

Promotion of multilateral agreements in the area of disarmament

In 2007, world military expenditures totalled some \$1.34 trillion. The need for a culture of peace and for significant arms reduction worldwide has never been greater. This applies to all classes of weapons. But the human and material cost of conventional weapons is also extreme. Of at least 640 million licensed firearms worldwide, roughly two thirds are in the hands of civil society. The legal trade in small arms and weapons exceeds \$4 billion a year. The illicit trade is estimated at \$1 billion. And such conventional weapons as landmines take an toll on life and limb that continues for years after the conflicts that spawned them are finished. And yet, beyond the obvious effects of these weapons is their deeper cost — a cost that stems from misplaced priorities and an absence of vision.

Since the birth of the United Nations, the goals of multilateral disarmament and arms limitation have been deemed central to the maintenance of international peace and security. These goals range from reducing and eventually eliminating nuclear weapons, destroying chemical weapons and strengthening the prohibition against biological weapons, to halting the proliferation of landmines, small arms and light weapons.

These efforts are supported by a number of key UN instruments. The *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)*, the most universal of all multilateral disarmament treaties, came into force in 1970. The *Chemical Weapons Convention* entered into force in 1997, the *Biological Weapons Convention* in 1975. The *Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty* was adopted in 1996. The 1997 *Mine-Ban Convention* came into force in 1999.

UN-supported regional treaties ban nuclear weapons in Antarctica, Latin America and the Caribbean, the South Pacific, South-East Asia, Africa and Central Asia. Other instruments adopted through the UN ban nuclear weapons in outer space in the sea-bed.

Responding to the rise of international terrorism, the General Assembly adopted [resolution 57/83](#) aimed at preventing terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery. In 2004, the Security Council adopted [resolution 1540](#), banning state support for such efforts. The Assembly's *International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism* was opened for signature in September 2005 and entered into force in July 2007.

The [General Assembly](#) and the Security Council address disarmament-related issues on a continuing basis. The Assembly also held special sessions on disarmament in 1978 and 1988. Some UN bodies are dedicated exclusively to disarmament. Among them is the Conference on Disarmament. As the international community's sole multilateral negotiating forum for disarmament agreements, the Conference successfully negotiated both the *Chemical Weapons Convention* and the *Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty*.

At the local level, UN peacekeepers often work to implement specific disarmament agreements between warring parties. This approach has been used successfully in West Africa, for example, where the [Office of the Special Representative](#) of the Secretary-General has organized regional meetings to harmonize programmes for the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants. The situation in Liberia provides a good example of how this works:

Established in September 2003, the United Nations Mission in Liberia ([UNMIL](#)) was charged with assisting in the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation of all armed parties. The process was launched in December. Within 12 months, nearly 100,000 Liberians had turned in guns, ammunition, rocket-propelled grenades and other weapons. On 3 November 2004, Liberia's warring militias formally disbanded in a ceremony at UNMIL headquarters in Monrovia. By the end of February 2006, more than 300,000 internally displaced Liberians had been returned to their home villages. After 15 years of conflict, the people turned out in massive numbers for UN-assisted elections in 2005, electing Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf as President.

The situation following Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait and the conclusion of the first Gulf War is a unique example of a UN ceasefire agreement requiring enforced disarmament. When the war ended, the Council adopted its resolution 687 of 8 April 1991, setting the terms of the ceasefire. Among them: the elimination of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction (WMDs).

To that end, the Council established the United Nations Special Commission ([UNSCOM](#)) on the disarmament of Iraq, with powers of no-notice inspection. It entrusted the International Atomic Energy Agency ([IAEA](#)) with similar verification tasks in the nuclear sphere, with UNSCOM assistance. Over the ensuing 12 years, this process succeeded in reducing Iraq's WMD stash considerably. Unfortunately, the inability to certify that all of those weapons and systems had been destroyed led, in part, to the second Iraq war in 2003.

UN Peacekeeping also employs the strategy of preventive disarmament, which seeks to reduce the number of small arms in conflict-prone regions. In El Salvador, Sierra Leone, Liberia and elsewhere, this has entailed demobilizing combat forces as well as collecting and destroying their weapons as part of an overall peace agreement.

Points of Fact

- In modern conflicts, over 80 per cent of all casualties have been civilians and 90 per cent of these were caused by small arms—handguns, pistols, shotguns, rifles, carbines, semi-automatic weapons, sub-machine guns, grenades and bayonets, landmines, medium-level machine guns, grenade launchers, light mortars, and shoulder-launched rocket launchers

SOURCES and useful links

[http://disarmament.un.org/library.nsf/aeca18509aa92c5c852575610076cc98/54c4d917273c0f7d85257601004a6058/\\$FILE/A-64-117-Add1.pdf](http://disarmament.un.org/library.nsf/aeca18509aa92c5c852575610076cc98/54c4d917273c0f7d85257601004a6058/$FILE/A-64-117-Add1.pdf)

<http://www.un.org/Pubs/chronicle/2003/issue1/0103p8.html>

<http://www.un.org/disarmament/HomePage/ODAPublications/Yearbook/2003/Html/ResDec17.html>

<http://www.reachingcriticalwill.org/political/1com/1com05/res/L.14reissued.pdf>

[http://disarmament.un.org/library.nsf/aeca18509aa92c5c852575610076cc98/54c4d917273c0f7d85257601004a6058/\\$FILE/A-64-117.pdf](http://disarmament.un.org/library.nsf/aeca18509aa92c5c852575610076cc98/54c4d917273c0f7d85257601004a6058/$FILE/A-64-117.pdf)

<http://books.google.de/books?id=c2C4IKf-78QC&pg=PA228&lpg=PA228&dq=Promotion+of+multilateral+agreements+in+the+area+of+disarmame>

nt+resolution&source=bl&ots=ZfUWadUWbe&sig=D0HWedGMOdURx1Uv5pz0h66nU_0&hl=de&ei=gTOSS_b8Naj8sQaS1rWTAw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=9&ved=0CDUQ6AEwCA#v=onepage&q=Promotion%20of%20multilateral%20agreements%20in%20the%20area%20of%20disarmament%20resolution&f=false

<http://www.acronym.org.uk/dd/dd89/89unodis.htm> **(resolutions and their "outcome")**

<http://www.iaea.org/NewsCenter/Statements/Misc/2009/oscararias24092009.html>
(various statements)

<http://www.un.org/temp/reform/consolidated2005/pdfs/disarmament.pdf> **(very useful!!)**

<http://www.un.org/depts/ddar/nptconf/215a.htm>
(Background paper prepared by the United Nations Secretariat from 1995)