



UNIDIR AT 40

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On its 40th anniversary, I applaud the Institute for its steadfast determination to think critically, facilitate frank conversations, and be an intellectual anchor for multilateral disarmament.”

- Izumi Nakamitsu, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs

From the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs



Today, as the Secretary-General said, ‘the web of arms control, transparency and confidence-building instruments established during the Cold War and its aftermath is fraying’. Dialogue, confidence building measures and utmost restraint are urgently required to overcome current divisions and distrust. But if we are to build the sustainable future that young people demand and deserve, we cannot stop there. The international community must establish a common vision, identify shared interests and forge a new agenda for strategic arms control and disarmament.

UNIDIR’s role in assisting States, the UN and other stakeholders to develop common ground for disarmament is more vital than ever. The Institute’s independent, evidence-based research can inform and support renewed dialogue. Its exploration of emerging topics can help generate fresh ideas, engage new actors and help reinvigorate paths to progress. UNIDIR is a critical partner for my office and the wider UN system.

With a significant part of its work done behind the scenes, UNIDIR does not always receive the accolades that it merits. On its 40th anniversary, I applaud the Institute for its steadfast determination to think critically, facilitate frank conversations, and be an intellectual anchor for multilateral disarmament.

Izumi Nakamitsu

Under-Secretary-General and
High Representative for Disarmament Affairs

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

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UNIDIR's 40th anniversary is a time to reflect on how research and ideas shape our globally interconnected world.”



Three ideas lay behind the UN General Assembly's decision to establish an autonomous institute for disarmament research in 1980. The first was that collective international action is required to tackle the security threats posed by weapons of all types and especially nuclear weapons. The second was that all states have the right to equal participation in international arms control and disarmament deliberations. And the third idea was that independent, evidence-based knowledge is essential for progress on both.

Four decades later, these ideas seem novel. Multilateralism, equality and expert knowledge are under sustained attack at a moment of assertive popular and authoritarian nationalism around the world. Yet the COVID-19 pandemic shows how important inclusive cooperation and science are to the security and wellbeing of people and the planet. It is revealing the relevance of arms control and disarmament agendas and institutions to tackling global challenges. And it is illustrating the gap between the promise and the practice of multilateral disarmament today.

UNIDIR's 40th anniversary is a time to reflect on how research and ideas shape our globally interconnected world. How can we adapt multilateral disarmament to address a more complex and uncertain world? How can more effective weapons governance limit the impact of armed violence on civilians and communities everywhere? How can we harness the potential of technology while also managing its risks? Who should be part of the conversation?

Ahead of this anniversary and with the support of our Board, donors, UN partners and colleagues, UNIDIR undertook a major initiative to enhance our contribution to equitable, fact based multilateral disarmament. Over the past three years we've grown our research agenda and established new interdisciplinary programmes. With national and UN partners we've developed new dialogues and practical solutions to tackle problems posed by unregulated weapons. We've doubled our team, tripled our publications and expanded our activities around the world. In 2021, we'll open a liaison presence at UN Headquarters.

We mark 40 years in the midst of a profound health and economic crisis. It is forcing us to re-examine our very notion of security. Independent thinking, inclusive dialogue and bold policy ideas alone won't solve the challenges we face. But they can provide the foundations for collective action toward a safer, fairer world. Now that's a novel idea.

Renata Dwan,
UNIDIR Director

1980- 1990

Managing the risk of unintentional nuclear war

The United Nations emerged from the devastation of the second world war and the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Concern over the risks of nuclear detonation during the Cold War were heightened after the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis. The United States and the then-Soviet Union established measures to manage their competition and illustrated how, in times of polarized tensions, arms control has a crucial role to play in increasing predictability and stability. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons' (NPT) entry into force in 1970, Soviet-US Strategic Arms Limitation Talks and the signing of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty in 1972 and the initiation of efforts to establish Nuclear-Weapons Free Zones in Latin America and elsewhere reflected this shared belief. Popular anti-nuclear movements around the world ensured that arms control and disarmament were in the public eye.





Decade One 1980-1990

In 1978, over 140 Member States came together to explore ways to advance comprehensive disarmament. The UN General Assembly Special Session on Disarmament (UNSSOD-1) agreed that strengthened and in some cases new institutions were required to advance practical progress. Recognising the right of all countries to participate

in disarmament negotiations, the idea of a United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research was proposed by then French president Giscard d'Estaing to support the informed participation of member states. In 1980 the General Assembly established UNIDIR as an autonomous institution within the United Nations.



The entire international community should have equal access to expertise, which would be the aim of this institute: 'disarmament is not the monopoly of a few but must become the concern of all.'

- Giscard d'Estaing, President of the French Republic at the first special session of the United Nations General Assembly devoted to disarmament in May 1978

UN Photo

Risk Reduction

Reducing the risk posed by nuclear weapons has been a priority for UNIDIR since its establishment. The end of the Cold War paved the way for significant reductions in U.S. and Russian nuclear arms. In recent years, however, increasing geopolitical tensions have slowed progress in arms control and disarmament and contributed to the threat of use. Technological developments, including in cyber operations and artificial intelligence, have generated new and uncharted vulnerabilities for nuclear weapons systems.

At the 2010 NPT Review Conference, States Parties reached consensus on a set of actionable measures, including in disarmament. But as states' relations deteriorated, implementation struggled to match ambition. In a deteriorating international climate, the 2015 NPT Review Conference was unable to sustain momentum or agree on an outcome.

“We asked what could be done to reduce the risk of any use of nuclear weapons, including by accident,” says Wilfred Wan, a researcher in UNIDIR’s WMD programme and co-editor of the 2017 report, *Understanding Nuclear Weapon Risks*, “We also looked at the possibility of misperception and misunderstanding



UNIDIR analysts and expert contributors examined drivers of risk of nuclear weapon use, and outlined concrete recommendations to address different scenarios, including in the 2020 report, *Nuclear Risk Reduction: Closing Pathways to Use*. Proposals include strategic dialogues, crisis management activities, and technical and operational fixes.

Risk reduction has become central to current State-led dialogues such as the Stockholm Initiative and the Creating an Environment for Nuclear Disarmament (CEND). There is the hope that these processes can help spark action in the context of the next NPT Review Conference now scheduled for 2021.

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We asked what could be done to reduce the risk of any use of nuclear weapons, including by accident.”

- Wilfred Wan, a researcher in UNIDIR’s WMD programme and co-editor of the 2017 report, *Understanding Nuclear Weapon Risks*

ME WMD Free Zone Project

The Middle East Nuclear and Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone has been a priority in UNIDIR research and dialogue agenda since the 1990s.

UNIDIR published a study in 1996 examining the “building blocks” and measures relevant to the establishment of such a zone. The study, *A Zone Free of Weapons of Mass Destruction in the Middle East*, includes a step-by-step description of the process of establishing a WMDFZ. Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, UNIDIR held several conferences on the Zone issue which reviewed the proliferation problem in the region and the history of proposals. UNIDIR also published articles exploring topics such as *Possible Elements of a NWFZ in the Middle East* and *The Role of Civil Society in Promoting a WMDFZ in the Middle East*.

In 2019, UNIDIR launched the ME WMDFZ project funded by the European Union. The initiative fills important gaps related to how the issue has evolved over time, including lessons for current and future prospects, builds analytic capacity, collects ideas, and foster an inclusive dialogue.



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Decade One 1980-1990

The Institute's first Director, Liviu Bota, said "we sought to harness the solidarity and the spirit that was so strong in the 1980s in favour of disarmament." Bota credits a unique blend of diplomacy and civil society as the engine for UNIDIR's establishment and why its role as a bridge-builder across different communities remains today.

Reflecting the global mood, UNIDIR's initial focus was on nuclear weapons' threats. The Institute's

first publication, *Risks of Unintentional Nuclear War*, underscored the nuances and latent security issues in the geopolitics of nuclear weapons.

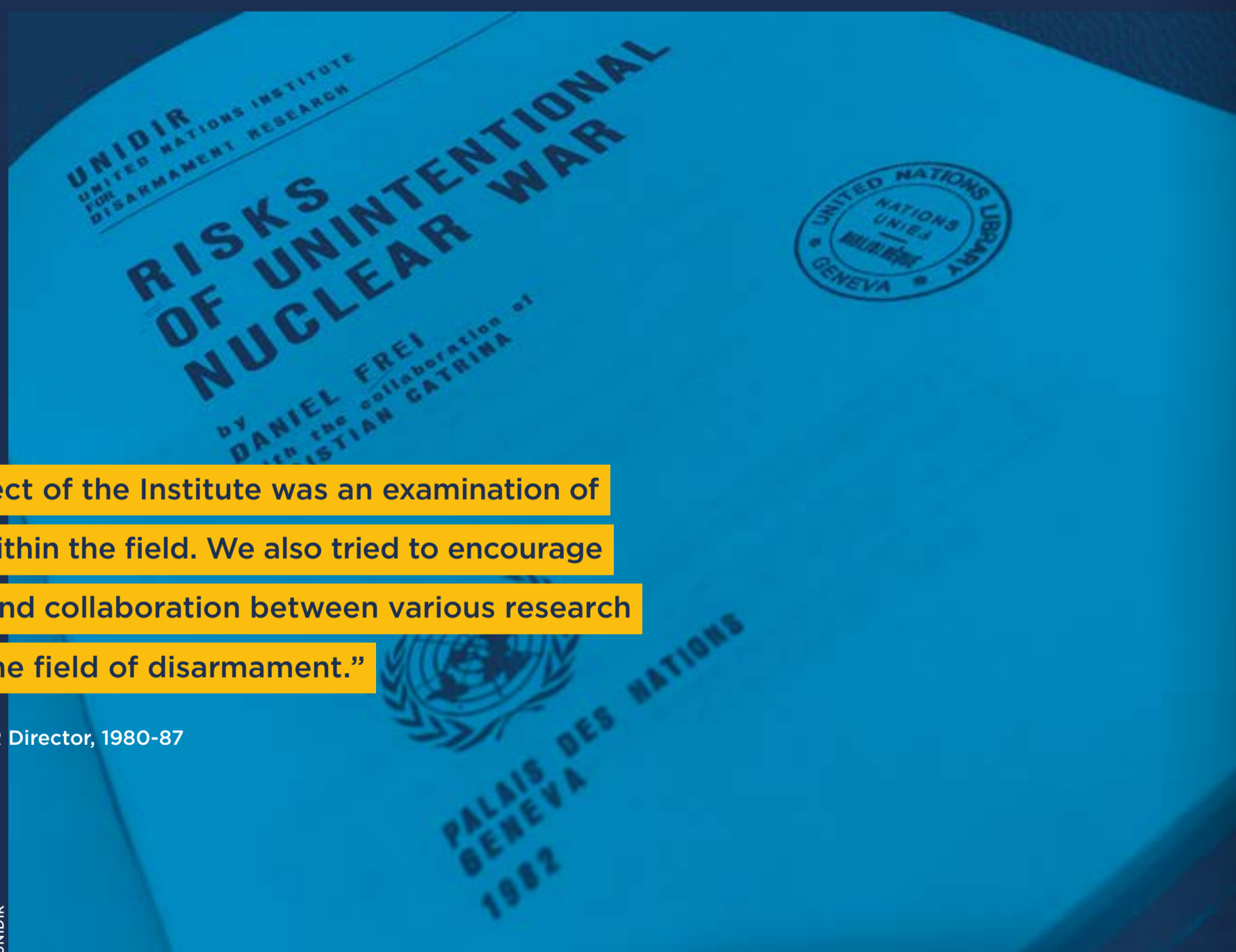
While UNIDIR would expand to cover many arms control topics, this seminal publication set a tone of expert knowledge, invitation to dialogue, and independent advice that would come to characterize UNIDIR's work.

“

The first project of the Institute was an examination of nuclear risk within the field. We also tried to encourage cooperation and collaboration between various research institutes in the field of disarmament.”

- Liviu Bota, UNIDIR Director, 1980-87

UNIDIR



Space Security



Designated to be the “primary task of UNIDIR” in 1986 by its Board of Trustees, space security was the subject of one of the Institute’s early publications, *Prevention of the Arms Race in Outer Space*. Written by Vladlen Vereshchetin of the then Soviet Union and advised by an eight-nation steering group, the study described general principles of international law limiting the utilization of outer space for military purposes.

It was among the first assessments of the legal implications of space militarization and offered solutions for

establishing a legal regime to safeguard and protect satellites.

Over thirty years later, there are renewed concerns about the risk of an arms race in outer space, especially as many vital civil and commercial interests depend on access to Earth’s orbits that could be cut off in the event of conflict in space. Former Space Security Fellow, Daniel Porras, notes that “agreement on behavioural norms can minimise threat and increase international security. Sustained dialogue with a variety of stakeholders is crucial in order to generate long-term solutions.”



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- Daniel Porras, former Space Security Fellow

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UNIDIR Directors



Liviu Bota,
1980-1987,
Romania



Jayantha Dhanapala,
1987-1992,
Sri Lanka



Sverre Lodgaard,
1992 to 1996,
Norway



Patricia Lewis,
1997-2008,
United Kingdom



Theresa Hitchens,
2009-2014,
United States



Jarmo Sareva,
2014-2018,
Finland



Renata Dwan,
2018-2020,
Ireland

1990- 2000

Bridging Arms Control and Development

The end of the Cold War brought new opportunities for arms control progress and the Institute supported delegates to the Conference on Disarmament in their negotiation of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty. UNIDIR's research helped inform deliberations on a possible Fissile Missile Cut-off Treaty and continues to this day.

Yet the transition in international order propelled a major increase in civil conflicts and UNIDIR's research expanded to conventional arms issues and the implications of unrestrained military expenditure and weapons use. Remnants of war, including landmines and cluster munitions, posed a deadly threat to vulnerable populations around the world.





Decade Two 1990-2000

The United Nations began to systematise disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) practices in post-war contexts. Recognising the devastating impact of war on communities, the UN's approach sought to reframe disarmament to encompass converting arms, reducing military expenditure, and retraining troops for long-term humanitarian development. UNIDIR contributed to this by examining different aspects of small arms and light weapons proliferation and supporting the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and

Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

During this time, UNIDIR launched programmes for visiting researchers and non-resident fellows to enhance the diversity of UNIDIR's research and bring new perspectives to Geneva based forums. Over the years, UNIDIR has welcomed researchers from more than 15 countries with representation from nearly every continent.

“

UNIDIR is on the frontlines of mapping how ammunition reaches unauthorized users in cities and towns around the world. Their work helps us understand how to reduce this fuel of urban violence by cutting illicit flows. Through their research they are making the ultimate contribution - saving lives.”

- Robert Muggah, Co-Founder and Research Director, Igarapé Institute, Brazil



UN Photo/Martine Perret

Supporting Intergovernmental Processes

UNIDIR reflects, responds and shapes key debates and international security problems of the day through engagement with a wide variety of multilateral mechanisms. The Institute provides steadfast support to the Conference on Disarmament, the single multilateral forum for negotiating arms control. UNIDIR seeks to increase knowledge, dialogue and understanding among delegations that can help pave the way for resumed negotiations in areas such as curbing fissile material production, nuclear disarmament, preventing an arms race in outer space, negative security assurances, and to address international security risks raised by particular developments in science and technology.

UNIDIR also provides technical expertise and knowledge support on a broad range of topics to other multilateral disarmament bodies, including the UN Disarmament Commission and General Assembly-mandated Groups of Governmental Experts (GGEs) and Open-Ended Working Groups (OEWGs) on topics such as space security, nuclear disarmament verification, conventional ammunition surplus and cyber-security. The Institute contributes papers and organizes briefings and interactive dialogues around the General Assembly's First Committee, the NPT, and many intergovernmental processes including the CCW, SALW, PoA, and ATT, among others.



UN Photo

Decade Two 1990-2000

In 1997, the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention was adopted, which banned the use, stockpiling, production, and transfer of anti-personnel mines: the Institute engaged with and provided comment on early drafts of the Convention. The success of the Mine Ban Convention would prove pivotal at generating civic engagement in years to follow.

UNIDIR expanded its engagement with UN, national and local practitioners with projects such as the development of a Security Needs Assessment Protocol for insecure communities.

UNIDIR's commitment to bridging arms control and sustainable development and disarmament that saves lives continues with applied research to support national and regional authorities in tackling illicit arms flows and effective weapons management.

Together with UN political, peacekeeping, disarmament and development partners, UNIDIR is spearheading an initiative to better integrate conventional arms control tools in the UN's conflict and crisis prevention policy and activities.



Poorly regulated arms and ammunition, their illicit proliferation and misuse pose a serious challenge to reducing armed violence, preventing conflicts and advancing development globally. UNIDIR's in-country and applied research in Africa - in particular its baseline assessments and lessons learned work - has been essential in enhancing knowledge among States on ways to strengthen weapon and ammunition management policies and practices to address arms related risks at the national and regional levels, and I encourage the continuation of this effort."

- Ambassador Lansana Gberie, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Sierra Leone to the UN Office at Geneva



From strengthening transparency in arms trade, to exploring ways to prevent arms diversion, the Small Arms Survey and UNIDIR have collaborated closely on research for the past two decades. As one of our fellow key Geneva-based research institutions, UNIDIR is an essential partner in our joint efforts to promote knowledge and generate ideas for addressing illicit arms, reducing armed violence, preventing conflict, and advancing sustainable development."

- Daniel de Torres, Director, Small Arms Survey

Focus

Somalia and 10 other countries improve weapons and ammunition management

UNIDIR supports 11 countries in the Middle East and Africa to put in place accountable and effective weapons and ammunition management.

In Somalia, UNIDIR has supported the government since 2014 to re-establish security and build national capacity to manage weapons and ammunition.

Federal Government authorities have sought to legally obtain weapons to combat the presence of the pervasive Al-Shabaab terrorist network. These efforts prompted

the UN Security Council to partially lift its arms embargoes. For its part, the government committed to preventing the diversion of imported weapons.

UNIDIR worked with Somali authorities to examine the entire life cycle of weapons and ammunition in the country, offering practical advice on more effective ways to secure the supply chain and mitigate risks of illicit distribution.

“This is a long-term engagement and we’re currently at a stage where we have

facilitated national consultations and helped Somali national authorities in their development of a comprehensive strategy,” says Einas Mohammed, a researcher in the Conventional Arms Programme.

In addition to Somalia, UNIDIR’s conventional arms programme has supported Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Côte D’Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ghana, Iraq, Liberia, Niger, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone in their efforts to build security and tackle illicit weapons.



2000- 2010

Disarmament as Humanitarian Action

People-centred and prevention-oriented responses that strengthen the protection of all people — human security — emerged as a core theme for UNIDIR research during the 2000s. Growing awareness of the links between disarmament, development and humanitarian action, prompted UNIDIR to initiate a series of diplomatic workshops and a four-volume series, *Disarmament as Humanitarian Action: Making Multilateral Negotiations Work* with the goal of engaging disarmament practitioners in new ways of thinking about weapons.

“

Our research fed directly into international efforts to address the humanitarian impacts of cluster bombs, including the Convention on Cluster Munitions. That treaty has saved lives and made a difference on the ground to people and their communities around the world.”

– John Borrie, Research Coordinator & Programme Lead, Weapons of Mass Destruction and Other Strategic Weapons, UNIDIR





Decade Three 2000-2010

Humanitarian disarmament achieved remarkable success by employing a cooperative process between networks of civil society, willing governments, and international organizations. The Institute has analysed these efforts and how to productively apply them to various security challenges. UNIDIR research contributed to the emergence of international efforts to prohibit cluster munitions through the Convention on Cluster Munitions which was adopted by more than 100 countries in May 2008. And it helped to lay groundwork for contemporary efforts to protect civilians from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. Throughout the years, several UNIDIR research initiatives have explored the role of explosive weapons use in populated areas through the perspectives of armed violence reduction, international humanitarian law (IHL) implementation, public health and environmental protection. In collaboration with UN health and humanitarian partners and military

experts, UNIDIR researchers are currently developing practical tools to better measure the impact of the use of these weapons so as to strengthen military risk mitigation practices, reduce civilian harm, and assist effective humanitarian planning and response in conflict and violence-affected situations.

From the 2000s, UNIDIR has also examined how to overcome obstacles and advance progress in longstanding research areas such as outer space. UNIDIR launched its annual flagship conference on Space Security to promote broader dialogue and engage industry actors, as well as Member States and non-governmental actors, on how arms control approaches and tools could help harness the benefits of new space technologies and help mitigate their potential risks for people, communities and states in the 21st century.



IEDs represent a threat to peace and security in Yemen and impede the socioeconomic development of affected governorates, in addition to the direct number of civilian casualties caused. To combat this situation, UNDP Yemen has developed a Counter-IED strategy, supported by the UNIDIR Counter-IED Self-Assessment Tool. As we move forward with implementation UNIDIR is a valued partner to innovate thinking around IEDs and compile lessons learned to inform policy and practice to combat such an indiscriminate weapon.”

- Gareth Collett CBE, Chief Technical Advisor C-IED, Yemen Country Office, UNDP

Focus

Counter-IED Tool

UNIDIR continues to tackle the devastating impacts of explosive devices and support states in their efforts to prevent and mitigate IED risks. In 2020, UNIDIR launched its Counter-IED Self-Assessment Tool. The tool is the result of a multi-year, multi-stakeholder collaboration among States, United Nations partners including UNMAS, industry and specialized organizations.

It is designed to assist States self-identify gaps and challenges in their national preparedness, in order to

support development of prevention and response strategies.

“Knowing our strengths and weaknesses is a fundamental part of facing the threat of IEDs,” Miguel Angel Fuentes Peniza, Senior Advisor, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Spain.

UNIDIR stands ready to provide technical support during the rollout of the C-IED Tool and encourages uptake and use by Member States and across the UN System.



Point-of-view

For the International Committee of the Red Cross, disarmament and arms control are not just tools to maintain international peace and security, and to prevent or end armed conflict. They are also critical means to mitigate the impact of armed conflict when it occurs. UNIDIR has shown a deep commitment towards this goal, by working on how we can collectively protect people from the effects of weapons and war. At the heart of our collaboration over the past four decades is a shared recognition that people-centered and prevention-oriented responses must be adopted.

To this end, UNIDIR's independent evidence-based research and policy work has served as a reliable touchstone and intersected with the ICRC's work on how international humanitarian law limits the development, use and availability of weapons.

I congratulate the Institute for its wide-ranging and important efforts in particular their work to mitigate the impact of explosive weapons in urban areas, reduce the risk of the use of nuclear weapons and ensure the peaceful use of outer space.

In our turbulent times, it is reassuring to know that we can count on the Institute's solution-oriented research, which has guided government policy-makers with a view to producing tangible benefits to civilians around the world. By balancing theory with real world experience, their work supports arms control, fuels diplomacy and enables humanitarian actors to operate safely.

Peter Maurer,
President of the ICRC

“

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2010- 2020

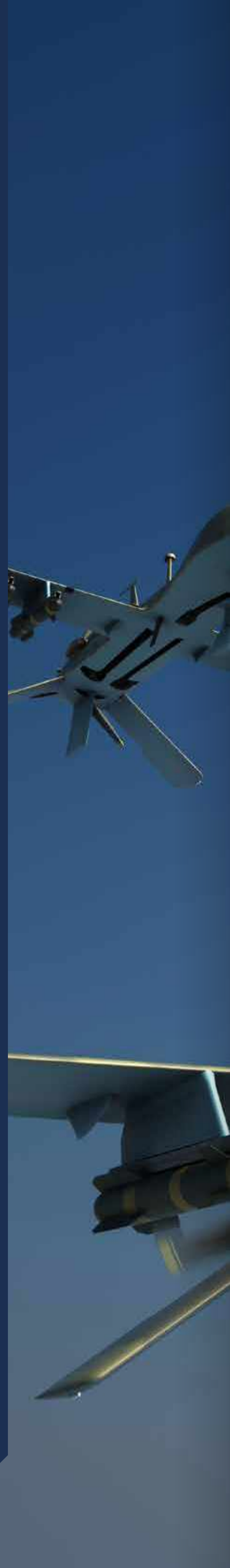
Expanding the Frontiers of Disarmament

One of the most impactful trends of the past decade has been the acceleration of technological developments and the erosion of states' leadership in innovation. Advances in computing power, speed of connectivity, and robotics, increasingly led by the private sector, are reshaping the political, economic and social landscape around the world.

“

UNIDIR helped pioneer multilateral discussion on how to advance stability and security in cyberspace in the late 1990s. The Institute's capacity to bring together diverse communities — government, industry, human rights, humanitarian and international law — to identify key policy challenges and collaborative ways forward makes it a valued collaborator for our work in advancing international norms on cyber stability.”

- Ambassador Latha Reddy, co-chair, Global Commission on the Stability of Cyberspace





Decade Four 2010-2020

The rate of innovation outpaces the ability of many states to keep abreast of developments and their impact on national and international security. This translates into three main challenges: 1) the evolution of means and methods of warfare (e.g. cyber weapons, autonomous weapons systems, hypersonic missiles), 2) the relevance of industry and non-state scientific expertise and their contribution to policy development and implementation, and, as a result, 3) the governance of such new technologies and the need to rethink traditional arms control tools to ensure they remain fit for purpose.

Since the late 1990s, UNIDIR has sought to anticipate risks associated with emerging technologies, facilitate dialogue on policy and normative

challenges and identify technically and politically feasible regulatory options to address them. In 2012, the Institute initiated an annual Cyber Stability Conference as a multi-stakeholder forum to analyze and mitigate the risks of cyberconflict, and in 2019, UNIDIR's Cyber Policy Portal was launched to promote transparency and information sharing.

To better support evidence-based research and dialogue on emerging technologies, in 2019 the Institute also established a dedicated Security and Technology programme as well as an annual Innovations Dialogue to inform and encourage deliberation among disarmament stakeholders on technologies that are not yet formally on the UN intergovernmental agenda.



cyberpolicyportal.org

UNIDIR's role in the UN Secretary-General Agenda for Disarmament

In 2018, Secretary-General Guterres announced his Disarmament Agenda, *Securing our Common Future*. The agenda has three priorities: disarmament to save humanity, disarmament to save lives, and disarmament for future generations. It promotes disarmament as a key instrument to manage relations between States, and reaffirmed UNIDIR as a central partner in advancing the Agenda, in support of the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs. The Institute is tasked to take forward 10 of the 40 action items and is involved in a further 16. Among his calls to action for UNIDIR are:

- Supporting efforts to reduce the risk of nuclear weapons use and build mutual confidence.
- Deepening engagement with Member States toward preventing an arms race in outer space.
- Conducting research on peace and security implications of long-range conventional weapons.
- Supporting Member States in regulations of armed unmanned aerial vehicles to ensure accountability, transparency and oversight for their use.
- Exploring how to better integrate an understanding of the impact of arms into assessments, risk analyses and conflict prevention activities.
- Facilitating the exchange of information and experiences between States on the reviews of new weapons in accordance with international humanitarian law.
- Supporting the deliberation of States on new weapon technologies through impartial and accessible studies.
- Convening dialogues among Member States, researchers, academics, civil society and the private sector on examining the implications raised by various technologies.



Decade Four 2010-2020

With renewed competition between nuclear-armed States, boosted by new, unregulated technological capabilities, the need for arms control has never been greater. Yet in the face of these challenges, multilateral action on either established or new weapons issues is limited.

In response, UNIDIR is bolstering thinking and policy innovation on how to adapt the arms control agenda for a more complex and turbulent world. This includes identifying politically sensitive means

of verifying the presence or absence of nuclear weapons, proposing more effective ways to monitor and ensure compliance of legally-binding treaties, and developing options to support states meet their reporting and other obligations in regimes such as the ATT. Cross-institute research is exploring options for an expanded arms control toolbox including norms, industry standards and codes of conduct, and integrating interdisciplinary dialogue between diverse scientists, industry, diplomats and civil society experts into disarmament deliberations.



Meaningful security requires a fairer, more equal and freer society.

UNIDIR is a valued partner in promoting gender equality and diversity

of perspectives that are required for progress on disarmament and

human security. The Institute's research and analysis complements

advocacy by women's groups and civil society organizations for

gender-responsive approaches to tackle armed violence and war.

Ending women's exclusion and bringing feminist perspectives into

disarmament will enable us to transform our militarized world and

advance sustainable peace."

- Madeleine Rees, Secretary-General, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

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Focus

More diverse voices, more effective action

UNIDIR research dating back to 2016 shows that women diplomats are significantly underrepresented in multilateral forums dealing with weapons and comprise only a third of diplomats accredited to arms control and disarmament conferences. In smaller, more specialized forums, the average proportion of women drops to twenty percent.

UNIDIR's Gender and Disarmament Programme works to improve equality and promote the effective integration of gender perspectives into arms control processes through research, outreach and the development of practical resources to translate gender awareness into policy action.

“Our research demonstrates that sex- and gender-disaggregated data, as well as knowledge of gender perspectives, can strengthen the implementation of arms control agreements,” says Renata Hessmann Dalaqua, who leads the Gender and Disarmament Programme. “Gender analysis can contribute to States’ preparedness in the event of a chemical or biological weapons attack and enhance the effectiveness of international assistance, for example.”

In 2018, UNIDIR co-founded the International Gender Champions Disarmament Impact Group to foster dialogue and the pursuit of gender-responsive action in disarmament

forums. The Impact Group is co-chaired by the Director of UNIDIR and the Ambassadors of Canada, Ireland, Namibia and the Philippines and collaborates with States and civil society organizations to build awareness about the relevance of gender issues across the disarmament agenda.

UNIDIR examines the gendered impacts of weapons systems and the links between gender and international security. Current research applies a gender analysis to weapons and ammunition management, cyber security, and strengthening convergences between arms control and the women, peace and security agenda.



Former United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan rightly observed that “education is quite simply peacebuilding by another name.” UNIDIR has long subscribed to that philosophy, and actively participated in the work of the UN Group of Governmental Experts Group on Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Education. UNIDIR’s signature educational activities include its publications, videos and visiting research fellowships. A global disarmament and non-proliferation culture cannot be developed easily or quickly. A sustained educational effort, as part of a broader strategy to build communities of diverse and independent specialists, is required. UNIDIR is to be congratulated for its important contribution over the past four decades to this vital endeavour.”

- William Potter, Director, James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies and Sam Nunn and Richard Lugar Professor of Nonproliferation Studies, Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey

Supporting disarmament education

Supporting and deepening disarmament knowledge is at the core of UNIDIR’s work. The Institute produces policy primers, convenes briefings and panel discussions and organizes table-top exercises around the world all of which are free and many of which are open to the public. In Geneva UNIDIR hosts youth groups and organizes a paid graduate professional programme to give young people insight into a potential career in disarmament.

For many years, UNIDIR produced a quarterly Disarmament Forum publication edited by UNIDIR staff member Kerstin Vignard. It combined the works of scholars, disarmament practitioners and diplomats, to share the diverse set of voices behind UNIDIR’s mission.

In 2019, together with the UNODA Geneva branch, UNIDIR initiated an orientation course for newly arrived Geneva diplomats. Participants learn about the roles and operations of key components

of the multilateral disarmament machinery and become familiar with a range of topics including WMD and conventional weapons issues’ missiles, lethal autonomous weapons systems, cyber security, gender perspectives and the role of civil society.

UNIDIR’s website was revamped in 2019 and now provides accessible resources on a wide range of arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament topics in addition to a comprehensive publications database.

2020-

The Coming Decade

UNIDIR enters its fifth decade in the midst of increasing global strategic uncertainty and crisis in arms control.

Mistrust and skepticism about the values and benefits of multilateralism is eroding commitment to the pursuit of cooperative solutions to global threats, whether climate change, economic inequality or weapons.

In the nuclear realm, the bilateral arms control relationship that underpinned multilateral efforts for decades has faltered between the Russian Federation and the United States.

Moreover, evolving missile defences, anti-satellite weapons, cyber offensive capabilities and artificial intelligence are making the nuclear deterrence equation less predictable. The risk of use of nuclear weapons is now higher than at almost any time since the Cold War.

Yet progress is being made:

- Well over half of the world's states have adopted regulations for the trade of conventional arms that include provisions to prohibit trade to countries where there is a risk of weapons being used in gender-based violence.
- The 2017 Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is likely to enter into force and may generate new momentum for nuclear arms reductions.
- For the first time, intergovernmental discussions on responsible state behaviour in cyberspace are formally engaging the private sector.
- States have agreed upon guiding principles for human-machine interaction in their consideration of autonomous weapons.

There can be no doubt that new, interdisciplinary approaches and more inclusive governance arrangements are required to tackle the myriad of 21st century international security challenges. The challenge for multilateral disarmament is to adapt fast enough to tackle the pace of technological innovation, the diversity of state and non-state actors involved, and the erosion of traditional definitions and classifications of weapons.

The COVID-19 pandemic reflects, and may well accelerate, action in these directions. The pandemic is forcing us to confront our very understanding of sustainable security – international, national and human. It is revealing the paucity of zero-sum thinking in an interconnected world. And it is showing that evidence-based research, expertise and exchange are fundamental to prevent and respond effectively to security challenges.

In this unprecedented moment for global governance, UNIDIR is a child of our time. Its focus on verifiable information, inclusive dialogue, interdisciplinary policy research and nimble support to the multilateral disarmament system are critical tools we need to help build a safer, fairer and more sustainable world for all. There's a busy decade ahead.



The facts and figures

With the support of our Board, donors, UN partners and colleagues, UNIDIR undertook a major initiative to enhance our contribution to equitable, fact based multilateral disarmament.

We're growing...

174
countries



Our publications have been read in 174 countries or territories

5
research programmes



Weapons of Mass Destruction and Other Strategic Weapons



Security and Technology



Conventional Arms



Gender and Disarmament



Middle East Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone

Social Media...

60%



We connected to over 60% more people

New Website...

202%



Increased pageviews by 202% and 69% more users

Our generous donors include...

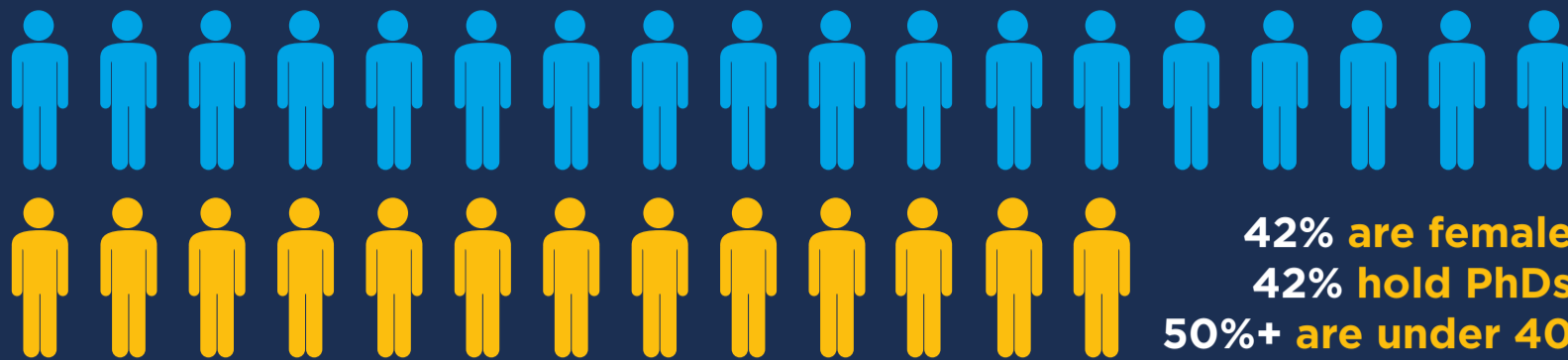
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We have...

31

full time
personnel



We're from...

23

countries Including all five UN regional groups

GRULAC
Group of Latin
America and
Caribbean
Countries

WEOG
Western
European and
Others Group

EEG
Eastern
European Group

Africa

Asia-Pacific

We speak...

17+

languages

including: Arabic / Chinese / Croatian / Czech / Dutch / English / French / German / Several Ghanian local languages / Hebrew / Hindi / Italian / Persian / Portugese / Russian / Slovenian / Spanish / Tagalog / Turkish...

Including all six official UN languages



From the Chair of the Board

2020 is a year of anniversaries. The United Nations is 75 and UNIDIR marks 40 years. UN Security Council resolution 1325 — the Women, Peace and Security Agenda — is 20 years old. This resolution, which my country had the honour to lead, makes the control of small arms and light weapons a women's issue. It makes arms proliferation a peace and security issue, and a sustainable development issue. Ultimately, it makes the control of weapons an issue of human rights, thus of women's rights.

Further from the glaring media headlines, but closer to my home, conventional weapons kill hundreds of thousands of people every year across the African continent. The illicit trade in weapons and ammunition has a devastating impact on the security, safety and well-being of our families and communities. It robs children of a peaceful childhood and turns them into child soldiers. Its violent impact sweeps across the continent and into our towns and homes.

We see how illicit flows of small arms have destabilized large parts of north and west Africa. We see how remnants of war and landmines make the transition from war to peace even more difficult from Mozambique to Sierra Leone. That is why I believe we need to give far greater attention to the control of arms and to act decisively and persistently to advance disarmament. The Secretary General's Agenda for Disarmament calls on the international community to bring disarmament back to the centre of the United Nations. UNIDIR's work is focused on doing just that.

Over the past four decades, UNIDIR has become a respected think tank, well known for its independent, authoritative research. The Institute's current research agenda, endorsed by UNIDIR's Board of Trustees, seeks to identify pathways to reinvigorate multilateral arms control and disarmament and forge concrete links with the Sustainable Development Goals.

UNIDIR has achieved significant impact in translating ideas into policy action in national, United Nations and multilateral disarmament processes. Its work helps us move from ideas to action and engage organizations and governments around the world. Disarmament is a collective act and all of us need to engage.

Let's take arms control and disarmament out of the conference room and into practical peace, security and sustainable development action now.

H.E. Ms. Selma Ashipala-Musavyi

Chair of the UNIDIR Board of Trustees

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development action now.”**





IDEAS TO ACTION

Contact us

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