



## Disarmament and International Security Committee (DISEC)

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### Description of Committee

#### First Committee

The First Committee deals with **disarmament**, global challenges and threats to peace that affect the international community and seeks out solutions to the challenges in the international security regime.

It considers all disarmament and international security matters within the scope of the **UN Charter** or relating to the powers and functions of any other organ of the **United Nations**; the general principles of cooperation in the maintenance of international peace and security, as well as principles governing disarmament and the regulation of armaments; promotion of cooperative arrangements and measures aimed at strengthening stability through lower levels of armaments.

The Committee works in close cooperation with the **United Nations Disarmament Commission** and the Geneva-based **Conference on Disarmament**. It is the only Main Committee of the **General Assembly** entitled to verbatim records coverage.<sup>1</sup>

The **Disarmament and International Security Committee (DISEC)** is the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly (GA). It includes all nations that are United Nations Member States. DISEC deals with issues regarding the promotion, establishment, and subsequent maintenance of global peace while simultaneously working to prevent weapons **proliferation**. Under the UN Charter, all member states and observers of the United Nations are automatically part of the first committee of the General Assembly, and have an equal vote. Documents drafted by this committee require a simple majority to be passed. Like the other committees of the United Nations General Assembly, DISEC is unable to impose sanctions, authorize armed intervention, or pass binding resolutions.<sup>4</sup> With the increase of weapons and growing security

threats, DISEC continues to grow in importance and becomes a significant part of resolving international crises.

In summary, DISEC cannot require that countries take a specific action. However, the committee can make recommendations to the **Security Council** about what should be done on a specific issue.<sup>3</sup>

### **United Nations Disarmament Commission**

In 1952, the General Assembly, by its resolution 502 (VI) of January 1952, created the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC) under the Security Council with a general mandate on disarmament questions. However, it met only occasionally after 1959.

In 1978 the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament established a successor Disarmament Commission (UNDC) as a subsidiary organ of the Assembly, composed of all Member States of the United Nations. It was created as a deliberative body, with the function of considering and making recommendations on various issues in the field of disarmament and of following up on the relevant decisions and recommendations of the special session, it reports annually to the General Assembly.<sup>2</sup>

### **Topic: Arms Proliferation**

#### **Introduction- Arms Control:**

The end of the First World War in 1918 saw the inception of a number of naval conferences with a stated aim to work towards disarmament. In the 1920s, the worldwide mood strongly favored disarmament, and the Washington Naval Conference of 1921 stands out as a successful example of modern-day international agreement to limit the use and proliferation of a certain type of armament. Some of the most powerful nations of the day, including Britain, France, Italy, Japan, and the United States, agreed to impose restrictions on the tonnage of warships and institute a full moratorium on new naval construction. In 1925, the **Second Geneva Convention** called for a complete ban on the use of chemical and biological weapons in warfare.<sup>5</sup>

The decades following the end of the Second World War saw a boom in treaties seeking to reduce the proliferation of broad categories of destructive weapons. The newly created United Nations provided a venue for hundreds of nations to create, discuss, and ultimately sign the nuclear **Non-Proliferation Treaty** (NPT) in 1968, while the United States and the Soviet Union worked bilaterally to sign and ratify the first Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty.<sup>6</sup>

Though global arms control efforts have tended to focus on traditional “weapons of mass destruction,” recent years have seen an expansion in the categories of weapons targeted by international treaties. In the past fifteen years, the international dialogue on arms control has finally begun to focus on small arms. A number of regional initiatives has helped set the stage for broader UN action to regulate trade and transfer in small arms, including the 1197 Organization

of American States Arms Convention, and a 2000 document on small arms produced by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).<sup>7</sup>

In 2001, the UN Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons was held in New York. The meeting resulted in a non-binding Programme of Action to guide further dialogue on the issue.<sup>8</sup>

### Nuclear Weapons:



Nuclear weapons are the most dangerous weapons on earth. One can destroy a whole city, potentially killing millions, and jeopardizing the natural environment and lives of future generations through its long-term catastrophic effects. The dangers from such weapons arise from their very existence. Although nuclear weapons have only been used twice in warfare—in the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945—about 22,000 reportedly remain in our world today and there have been over 2,000 nuclear tests conducted to date. Disarmament is the best protection against such dangers, but achieving this goal has been a tremendously difficult challenge.

The United Nations has sought to eliminate such weapons ever since its establishment. The first resolution adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1946 established a Commission to deal with problems related to the discovery of atomic energy among others. The Commission was to make proposals for, *inter alia*, the control of atomic energy to the extent necessary to ensure its use only for peaceful purposes. The resolution also decided that the Commission should make proposals for "the elimination from national armaments of atomic weapons and of all other major weapons adaptable to mass destruction."

A number of multilateral treaties have since been established with the aim of preventing nuclear proliferation and testing, while promoting progress in nuclear disarmament. These include the **Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)**, the Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapon Tests In The Atmosphere, In Outer Space And Under Water, also known as the **Partial Test Ban Treaty (PTBT)**, and the **Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT)**, which was signed in 1996 but has yet to enter into force.<sup>9</sup>

### **Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT):**

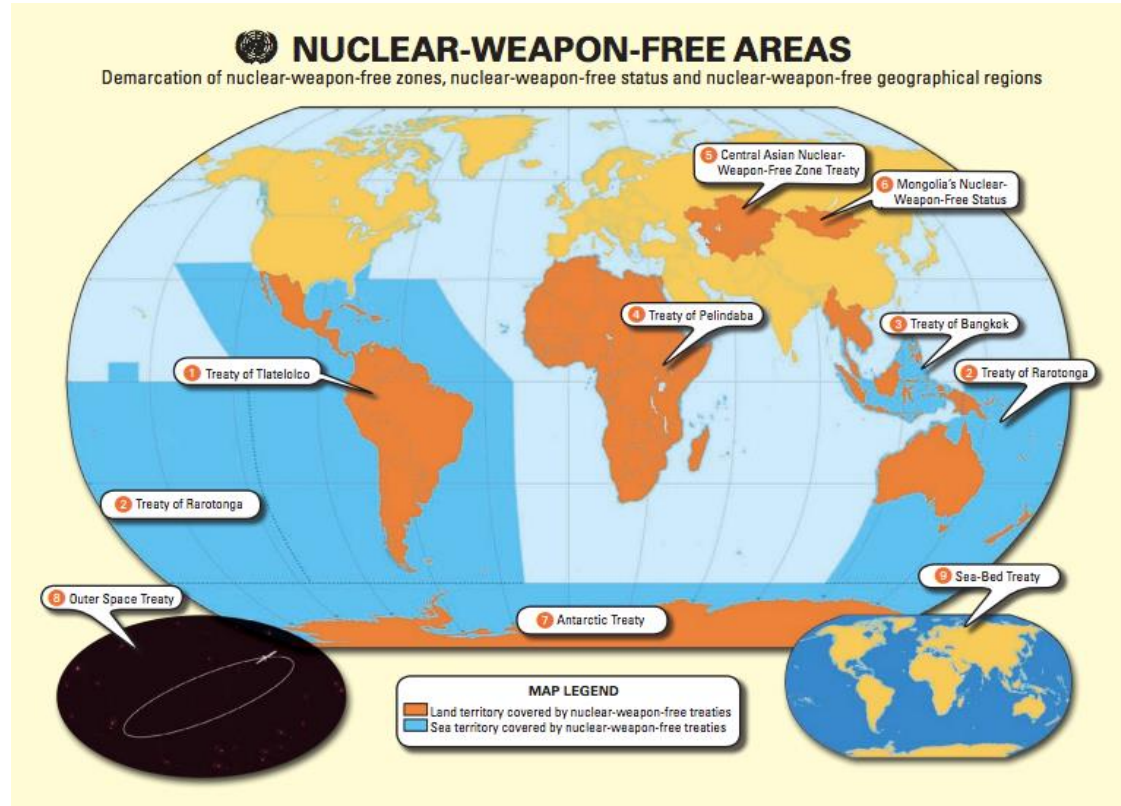
The NPT is a landmark international treaty whose objective is to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and weapons technology, to promote cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, and to further the goal of achieving nuclear disarmament and general and complete disarmament. The Treaty represents the only binding commitment in a multilateral treaty to the goal of disarmament by the nuclear-weapon States. Opened for signature in 1968, the Treaty entered into force in 1970. On 11 May 1995, the Treaty was extended indefinitely. A total of 190 parties have joined the Treaty, including the **five nuclear-weapon States**. More countries have ratified the NPT than any other arms limitation and disarmament agreement, a testament to the Treaty's significance.

The provisions of the Treaty, particularly article VIII, paragraph 3, envisage a review of the operation of the Treaty every five years, a provision which was reaffirmed by the States parties at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference.

To further the goal of non-proliferation and as a confidence-building measure between States parties, the Treaty establishes a safeguards system under the responsibility of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Safeguards are used to verify compliance with the Treaty through inspections conducted by the IAEA. The Treaty promotes cooperation in the field of peaceful nuclear technology and equal access to this technology for all States parties, while safeguards prevent the diversion of fissile material for weapons use.

**The 2010 Review Conference** of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) met at United Nations Headquarters in New York from 3 to 28 May 2010. A total of 172 States parties to the Treaty participated in the Conference. States parties agreed to a final document which included a review of the operation of the Treaty, reflecting the views of the President of the Conference, as well as agreed conclusions and recommendations for follow-on actions. The action plan contains measures to advance nuclear disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation, the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and regional issues, including the implementation of the 1995 Resolution on the Middle East.<sup>10</sup>

## Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones:



The establishment of **Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones** (NWFZ) is a regional approach to strengthen global nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament norms and consolidate international efforts towards peace and security. Article VII of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) states: “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“.

General Assembly resolution **3472 B (1975)** defines a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone as

...any zone recognized as such by the General Assembly of the United Nations, which any group of States, in the free exercises of their sovereignty, has established by virtue of a treaty or convention whereby:

- (a) The statute of total absence of nuclear weapons to which the zone shall be subject, including the procedure for the delimitation of the zone, is defined;
- (b) An international system of verification and control is established to guarantee compliance with the obligations deriving from that statute.<sup>11</sup>

## Guidelines and Principles for the Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones:

The UN Disarmament Commission in its **report of April 30, 1999**, recommended a set of principles and guidelines for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone, which included, *inter alia*:

- Nuclear-weapon-free zones should be established on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned
- The initiative to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone should emanate exclusively from States within the region concerned and be pursued by all States of that region
- The nuclear-weapon States should be consulted during the negotiations of each treaty and its relevant protocol(s) establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in order to facilitate their signature to and ratification of the relevant protocol(s) to the treaty, through which they undertake legally binding commitments to the status of the zone and not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against States parties to the treaty
- A nuclear-weapon-free zone should not prevent the use of nuclear science and technology for peaceful purposes and could also promote, if provided for in the treaties establishing such zones, bilateral, regional, and international cooperation for the peaceful use of nuclear energy in the zone, in support of socio-economic, scientific, and technological development of the States parties<sup>12</sup>

**Current situation—Facts:**

*“Small arms in the wrong hands destroy lives and livelihoods, impede peace efforts, hinder humanitarian aid, facilitate the illicit trade in narcotics and obstruct investment and development.”*

- Ban Ki-moon

Big-ticket weapons such as ICBMs may seem vastly threatening than AK-47s and grenade launchers, and certainly have a place in the UN’s security agenda, but the truth of the matter is that small arms do far more damage around the world on a day-to-day level. In the words of the Small Arms Working Group, “there are around forty wars raging in countries around the world today. These wars are being fought primarily with small arms and light weapons carried by individual soldiers or on light vehicles.” On average, over 400,000 people are killed every year through small arms, both in conflict zones and in crime-ridden areas of cities around the world, and that number is bound to increase—conservative estimates indicate that eight million more small arms are produced by year, along with 16 billion units of ammunition, more than two new bullets for every man, woman and child on the planet. In 2005, then-current estimates pegged the number of extant small arms worldwide at 550 million—as of 2011, that number is closer to 90 million.<sup>13</sup>

The distribution of small arms-related casualties matters as well. Over 90% of civilian casualties in conflict zones are caused by small arms, and these firearms are undoubtedly the major cause of non-combatant deaths in conflicts around the world. More than any other weapon in modern warfare, small arms are consistently utilized to target and terrorize non-combatants.<sup>14</sup>

### **Questions to Consider**

1. What is the difference between non-proliferation and disarmament?
2. Why do some member states within the UN favor non-proliferation and others disarmament?
3. Do people need weapons for self-defense? Does enforcing disarmament pose a threat to national sovereignty?
4. Is total disarmament possible?
5. Should the NPT be revised? What provisions should be made?
6. Is it time for complete, global, nuclear disarmament? Why or why not?
7. What is the distinguishing factor between peaceful energy processing and warhead buildup?
8. What are guidelines to prevent buildup?
9. Are all countries equal in regard to nuclear technology?
10. Why do some people refer to small arms as weapons of mass destruction? What can the committee take away from previous UN action (or attempts at action) on the proliferation of small arms and light weapons?

### **Terms and Concepts (in order of appearance)**

**Disarmament:** The act of laying down arms, especially the reduction or abolition of a nation's military forces and armaments

**UN Charter:** the foundational treaty of the United Nations

**United Nations:** an international organization that promotes international law, security, economic development, social progress, human rights, civil rights, civil liberties, political freedoms, democracy, and world peace

**United Nations Disarmament Commission:** considers and makes recommendations on issues related to disarmament, reports to the General Assembly

**Proliferation:** a rapid and often excessive spread or increase

**Conference on Disarmament:** independent of the UN and established in 1979, it's a multilateral forum that negotiates arms control and disarmament agreements

**General Assembly:** the main deliberative, policymaking, and representative organ of the United Nations

**Disarmament and International Security Committee (DISEC):** established by the UN to serve as a forum for representatives from all member countries to debate issues of disarmament and security in an environment of equality

**Security Council:** made of 15 members, all with one vote each, holds the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security

**Second Geneva Convention:** a complete ban on the use of chemical and biological weapons in warfare

**Non-Proliferation Treaty:** 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

**Partial Test Ban Treaty (PTBT):** prohibited nuclear weapons tests or other nuclear explosions under water, in the atmosphere, or in outer space; allowed underground nuclear tests as long as no radioactive debris falls outside the boundaries of the nation conducting the test

**Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT):** signed by 71 nations, the treaty prohibits all nuclear test explosions including underwater

**Five nuclear-weapon States:** the United States, the Russian federation, the United Kingdom, France, and China

**Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones:** a regional approach to strengthen global nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament norms and consolidate international efforts towards peace and security



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