disarmament machinery to resume its work during the pandemic.

On 28 January, the Secretary-General of the Conference, Tatiana Valovaya, delivered a message to the body’s 1,525th plenary meeting on behalf of the United Nations Secretary-General. Noting that the atrophying state of disarmament instruments and institutions was one of the most significant drivers of global uncertainty and insecurity, the United Nations Secretary-General expressed willingness to engage with States to develop a “new vision for disarmament”. Such a vision, he said, could lay the groundwork for a new consensus to collectively improve the international situation, as well as make a practical contribution to a long-overdue revitalization of the Conference on Disarmament.¹⁴⁶

The Conference held its high-level segment from 24 to 26 February under the presidency of Argentina, with the participation of 34 ministerial-level dignitaries from both member and non-member States of the Conference.¹⁴⁷ In their addresses, the dignitaries voiced support for the Conference and the principle of multilateralism, highlighted the critical importance of multilateral diplomacy and multilateral institutions in the context of the United Nations and set out their national priorities for the work of the Conference. Some speakers also expressed concern about the Conference’s stalemate, calling upon the body to do its part to advance the international agenda by overcoming its ongoing deadlock.

As the session’s first president, from 20 January to 14 February, Rachid Belbaki (Algeria) undertook intensive consultations to develop a draft package for the Conference’s organization of work in 2020. Based on those consultations,

¹⁴³ [A/C.1/75/L.48](#).

¹⁴⁴ [A/C.1/75/L.49](#).

¹⁴⁵ The Russian Federation, again, disassociated itself from consensus on decision [75/519](#). ([A/75/PV.37](#))

¹⁴⁶ [CD/PV.1525](#).

¹⁴⁷ [CD/PV.1532](#), [CD/PV.1533](#), [CD/PV.1534](#) and [CD/PV.1535](#).

Algeria, on behalf of the six presidents of the 2020 session—Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bangladesh and Belarus—circulated a draft package¹⁴⁸ on 13 February for the Conference to consider. That package featured a draft presidential statement on appointing an ambassador to hold consultations on the body’s improved and effective functioning, a draft proposal for a programme of work to establish five subsidiary bodies on agenda items of the Conference and a draft decision to appoint the coordinators for the proposed subsidiary bodies, including a timetable for their respective work. Despite the coordinated approach taken by the President, the Conference did not reach consensus on that proposal.

During the second presidency from 17 February to 13 March, the President, Carlos Foradori (Argentina), developed a slightly revised version of the previous package to further consider the preferences expressed by member States. Following exchanges of views in plenary meetings and informal consultations, two revised drafts were introduced, on 24 February¹⁴⁹ and 2 March.¹⁵⁰ Despite the President’s efforts and consultations with other member States, the Conference did not agree to any of the proposals. Also during its presidency, Argentina submitted a non-paper entitled “Gender issues in disarmament” and held a formal plenary meeting devoted to gender perspectives in disarmament, where the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) delivered a presentation.¹⁵¹

The presidency of Sally Mansfield (Australia), from 16 March to 5 June, coincided with the suspension of meetings at the Palais des Nations owing to the COVID-19 pandemic. In that context, the President pursued the continuation of the Conference’s work by holding informal online consultations and circulating a questionnaire to gather Member States’ views on the Conference. In addition, she proposed a technical update¹⁵² of the Conference’s Rules of Procedure to make them gender-neutral. At the end of Australia’s term, the President issued an official document¹⁵³ in which it summarized the views of member States, without attribution, on the priorities and role of the Conference on Disarmament, ways to break the deadlock and how to work more effectively.

In the first meeting during the fourth presidency, from 8 June to 3 July, Robert Müller (Austria) delivered a statement¹⁵⁴ in which he reported on the work and progress achieved in the Conference to date. He later organized two hybrid plenary meetings on 30 June, during a temporary resumption of in-person meetings at the Palais de Nations made possible by a decline in local COVID-19 infection rates. Additionally, the President joined the Secretary-General of the Conference to co-convene a virtual informal event entitled “Conference on Disarmament

¹⁴⁸ [CD/2187/Add.1.](#)

¹⁴⁹ [CD/2187/Add.2.](#)

¹⁵⁰ [CD/2187/Add.3.](#)

¹⁵¹ [CD/PV.1539.](#)

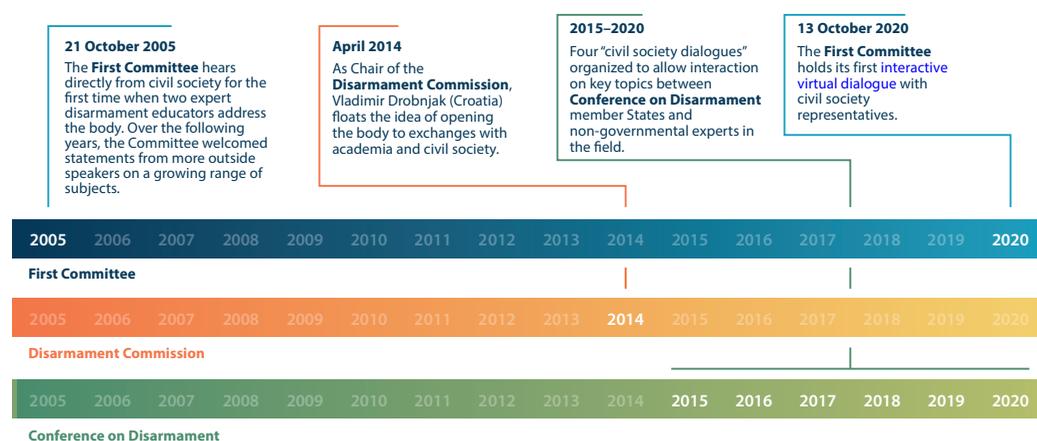
¹⁵² [CD/2198.](#)

¹⁵³ [CD/2197.](#)

¹⁵⁴ [CD/PV.1540.](#)

meets civil society—Lessons from the Pandemic: Rethinking the nexus between disarmament and security”. The event, which drew attendees from civil society and member States of the Conference, included presentations by panellists from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, the Vienna Center for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation, the Geneva Centre for Security Policy and the Quaker United Nations Office.

Civil society participation in disarmament



Disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control are not the work of government officials alone. In a complex, fast-changing international security landscape, the advice of independent advocates and experts—like physicians, lawyers and technologists—is essential to helping States craft meaningful policies to pursue peace.

Recognizing that, the General Assembly’s First Committee heard directly from civil society speakers for the first time in 2005. Since then, the body has devoted a regular part of its annual session to hearing independent voices on issues related to disarmament and international security. Smaller steps have been taken to encourage the integration of experts, industry and non-governmental organizations into the proceedings of the two other primary disarmament organs, the Conference on Disarmament and the United Nations Disarmament Commission.

In his Agenda for Disarmament, the Secretary-General committed in 2018 to working with States to further enhance civil society access and participation in United Nations disarmament forums.

Under the fifth presidency from 6 July to 21 August, the President, Shameem Ahsan (Bangladesh), convened several rounds of online consultations and two plenary meetings. Taking place in a hybrid format without dedicated topics, the plenary meetings provided an opportunity for member States to engage in general exchanges.

Yury Ambrazevich (Belarus), the sixth and final President of the 2020 session, held one thematic plenary meeting on agenda items 5, 6 and 7 of the Conference.¹⁵⁵ During that meeting, the Conference heard remarks from UNIDIR and the Geneva office of the Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs, as well as an expert from the Geneva Centre for Security Policy.¹⁵⁶ The President also successfully organized the negotiation of the Conference's final report, which was adopted by consensus at the 1,547th plenary meeting, on 18 September, and submitted to the seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly.¹⁵⁷

Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters

The Secretary-General's [Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters](#) held its seventy-third session in Geneva from 29 January to 31 January and its seventy-fourth session in an online setting on 15, 19, 24 and 25 June. During those sessions, the Board began a two-year programme of work to reflect on alternative approaches and a potential new vision for nuclear disarmament and arms control, including possible principles and elements.

In its deliberations, which were summarized in a report¹⁵⁸ to the General Assembly submitted in August, the Board focused on approaches to revitalizing and modernizing the disarmament architecture and machinery, particularly in the context of an increasingly complex, multipolar international security environment. Its members noted a range of challenges to international peace and security from nuclear weapons, including the ongoing erosion of the nuclear-arms-control architecture, the current uncertainty about the continuation of existing arms control agreements and a profusion of dangerous rhetoric on nuclear-weapon use. Members also acknowledged broader threats stemming from, inter alia, a lack of trust and dialogue among States, as well as rapid technological change in fields such as artificial intelligence and information and communications technologies.

The Advisory Board believed that a new approach to tackling such challenges must be built on a shared vision for a world free of nuclear weapons. Such a vision, its members agreed, should be based on the principles of verifiability, irreversibility and transparency; aimed at closing gaps in existing arms control measures; and supportive of the "security of humanity". To gain political support from States with and without nuclear weapons, the Board examined the potential of the following concepts to guide its work on a new vision: (a) avoiding the complete collapse of bilateral arms control efforts while transitioning away from bilateral-only strategic arms control; (b) identifying the main strategic issues that

¹⁵⁵ Those agenda items are as follows: (a) new types of weapons of mass destruction and new systems of such weapons; radiological weapons, (b) comprehensive programme of disarmament and (c) transparency in armaments.

¹⁵⁶ [CD/PV.1545](#).

¹⁵⁷ [CD/2207](#).

¹⁵⁸ [A/75/283](#).

must be addressed and matching those issues to the instruments and tools available to address them; and (c) separating any discrete risks or challenges that could be effectively addressed apart from the broader agenda.

Furthermore, the Advisory Board identified the need for a diverse and modern diplomatic “toolkit” that could help address tensions between States; increase effective bilateral, plurilateral and multilateral dialogue; enhance transparency; and reduce strategic competition among States possessing nuclear weapons. According to the Board, such a toolkit would contain a comprehensive menu of arms control processes, mechanisms and approaches that could be tailored to different strategic problems, political-military relationships and regional contexts.

As it sought to pinpoint the essential elements that should figure into any alternative approaches or a new vision for nuclear disarmament and arms control, the Board benefited from presentations by experts on a wide range of subjects.¹⁵⁹ Those speakers addressed, *inter alia*, the adequacy and effectiveness of the existing nuclear non-proliferation regime and arms control architecture, including recent negative trends and constraints. The presenters also considered sources of contemporary strategic unpredictability, including “lower-yield” nuclear arms, weapons such as hypersonic missiles and anti-satellite capabilities.

While the Board saw an urgent need to prevent the further erosion of existing disarmament and arms control frameworks, its members also discussed how a norms-based approach, made up of political and voluntary arrangements, could help encourage restraint and rebuild trust. The Board was of the view that a renewed focus on norms could complement existing legal frameworks and arrangements; however, its members believed that such an approach would be best suited to domains thought to be at particularly high risk of miscalculation and conflict, such as outer space and information and communications technologies. In that context, members discussed how to develop new norms while considering what actors would drive the agenda, who might be engaged in monitoring and compliance, the possible role of verification mechanisms, and how to link such an approach with existing crisis-management frameworks and confidence-building measures.

The Board also stressed the need for a convincing narrative that could be used to mobilize public support for decisive action on disarmament and arms control. In that regard, members discussed how disarmament issues could be examined alongside other matters of global concern—particularly the climate crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic—to highlight their common impact on human security. Such a discussion would encourage States to establish human security as a central objective of their policies across those areas.

In its capacity as the UNIDIR Board of Trustees, the Board engaged in substantive discussions on two of the Institute’s workstreams: weapons and

¹⁵⁹ The expert speakers included representatives of the International Institute for Strategic Studies and UNIDIR.

ammunition management, and autonomous weapons and human control. It also reviewed the current UNIDIR programmes, activities and finances, including ongoing efforts to strengthen its policy impact, achieve financial sustainability and further expand its global engagement. The Board approved a report by the UNIDIR Director on its 2019 activities, as well as the Institute's proposed programme of work and financial plan for 2020 and 2021. The Board also endorsed a proposal by the Institute to commemorate its fortieth anniversary in the context of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations while emphasizing engagement with women and youth on disarmament matters.

The Board planned to continue its programme of work and prepare recommendations in 2021, building on the key points and conceptual framework it had identified. The Secretary-General would report the resulting findings to the General Assembly at its seventy-sixth session.



Chapter VIII

Information and outreach

Youth and experts discuss “74 Years of Nuclear Disarmament and the Contribution of Youth Beyond 2020” at an event held in New York on 24 January 2020.

From left: Crystal Isidor, Pace University senior and Model United Nations head delegate; Izumi Nakamitsu, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs; Cho Hyun, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea to the United Nations; and Ethan Klein, Ph.D., student at the Department of Nuclear Science and Engineering at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

CHAPTER VIII

Information and outreach

I firmly believe that the continued relevance of multilateralism and international cooperation depends on how we create space for young people to fully participate.

IZUMI NAKAMITSU, UNITED NATIONS HIGH REPRESENTATIVE FOR DISARMAMENT AFFAIRS¹

Developments and trends, 2020

IN 2020, THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY renewed the two resolutions that form the cornerstone for all United Nations information and outreach activities in the area of disarmament: “United Nations Disarmament Information Programme” (75/80) and “United Nations study on disarmament and non-proliferation education” (75/61). Those mandates underlie efforts by the Office for Disarmament Affairs, and other United Nations entities, to provide Member States, the diplomatic community, non-governmental organizations and the public at large with unbiased, up-to-date and relevant information on multilateral disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control.

For the forty-fourth year in a row since 1976, the Office published the *United Nations Disarmament Yearbook*, providing a comprehensive account of developments and key issues in the field of disarmament. The 2019 *Yearbook* included, for the first time, a collection of explanatory graphics and charts, as well as a full chapter on gender issues in disarmament.

In addition, the Office published three titles under its Occasional Papers series during the year: *Rethinking Unconstrained Military Spending* (No. 35), *Conventional Ammunition Management: Developments and Challenges from COVID-19* (No. 36) and the *United Nations Programme of Fellowships on Disarmament at 40* (No. 37). Originally conceived in the 1990s to feature, in their entirety, papers or statements made at meetings, symposiums, seminars, workshops or lectures, the Occasional Papers series evolved over the following years to also showcase original work by authors on topical issues in the field of arms limitation, disarmament and international security. While technical and substantive issues are addressed in many of its titles, some from the past decade—including 2020—included historical overviews of activities, issues and subjects deserving of both praise and appraisal.

¹ [Remarks](#) to the 2020 class of the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies Summer School on Non-Proliferation and Nuclear Disarmament for Diplomats in Latin America and the Caribbean, New York, 28 April 2020.

The Office also produced a new edition of its Civil Society and Disarmament collection, entitled *Navigating Disarmament Education: The Peace Boat Model*. In the publication, the authors set forth a methodology for disarmament education centred on people-to-people exchanges. They also addressed how such work should be implemented in relation to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as how digital technologies could be leveraged to provide a rewarding experience for participants.

Meanwhile, the Office for Disarmament Affairs issued several ad hoc publications throughout the year. Those releases included *The Militarization of Artificial Intelligence*, aimed at examining the benefits of artificial intelligence while mitigating the misapplication of that important technology. The Office also published the *Final Report of the UNODA Project to Identify Lessons Learned from the OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism*,² containing reflections and recommendations that could benefit future investigations, as well as guidance for confronting the challenges to international peace and security from chemical weapons use. Furthermore, the Office launched the second edition of *Aide-Memoire: Options for Reflecting Weapons and Ammunition Management in Decisions of the Security Council*. Following the first edition from 2018, the new release contained updates examining the evolution in the Council's practices related to weapons and ammunition from the late 1990s to August 2020.

In the fourth quarter of 2020, the Office co-published, with Small Arms Survey, *Making Room for Improvement: Gender Dimensions of the Life-cycle Management of Ammunition*. In that publication—available online in English, French and Spanish—the authors explored how gender considerations could be conceptualized and addressed in the context of the life-cycle management of ammunition. Also in the fourth quarter, the Office published an enhanced version of the Secretary-General's July 2020 [report on current developments in science and technology and their potential impact on international security and disarmament efforts](#).³ Including specially designed infographics in the report added a visual dimension to the examination of scientific and technological developments relevant to the means and methods of warfare, as well as of new weapons technologies and their implications.

The Office also issued a new edition in its series *Programmes Financed from Voluntary Contributions*, covering the period 2019–2020. In the latest volume,

² The title contains a reference to the project of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) on lessons learned from the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism. The Mechanism's mandate was to identify to the greatest extent feasible individuals, entities, groups or Governments who were perpetrators, organizers, sponsors or otherwise involved in the use of chemicals as weapons, including chlorine or any other toxic chemical, in the Syrian Arab Republic where the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission determined or had determined that a specific incident in the Syrian Arab Republic involved or likely involved the use of chemicals as weapons. For more information, see the OPCW [website](#).

³ For the parliamentary version of the document, see [A/75/221](#).

the instrumental role of effective partnerships with donors in achieving ambitious disarmament goals was further demonstrated.

The websites of the Office remained a key resource for engagement with delegates, civil society stakeholders and the general public. The “[UNODA Meetings Place](#)” website, launched in December 2019, assumed a growing role throughout the year as an all-in-one online location for every disarmament-related meeting supported by the United Nations Secretariat, ending what had been a less efficient practice of creating a new website for every intergovernmental meeting.

In 2020, the [Disarmament Yearbook website](#) was launched, making the key findings of the *Yearbook* available through a dedicated, easy-to-use online resource. Using the new digital platform, visitors could navigate effortlessly through a comprehensive overview of key developments and trends from the previous year in the area of multilateral disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control.

Young people assumed an increasingly prominent role in the work of disarmament during the year, as the Office for Disarmament Affairs undertook various initiatives to further strengthen support for meaningful and inclusive youth participation. Through its “[#Youth4Disarmament](#)” initiative, the Office supported the engagement, education and empowerment of young people in disarmament with new resources, including its Open Minds Project e-newsletter; online training programmes; and the new [#Youth4Disarmament website](#), containing career resources, stories from young people and details on upcoming youth-oriented events.

Owing to COVID-19 restrictions, the International Day against Nuclear Tests on 29 August was commemorated through a virtual high-level plenary session of the General Assembly, as well as through an online panel discussion organized by the European Forum Alpbach. The International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons was observed on 2 October at a high-level plenary meeting convened by the President of the seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly. The commemorative event took place in line with protocols for in-person meetings during the pandemic, with 112 statements given by Member States and other representatives.

Throughout the year, the Office for Disarmament Affairs made considerable efforts to continue its disarmament information and education efforts despite the complications from COVID-19. By sharing key messages of the High Representative on its website and social media platforms, the Office informed Member States and other stakeholders about how it was remaining active and committed to fulfilling its mandates.⁴

⁴ Izumi Nakamitsu, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs: “[The UN Office for Disarmament Affairs remains active and committed—how the Covid-19 pandemic is affecting the work of disarmament](#)”, 3 April 2020; and “[The UN Office for Disarmament Affairs continues to fulfil its mandates and support Member States—Latest message on how Covid-19 is impacting multilateral disarmament and arms control](#)”, 9 June 2020.

Regarding media outreach, the High Representative published two joint opinion articles—co-authored with senior officials of the United Nations Secretariat, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Chair of the Secretary-General’s Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters—highlighting actions that Member States and the public could take to address related concerns in a manner consistent with United Nations disarmament goals. In two separate opinion pieces that she authored, the High Representative advocated for modern, multilateral approaches to evolving missile threats, as well as for meaningful inclusion of youth in disarmament activities. Additionally, the High Representative issued a joint call to action⁵ with the African Union High Representative for Silencing the Guns, Ramtane Lamamra, encouraging citizens across Africa to hand in their illicit small arms and light weapons in the context of the September 2020 Africa Amnesty Month.

Disarmament Information Programme

Print and e-publications

The *United Nations Disarmament Yearbook* continued to serve as the flagship publication of the Office for Disarmament Affairs. While the Office paused print releases of publications during the COVID-19 pandemic, it made Parts I and II of the 2019 Yearbook available on a new, dedicated website (yearbook.unoda.org). Launched on 5 October, the easy-to-use digital platform enabled diplomats, technical experts, journalists and other readers to effortlessly navigate through a comprehensive overview of key developments and trends from the previous year in the area of multilateral disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. To further highlight key findings, the forty-fourth edition of the *Yearbook* included, for the first time, a collection of explanatory graphics and charts, as well as a full chapter on gender issues in disarmament. The Office also issued the latest versions of the *Yearbook* in PDF and e-book formats, announcing their publication both on Twitter and in the Spotlight section of its website.

In addition, the Office published three titles during the year under its Occasional Papers series. In April, it issued *Rethinking Unconstrained Military Spending (No. 35)*,⁶ addressing the impacts of military expenditure on international security and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as the importance of gender perspectives and past economic conversion movements in

⁵ Africa Renewal, “Africa Amnesty Month: UN-AU joint call for the surrender of illicit weapons”, 23 September 2020; and African Union, “Article d’opinion conjoint par Ramtane Lamamra, Haut Représentant de l’Union Africaine pour Faire Taire les Armes, et Izumi Nakamitsu, Haute Représentante des Nations Unies pour les Affaires de Désarmement”, 23 September 2020.

⁶ The contributing authors were Samuel Perlo-Freeman (Campaign Against Arms Trade); Nan Tian, Diego Lopes da Silva and Alexandra Kuimova (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute); Ray Acheson and Madeleine Rees (Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom); Miriam Pemberton (Institute for Policy Studies); and William D. Hartung (Center for International Policy).

rethinking such spending. The book was the second in a series aimed at supporting the Sustainable Development Goals and the Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament through renewed research and analysis on the relationship between military spending and economic and social development.⁷

In August, the Office launched the second Occasional Paper for the year, *Conventional Ammunition Management: Developments and Challenges from COVID-19 (No. 36)*. Written by Jovana Carapic of the Ammunition Management Advisory Team (Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining),⁸ the paper contained insights into the potential impact of the pandemic on the field of disarmament in general and the ammunition-management sector in particular. In a preliminary analysis of the pandemic's effects on that sector in the spring of 2020, the author highlighted key risks to relevant control and management measures, arguing that shifts in national priorities and reduced resources might increase the risk of accidental explosions and diversion. Ammunition management needed to remain a priority during and after the pandemic, she wrote, stressing that implementing effective and sustainable ammunition management policies and practices would allow States to develop adaptive strategies and methodologies for managing risk in future crises.

Occasional Paper No. 37, entitled *United Nations Programme of Fellowships on Disarmament at 40* and released in December, featured insights from seven past Disarmament Fellows⁹ about how the Programme shaped their professional development and how the disarmament field had changed over time. The authors also elucidated the distinct role that the community of former Disarmament Fellows continued to play, as well as how the 40-year-old Programme had developed into an important institution for disarmament education and capacity-building. As of 2020, the Programme had 1,033 alumni from 170 States, many of whom went on to hold national or international positions of responsibility in the field of disarmament.

As a contribution to its Civil Society and Disarmament series, the Office produced *Navigating Disarmament Education: The Peace Boat Model*.¹⁰ In that publication, the authors introduced a methodology for disarmament education developed by the non-governmental organization Peace Boat, discussed how disarmament education should be implemented in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals and considered how digital technologies could be leveraged to provide a fruitful experience for participants.

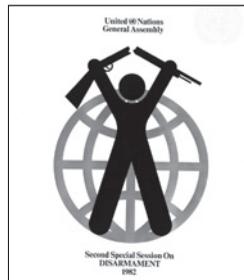
⁷ The first volume, *Occasional Paper No. 33*, released in October 2019, provided a historical overview of efforts within the United Nations to reduce military spending.

⁸ For more information on the Ammunition Management Advisory Team established in 2019 by the Office for Disarmament Affairs and the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining, see chap. III.

⁹ The authors with their citizenship and the year they joined the Fellowship Programme are as follows: Tejaswinee Burumdoyal (Mauritius), 2017; Radoslav Deyanov (Bulgaria), 1979; Amandeep S. Gill (India), 1999; Rafael Mariano Grossi (Argentina), 1986; Chris King (Australia), 2007; Shorna-Kay Richards (Jamaica), 2005; and Tibor Tóth (Hungary), 1980.

¹⁰ The authors were Sumiko Hatakeyama and Akira Kawasaki, with the assistance of Meri Joyce.

Disarmament information and outreach: Selected highlights



The winner of a 1981 international poster competition in support of the Assembly's upcoming special session devoted to disarmament.

Launch of the World Disarmament Campaign

17 June 1982: The General Assembly establishes the World Disarmament Campaign to boost public support for agreements advancing the goal of general and complete disarmament under effective international control (A/S-12/32, annex V). In 1992, it was renamed the Disarmament Information Programme.

United Nations study on disarmament and non-proliferation education

30 August 2002: A General Assembly-mandated study recommends new pedagogical and communication methods for advancing disarmament and non-proliferation education both in and outside of classrooms.

A tour guide briefs visitors at United Nations Headquarters in New York in August 2001.



Reykjavik

27 September 2012: The Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) stages Richard Rhodes' play *Reykjavik*, a dramatization of the historic 1986 meeting where Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev neared agreement on the total abolition of their countries' nuclear weapons, in New York with support from the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs.



Photo: CTBTO

1982

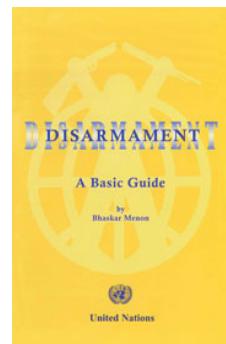
2001

2002

2009

2012

2014



Disarmament: A Basic Guide

July 2001: The Office for Disarmament Affairs publishes the first in what would become a four-edition series providing a comprehensive introduction to the field of disarmament.



Against Nuclear Arms

10 August 2009: The United Nations co-sponsors *Against Nuclear Arms*, an exhibit portraying the destruction caused by the atomic bomb explosions in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan, as well as decades of nuclear arms testing in Kazakhstan.

Byrganym Aitimova, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Kazakhstan to the United Nations, speaks at the exhibit's opening.



Action for Disarmament

15 April 2014: The United Nations unveils *Action for Disarmament: 10 Things You Can Do!*, encouraging young people to engage on disarmament issues in an active and thoughtful way.

Michael Douglas, United Nations Messenger of Peace, speaks at the publication's launch.

In October, the Office issued the 2019–2020 edition of *Programmes Financed from Voluntary Contributions*, showcasing concrete results of its partnerships with donors and underscoring the essential role of their support in attaining important disarmament goals. The extrabudgetary activities explored in that publication were aimed at, inter alia, empowering young people to take action for disarmament in their communities; strengthening the nuclear-arms-control framework through seminars and meetings to build momentum ahead of the tenth Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty); fostering and enhancing cooperation between the five regional nuclear-weapon-free zones and Mongolia; and further integrating gender considerations in activities to control small arms, including through training sessions in several regions and dedicated coaching for staff of the Office's regional centres.

Meanwhile, the Office released five stand-alone publications in 2020. The first, entitled *The Militarization of Artificial Intelligence*,¹¹ was published in June as the outcome of a multi-stakeholder discussion held in 2019 to better understand the peace and security implications of artificial intelligence. Based on a workshop and series of papers arranged in collaboration with the Stanley Center and the Stimson Center, the book captured the views of experts from Member States,¹² industry, academia and research institutions on how to maximize the benefits of artificial intelligence while mitigating its misapplication. In that regard, the publication was intended as a starting point for more robust dialogues on the topic.

In October, the Office for Disarmament Affairs released another non-serial publication, entitled *Final Report of the UNODA Project to Identify Lessons Learned from the OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism*. As described in the report, project participants reflected on the Mechanism's previous work¹³ and on how to establish an effective and credible mechanism to identify perpetrators of chemical weapons use, recommending steps to benefit future investigations. In preparing the report, the Office sought to provide guidance on confronting the challenges to international peace and security posed by chemical weapons use, as well as restoring respect for the global norm against such use (for more information on the report, see chap. II).

¹¹ The authors were Melanie Sisson (Defense Strategy and Planning Program, Stimson Center), Jennifer Spindel (University of New Hampshire), Paul Scharre (Center for a New American Security, China Arms Control and Disarmament Association) and Vadim Kozulin (PRI Center (Russian Center for Policy Research)).

¹² China, Russian Federation and United States.

¹³ The Joint Investigative Mechanism was mandated by the Security Council, by resolution [2235 \(2015\)](#), to identify, to the greatest extent feasible, individuals, entities, groups, or Governments who were perpetrators, organizers, sponsors or otherwise involved in the use of chemicals as weapons, including chlorine or any other toxic chemical, in the Syrian Arab Republic, where the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission determined that a specific incident involved or likely involved the use of chemicals as weapons.

Also that month, the Office launched its second edition of *Aide-Memoire: Options for Reflecting Weapons and Ammunition Management in Decisions of the Security Council*. Succeeding the 2018 edition, the new version was updated to reflect the evolution in Security Council practice on weapons and ammunition-related issues from the late 1990s to August 2020. It also included a new section on key recommendations, drawn from previous reports of the Secretary-General on small arms and light weapons, to help further integrate weapons and ammunition-related matters in the Council’s work. The main body and a supporting annex of the *Aide-Memoire* were based on a review of over 650 Security Council resolutions—including both thematic measures and country- or region-specific texts—as well as relevant presidential statements issued since the late 1990s. To ensure a broad pool of drafting options, the Office applied a 30-year time frame that also corresponded to the establishment of several major United Nations peace operations.

Another book released in October was *Making Room for Improvement: Gender Dimensions of the Life-cycle Management of Ammunition*, which the Office co-published with Small Arms Survey.¹⁴ In the paper, the author, Emile LeBrun, considered how to conceptualize and address gender considerations in the context of the life-cycle management of ammunition. He also described the normative basis for incorporating gender considerations in that area, identified indicators of successful gender mainstreaming throughout the ammunition life cycle and outlined a framework for promoting further work. The publication also included research questions to help advance gender mainstreaming efforts.

The fifth non-serial publication, launched in November, was entitled *Report of the Secretary-General on current developments in science and technology and their potential impact on international security and disarmament efforts*. Prepared by the Office for Disarmament Affairs pursuant to General Assembly resolution 74/35, the report contained an overview of recent scientific and technological developments relevant to the means and methods of warfare, their broader impacts on security and disarmament, and their implications for efforts to limit the humanitarian consequences of armed conflict. The report also included descriptions of the relevant intergovernmental processes where those developments were under discussion. The Office prepared a graphically enhanced version of the parliamentary document¹⁵ in line with action 24, on raising awareness about the implications of new weapons technologies, of the Secretary-General’s Agenda for Disarmament.

Throughout the year, the Office continued to produce the “UNODA Update”, an online chronicle of events and activities of the Office and various disarmament forums. The Office posted 71 articles for the Update in 2020, collating them in a quarterly mode.

¹⁴ The publication was launched in English, with the Spanish and French versions posted online in December.

¹⁵ [A/75/221](#).

The Office also continued the biannual updates of its two-page [fact sheets](#) on various disarmament, non-proliferation, arms control and related issues, providing readers with relevant and up-to-date information in a clear, easy-to-read format. In 2020, the Office posted 38 fact sheets in areas such as weapons of mass destruction, conventional arms, the disarmament machinery and regional disarmament, as well as on cross-cutting issues including gender perspectives, emerging technologies and youth engagement.

For a list of the Office's 2020 publications, including those of its regional centres, see annex I to this chapter.

Websites

The Office for Disarmament Affairs made full use of its websites as a key means of engaging with delegates, civil society stakeholders and the general public, as well as staff members. Its main website (www.un.org/disarmament), with over 500,000 unique visitors in 2020, remained the primary channel for sharing updates, speeches, remarks and news in the area of multilateral disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control,

The Office continued to streamline its main website throughout the year. That work included simplifying access to key pages and integrating elements previously hosted by the United Nations Office in Geneva. In addition, the Office removed certain elements no longer in use from the main website, making it less cluttered and more responsive. A revamped “Spotlight” section was regularly updated with new articles and event information, and the Office continued its efforts to provide as much content as possible in the six official languages of the United Nations.

In 2020, a new website for the *United Nations Disarmament Yearbook* (yearbook.unoda.org) was deployed to give readers easy access to a complete survey of recent developments and trends related to multilateral disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. Its modern design enabled users to quickly view key highlights, including through a timeline and other graphical representations.

The Office for Disarmament Affairs also continued to update the “[UNODA Meetings Place](#)”, a comprehensive source of information on intergovernmental disarmament meetings that previously required dedicated websites.

Databases

In 2020, the Office maintained and updated the following public databases:

- [General Assembly Resolutions and Decisions](#), which hosted information about disarmament-related resolutions adopted by the Assembly since its fifty-second session. The Office was developing a new version of the platform during the year.

- [Disarmament Treaties Database](#), with information about 27 disarmament-related treaties, including lists of their States parties and signatories
- [Documents Library](#), a specialized archive of United Nations disarmament-related documents
- [Military Expenditures Database](#), which catalogued the national reports received from Member States
- [The Global Reported Arms Trade—the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms](#), which presented data provided by Member States in an interactive information platform.

International days

International Day against Nuclear Tests

The International Day against Nuclear Tests¹⁶ on 29 August was commemorated through a virtual high-level plenary session of the General Assembly and an online panel discussion organized by the European Forum Alpbach.

Tijjani Muhammad Bande (Nigeria), the seventy-fifth President of the General Assembly and Chair of the high-level meeting¹⁷ held on 26 August, said that the threat of the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted “the need to collectively pursue actions to safeguard humanity, including the prioritizing of a world free from the threat of nuclear weapons”.¹⁸ He added, “The very survival of humanity hinges on our resolute agreement that nuclear weapons are not to be used and should be forever eliminated.”

In separate remarks,¹⁹ the Secretary-General urged all States that had not yet signed or ratified the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty to do so without further delay. “The best way to honour the victims of nuclear tests is to prevent any in the future,” he said. “Nuclear testing is a relic of another age and should have no place in the twenty-first century.”

The United Nations High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Izumi Nakamitsu, delivered a statement²⁰ in which she stressed the environmental, health

¹⁶ By resolution [64/35](#) of 2 December 2009, introduced at the initiative of Kazakhstan, the General Assembly declared 29 August the International Day against Nuclear Tests to commemorate the closure of the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site on 29 August 1991, to raise awareness on the effects of nuclear-weapon test explosions and to strengthen the international norm against all nuclear tests as a valuable step towards achieving a world free of nuclear weapons.

¹⁷ United Nations Web, “[General Assembly High-level meeting to commemorate and promote the International Day against Nuclear Tests](#)” (video), streamed live on 26 August 2020.

¹⁸ President of the General Assembly, [statement](#) on the occasion of the International Day against Nuclear Tests, New York, 26 August 2020.

¹⁹ [Message](#) on the occasion of the International Day against Nuclear Tests, Nuclear Tests, New York, 26 August 2020.

²⁰ [Statement](#) at the virtual high-level meeting of the United Nations General Assembly to commemorate the International Day against Nuclear Tests, 26 August 2020.

and economic impacts of historical nuclear testing. “In this fraught geostrategic environment, we need to redouble our efforts to uphold the norm against nuclear testing,” she said.

Additionally, in a video message²¹ delivered on behalf of Nursultan Nazarbayev, who was Kazakhstan’s first president, Kazakh Foreign Minister Mukhtar Tleuberdi called for more persistent efforts to persuade States to sign and ratify the Treaty without any condition.

Former President of Finland Tarja Halonen, a member of the Group of Eminent Persons of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization, stressed the importance of permanently ending nuclear testing as a step towards the ultimate goal of eliminating all nuclear weapons. By ratifying the Treaty, she said, States could both reduce the risk of a nuclear arms race and build trust through scientific cooperation and sharing.²²

The Executive Secretary of the Preparatory Commission, Lassina Zerbo, spoke both to the high-level meeting and the European Forum Alpbach panel entitled “Championing a Nuclear Test Free World”. Noting that 2021 would mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Treaty’s opening for signature, he stressed the achievements of the Treaty’s International Monitoring System in providing credible assurances that no nuclear explosion would go undetected.

The Preparatory Commission also joined the African Commission on Nuclear Energy to issue a joint statement²³ in which they called for a strengthened global norm against nuclear testing and urged all States to sign and ratify the Treaty. They further committed themselves to boosting mutual ties and fostering synergies in their activities, particularly in training and capacity development.

International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons

The International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons²⁴ was observed on 2 October at a high-level plenary meeting convened by the President of the seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly, Volkan Bozkir

²¹ “[The International Day against Nuclear Tests](#)”, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan, YouTube video, 27 August 2020.

²² United Nations Web, “[General Assembly High-level meeting to commemorate and promote the International Day against Nuclear Tests](#)” (video), 12:36, streamed live on 26 August 2020.

²³ “[International Day against Nuclear Testing: Joint Press Release by the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization and the African Commission on Nuclear Energy](#)”, 26 August 2020.

²⁴ 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. The initiative was advanced under General Assembly 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 and [75/45](#) of 7 December 2020, by which 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.

(Turkey). In an opening statement²⁵ to the meeting, the President of the General Assembly lamented the “significant strain” placed on the global disarmament and non-proliferation architecture by rising global tensions, and he called for a return to “the common goal of a world free of nuclear weapons through practical realizable goals and commensurate actions”.

The Secretary-General delivered remarks²⁶ in which he urged the Russian Federation and the United States to immediately extend the Treaty on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (New START), which was scheduled to expire on 5 February 2021. “The only treaty constraining the size of the world’s largest nuclear arsenals is set to expire early next year, raising the alarming possibility of a return to unconstrained strategic competition”, he said of the agreement. The Secretary-General highlighted the importance of ensuring a meaningful outcome of the tenth Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, and he added that he looked forward to the entry into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

The commemorative event included 112 statements²⁷ from Member States, as well as remarks by representatives from the Holy See, the League of Arab States, the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean and the Inter-Parliamentary Union. Two non-governmental organizations, the PragueVision Institute for Sustainable Security and

²⁵ President of the General Assembly, [statement](#) on the occasion of the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, New York, 2 October 2020.

²⁶ [Remarks](#) at the high-level meeting to commemorate and promote the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, 2 October 2020.

²⁷ The statements were delivered by the following: Afghanistan, Algeria, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Austria, Azerbaijan (on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement), Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Benin, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Botswana, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Cameroon, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d’Ivoire, Cuba, Cyprus, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Dominica, Ecuador, Egypt, Egypt (on behalf of the Group of Arab States), El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Fiji (on behalf of the Pacific Small Island Developing States), Gambia, Georgia, Ghana, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kiribati, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Liechtenstein, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nepal, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Palau, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Philippines, Qatar, Russian Federation, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, South Africa, State of Palestine, Sudan, Suriname, Sweden, Tajikistan, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Trinidad and Tobago, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu (on behalf of the Pacific Islands Forum), Ukraine, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam and Zimbabwe. For written statements, see Journal of the United Nations (eStatements), “[High-level plenary meeting to commemorate and promote the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapon](#)”, 2 October 2020. 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](#), [Part 2](#) and “[Continuation of Statements](#)”), streamed live on 2 October 2020.

Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament, also delivered statements.

In a pre-recorded video message²⁸ to a separate, civil society-led observance of the International Day on 26 September, the United Nations High Representative for Disarmament Affairs noted that the goal of the total elimination of nuclear weapons dated to the founding of the United Nations and remained “more relevant than ever”. In addition, she stressed the “integral” role of civil society “in motivating Governments to take seriously the global threat posed by nuclear weapons and to take decisive and meaningful action towards their total elimination”.

Commemoration of Hiroshima and Nagasaki

On 6 August, the Secretary-General delivered a video message²⁹ at the seventy-fifth Hiroshima Peace Memorial Ceremony. In the message, he paid tribute to the victims of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and applauded the hibakusha for their resilience and unmatched advocacy for nuclear disarmament. Noting the collapse of arms control, transparency and confidence-building instruments established during the cold war, he warned that the risk of nuclear weapons being used—intentionally, by accident or through miscalculation—was too high. The Secretary-General repeated his call for States to return to a common vision and path leading to the total elimination of nuclear weapons, while also renewing his commitment to working with others in pursuing that common goal. On behalf of the Secretary-General, the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs attended the ceremony.³⁰

On 9 August, the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs attended the seventy-fifth Nagasaki Peace Memorial Ceremony and delivered a message³¹ from the Secretary-General. In his message, the Secretary-General expressed his appreciation for the dedication of Nagasaki’s citizens to achieving a world free of nuclear weapons. He also paid homage to the hibakusha for transforming their suffering into a warning about the perils of nuclear weapons, noting that their example should provide the world with daily motivation to eliminate all such weapons. Recognizing the continued nuclear danger, he called on the international community to return to the understanding that a nuclear war could not be won and must never be fought. He also urged States to use the tenth Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty to restart joint efforts on nuclear disarmament. He pledged that the United Nations would carry forward the

²⁸ [Statement](#) to the #WeThePeoples2020 virtual event on the occasion of the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, New York, 26 September 2020.

²⁹ [Video message](#) to Hiroshima Peace Memorial Ceremony, Hiroshima, 6 August 2020.

³⁰ Owing to restrictions resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, the Secretary-General could not attend the ceremony in person, as originally planned.

³¹ Secretary-General’s [message](#) delivered by Izumi Nakamitsu, Nagasaki, 9 August 2020.

message of hibakusha, with the involvement of youth, so that the world could see the human face of the cold logic of nuclear strategy.

Media

In 2020, the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs published two joint opinion articles highlighting actions that Member States and the public could take to support key United Nations goals.

In the first article,³² the High Representative—and co-authors Mark Lowcock, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, and Robert Mardini, Director-General of the International Committee of the Red Cross—advocated for an immediate end to the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. Ceasing such use, they said, would help previously fragile health systems and communities to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

To mark the twentieth anniversary of Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#)—on the pivotal role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations and peacebuilding—the High Representative joined Selma Ashipala-Musavyi (Namibia), Chair of the Secretary-General’s Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters, to explain how the wide availability of weapons impeded progress towards gender justice and peace. Their article³³ was published in 19

³² “Opinion: Conflict and COVID-19 are a deadly mix,” Thomson Reuters Foundation, 27 May 2020; “More than 50m people are affected by conflict in urban areas. For them, coronavirus is just another burden to bear”, *Independent*, 29 May 2020; and “Conflict and Covid-19 are a deadly mix”, *The Strategist*, 1 September 2020.

³³ “Women around the globe share an immense stake in ending armed violence. Our peace work should reflect that reality”, United Nations Information Centre for the Caribbean Area, 27 October 2020; “Il y a 20 ans, le Conseil de sécurité reconnaissait le rôle des femmes dans la promotion de la paix”, *Le Matin*, 28 October 2020; “Women around the globe share a stake in ending armed violence”, *Ahram Online*, 30 October 2020; “Las mujeres de todo el mundo comparten un gran interés en poner fin a la violencia armada. Nuestro trabajo por la paz debe reflejar esa realidad”, *Excelsior*, 31 October 2020; “Women share immense stake in ending armed violence”, *Jakarta Post*, 31 October 2020; “Las mujeres de todo el mundo comparten un gran interés en poner fin a la violencia armada”, *Mural de Género*, 31 October 2020; “دور النساء حول العالم في الحد من العنف المسلح”, *Nidaa Al-Watan*, 31 October 2020; “Mulheres de todo o mundo partilham interesse em pôr fim à violência armada”, *Publico*, 31 October 2020; “Women share an immense stake in ending armed violence, our peace work should reflect that reality”, United Nations in I.R. Iran, 31 October 2020; “Женщины мира крайне заинтересованы в прекращении вооруженного насилия”, *Независимая газета*, 1 November 2020; “للسناتساء حول العالم دوراً كبيراً في وضع حد للعنف المسلح”, *Al-Kalima online*, 2 November 2020; “Women share an immense stake in ending armed violence, our peace work should reflect that reality”, *Peninsula*, 3 November 2020; “Women around the globe share an immense stake in ending armed violence”, *Africa Renewal*, 4 November 2020; “ARTIGO: Mulheres ao redor do mundo participam do fim da violência armada”, *Dourados Agora*, 4 November 2020; “Women have an immense stake in ending armed violence”, *Namibian Sun*, 4 November 2020; “Die Gewalt muss ein Ende haben”, *Wiener Zeitung*, 4 November 2020; “ジェンダーの平等」を平和構築の中核に 中満国連事務次長ら寄稿”, *Sankei News*, 27 November 2020; and “Women share an immense stake in ending armed violence, our peace work should reflect that reality”, *New Horizons Newsletter*.

outlets around the world, in eight languages: Arabic, English, French, German, Japanese, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish.

Additionally, the High Representative issued a joint call to action³⁴ with the African Union High Representative for Silencing the Guns, Ramtane Lamamra. In the statement, they encouraged citizens across Africa to hand in their illicit small arms and light weapons in the context of September 2020 Africa Amnesty Month.

The High Representative also produced two opinion articles for media outlets to advocate for, inter alia, modern, multilateral approaches to tackle rapidly evolving missile threats;³⁵ and meaningfully including youth in tackling the world's most pressing disarmament concerns.³⁶

Furthermore, the Office for Disarmament Affairs authored a feature article for the United Nations News website about the worldwide effort to eradicate cluster munitions, in connection with the second Review Conference of the Convention on Cluster Munitions.³⁷

The High Representative and senior staff of the Office spoke about disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control issues in numerous interviews with international television, radio and print outlets, including Al Arabiya, the *Asahi Shimbun*, the *Business Times*, *Der Spiegel*, *Elle Japan*, the *Hill Times*, *Kyodo News*, the *Mainichi Shimbun*, *New Zealand International Review*, NHK and Politico. In total, the High Representative conducted over 40 interviews with media organizations, think tanks, civil society organizations and youth groups in 11 countries. She also continued to contribute to the Sunday front-page column for the *Mainichi Shogakusei Shimbun* (Japan), a newspaper for elementary students, directly appealing to youth on matters of disarmament and international cooperation at an accessible level.³⁸

The High Representative also participated in press conferences and media briefings on the following occasions: in Tokyo on 11 August, during a trip to commemorate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima

³⁴ “Africa Amnesty Month: UN-AU joint call for the surrender of illicit weapons”, Africa Renewal, 23 September 2020; “Article d’opinion conjoint par Ramtane Lamamra, Haut Représentant de l’Union Africaine pour Faire Taire les Armes, et Izumi Nakamitsu, Haute Représentante des Nations Unies pour les Affaires de Désarmement”, *Al Wihda*, 23 September 2020.

³⁵ “Rapidly Evolving Missile Threats Require Modern, Multilateral Approaches: Preventing the spread and emergence of destabilizing missile threats is a vital, unfinished task for the international community”, *The Diplomat*, 11 September 2020.

³⁶ “Young people have a major role to play in ridding the world of nuclear weapons”, United Nations News, 10 August 2020.

³⁷ “Five things to know about the worldwide effort to eradicate cluster bombs”, UNODA Updates, 27 November 2020; “ONU divulga guia sobre ações para erradicar bombas de fragmentação”, ONU News, 28 November 2020; and “Cinco cosas que hay que saber sobre el trabajo global para erradicar las bombas de racimo”, Noticias ONU, 30 November 2020.

³⁸ For the articles published, see United Nations Information Centre, “毎日小学生新聞に連載中の1面コラム 「中満泉さんから『地球を変えるあなたへ』」 バックナンバーはこちらから”, 18 December 2020.

and Nagasaki; in a virtual format on 8 October, to announce the development with Singapore of a cyber “norms implementation checklist”; and on 26 October, to mark the deposit of the fiftieth instrument of ratification for the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, triggering its entry into force.³⁹

The Office also conducted a social media campaign to publicize an opinion article of the United Nations Secretary-General to commemorate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In the article⁴⁰ for the *Yomiuri Shimbun*, the Secretary-General advocated for a return to (a) the shared understanding that a nuclear war cannot be won and must not be fought, (b) the collective agreement to work towards a world free of nuclear weapons, and (c) the spirit of cooperation that enabled historic progress towards their elimination.

Disarmament and non-proliferation education

The Office for Disarmament Affairs continued its work to promote disarmament and non-proliferation education, focusing on further implementing the recommendations contained in the 2002 United Nations study⁴¹ on the matter.

The United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific continued to actively collaborate with the Hiroshima office of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research in implementing the Training Programme on Nuclear Disarmament and Non-Proliferation. The Programme was dedicated in 2020 to the seventy-fifth anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, as well as the fiftieth anniversary of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

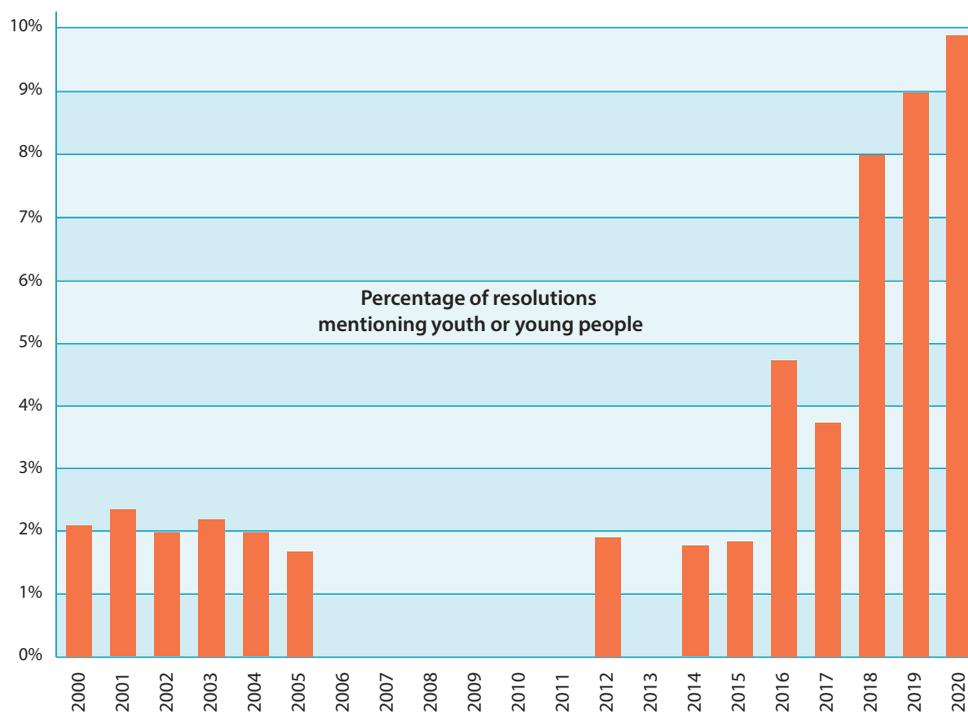
In February, the Regional Centre partnered with the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and the Republic of Korea to launch a project on “Youth and Disarmament—A Future Without Weapons: Youth Perspectives on Disarmament and Non-Proliferation in Northeast Asia”.

³⁹ The United Nations Information Centre in Tokyo organized the appearance on 11 August. The event on 8 October took place with the Minister for Communications and Information of Singapore, marking Singapore International Cyber Week 2020. The event on 26 October also included Beatrice Fihn, the Executive Director of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, and Helen Durham, the Director for International Law and Policy at the International Committee of the Red Cross.

⁴⁰ “原爆投下75年、「核なき世界」決意新たに...グテレス国連事務総長が寄稿”, *Yomiuri Shimbun*, 6 August 2020. See also “75th Anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki: Time to end the nuclear menace”, 6 August 2020.

⁴¹ [A/57/124](#).

Youth in the General Assembly



After the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution [2250 \(2015\)](#) on youth, peace and security, the General Assembly increased its number of official references to “youth” or “young people” in resolutions.

The Assembly also expanded the scope of its language in resolutions on youth, moving beyond their participation in educational activities to also recognize their active role and contributions as advocates for disarmament. For instance, in its 2019 resolution on “Youth, disarmament and non-proliferation” ([74/64](#)), the General Assembly recognized that “young people in all countries are key agents for social change, economic development and technological innovation”.

Youth and disarmament

By its resolution 74/64 of 12 December 2019, entitled “Youth, Disarmament and Non-proliferation”, the General Assembly reaffirmed the important and positive contribution that young people could make in sustaining peace and security.

In 2020, the Office for Disarmament Affairs continued efforts to further strengthen young people’s meaningful and inclusive participation in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation through “#Youth4Disarmament”, an outreach initiative it launched the previous year. Under the #Youth4Disarmament initiative, the Office worked in 2020 to engage, educate and empower young people with resources such as its Open Minds Project e-newsletter, online training programmes, and a new website (www.youth4disarmament.org) containing career resources, stories from youth and related upcoming events. The Office also launched the United Nations Youth Champions for Disarmament programme, under which the Office trained the first group of 10 Youth Champions on general principles of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control through both online courses and live webinars. As part of that programme, the Youth Champions received opportunities to exchange ideas with experts from think tanks, civil society organizations and the diplomatic field as they developed plans to engage their communities on disarmament-related issues. In addition, the Office partnered with the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs to train a steering committee of young leaders in North-East Asia for eight months on issues related to disarmament and international peace and security.

Meanwhile, to commemorate the seventy-fifth anniversaries of the establishment of the United Nations and the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Office for Disarmament Affairs launched the “75 Words for Disarmament Youth Challenge”, inviting young people around the world to express what disarmament meant to them and their communities in 75 words. The challenge provided an opportunity for participants to think about disarmament not as an abstract concept, but as a practical means to help prevent armed conflict and promote peace and security.

In December, the PeaceJam Foundation recognized #Youth4Disarmament as the 2020 Billion Acts of Peace Award for Best Coalition Building Project. PeaceJam and 14 Nobel Peace Prize laureates work together through the One Billion Acts of Peace Campaign to help the next generation of leaders tackle the most pressing issues facing humanity.

Disarmament fellowships

Established by the General Assembly⁴² in 1978 at the initiative of Nigeria, the United Nations Programme of Fellowships on Disarmament is intended to train and build the capacity of officials from Member States to participate more effectively in international disarmament deliberations and negotiations. The Programme is implemented each year by the Office for Disarmament Affairs for about 25 Fellows nominated by their respective Governments. As of 2020, the Programme had trained 1,033 public officials—mostly diplomats or military experts—from 170 States.⁴³

On 7 December, the General Assembly adopted by consensus its biennial resolution (75/74), recalling the decision to establish the Programme and requesting the continuation of its annual implementation, funded through the United Nations regular budget. Owing to the liquidity crisis faced by the Organization in 2020, the number of fellowships for the year was exceptionally reduced to 20.

However, the COVID-19 pandemic directly affected the Programme's implementation during the year. Based on an analysis of the pandemic situation and what options could reasonably be substituted for formal in-person study visits by the Fellows without compromising the Programme's quality and comprehensive character, as well as the objectives established by the General Assembly, the Programme was cancelled for 2020. The selected Fellows were to be carried forward to 2021, should they still be available.

Meanwhile, to mark the Programme's fortieth anniversary, the Office for Disarmament Affairs published an Occasional Paper entitled *United Nations Programme of Fellowships on Disarmament at 40*. The publication contained articles from former Fellows on how the Programme had shaped their professional development, as well as how the community of Fellows continued to play a distinct role in the field of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control.

⁴² The Programme was established pursuant to the final document (resolution S-10/2) of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. In paragraph 108, the Assembly stated, "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."

⁴³ Through specialized training, the Programme helped the Fellows gain greater expertise in disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation issues, as well as better understanding of the challenges and opportunities in the field of multilateral disarmament and international security. The Programme enabled former Fellows to participate more effectively in regional and global disarmament efforts and, by creating an informal international 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 in their Governments or in international organizations.

Vienna Office of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs

In 2020, the Vienna Office continued its efforts to raise awareness and provide educational opportunities in the areas of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. In that regard, it organized a range of outreach and capacity-building programmes for young professionals, focusing particularly on women.

The Office added new self-paced courses to its online learning platform, the [Disarmament Education Dashboard](#),⁴⁴ including two new in-depth courses on cyber diplomacy and Security Council resolution [1540 \(2004\)](#).⁴⁵ In addition, it continued to expand the Dashboard's collection of short and introductory courses on key disarmament and non-proliferation issues, while continuing to refine the system's functionality and earlier substantive content. The Dashboard's reach grew significantly in 2020, with 8,265 active registered users as at the end of the year.

Meanwhile, the Vienna Office continued to partner with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) to train young professionals in the OSCE region through the Scholarship for Peace and Security, awarding 152 new scholarships to young professionals—137 women and 15 men—from the OSCE participating States and Partners for Co-operation. Its 2020 programme consisted of two components: (a) eight weeks of online coursework for young professional women; and (b) a separate eight-week online training course open to women and men.⁴⁶ The training sessions not only increased the substantive knowledge and skills of the participants but also helped build a network of young professionals, particularly women, active in relevant fields across the wider OSCE area. The 2020 scholarship programme was the third round of training courses organized by the Vienna Office in close partnership with OSCE.

Other education and outreach efforts of the Office included “Disarmament4Educators”, a joint pilot project bringing together representatives of select accredited universities and Governments of five Asian countries. Additionally, together with the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific, the Office contributed to a subregional

⁴⁴ The Dashboard provides access to training materials and resources developed in cooperation with relevant entities on disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control, as well as on cross-cutting issues such as gender and development. Designed to expand the number and quality of training opportunities available in those areas, the Dashboard assumed a growing role as a training resource for Vienna Office partners, donors and—increasingly—the general public. Its flexible format continued to allow the addition of new training courses with features customized to suit audience demand. The Vienna Office also continued to update its existing educational modules, including with thematic and methodological improvements developed in cooperation with other branches of the Office for Disarmament Affairs, as well as other partners.

⁴⁵ The Vienna Office developed those courses in cooperation with relevant branches of the Office for Disarmament Affairs in New York.

⁴⁶ Owing to public health restrictions resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, the Vienna Office restructured earlier plans for an in-person, week-long course as three virtual workshops.

workshop entitled “Enhancing implementation of Security Council resolution [1540 \(2004\)](#) by establishing national points of contact and encouraging South Asian States to prepare national implementation action plans”.

In the area of outreach, the Vienna Office continued its activities to raise awareness about various issues related to disarmament and non-proliferation, as well as about its work with diplomats and the general public. For example, to mark the second anniversary of the Secretary-General’s Agenda for Disarmament, it held a webinar on 28 May to consider the progress made in the Agenda’s implementation. Meanwhile, the Vienna Office continued to initiate and participate in various additional outreach activities in cooperation with other Vienna-based organizations and entities, including briefings to student groups on the mandate and activities of the Office for Disarmament Affairs.

United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research

In its fortieth year of operation, the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) continued to carry out activities aimed at generating knowledge and promoting dialogue and action on disarmament and security. Its work in 2020 included producing policy-relevant research and analysis, building capacity on traditional and emerging issues, and delivering tools to assist Member States in implementing their disarmament commitments.

As an autonomous institution within the United Nations, UNIDIR continued to offer research and policy support to Member States, United Nations bodies, international and regional organizations, and other stakeholders. Under its strategic research agenda,⁴⁷ the Institute focused on four multi-year programmes—conventional arms, gender and disarmament, security and technology, and weapons of mass destruction and other strategic weapons—as well as its project on a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction. In each of those areas, it aimed to identify new issues in a manner responsive to diverse security concerns; integrated with relevant peace, security and development priorities; and accessible to a global audience.

By resolution [75/82](#) of 7 December 2020, the General Assembly welcomed the Institute’s fortieth anniversary and recognized “the importance, the timeliness and the high quality” of its work.

During the year, UNIDIR accomplished the following:

- Researched topics including nuclear risk reduction and verification, space security, countering improvised explosive devices, weapons and ammunition management, conflict prevention, cyber stability, the weaponization of

⁴⁷ The UNIDIR programme of work and financial plan for 2020 and 2021 received approval from its Board of Trustees. See [A/75/283](#).

autonomous technologies, gender and disarmament, and a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction

- Engaged and facilitated dialogue between and among disarmament stakeholders through more than 45 conferences, workshops and events, drawing over 7,600 participants. Those activities included a gender and disarmament conference in Uganda; table-top exercises on lethal autonomous weapons; orientation courses on the Biological Weapons Convention for new diplomats; and, in partnership with the Office for Disarmament Affairs, a course of six thematic modules, each comprising a reading list, an introductory video and a 90-minute interactive online videoconference session.⁴⁸ Furthermore, in addition to its annual Cyber Stability Conference, UNIDIR convened its flagship Innovations Dialogue to discuss innovations in the life sciences and their implications for international security.
- Offered advisory services to intergovernmental processes and forums, including as a consultant to two groups of governmental experts respectively addressing problems arising from the accumulation of conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus and advancing responsible State behaviour in cyberspace in the context of international security
- Issued 52 publications (and over 25 translations) on subjects as varied as swarm robotics, nuclear risk reduction, chemical and biological weapons, autonomous weapons systems, and gender issues related to cyber diplomacy (for a list of UNIDIR publications, see annex II)
- Revamped its website, driving a 75 per cent increase in average monthly traffic, with visitors based in all Member States, and a 35 per cent growth in social media followers.

The following subsections identify 2020 highlights from UNIDIR research programmes, all of which supported the implementation of the Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament.⁴⁹

Weapons of mass destruction and other strategic weapons

The work of UNIDIR under its programme on weapons of mass destruction and other strategic weapons fell into five main areas: finding measures to reduce nuclear-weapon risk; strengthening compliance and enforcement of regimes related to weapons of mass destruction; new approaches to transparency and verification in nuclear disarmament; improving space security and sustainability; and addressing the future of arms control and disarmament related to weapons of mass destruction. In 2020, the Institute commenced work through the Nuclear

⁴⁸ The course was a joint endeavour of UNIDIR and the Office for Disarmament Affairs.

⁴⁹ UNIDIR provided a full account of its activities, as well as its proposed programme of work and financial plan for 2020, in the annual report of its Director to the General Assembly (A/75/134). For more details on specific UNIDIR projects, as well as on all its research and activities, see the UNIDIR [website](#).

Disarmament, Deterrence and Strategic Arms Control Dialogue, a new format bringing together senior experts from around the world to identify options for recrafting strategic arms control and revitalizing the pursuit of nuclear disarmament. Three dialogue events were hosted during the year.

The programme published outputs in all those areas, including a new series of reports on discussions from the Dialogue.⁵⁰ UNIDIR also organized, inter alia, several presentations of findings from a multi-author volume on nuclear risk reduction, as well as the Launch Pad seminar series on space-related research. After the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Institute prepared several publications and events to help raise awareness about the Biological Weapons Convention and its review process.

Conventional arms

In 2020, UNIDIR conducted research for its conventional arms programme in three priority areas: strengthening policy and practice for weapon and ammunition management; integrating conventional arms control into prevention and peacemaking; and adapting arms control to address urbanization of violence. Those activities supported the active engagement of States in various multilateral processes, including the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons, the Arms Trade Treaty, the Group of Governmental Experts on problems arising from the accumulation of conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus, and relevant Security Council committees.

In the area of weapons and ammunition management, UNIDIR achievements included enhancing knowledge among States on ways to better identify and mitigate diversion risks in arms transfers, in line with the Arms Trade Treaty; facilitating a regional lessons-learned dialogue on weapons and ammunition management in Africa;⁵¹ generating ideas to achieve progress on conventional ammunition management at the national, regional and international levels in support of the relevant Group of Governmental Experts process; and providing advisory support for Somalia to develop a national strategy for weapons and ammunition management.

Meanwhile, by considering conventional arms control measures alongside prevention and peacemaking, the programme enhanced policymakers' knowledge on practical ways such measures could support the implementation of the Secretary-General's appeal for a global ceasefire in response to the pandemic. That cross-cutting approach also helped United Nations practitioners to generate ideas aimed at further integrating conventional arms control in multilateral agendas on conflict prevention, peacebuilding, human rights and sustainable development.

⁵⁰ John Borrie and Lewis A. Dunn, *The Strategic Context for Nuclear Disarmament, Deterrence and Strategic Arms Control Dialogue* (Geneva, UNIDIR, 2020).

⁵¹ This support was provided in cooperation with the African Union as part of its Silencing the Guns initiative.

Additionally, in its research on adapting arms control to address the urbanization of violence, UNIDIR produced a dedicated study⁵² of lessons learned and ways to further reduce safety and security risks from explosive precursors in populated areas. It undertook that study after such precursors were identified as contributors to a devastating explosion in Beirut in August.

UNIDIR also aimed, through its conventional arms programme, to help practitioners develop their capacities to prevent and mitigate the risks and impacts of armed violence. In that regard, it produced a self-assessment tool designed to help States evaluate their capabilities to prevent and mitigate threats from improvised explosive devices. Furthermore, to help inform strategies and programmes designed to reduce armed violence, the UNIDIR developed a handbook offering practical guidance on ways to identify and document the trafficking and misuse of illicit ammunition.

Security and technology

Through its security and technology programme, UNIDIR aimed to help practitioners and multilateral disarmament processes respond effectively to the security challenges resulting from technological innovation. Its objectives were to support norm development and implementation, increase understanding of digital destabilization and help modernize the “arms control toolbox”.

That programme was focused on three priority areas: cyber stability; artificial intelligence and the weaponization of increasingly autonomous technologies; and the security dimensions of innovations in science and technology. Within each area, UNIDIR aimed to build knowledge and awareness on the international security implications and risks of specific technological innovations, and convene stakeholders to explore ideas and develop new thinking on ways to address them.

In 2020, UNIDIR continued to help advance the international cyber debate by, *inter alia*, (a) facilitating the operationalization of norms of responsible State behaviour through a combination of research activities, multi-stakeholder dialogues and webinars; (b) continuously maintaining and further developing the [UNIDIR Cyber Policy Portal](#); (c) supporting the relevant intergovernmental processes established by the General Assembly;⁵³ and (d) convening the Institute’s annual Cyber Stability Conference in September 2020.⁵⁴

⁵² Bob Seddon and Himayu Shiotani, “The Beirut Port Explosion: Understanding Its Impact and How to Reduce Risks from Explosive Precursors” (Geneva, UNIDIR, 2020).

⁵³ UNIDIR provided that support pursuant to General Assembly resolutions [73/27](#) and [73/266](#). It advised Chairs of both Groups (Group of Governmental Experts on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security; and Group of Governmental Experts on Advancing Responsible State Behaviour in Cyberspace in the Context of International Security) at their February in-person meetings; synthesized relevant national inputs, positions and comments; and prepared draft texts for both processes.

⁵⁴ Notably, the Cyber Stability Conference was convened for the first time in a hybrid format; participants attended the Conference in person from Geneva and virtually from around the world.

As part of its artificial intelligence work stream, UNIDIR executed an ambitious programme of original research projects and engaged with stakeholders across a variety of channels. Its research team released three major reports and two briefs, all of which were translated into French and Spanish and were well received by the relevant policy communities. The Institute also maintained a diverse and broad public engagement programme under that work stream, including a side event for the Group of Governmental Experts on Emerging Technologies in the Area of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems, two webinars on lethal autonomous weapons developed in conjunction with the Office of Disarmament Affairs, and two multi-day table-top exercises, in addition to sustained external engagement through international speaking and media appearances.

Meanwhile, as part of its work on science, technology and innovation, UNIDIR pursued activities in the life sciences and related issues about the Biological Weapons Convention. In that regard, it undertook hands-on research; issued three well-received publications; held five events, including its flagship Innovations Dialogue, which was convened for the first time in a fully virtual format; and organized several external speaking engagements. In facilitating dialogue among relevant stakeholders, the Institute helped advance understanding of and promote multilateral discourse on potential international security and disarmament implications of various scientific and technological innovations.

Gender and disarmament

In 2020, under its programme on gender and disarmament, UNIDIR continued to assist the diplomatic community in bridging gender and disarmament frameworks. In the lead-up to the twentieth anniversary of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security, the Institute issued its report entitled *Connecting the Dots*, presenting research findings and recommendations aimed at further integrating the women, peace and security agenda into arms control and disarmament processes. Notably, that publication contained a proposal for a new international approach to gender-responsive arms control and disarmament, structured around the four pillars of the women, peace and security agenda: participation; prevention; protection; and relief and recovery. In addition, UNIDIR produced a series of short videos to help raise awareness about the publication and its underlying research.⁵⁵

Separately, as part of an ongoing effort to build capacity and support engagement in disarmament issues among stakeholders around the world, UNIDIR organized a regional workshop in Uganda that was attended by national officials and experts from 15 African countries. It presented key takeaways

⁵⁵ The full text of the report is available in English, French and Spanish. Its accompanying videos are available on the UNIDIR [YouTube channel](#) in English, French and Spanish, with subtitles in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish.

of the discussions, along with recommendations, in its report entitled *Gender Perspectives in Arms Control and Disarmament: Views from Africa*.⁵⁶

Given ongoing discussions on information and telecommunications in the context of international security, the Institute undertook a research project aimed at developing proposals for gender-based approaches to cybersecurity. UNIDIR presented preliminary findings and insights from that work in the commentary entitled *Advancing Gender Considerations in the Cyber OEWG*,⁵⁷ as well as during a December 2020 side event it had co-organized.

Additionally, the Institute organized briefings on gender and produced resource tools tailored to delegations supporting specific disarmament processes and meetings. For instance, ahead of the twenty-fifth Conference of States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention, UNIDIR launched a fact sheet entitled *Gender and Chemical Weapons*, with information on sex-specific and gendered impacts of chemical weapons, as well as ideas for mainstreaming gender perspectives in the Convention's implementation.

UNIDIR researchers also drew on their previous work on gender and biological weapons to analyse the gendered impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the commentary entitled *Pandemics Are Not Gender-Neutral*, they proposed a set of guiding questions for gender-responsive public health policies. Following the commentary's release, its authors continued to discuss their findings in webinars and informal consultations.

In addition, as part of its activities with the International Gender Champions Disarmament Impact Group,⁵⁸ the Institute distributed an updated version of its *Gender and Disarmament Resource Pack*, providing new information on the relevance of gender perspectives to arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament, as well as practical ideas to help diplomats apply a gender lens to their work.

Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction

Through its project on a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction, which was fully funded by the European Union, UNIDIR pursued four overarching objectives: (a) to fill an important research gap related to how the issue of the project evolved, including lessons for current and future prospects; (b) to build analytic capacity to support new thinking on regional security issues and the zone, including drawing on lessons from the establishment of other

⁵⁶ The report is available in English and French.

⁵⁷ The title includes reference to the Open-ended Working Group on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security.

⁵⁸ The International Gender Champions Disarmament Impact Group seeks to promote dialogue, shared knowledge and the pursuit of concrete opportunities to advance gender-responsive action within disarmament processes. The Group is co-chaired by the Director of UNIDIR and the Permanent Representatives of Canada, Ireland, Namibia and the Philippines to the United Nations Office at Geneva.

regional nuclear-free zones; (c) to collect ideas and develop new proposals on how to move forward on that issue; and (d) to foster inclusive dialogue among experts and policymakers on regional security issues and the zone, which in turn could contribute to ongoing multilateral processes.

The Institute launched the project's second phase in January 2020.⁵⁹ Scheduled to continue through May 2021, that phase was focused on conducting dialogues, exploring contemporary tools and analysing current international and regional events with a view to how they may contribute towards and influence regional security, as well as prospects for the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. Another aim was to examine what further incentives may be needed to achieve progress towards establishing such a zone. To those ends, UNIDIR interviewed 70 officials and experts from the region and beyond, helping it identify key issues and opportunities for creating the zone.

Throughout 2020, the project team disseminated preliminary findings through a dedicated quarterly newsletter and briefings to stakeholders. In that regard, it delivered a presentation at a [thematic seminar](#) convened in March by the Office for Disarmament Affairs in preparation for the tenth Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty; published a [report](#) in April on “pathways forward” during the Conference; presented a [paper](#) in July entitled “The ways and means in which nuclear-weapon-free zones contribute to regional peace, stability and other political objectives”; and held an [event](#) in October on “Lessons from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action for the Middle East Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone”. In addition, the project team authored articles published in the *Washington Post*, *Arms Control Today* and the *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*.

⁵⁹ During the first phase of the project, from May to December 2019, UNIDIR focused on engaging with regional and international interlocutors to introduce the project, solicit regional positions and create online interactive tools for accessing historical and factual information. In one step to build capacity among researchers, it created an the online [Middle East WMD Free Zone Documents Depository](#), with over 400 documents, including many not previously available to the public. To further assist in capacity-building, the Institute supported the translation of many project products into the three main languages of the region: Arabic, Hebrew and Persian. UNIDIR also continued to engage with officials and experts from all key stakeholders in the region and beyond, including the three depositary States of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. In addition, it established a seven-member Project Reference Group to represent key stakeholders, while also contributing towards introducing the project in the region, identifying additional regional experts and facilitating project activities in the region.

Annex I

United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs publications and other information materials in 2020

- *United Nations Disarmament Yearbook*, vol. 44 (Parts I and II): 2019 (Sales Nos. E.20.IX.3 and E.20.IX.7) (also available in e-book format)
- *Rethinking Unconstrained Military Spending*, United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs Occasional Papers, No. 35, April 2020 (Sales No. E.20.IX.4)
- *Conventional Ammunition Management: Developments and Challenges from COVID-19*, United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs Occasional Papers, No. 36, August 2020 (Sales No. E.20.IX.6)
- *United Nations Programme of Fellowships on Disarmament at 40*, United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs Occasional Papers, No. 37, December 2020 (Sales No. E.20.IX.8)
- *Navigating Disarmament Education: The Peace Boat Model*, Civil Society and Disarmament: 2020 (Sales No. E.20.IX.9)
- *Programmes Financed from Voluntary Contributions: 2019–2020*
- *The Militarization of Artificial Intelligence*
- *Final Report of the UNODA Project to Identify Lessons Learned from the OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism*
- *Aide-Memoire: Options for Reflecting Weapons and Ammunition Management in Decisions of the Security Council, Second Edition*
- *Making Room for Improvement: Gender Dimensions of the Life-cycle Management of Ammunition*
- *Report of the Secretary-General on current developments in science and technology and their potential impact on international security and disarmament efforts*
- *UNODA Update* (online news updates): First Quarter, Second Quarter, Third Quarter and Fourth Quarter
- *Fact sheets* on disarmament issues

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

- *Roadmap for Implementing The Caribbean Priority Actions on the Illicit Proliferation of Firearms and Ammunition across the Caribbean in a Sustainable Manner by 2030*
- *Normes et instruments juridiques sur les armes à feu, les munitions et les explosifs république d'Haïti*

- *Avis juridique relatif à la Proposition de loi relative à la fabrication, la commercialisation, la détention, le contrôle et le port d'armes à feu sur le territoire national, 10 juillet 2019 : Synthèse*
- *Estudio normativo—La necesaria vinculación entre las normas sobre violencia contra la mujer y las normas de regulación y control de armas pequeñas: Análisis de Centroamérica, Colombia, México y República Dominicana*
- *Normative study—Making the link between norms on violence against women and small arms control and regulation norms: Analysis of CARICOM States*
- *Preventing violence against women through arms control in Latin America and the Caribbean: Recommendations during the COVID-19 crisis* ([English](#), [French](#), [Portuguese](#) and [Spanish](#))
- *Firearms in Latin American and Caribbean schools: Approaches, challenges and responses* ([English](#), [Portuguese](#) and [Spanish](#))
- *Forces of Change IV: Latin American And Caribbean Women Promoting Disarmament, Non-Proliferation and Arms Control* ([English](#) and [Spanish](#))
- *Medidas de Control de las Municiones en América Latina y el Caribe: Un Enfoque Normativo* ([Spanish](#))
- *Identification Guide for Weapons, Parts and Components* (abridged version)
- *Ballistic Intelligence and Information Management: Reference Document, Working Version*

Fact sheets (updated)

- [Institutional fact sheet of the Centre](#)
- [Women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control](#)
- [Firearms in Latin American and Caribbean schools](#)
- [Bolstering Stockpile Safety and Security and Assisting in Weapons Destruction](#)
- [Interdicting Small Arms, Ammunition, Parts and Components Course](#)
- [Preventing and Solving Gun Crimes through Forensic Ballistics](#)
- [Promoting Small Arms Control in the Private Security Sector](#)
- [Arms Trade Treaty Assistance Package](#)
- [Supporting Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540 \(2004\)](#)

Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific

- [Newsletter No. 19](#), November 2019–February 2020
- [Compendium](#) of activities, outcomes, recommendations of the Centre’s project on gun violence and illicit small-arms trafficking from a gender perspective (May 2020)
- Series of [video testimonials](#) showcasing participants’ experiences in advocating for gender approaches in arms control laws and policies, women empowerment in disarmament-related initiatives and youth involvement in peace and security.

Annex II

United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research publications in 2020⁶⁰

Conventional Arms

- *Tracing Illicit Weapon Flows in Conflict and Security Transitions: A Case for Managing Recovered Weapons in Somalia*
- *An Innovative Approach to United Nations Arms Embargoes*
- *Weapon and Ammunition Management in Africa: Online Meeting Summary* (French version published in 2020)
- *Counter-IED Capability Maturity Model and Self-Assessment Tool* (English, French, Spanish and Arabic)
- *The Arms Trade Treaty: Obligations to Prevent the Diversion of Conventional Arms* (Arabic, English and French)
- *Urban Conflict and Targeting: A Special Problem for Protection*
- *Conventional Ammunition Management: A Gap Analysis* (French and Spanish versions published in 2020)
- *Key Issues and Processes Pertinent to the Management of Conventional Ammunition: Report of the Second Seminar* (French version published in 2020)
- *Key Issues and Processes Pertinent to the Management of Conventional Ammunition: Report of the Third Seminar* (French and Spanish versions published in 2020)
- *Opportunities to Strengthen Military Policies and Practices to Reduce Civilian Harm From Explosive Weapons: A Food for Thought Paper* (French version published in 2020)

⁶⁰ To view the publications listed in this annex, see UNIDIR, “[Publications](#)”.

- *Opportunities to Improve Military Policy and Practice to Reduce Civilian Harm from Explosive Weapons in Urban Conflicts: An Options Paper* (French version published in 2020)
- *The Arms Trade Treaty: Measures to Prevent, Detect, Address and Eradicate the Diversion of Conventional Arms*
- Country Insights Series: Weapons and Ammunition Management (15 issues published in 2020: (10 in English and 5 in French))
- *Handbook to Profile Small Arms Ammunition in Armed Violence Settings*
- *The Beirut Port Explosion: Understanding Its Impact and How to Reduce Risks from Explosive Precursors*
- *Addressing Conventional Arms Risks and Impacts to Prevent Conflict and Build Peace: What More Should the United Nations Do?*

Gender and disarmament

- *Connecting the Dots: Arms Control, Disarmament and the Women, Peace and Security Agenda* (English, French and Spanish)
- *Gender Perspectives in Arms Control and Disarmament: Views from Africa* (English and French)
- *Gender & Disarmament Resource Pack* (2020 edition)
- Fact sheet on gender and chemical weapons

Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction

- The ways and means in which nuclear-weapon-free zones contribute to regional peace, stability and other political objectives
- *Pathways Forward for the ME WMD/FZ Process and 2020 NPT Review Conference: Conference Report* (Arabic, English, Hebrew and Persian)

Security and technology

- *The Black Box, Unlocked*
- *Modernizing Arms Control*
- *Advances in Science and Technology in the Life Science*
- *Swarm Robotics: Technical and Operational Overview of the Next Generation of Autonomous Systems* (French and Spanish versions published in 2020)
- *Robotic Swarms* (research brief)
- *The Human Element in Decisions about the Use of Force* (French and Spanish versions published in 2020)

- *Supply Chain Security in the Cyber Age: Sector Trends, Current Threats and Multi-Stakeholder Responses*
- *Magnifying Nanomaterials*
- *The 2020 Innovations Dialogue Report*
- *The 2020 Cyber Stability Conference Report*

Weapons of mass destruction and other strategic weapons

- *Exploring the Future of WMD Compliance and Enforcement: Workshop Report*
- *The 2020 NPT Review Conference: Prepare for Plan B*
- *IAEA Mechanisms to Ensure Compliance with NPT Safeguards (WMD Compliance and Enforcement Series, No. 2)*
- *Is Past Prologue? Examining NPT Review Conference Commitments*
- *Nuclear Risk Reduction: Closing Pathways to Use*
- *Space Dossier File 5: Alternative Approaches and Indicators for the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space*
- *Space Dossier File 6: Ballistic Missile Defence and Outer Space Security—A Strategic Interdependence*
- *On ‘Great Power Competition’ (Nuclear Risk Reduction Policy Brief, No. 1)*
- *Freeze and Verify: Ending Fissile Material Production on the Korean Peninsula*
- *A World Without the NPT Redux*
- *Strategic Technologies (Nuclear Risk Reduction Policy Brief, No. 2)*
- *Perceptions in the Euro-Atlantic (Nuclear Risk Reduction Policy Brief, No. 3)*
- *The DPRK Nuclear Programme (Nuclear Risk Reduction Policy Brief No. 4)*
- *The Strategic Context for Nuclear Disarmament, Deterrence and Strategic Arms Control Dialogue (UNIDIR Nuclear Dialogue Series, No. 1)*
- *The Logic of Nuclear Disarmament (UNIDIR Nuclear Dialogue Series, No. 2)*
- *The Logic of Nuclear Deterrence: Assessments, Assumptions, Uncertainties and Failure Modes (UNIDIR Nuclear Dialogue Series, No. 3)*
- *Science and Technology for WMD Compliance Monitoring and Investigations (WMD Compliance and Enforcement, No. 8)*
- *The Role of International Organizations in WMD Compliance and Enforcement (WMD Compliance and Enforcement, No. 9)*

Annex III

Events held on the margins of the 2020 session of the First Committee

- 13 October New Horizons for Victim Assistance and Environmental Remediation: The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons' Positive Obligations (Organized by the Permanent Mission of Kiribati with Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, the Harvard Law School International Human Rights Clinic, the Center for International Security and Policy and the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons France)
- 14 October Nuclear Risk: Which Scenarios Most Worry Us? (Organized by UNIDIR)
- 15 October Improvised Explosive Devices: Past, Present and Future (Organized by UNIDIR and Action on Armed Violence)
- 19 October Innovations in Life Sciences (Organized by UNIDIR)
- 21 October New Technological Opportunities to Bolster Treaty Compliance (Organized by UNIDIR)
- 22 October Multilateralism and Armed Drones: Escaping the Gridlock (Organized by PAX)
Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons: Past, Present and Future Perspectives (Organized by the Permanent Mission of the Netherlands and the Office for Disarmament Affairs)
- 23 October The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons—A game changer in nuclear disarmament (Organized by the Permanent Missions of Austria, Brazil, Costa Rica, Indonesia, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, Nigeria, South Africa and Thailand, with the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons)
- 26 October United Nations #75Words4Disarmament Congratulatory Event (Organized by the Office for Disarmament Affairs)
- 28 October Connecting the Women, Peace and Security and Disarmament Agendas (Organized by UNIDIR)
- 29 October Transparency and Reporting in the Arms Trade Treaty: Trends and Challenges in the Age of COVID-19 (Organized by Control Arms)
Virtual Launch Event of the Office for Disarmament Affairs Briefing Paper “Gender Dimensions of the Life-cycle Management of Ammunition” (Organized by the Office for Disarmament Affairs)
The State of Ballistic Missile Proliferation Today (Organized by Fondation pour la recherche stratégique)

- 30 October Supporting Gender-Mainstreamed Policies, Programmes and Actions in the Fight Against Small-Arms Trafficking and Misuse, in line with the Women, Peace and Security Agenda (Organized by the European Union and the Office for Disarmament Affairs)
- 2 November Arms Trade Treaty Update: Report from the Sixth Conference of States Parties and prospects for Seventh Conference of States Parties (Organized by Control Arms)
- 3 November Book Launch—Navigating Disarmament Education: The Peace Boat Model (Organized by Peace Boat and the Office for Disarmament Affairs)



Appendix

Status of multilateral arms regulation and disarmament agreements

The Security Council meets on 26 February 2020 about non-proliferation and support for the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty ahead of the 2020 Review Conference.

UN Photo/Loey Felipe

APPENDIX

Status of multilateral arms regulation and disarmament agreements

The most up-to-date information on disarmament treaties, including their status of adherence, are available at the Disarmament Treaties Database of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs:

<https://treaties.unoda.org/>

The data contained in this appendix has been provided by the depositaries of the treaties or agreements. Inclusion of information concerning the treaties and agreements of which the United Nations Secretary-General is not the depositary is as reported by the respective depositaries and implies no position on the part of the United Nations with respect to the data reported.

The treaties are presented below by depositary.

Secretary-General of the United Nations

Agreement Governing the Activities of States on the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies

Arms Trade Treaty

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 (Kinshasa Convention)

Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty

Convention on Cluster Munitions

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 the Prohibition of Military or Any Other Hostile Use of Environmental Modification Techniques

Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction

Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction (Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention)

International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism

Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons

African Union

African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty (Pelindaba Treaty)

Canada and Hungary

Treaty on Open Skies

France

Protocol for the Prohibition of the Use in War of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or Other Gases, and of Bacteriological Methods of Warfare (1925 Geneva Protocol)

Kyrgyzstan

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

Mexico

Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (Treaty of Tlatelolco)

Netherlands

Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe

Organization of American States

Inter-American Convention Against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives and Other Related Materials

Inter-American Convention on Transparency in Conventional Weapons Acquisitions

Pacific Islands Forum

South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty (Rarotonga Treaty)

Russian Federation, United Kingdom and United States

Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction

Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapon Tests in the Atmosphere, in Outer Space and Under Water (Partial Test Ban Treaty)

Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies (Outer Space Treaty)

Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

Treaty on the Prohibition of the Emplacement of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction on the Sea-Bed and the Ocean Floor and in the Subsoil Thereof (Sea-bed Treaty)

Thailand

Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone (Bangkok Treaty)

United States

Antarctic Treaty

Actions reported for the period 1 January to 31 December 2020

The following list shows actions, if any, during the period from 1 January to 31 December 2020 with regard to multilateral arms regulation and disarmament agreements, as reported by the depositaries. The order in which the agreements are listed is according to the date of signature or opening for signature.

A new State party is listed below based on the date of deposit with the respective depositary of a State's instrument of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession. However, please refer to the footnotes to ascertain whether that State actually becomes a State party at a later date, as some treaties only enter into force for a State after a specified period of time from the date of deposit. If a State expressed its consent to be bound by a means other than ratification, the date of deposit is further noted as follows: (a) = accession, (A) = acceptance, (AA) = approval, (P) = consent to be bound and (s) = succession.^a

In the case of multi-depositary clauses, depositary action may be completed with one or more of the several depositaries. The following notation indicates where the reported action was completed: (M) = Moscow, (L) = London and (W) = Washington; Canada (C) and Hungary (H).

Certain treaties that establish nuclear-weapon-free zones (Bangkok Treaty, Pelindaba Treaty, Rarotonga Treaty, Treaty of Tlatelolco and Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia) have associated protocols concerning security guarantees from the nuclear-weapon States and some also have protocols for States outside the zone of application, but which have some territory within the zone. They are at different stages with regard to signature, ratification and entry into force. (For the status of adherence of these protocols, see the table in chapter IV on p. 129.)

Protocol for the Prohibition of the Use in War of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or Other Gases, and of Bacteriological Methods of Warfare (1925 Geneva Protocol)

SIGNED AT GENEVA: 17 June 1925

ENTERED INTO FORCE: 8 February 1928

DEPOSITARY: France

NEW PARTIES: Kazakhstan —20 April (a)

Kyrgyzstan —29 June (a)

TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTIES: 145

Antarctic Treaty

SIGNED AT WASHINGTON: 1 December 1959

ENTERED INTO FORCE: 23 June 1961

DEPOSITARY: United States

NEW PARTIES: None

TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTIES: 54

^a For a glossary of terms, see United Nations Treaty Collection, "[Glossary of terms relating to Treaty actions](#)".

Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapon Tests in the Atmosphere, in Outer Space and Under Water (Partial Test Ban Treaty)

SIGNED BY THE ORIGINAL PARTIES^b IN MOSCOW: 5 August 1963
OPENED FOR SIGNATURE AT LONDON, MOSCOW AND WASHINGTON: 8 August 1963
ENTERED INTO FORCE: 10 October 1963
DEPOSITARY: Russian Federation (M), United Kingdom (L) and United States (W)
NEW PARTIES: None
TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTIES: 125

Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies (Outer Space Treaty)

OPENED FOR SIGNATURE AT LONDON, MOSCOW AND WASHINGTON: 27 January 1967
ENTERED INTO FORCE: 10 October 1967
DEPOSITARY: Russian Federation (M), United Kingdom (L) and United States (W)
NEW PARTIES: Bosnia and Herzegovina —29 September (a) (L)
TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTIES: 111

Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (Treaty of Tlatelolco)

OPENED FOR SIGNATURE AT MEXICO CITY: 14 February 1967
ENTERED INTO FORCE: for each Government individually
DEPOSITARY: Mexico
NEW PARTIES: None
TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTIES: 33

Amendment to article 7^c

NEW PARTIES: None
TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTIES: 24

Amendment to article 25^d

NEW PARTIES: None
TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTIES: 24

Amendment to articles 14, 15, 16, 19 and 20^e

NEW PARTIES: None
TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTIES: 28

^b The original parties are the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States.

^c Amendment adopted by the General Conference of OPANAL, pursuant to resolution 267 (E-V) of 3 July 1990.

^d Amendment adopted by the General Conference of OPANAL, pursuant to resolution 268 (XII) of 10 May 1991.

^e Amendment adopted by the General Conference of OPANAL, pursuant to resolution 290 (VII) of 26 August 1992.

Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

OPENED FOR SIGNATURE AT LONDON, MOSCOW AND WASHINGTON: 1 July 1968
ENTERED INTO FORCE: 5 March 1970
DEPOSITARY: Russian Federation (M), United Kingdom (L) and United States (W)
NEW PARTIES: None
TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTIES: 191

Treaty on the Prohibition of the Emplacement of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction on the Sea-Bed and the Ocean Floor and in the Subsoil Thereof (Sea-bed Treaty)

OPENED FOR SIGNATURE AT LONDON, MOSCOW AND WASHINGTON: 11 February 1971
ENTERED INTO FORCE: 18 May 1972
DEPOSITARY: Russian Federation (M), United Kingdom (L) and United States (W)
NEW PARTIES: None
TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTIES: 94

Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction

OPENED FOR SIGNATURE AT LONDON, MOSCOW AND WASHINGTON: 10 April 1972
ENTERED INTO FORCE: 26 March 1975
DEPOSITARY: Russian Federation (M), United Kingdom (L) and United States (W)
NEW PARTIES: None
TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTIES: 183

Convention on the Prohibition of Military or Any Other Hostile Use of Environmental Modification Techniques

OPENED FOR SIGNATURE AT GENEVA: 18 May 1977
ENTERED INTO FORCE: 5 October 1978
DEPOSITARY: Secretary-General of the United Nations
NEW PARTIES: None
TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTIES: 78

Agreement Governing the Activities of States on the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies

OPENED FOR SIGNATURE AT NEW YORK: 18 December 1979
ENTERED INTO FORCE: 11 July 1984
DEPOSITARY: Secretary-General of the United Nations
NEW PARTIES:^f None
TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTIES: 18

^f Article 19, paragraph 4, states:

“For each State depositing its instrument of ratification or accession after the entry

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

OPENED FOR SIGNATURE AT NEW YORK: 10 April 1981

ENTERED INTO FORCE: 2 December 1983

DEPOSITARY: Secretary-General of the United Nations

NEW PARTIES:[§] None

TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTIES: 125

Amendment to Article 1 of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (entered into force on 18 May 2004)

NEW PARTIES: None

TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTIES: 86

Amended Protocol II (entered into force on 3 December 1998)

NEW PARTIES: None

TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTIES: 106

Protocol IV (entered into force on 30 July 1998)

NEW PARTIES: None

TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTIES: 109

Protocol V (entered into force on 12 November 2006)

NEW PARTIES: None

TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTIES: 96

South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty (Rarotonga Treaty)

OPENED FOR SIGNATURE AT RAROTONGA: 6 August 1985

ENTERED INTO FORCE: 11 December 1986

DEPOSITARY: Secretary-General of the Pacific Islands Forum

NEW PARTIES: None

TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTIES: 13

into force of this Agreement, it shall enter into force on the thirtieth day following the date of deposit of any such instrument.”

[§] Article 5, paragraphs 2 and 3, of the Convention state:

“2. For any State which deposits its instrument of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession after the date of the deposit of the twentieth instrument of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession, this Convention shall enter into force six months after the date on which that State has deposited its instrument of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession.

“3. Each of the Protocols annexed to this Convention shall enter into force six months after the date by which twenty States have notified their consent to be bound by it in accordance with paragraph 3 or 4 of Article 4 of this Convention.”

Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe

SIGNED AT PARIS: 19 November 1990
ENTERED INTO FORCE: 9 November 1992
DEPOSITARY: Netherlands

NEW PARTIES: None
TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTIES: 30

Agreement on Adaptation

ADOPTED AND SIGNED AT ISTANBUL: 19 November 1999
NOT YET IN FORCE^h

NEW SIGNATORIES: None
TOTAL NUMBER OF SIGNATORIES: 30

NEW PARTIES: None
TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTIES: 3

Treaty on Open Skies

SIGNED AT HELSINKI: 24 March 1992
ENTERED INTO FORCE: 1 January 2002
DEPOSITARY: Canada and Hungary

NEW PARTIES: None
WITHDRAWAL: United States —22 November (C) (H)
TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTIES: 33

Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction

SIGNED AT PARIS: 13 January 1993
ENTERED INTO FORCE: 29 April 1997
DEPOSITARY: Secretary-General of the United Nations

NEW PARTIES:ⁱ None
TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTIES: 193

^h Article 31, paragraph 3, states:

“This Agreement on Adaptation shall enter into force 10 days after instruments of ratification have been deposited by all States Parties listed in the Preamble, after which time the Treaty shall exist only in its amended form.”

ⁱ Article XXI, paragraph 2, states:

“For States whose instruments of ratification or accession are deposited subsequent to the entry into force of this Convention, it shall enter into force on the 30th day following the date of deposit of their instrument of ratification or accession.”

**Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone
(Bangkok Treaty)**

SIGNED AT BANGKOK: 15 December 1995

ENTERED INTO FORCE: 27 March 1997

DEPOSITARY: Thailand

NEW PARTIES: None

TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTIES: 10

African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty (Pelindaba Treaty)

SIGNED AT CAIRO: 11 April 1996

ENTERED INTO FORCE: 15 July 2009

DEPOSITARY: Secretary-General of the African Union

NEW PARTIES: Cabo Verde —7 February

TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTIES: 41

Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty

OPENED FOR SIGNATURE AT NEW YORK: 24 September 1996

NOT YET IN FORCE^j

DEPOSITARY: Secretary-General of the United Nations

NEW SIGNATORIES: None

TOTAL NUMBER OF SIGNATORIES: 184

NEW PARTIES: None

TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTIES: 168

**Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling,
Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on
Their Destruction (Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention)**

OPENED FOR SIGNATURE AT OTTAWA: 3 December 1997

ENTERED INTO FORCE: 1 March 1999

DEPOSITARY: Secretary-General of the United Nations

NEW PARTIES:^k None

TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTIES: 164

^j Article XIV, paragraph 1, states:

“This Treaty shall enter into force 180 days after the date of deposit of the instruments of ratification by all States listed in Annex II to this Treaty, but in no case earlier than two years after its opening for signature.”

^k Article 17, paragraph 2, states:

“For any State which deposits its instrument of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession after the date of the deposit of the 40th instrument of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession, this Convention shall enter into force on the first day of the sixth month after the date on which that State has deposited its instrument of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession.”

Inter-American Convention Against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials

OPENED FOR SIGNATURE AT WASHINGTON, DC: 14 November 1997

ENTERED INTO FORCE: 1 July 1998

DEPOSITARY: Organization of American States

NEW PARTIES:^l None

TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTIES: 31

Inter-American Convention on Transparency in Conventional Weapons Acquisitions

OPENED FOR SIGNATURE AT GUATEMALA CITY: 7 June 1999

ENTERED INTO FORCE: 21 November 2002

DEPOSITARY: Organization of American States

NEW PARTIES: None

TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTIES: 17

International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism

OPENED FOR SIGNATURE AT NEW YORK: 14 September 2005

ENTERED INTO FORCE: 7 July 2007

DEPOSITARY: Secretary General of the United Nations

NEW PARTIES:^m Saint Kitts and Nevis —13 August (a)

TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTIES: 117

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

OPENED FOR SIGNATURE AT SEMPALATINSK: 8 September 2006

ENTERED INTO FORCE: 21 March 2009

DEPOSITARY: Kyrgyzstan

NEW PARTIES: None

TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTIES: 5

^l Article XXV states:

“This Convention shall enter into force on the 30th day following the date of deposit of the second instrument of ratification. For each State ratifying the Convention after the deposit of the second instrument of ratification, the Convention shall enter into force on the 30th day following deposit by such State of its instrument of ratification.”

^m Article 25, paragraph 2 states:

“For each State ratifying, accepting, approving or acceding to the Convention after the deposit of the twenty-second instrument of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession, the Convention shall enter into force on the thirtieth day after deposit by such State of its instrument of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession.”

Convention on Cluster Munitions

OPENED FOR SIGNATURE AT OSLO: 3 December 2008

ENTERED INTO FORCE: 1 August 2010

DEPOSITARY: Secretary-General of the United Nations

NEW PARTIES: ⁿ	Niue	—6 August (a)
	Saint Lucia	—15 September (a)
	Sao Tome and Principe	—27 January

TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTIES: 110

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 (Kinshasa Convention)

OPENED FOR SIGNATURE AT BRAZZAVILLE: 19 November 2010

ENTERED INTO FORCE: 8 March 2017

DEPOSITARY: Secretary-General of the United Nations

NEW PARTIES:^o None

TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTIES: 8

Arms Trade Treaty

OPENED FOR SIGNATURE AT NEW YORK: 3 June 2013

ENTERED INTO FORCE: 24 December 2014

DEPOSITARY: Secretary-General of the United Nations

NEW PARTIES: ^p	Afghanistan	—30 July (a)
	China	—6 July (a)
	Namibia	—28 April
	Niue	—6 August (a)
	Sao Tome and Principe	—28 July

TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTIES: 110

ⁿ Article 17, paragraph 2, states:

“For any State that deposits its instrument of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession after the date of the deposit of the thirtieth instrument of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession, this Convention shall enter into force on the first day of the sixth month after the date on which that State has deposited its instrument of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession.”

^o Article 36, paragraph 2, states:

“For each State that deposits its instrument of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession after the date of deposit of the sixth instrument of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession, the Convention shall enter into force 30 days after the date of deposit of that instrument.”

^p Article 22, paragraph 2, states:

“For any State that deposits its instrument of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession subsequent to the entry into force of this Treaty, this Treaty shall enter into force for that State ninety days following the date of deposit of its instrument of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession.”

Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons

OPENED FOR SIGNATURE AT NEW YORK: 7 July 2017

NOT YET IN FORCE⁹

DEPOSITARY: Secretary-General of the United Nations

NEW SIGNATORIES:	Belize	—6 February
	Malta	—25 August
	Mozambique	—18 August
	Niger	—9 December
	Sudan	—22 July
	Zimbabwe	—4 December

TOTAL NUMBER OF SIGNATORIES: 86

NEW PARTIES:	Belize	—19 May
	Benin	—11 December
	Botswana	—15 July
	Fiji	—7 July
	Honduras	—24 October
	Ireland	—6 August
	Jamaica	—23 October
	Lesotho	—6 June
	Malaysia	—30 September
	Malta	—21 September
	Namibia	—20 March
	Nauru	—23 October
	Nigeria	—6 August
	Niue	—6 August (a)
	Paraguay	—23 January
	Saint Kitts and Nevis	—9 August
	Tuvalu	—12 October

TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTIES: 51

⁹ Article 15, paragraph 1, states:

“This Treaty shall enter into force 90 days after the fiftieth instrument of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession has been deposited.”

That condition for entry into force was met when Honduras deposited its instrument of ratification on 24 October. The Treaty will therefore enter into force on 22 January 2021.

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