

# GENDER, DEVELOPMENT AND NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Shared goals, shared concerns

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**Cover photo:** Heads of delegation for 2016 Nuclear Security Summit gather for a photo opportunity in Washington, D.C. on April 1, 2016 (Photo: Ben Solomon/U.S. Department of State).

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# Summary

- This study discusses the relationship between nuclear weapons and gender—how and why the two are connected, both to each other, and to shared global agendas such as sustainable development.
- A gender perspective is useful and highly relevant in understanding the impact, discourse and actors dealing with nuclear weapons.
- Impact: Nuclear weapon detonations affect women and men differently, both in terms of the biological effects of ionizing radiation and the social, economic and psychological impacts of nuclear weapon detonations.
- Discourse: Applying a gender lens to the nuclear weapons discourse gives insight into how ideas and policies related to nuclear weapons are gendered; that is, is underpinned by notions of masculinity and femininity. A gender perspective contributes to diversifying the debate on nuclear weapons and to challenging the established pattern of power relations, and is helpful in creating conditions for reaching the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons.
- Representation: In spite of international agreement on the importance of women's participation in decision-making, there is a gender imbalance in multilateral disarmament forums. This study presents new research on the topic, showing that men continue to be heavily over-represented and women are under-represented in multilateral forums concerned with security issues, including nuclear weapons. Men's over-representation/women's under-representation seems to be even more pronounced in forums concerned with security issues and disarmament than in others.
- Failure to apply a gender perspective and lack of female participation may be factors contributing to the current lack of nuclear disarmament progress, and why other agreements to tackle global problems (such as the Sustainable Development Goals) seem to be so often ignored or contradicted in the prevailing international policy discourse on nuclear weapons.

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## List of acronyms and terms

<b>Agenda 2030</b>	2030 United Nations Agenda for Sustainable Development, which includes 17 sustainable development goals. Also known as the post-2015 development agenda.
<b>BWC</b>	1972 Biological Weapons Convention (also known as the Bacteriological and Toxin Weapons Convention)
<b>CEDAW</b>	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
<b>CWC</b>	1993 Chemical Weapons Convention
<b>EEG</b>	Eastern European Group
<b>First Committee</b>	Committee of the UNGA dealing with disarmament, global challenges and threats to peace that affect the international community
<b>GGE</b>	Group of Governmental Experts
<b>ILPI</b>	International Law and Policy Institute
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organisation
<b>NPT</b>	Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty
<b>OEWG</b>	Open-ended Working Group on taking forward nuclear disarmament negotiations
<b>SDGs</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>Third Committee</b>	Committee of the UNGA to which agenda items relating to a range of social, humanitarian affairs and human rights issues are allocated
<b>UNGA</b>	United Nations General Assembly
<b>UNIDIR</b>	United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research
<b>UNSC</b>	United Nations Security Council
<b>UNSCR 1325</b>	United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security
<b>U.S.</b>	United States
<b>WEOG</b>	Western European and Others Group
<b>WMD</b>	Weapons of mass destruction

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# 1 Introduction

The risk of nuclear conflict endures. Almost three decades after the cold war ended, there are approximately 16,000 nuclear weapons in the arsenals of nine countries.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, a significant proportion of the world's states continues to regard nuclear deterrence as central to their strategic doctrines.<sup>2</sup> Because of the massive destructive power and lingering harmful effects of these weapons, achieving nuclear disarmament remains a stated goal for the international community, even if it is challenging and has remained largely deadlocked for the last two decades.

A nuclear weapon detonation event in a populated area would be a humanitarian catastrophe, which would in addition have negative impacts on many shared global goals, such as sustainable development and gender equality. It is well established that gender relations change in conflict and crisis situations, and violence and discrimination against women are often exacerbated. Over recent decades, the international community has thus endeavoured to include a gender perspective and strengthen the roles of women in peace and security, including in decision-making processes. Promoting gender equality is also universally recognised as crucial to achieving sustainable development.<sup>3</sup>

Meanwhile, nuclear disarmament is a highly specialized field. It has traditionally been discussed and treated in specific forums, based on a rela-

tively narrow security policy discourse. There has often been little connection between efforts in the nuclear weapons domain with other policy areas like those related to sustainable development and gender equality.

In recent years, however, successive international conferences have sought to focus attention on the real world consequences of the detonation of nuclear weapons with a view to prompting nuclear disarmament. These meetings, in Oslo, Nayarit and Vienna, contributed to a widened recognition that the failure of nuclear disarmament is a direct and lingering risk, which should be of broader concern. They eased the way for mainstream policy consideration of the consequences of nuclear weapons detonations, including for emergency humanitarian response,<sup>4</sup> development,<sup>5</sup> the environment, the impacts of test explosions on indigenous peoples,<sup>6</sup> as well as the gendered impacts of nuclear weapons.<sup>7</sup> State-sponsored events on gender and disarmament on the margins of the 2014 First Committee and the 2015 Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) have further highlighted a need to examine to what extent and how broader global imperatives on gender and development are reflected in multilateral nuclear disarmament efforts.<sup>8</sup>

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1 China, France, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, India, Israel, Pakistan, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

2 See S. N. Kile and H. M. Kristensen, 'Chapter 11: World Nuclear Forces' in *SIPRI Yearbook 2015: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security*, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute/Oxford University Press, 2015, pp. 459-460, p. 459. According to SIPRI, roughly 1800 of these nuclear weapons are kept in a state of high operational alert.

3 Both as a separate goal (goal 5) and as an integrated approach for progress across the multiple goals. See United Nations General Assembly, Draft outcome document of the United Nations summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda (A/69/L.85), 12 August 2015.

4 S. Bagshaw, 'Population displacement', ILPI and UNIDIR, Vienna Conference Series, no. 4, 2014, <http://nwp.ilpi.org/?p=3573> (accessed 10 August 2016).

5 M. Sabatier, 'Disarmament and development?', International Law and Policy Institute, Background Paper 7, 2014, <http://nwp.ilpi.org/?p=2461> (accessed 10 August 2016).

6 J. Borrie, 'The lingering humanitarian impacts of nuclear weapons testing', ILPI and UNIDIR, Vienna Conference Series, no. 2, 2014.

7 A.G. Dimmen, 'Gendered impacts', ILPI and UNIDIR, Vienna Conference Series, no. 5, 2014, <http://nwp.ilpi.org/?p=3638> (accessed 10 August 2016).

8 For instance, Ireland, Austria, Costa Rica, Denmark, Sweden, and Trinidad and Tobago co-hosted an event on the margins of the 2015 NPT Review Conference in New York on 5 May 2015 on gender and nuclear weapons: <http://www.nirs.org/radiation/radhealth/genderandnuclearflyer415.pdf>.

This study focuses on aspects of the relationship between nuclear weapons and gender (see Box 1). It builds on previous work ILPI and UNIDIR have undertaken,<sup>9</sup> as well as recent contributions related to the gendered impacts of nuclear weapons produced by others.<sup>10</sup> A Chatham House report on the missing links between the nuclear weapons discourse and other domains—namely climate change, development, international law, gender, protection of cultural heritage, public health, non-state armed groups, humanitarian action, and cyber security—is particularly significant in this regard.<sup>11</sup>

Taken together these studies indicate that if there is a ‘disconnect’<sup>12</sup> between how nuclear weapons are treated and other agreed international priorities, that deserves transparent interrogation. This is because, as one state recently observed in the context of multilateral discussions on taking forward nuclear disarmament, ‘the commitments we make under other international agreements also impact on the commitments we must make, and must fulfil, around nuclear disarmament.’<sup>13</sup> For example, the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals would be imperilled by the use of nuclear weapons.

In the next section, global goals related to sustainable development, human rights and women, peace and security are briefly described,

9 A.G. Dimmen, ‘Gendered impacts’, *op.cit.*

10 See, for instance, Article 36, ‘Women and multilateral disarmament forums’, Discussion Paper, October 2015, p. 2: <http://www.article36.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Underrepresentation-women-FINAL1.pdf> (accessed 11 August 2016).

11 See Chatham House’s work included within Ireland, ‘Nuclear Disarmament in context—a global governance issue’ (A/AC.286/WP.35), 3 May 2016, Annex, pp. 5-25.

12 ‘Civil society statement on gender and disarmament at the UN General Assembly First Committee, New York, 16 October 2015’: <http://www.reachingcriticalwill.org/resources/statements/10407-statement-on-gender-and-disarmament-to-the-un-general-assembly-first-committee>.

13 Ireland, ‘Nuclear Disarmament in context—a global governance issue’ (A/AC.286/WP.35), 3 May 2016, paragraph 19.

14 R.J. Cook and S. Cusack, *Gender Stereotyping: Transnational Legal Perspectives*, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010, p. 9.

## GENDER AND SEX

‘Gender’ most often refers to social and cultural differences between male and female, as opposed to biological differences (sex).

Gender, in other words, refers to the socially constructed characteristics of masculinity and femininity. What it means to be masculine and feminine evolves over time and through space, reflecting—and, some would argue, *effecting*—broader changes in society. Gender is associated with stereotypes, a generalized view or preconception about the attributes or characteristics possessed, or the roles that are or should be performed, by women and men.<sup>14</sup> Perpetuated by stereotypes and preconceptions, gender roles generate different opportunities and constraints for women and men, girls and boys.

Gender is also an analytical perspective to investigate the implicit or explicit ways in which concepts of gender are embedded in social institutions or create different opportunities for men and women. In this way, a gender perspective can be a means to expose discrimination.

as they form the broader policy context for this study’s exploration of gender and nuclear weapons (section 2). Then, the impacts of the use of nuclear weapons are examined (section 3). Women are biologically more susceptible to harmful health effects of ionizing radiation. The section will also show that many of the effects of nuclear weapon detonation are gendered, with especially negative consequences for women. In section 4, we show how applying a gender lens to the nuclear weapons discourse—how these arms are talked about—is useful. In section 5 we present new research on women’s and men’s representation in multilateral nuclear disarmament forums. In section 6, the study looks at *why* the greater involvement of women and a gender perspective can contribute to moving the nuclear disarmament agenda forward. Finally, section 7 concludes with the study’s main findings.

# 2 Nuclear weapons, gender and global goals

## CHAPTER SUMMARY

- The international community has recognised the links between gender equality, disarmament, peace and security and development in several ways.
- International frameworks on sustainable development, human rights and women, peace and security are especially relevant.

### 2.1 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND HUMAN RIGHTS

With the adoption of the Agenda 2030, the world acknowledged that achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls are crucial for achieving sustainable development.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, it is widely considered that ‘gender equality and the empowerment of women are essential across all SDGs and their targets.’<sup>16</sup>

The links between gender equality, development and disarmament have also been widely recognized by the international community. The human rights treaty specifically addressing discrimination against women (CEDAW) adopted in 1979 noted that disarmament, in particular nuclear disarmament, ‘will promote social progress and development and as a consequence

will contribute to the attainment of full equality between men and women.’<sup>17</sup> The CEDAW Committee subsequently elaborated on the relationship between that human rights convention and women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations.<sup>18</sup> The effects of armed conflict on women were also highlighted as a critical area of concern in the Beijing Platform for Action adopted at the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995.<sup>19</sup>

### 2.2 WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY

Equal participation of women in decision-making processes is a key issue for gender equality in general. Over the last two decades, the international community has also increasingly acknowledged the importance of women’s participation specifically related to peace and security issues. In 2000, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC)—strongly supported by women’s organisations and other NGOs—adopted a resolution on women, peace and security (UNSCR 1325). Crucially, this resolution stressed the importance of the ‘equal participation and full involvement’ of women ‘in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security, and the need to increase [women’s] role in decision-making with regard

15 United Nations General Assembly, Draft outcome document of the United Nations summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda (A/69/L.85), 12 August 2015.

16 European Parliament, ‘Women’s empowerment and its links to sustainable development— in-depth analysis’ (PE 556.927), European Union, 2016: [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2016/556927/IPOL\\_IDA\(2016\)556927\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2016/556927/IPOL_IDA(2016)556927_EN.pdf), p. 19. This report describes women’s empowerment as ‘multi-dimensional social process that helps people gain control over their own lives. It is a process that fosters power (that is, the capacity to implement) in people, for use in their own lives, their communities, and in their society, by acting on issues that they define as important.’

17 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), preamble, <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CEDAW.aspx> (accessed 28 September 2016).

18 Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. General recommendation No. 30 on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations, CEDAW/C/CG/30, 2013: <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/CEDAW/GComments/CEDAW.C.CG.30.pdf>.

19 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, critical area E: [http://beijing20.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/csw/pfa\\_e\\_final\\_web.pdf#page=93](http://beijing20.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/csw/pfa_e_final_web.pdf#page=93) (accessed 28. September 2016).

20 See endnote 3.



## THE 2030 UNITED NATIONS AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (AGENDA 2030)

In September 2015, world leaders adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which includes seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (the SDGs). These goals replace the Millennium Development Goals, adopted in 2000, and will guide global development cooperation over the next 15 years. Briefly, the goals are: 1) No poverty, 2) zero hunger, 3) good health and well-being, 4) quality education, 5) gender equality, 6) clean water and sanitation, 7) affordable and clean energy, 8) decent work and economic growth, 9) industry, innovation and infrastructure, 10) reduced inequalities, 11) sustainable cities and communities, 12) responsible consumption and production, 13) climate action, 14) life below water, 15) life on land, 16) peace, justice and strong institutions, 17) partnership for the goals.<sup>20</sup>

to conflict prevention and resolution'.<sup>21</sup> 'All efforts' to promote peace and security logically include arms control and disarmament processes.

Since UNSCR 1325's adoption, the Security Council has passed seven additional resolutions expressing similar sentiments.<sup>22</sup> In addition to reaffirming the importance of women's equal participation in efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security, the resolutions also highlight the fact that conflict can affect women and men differently, and that there is a need for special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence and include a gender perspective in peace and security efforts. From 2010, the General Assembly has also passed several resolutions on the subject of 'Women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control'. The most recent of these, from 2014, states that 'the equal, full and effective participation of women and men is one of the essential factors for the promotion and attainment of sustainable peace and security'.<sup>23</sup>

Overall, the emergence of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda, which started with the 1995 Beijing Platform of Action and was further elaborated through the Security Council resolutions on the topic, have contributed to a greater awareness of women's roles in matters of peace and security. Many countries have shown great

interest and willingness to work on these issues; around 50 of them have developed national action plans. At a fifteenth anniversary open debate in the Security Council on UNSCR 1325, a record number of countries made statements.<sup>24</sup>

### Many countries have shown great interest and willingness to work on these issues

The resolutions related to women, peace and security have provided states and non-state actors, such as civil society organisations, with an important tool to advocate for women's inclusion in peace and reconstruction processes. A significant body of scholarly research has emerged showing a strong positive correlation between rates of gender equality and greater peace within societies.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, researchers and activists have highlighted and elaborated on the linkages between gender and disarmament, including weapons of mass destruction (WMD),<sup>26</sup> and directed attention to the gendered impacts of specific weapons, including

21 S/RES/1325 (2000): <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/No0720/18/pdf/No072018.pdf?OpenElement>.

22 S/RES/1820 (2008), S/RES/1888 (2009), S/RES/1889 (2009), S/RES/1960 (2010), S/RES/2106 (2013), S/RES/2122 (2013) and S/RES/2242 (2015).

23 Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 2 December 2014 on women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control, A/RES/69/61 (2014).

24 R. Jenkins, 'The practical is the political: The UN's global study on women, peace and security', *Global Peace Operations Review*, 12 November 2015: <http://peaceoperationsreview.org/thematic-essays/practical-political-un-global-study-women-peace-security>.

25 See E. Bjarnegård et al, 'I. Gender, peace and conflict' in *SIPRI Yearbook 2015: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security*, op.cit, p. 102, and V.M. Hudson, 'What sex means for world peace', *Foreign Policy*, 24 April 2012.

26 C. Cohn, F. Hill and S. Ruddick, 'The Relevance of Gender for Eliminating Weapons of Mass Destruction', *Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission paper no. 38*, Stockholm, 2005.



The UN Security Council adopts resolution Resolution 2242 (2015), the eighth resolution on women, peace and security to date, during the High Level Review on the 15th anniversary of resolution 1325 held on 13 October 2015 at UN Headquarters in New York (Photo: UN Women/Ryan Brown).

nuclear weapons.<sup>27</sup> Despite the growing attention to these linkages, the Security Council has acknowledged and reinforced them only to a very limited degree,<sup>28</sup> and to our knowledge has not discussed the gendered impacts of nuclear weapons.

Governments of most United Nations member states share the view (at least officially) that the equal participation of women is important for the attainment of sustainable development, peace and security. In practice, though, it is clear that there is a long way to go to reach the goal of

equal participation of women in decision-making processes, and perhaps especially in relation to peace and security. Later in this study we present numbers showing that women are not equally represented in the multilateral nuclear disarmament forums. But first, we will look at the impact of nuclear weapons using a gender perspective.

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Governments of most United Nations member states share the view (at least officially) that the equal participation of women is important for the attainment of sustainable development, peace and security.

<sup>27</sup> For instance, see R. Acheson, 'Gender and nuclear weapons', Presentation to the 2010 National Model United Nations, New York, WILPF, 31 March 2010: <http://www.reachingcriticalwill.org/resources/statements/6741-presentation-on-gender-and-nuclear-weapons>.

<sup>28</sup> An exception is two paragraphs on gender-based violence and the Arms Trade Treaty in Security Council Resolution 2122 (2013).

# 3 The gendered impact of nuclear weapon detonations

## CHAPTER SUMMARY

- The use of nuclear weapons affects women and men differently, both in terms of the biological impacts of ionizing radiation and gender-specific impacts.
- The reverberating impacts of nuclear weapon detonations are gendered. Research indicates that women often are the ones most affected, e.g. in relation to psychological health, displacement, social stigma and discrimination.

Whether caused deliberately or inadvertently, nuclear detonations in populated areas would be extremely destructive, and harm human health and welfare far beyond the immediate mass casualties and lingering deaths from radiation effects.<sup>29</sup> As such, nuclear weapon detonations in populated areas could be expected to seriously set back the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

A large body of scientific evidence exists about these impacts, in part due to the detonation of nuclear weapons over Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan in 1945 and subsequent nuclear testing during the cold war by several states.<sup>30</sup> However, research to date has examined if and how nuclear weapons affect women and men differently to only a limited degree. Below, we identify some ways in which nuclear weapons have both biological and gender-specific impacts.

### 3.1 BIOLOGICAL IMPACTS

The detonation of one or more nuclear weapons in a populated area would cause massive death and injury to women, men, girls and boys

29 J. Borrie and T. Caughley, 'An Illusion of Safety: Challenges of Nuclear Weapon Detonations for United Nations Humanitarian Coordination and Response', UNIDIR, 2014.

30 J. Borrie, 'A Harmful Legacy: The Lingering Humanitarian Impacts of Nuclear Testing', *op.cit.*

alike.<sup>31</sup> Much of the harm would be caused by instantaneous effects—blast and heat, but also flash (which can damage eyesight and cause blindness) and prompt ionizing radiation (see Box 3). Depending on the altitude of the nuclear weapon detonation, fallout of radioactively contaminated particles from the atmosphere to the ground would be another effect posing a risk to health over time.<sup>32</sup> However, a crucial point is that ionizing radiation does not affect men and women equally.

Research to date has examined if and how nuclear weapons affect women and men differently to only a limited degree.

Scientific studies examining stochastic effects of ionizing radiation show that women are more vulnerable to its harmful health effects than men.<sup>33</sup> Why this is so has not yet been definitively settled, but it has been suggested it is because women have 50 per cent more high-risk body tissue such as sensitive reproductive and fatty tissues, as well as metabolic differences between women and men.<sup>34</sup> Whatever the ultimate causes, the evidence for this greater susceptibility is unambiguous. For example, a

31 M. Olson, 'Nuclear: War of Human Consequences—Presentation to the Vienna Conference on Humanitarian Impacts of Nuclear Weapons', *Nuclear Information and Resource Service*, December 2014, p. 34: <http://www.nirs.org/international/olsontalkvienna12414.pdf>.

32 See J. Borrie and T. Caughley, 'An Illusion of Safety: Challenges of Nuclear Weapon Detonations for United Nations Humanitarian Coordination and Response', *op.cit.*, pp. 22–25.

33 A.G. Dimmen, 'Gendered impacts', *op.cit.*

34 M. Olson, 'Nuclear: War of Human Consequences—Presentation to the Vienna Conference on Humanitarian Impacts of Nuclear Weapons', *op.cit.*, p. 33.

life-span study of survivors of the 1945 nuclear weapon attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan found that the risk of developing and dying from solid cancer due to ionizing radiation exposure was nearly twice as high for women as for men.<sup>35</sup> Sex-specific cancers and female breast cancer seem to be the main reasons for the heightened risk for women: when these cancers are excluded from analysis, the absolute rates were essentially equal.<sup>36</sup> Research on rates of solid cancers following local fallout from Soviet atmospheric nuclear weapon testing in Kazakhstan also indicates higher rates of certain kinds of cancer in women.<sup>37</sup>

In addition, pregnant women exposed to high doses of ionizing radiation are at risk of harm to their children, including malformations and mental retardation. The risk of spontaneous abortion and stillbirth is also heightened if pregnant women are exposed to a certain level of radiation. Moreover, studies of the effects of the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear power plant disaster (which released a large amount of ionizing radiation into the surrounding environment) indicate elevated levels of thyroid cancer in children and adolescents in which diagnosis was significantly higher in females.<sup>39</sup> In addition, there is

35 Risk here referring to Excess Relative Risk per Gray (ERR/Gy). K. Ozasa et al, 'Studies of the mortality of atomic bomb survivors: Report 14, 1950–2003—an overview of cancer and non-cancer diseases', *Radiation Research*, vol. 177 no. 3, 2012, pp. 229–243, p. 232.

36 D. L. Preston et al, 'Solid cancer incidence in atomic bomb survivors: 1958-1998', *Radiation Research*, vol. 168 no. 1, 2007, pp. 1-64, p. 55.

37 S. Bauer, B.I Gusev, L.M. Pivina, K.N. Apsalikov and B. Grosche, 'Radiation exposure due to local fallout from Soviet atmospheric nuclear weapons testing in Kazakhstan: Solid cancer mortality in the Semipalatinsk historical cohort, 1960-1999', *Radiation Research*, vol. 164, pp. 409–419.

38 See J. Borrie and T. Caughley, 'An Illusion of Safety: Challenges of Nuclear Weapon Detonations for United Nations Humanitarian Coordination and Response', *op.cit.*, pp. 86–87 (Appendix 2 on radiation terminology).

39 United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation, Report to the General Assembly with Scientific Annexes, 'Sources and effects of ionizing radiation', Volume II (Scientific Annexes C, D and E), 2008, p. 60, figure VIII on health effects due to radiation from the Chernobyl accident.

## IONIZING RADIATION

Ionizing radiation is radiation with enough energy to cause atoms or molecules to gain or lose electrons. Adding or removing an electron from an atom creates a charged particle called an ion. The process by which an atom or a molecule acquires a positive or negative charge by gaining or losing an electron is called ionization. Radioactivity—the break-up (or *decay*) of an unstable atom's nucleus to create a different nuclide is called nuclear radiation and is an ionizing radiation.<sup>38</sup>

Ionizing radiation can harm the body in two ways. First, it can directly destroy cells through radiation burns or acute radiation syndrome. These kinds of deterministic effects would be observable in victims of a nuclear detonation immediately or soon after their exposure. Second, ionizing radiation can cause mutations to DNA such as cancer and genetic effects (stochastic effects). If mutations are not repaired, then the cell may turn cancerous. These stochastic effects are usually observed a long time (possibly many years) after the radiation exposure. Ultimately, however, these effects are attributable to the nuclear detonation—just as deterministic effects would be.

some evidence for human inter-generational genetic effects due to ionizing radiation exposure, although this is not conclusive.

**Women are more vulnerable than men to the health effects of ionizing radiation that nuclear detonations produce.**

In this way, even though the effects of ionizing radiation are indeed manifested later through higher rates of certain kinds of cancer and genetic effects, these are attributable to the initial radiation exposure a nuclear weapon detonation event would cause. It can be concluded that there are sex-specific health impacts resulting from the biological effects of ionizing radiation and that women are more vulnerable than men to the health effects of ionizing radiation that nuclear detonations produce.

### 3.2 GENDER-SPECIFIC IMPACTS

In addition to the differentiated biological effects of ionizing radiation, a nuclear weapon

detonation would also have gendered impacts. In most societies men and women have different socially- and culturally-assigned roles and responsibilities. These gender roles result in different social impacts for women and men. A number of social and cultural gender differences can be found in relation to psychological health, displacement, social stigma and discrimination as the impacts of nuclear weapon detonations reverberate outward in space and time. These impacts seem to be especially negative for women.

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In most societies men and women have different socially- and culturally-assigned roles and responsibilities. These gender roles result in different social impacts for women and men.

### 3.2.1 Psychological impacts

Invisible environmental contamination from radiation can have traumatic psychological effects irrespective of the radiation dose.<sup>40</sup> Lack of information and uncertainty about health risks can become a stressor, as can the fear of the delayed effect of radiation exposure. There is evidence that these psychological impacts of radiation contamination may be more serious for women, something that could be connected to their roles as mothers. For example:

- After the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear accident fallout, women in most European countries reported more stress than men, and women were shown to have taken protective measures more often.<sup>41</sup>
- Mothers with children under eighteen years of age in the city of Gomel, approximately

110 kilometres north of Chernobyl, had a higher prevalence of mental health problems.<sup>42</sup>

- After the Three Mile Island nuclear accident in the United States in 1979, researchers found that the ‘most highly distressed people around Three Mile Island were mothers of young children who were asked by the Pennsylvania governor to leave the area in the initial aftermath of the accident to safeguard their families’.<sup>43</sup>

There are also other implications for women. For instance, following the Chernobyl accident pregnant women in Ukraine were advised to have abortions without being given clear explanations,<sup>44</sup> and it has been claimed that thousands of additional abortions were undertaken in Western Europe in the months after Chernobyl.<sup>45</sup>

### 3.2.2 Evacuation and displacement

The destruction caused by nuclear weapon detonations in populated areas, as well as the risk of radioactive fallout, will necessitate evacuation and lead to displacement for many people.<sup>46</sup>

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40 H. M. Vynner, ‘The psychological dimensions of health care for patients exposed to radiation and the other invisible environmental contaminants’, *Social Science and Medicine*, vol. 27 no. 10, 1988, pp. 1097–1103.

41 H. M. Vynner, ‘The psychological dimensions of health care for patients exposed to radiation and the other invisible environmental contaminants’, *ibid.*

42 J. M. Havenaar et al, ‘Mental health problems in the Gomel region (Belarus): an analysis of risk factors in an area affected by the Chernobyl disaster’, *Psychological Medicine*, vol. 26 issue 4, 1996, pp. 845–855.

43 M. Yamada and S. Izumi, ‘Psychiatric sequelae in atomic bomb survivors in Hiroshima and Nagasaki two decades after the explosions’, *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology*, vol. 37, 2002, pp. 409–415, p. 414. See also M.A. Dew and E.J. Bromet, ‘Predictors of temporal patterns of psychiatric distress during 10 years following the nuclear accident at Three Mile Island’, *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology*, vol. 28, no. 2, 1993, pp. 49–55, p. 54.

44 E. J. Bromet et al, ‘Somatic Symptoms in Women 11 Years after the Chornobyl Accident: Prevalence and Risk Factors’, *Environmental Health Perspectives*, vol. 110 no. 4, 2002, pp. 625–629.

45 K. Becker, ‘Economic, social and political consequences in Western Europe’, European Commission and World Health Organization international conference one decade after Chernobyl: Summing up the consequences of the accident, 1997: <https://inis.iaea.org/search/Search.aspx?q=29013445>.

46 S. Bagshaw, ‘Population displacement’, *op.cit.*

Displacement, irrespective of its cause, tends to result in a range of problems, and has been shown to impact women and men differently.

In crisis and conflict situations women are more likely to be targets of sexual violence, have less access to assistance, are likely to face difficulties in exercising their rights to health, housing, land and property—exacerbating pre-existing patterns of discrimination. This can have long-term effects in terms of additional psychological stress on women, and worse health in general.<sup>47</sup> Also, in many societies women are expected to carry out most, if not all, domestic labour, which reduces their ability to participate in political and social life and decision-making.<sup>48</sup> Displacement and its impacts tend to exacerbate this, as tasks such as queuing for and preparing food, or fetching water become even more time-consuming.

### 3.2.3 Cultural and indigenous rights

Long-term or permanent displacement due to nuclear weapon detonations, including test explosions (see Box 4), can affect cultural and indigenous rights in ways that have a gender dimension. Indigenous Marshallese women are an example: in a matriarchal society where land is passed from mother to child, displacement from land due to nuclear testing during the cold war denied Marshallese women the right to exercise their cultural right as custodians of land in society.<sup>49</sup> Displacement also meant that these women lost their ability to generate income on their own property because they lost access to materials needed to make handicrafts and households supplies.<sup>50</sup> Marshallese men

## NUCLEAR TESTING

More than 2,000 nuclear detonations have occurred since 1945 as part of the weapons testing programmes of at least eight nations. Nuclear weapons have been exploded in the atmosphere, underground and underwater at dozens of test sites from Lop Nor in China, to the atolls of the Pacific (including in the Marshall Islands), to Nevada, to Algeria where France conducted its first test of a nuclear device, to western Australia where the United Kingdom exploded nuclear weapons, to the South Atlantic, to Semipalatinsk in Kazakhstan, across Russia, South Asia and elsewhere. The main issue with nuclear weapons testing is that nuclear explosions exposed to the atmosphere (including venting from underground tests) create radioactive contamination.<sup>51</sup>

were also affected by displacement in a particular way: they used to ensure food for their families by using their cultivated fishing and food-gathering skills, but in the areas they now live the ability to survive largely depends on generating cash income.<sup>51</sup>

### 3.2.4 Social stigma and discrimination

Another feature of the aftermath of nuclear weapon testing in the Marshall Islands, according to the accounts of Marshallese women, were humiliating examinations by U.S. military medical and scientific personnel.<sup>52</sup> As well as being distressing, it contributed to the social stigmatization of these women.

Japanese survivors of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki have also faced radiation-related social stigma.<sup>53</sup> They were deemed 'contaminated', and were treated with fear and suspicion

47 T.R. Lee, 'Environmental stress reactions following the Chernobyl Accident', European Commission and World Health Organization international conference one decade after Chernobyl: Summing up the consequences of the accident, 1997, p. 295: [http://www-pub.iaea.org/MTCD/Publications/PDF/Pub1001\\_web.pdf](http://www-pub.iaea.org/MTCD/Publications/PDF/Pub1001_web.pdf). See also E J. Bromet et al (2002).

48 See C. Wille, 'The Implications of the Reverberating Effects of Explosive Weapons Use in Populated Areas for Implementing the Sustainable Development Goals', Geneva, UNIDIR, 2016, pp. 16-17.

49 A/HRC/21/48/Add. 1.

50 B. R. Johnston and H. M. Barker, 'The Rongelap Report: Consequential Damages of Nuclear War', Left Coast Press, 2008, p. 188.

51 J. Borrie, 'A Harmful Legacy: The Lingerin Humanitarian Impacts of Nuclear Testing', *op.cit.*

52 'Report of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the implications for human rights of the environmentally sound management and disposal of hazardous substances and wastes, Calin Georgescu', document A/HRC/21/48/Add. 1, 2012, paragraph 32: [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/HRC/21/48/Add.%201](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/HRC/21/48/Add.%201).

53 M. Todeshini, 'Illegitimate Sufferers: A-Bomb Victims, Medical Science, and the Government Author(s)', *Daedalus*, vol. 128 no 2, 1999, p. 73.

by some others in Japanese society. Though this stigma was experienced by both male and female *hibakusha*—a term used to describe survivors of the atomic bombings in Japan—the images and beliefs related to female bodies seem to contribute to the intensified discrimination experienced by women related to marriage or reproduction.<sup>54</sup> In the Marshall Islands, some women face stigmas and fears of the prospect of marriage and motherhood following exposure to U.S. nuclear weapons tests.<sup>55</sup>

Images and beliefs related to female bodies seem to contribute to the intensified discrimination experienced by women related to marriage or reproduction.

### 3.2.5 Other cultural and social impacts

Gendered cultural practices may also lead to differing radiation effects on women and men, for example because of eating traditions, as occurred following the Chernobyl nuclear accident,<sup>56</sup> and in the Marshall Islands.<sup>57</sup> The Chernobyl nuclear accident also influenced the inner functioning of social groups and family—including the relationship between some spouses—based on fears of exposure to radiation and the fear of having sick children.<sup>58</sup>

54 M. Todeshini, 'Illegitimate Sufferers: A-Bomb Victims, Medical Science, and the Government Author(s)', *ibid.*

55 B. R. Johnston, 'Nuclear weapons tests, fallout, and the devastating impact on Marshall Islands environment, health and human rights' in B. Fihn (ed.) *Unspeakable suffering*, Reaching Critical Will, 2013, pp. 88- 93, p. 91.

56 International Atomic Agency (IAEA), 'Environmental Consequences of the Chernobyl Accident and their Remediation—Twenty Years of Experience: Report of the Chernobyl Forum Expert Group on Environment', IAEA, 2006, p. 115: [http://www.who.int/ionizing\\_radiation/chernobyl/IAEA\\_Pub1239\\_web%5b1%5d.pdf](http://www.who.int/ionizing_radiation/chernobyl/IAEA_Pub1239_web%5b1%5d.pdf).

57 A/HRC/21/48/Add. 1, paragraph 29.

58 S. Krysenko, 'Psychological support in family disorders caused by Chernobyl catastrophe', 'Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference on Long-term Health Consequences of the Chernobyl Disaster', World Health

### 3.2.6 Environmental impacts

Although not a main focus of this study, it is important to note that nuclear weapon detonation events have important environmental consequences, which in themselves would impede the achievement of global goals such as those related to combating climate change, reducing pollution, and preserving biodiversity. A conflict fought with nuclear weapons would exacerbate all of these problems, and make effective responses to them more difficult, if not impossible. For example, recent scientific studies indicate that even 'limited' nuclear regional conflicts would have lasting global impacts, including on the climate, food production and mass migration, because it would cast particulate material that would block sunlight from reaching the earth's surface, and consequently depress global temperatures for years.<sup>59</sup> Those near, on or below the poverty line would be most severely affected. In most countries, women's incomes are lower than men's, and thus the decreased availability of food and increases in food prices may affect them at least as severely as men.

This section has shown that some of the impacts of nuclear weapon detonation events vary between women and men. Using a gender perspective deepens insight into the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons. A theme running throughout this section is that nuclear weapons impinge upon or make it more difficult for women to avail themselves of their social, economic and cultural rights, as well as basic protection from violence and discrimination. In the current international environment, humanitarian response and post-conflict recovery and development efforts are already under immense strain, and nuclear weapon detonation events would add hugely to the difficulty and complexity of response.

Organization and Association of Chernobyl Physicians, 1998, p. 467: [https://inis.iaea.org/search/search.aspx?orig\\_q=RN:31014958](https://inis.iaea.org/search/search.aspx?orig_q=RN:31014958).

59 A. Robock and O. B. Toon (2012), 'Self-assured Destruction: The Climate Impacts of Nuclear War', *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, vol. 68 no. 5, pp. 66-74, p. 70.

# 4 Gender and the nuclear weapons discourse

## CHAPTER SUMMARY

- Applying a gender lens to the nuclear weapons discourse gives insight into how ideas and policies related to nuclear weapons are gendered; that is, underpinned by notions of masculinity and femininity.
- A gender perspective contributes to diversifying the debate on nuclear weapons and challenging unjust, established patterns of power relations, and is helpful to create conditions for reaching the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons.

In this section, as part of applying a gender lens to nuclear weapons, we explain its analytical relevance in the current nuclear weapons ‘discourse’ (see Box 5).

Beginning in the 1980s, some feminist scholars focused on the gendered nature of the nuclear disarmament discourse, and were deeply critical of it.

Beginning in the 1980s, some feminist scholars focused on the gendered nature of the nuclear disarmament discourse, and were deeply critical of it.<sup>60</sup> They argued that the perceived value of nuclear weapons could, at least in part, be explained by perceptions and meanings that are socially constructed through actions, language and discourse.<sup>61</sup> Much of this discourse was seen as gendered; with the characteristics

associated with masculinity being more highly valued. Disarmament, in contrast, was seen as somehow emasculating, and therefore feminine and weak.

A gender perspective on security and disarmament has slowly entered the mainstream of policy making.

One prominent feminist scholar, Carol Cohn, observed that U.S. nuclear policy-making has been dominated by ‘technostrategic’ language based on ambiguous and contradictory axioms.<sup>62</sup> Typically, certain views were asserted as facts or principle not requiring evidence or explanation. Cohn observed that American defence experts often resorted to euphemistic, indirect language when discussing nuclear weapons. They neglected ‘the emotional, the concrete, the particular, human bodies and their vulnerability, human lives and their subjectivity—all of which are marked feminine.’<sup>63</sup> Feminist scholars have also used gender analysis to argue that nuclear-weapon states mobilize masculine coded language and symbols in their assumptions about security and the state as an actor.<sup>64</sup>

A gender perspective on security and disarmament has slowly entered the mainstream of policy making. In 2006, an international commission led by Hans Blix, a former Director of the International Atomic Energy Agency, con-

60 C. Cohn and S. Ruddick, ‘A Feminist Ethical Perspective on Weapons of Mass Destruction’, Working Paper No. 104 / 2003, Consortium on Gender, Security, and Human Rights.

61 C. Cohn, ‘Language in the security discourse’ in B. Brock-Utne and G. Garbo (eds), *Language and Power: The implications of Language for Peace and Development*, Dar es Salaam, Mkuki na Nyota Publishers, 2009, p. 34.

62 C. Cohn, ‘Sex and Death in the Rational World of Defense Intellectuals’, *Signs*, vol. 12, no. 4, 1987, p. 693.

63 C. Cohn, F. Hill and S. Ruddick, ‘The Relevance of Gender for Eliminating Weapons of Mass Destruction’, *Disarmament Diplomacy*, vol. 80, no. 1, 2005, p.5, (last accessed 4 June 2008), p. 5.

64 C. Duncanson and C. Eschle, ‘Gender and the nuclear weapons state: a feminist critique of the UK government’s white paper on Trident’, *New Political Science*, 30 (4), 2008, pp. 545-563.



## DISCOURSE ANALYSIS WITH A GENDER PERSPECTIVE

Following what is sometimes called the ‘linguistic’ or ‘discursive turn’ in the social sciences, scholars have devoted increasing attention to the ways in which discourses structure international relations. Discourse describes ‘written or spoken communication’.<sup>66</sup> or ‘the use of words to exchange thoughts and ideas.’<sup>67</sup> In academic debates, however, ‘discourse’ is often used in a more narrow and abstract sense: discourses are ‘systems of signification’ created and perpetuated by habits of thought, speech, and writing.<sup>68</sup> Discourse, in this view, refers to power-infused webs of metaphors, historical representations, and concepts that are employed in particular debates, and which implicitly or explicitly classify objects in binary strata like utility/disutility, beauty/repulsiveness, and strength/weakness.<sup>69</sup> On this basis, discourse analysts argue that discourses form ‘preconditions for action’.<sup>70</sup> By reinforcing certain values, norms, and ‘facts’, established discourses make specific actions more or less ‘thinkable’.

Feminist scholars have often used discourse analysis as a tool to look at how gender ‘matters’ in international relations.<sup>71</sup> They have emphasized that policies are not gender neutral, but have gendered meanings and effects, embodying norms that influence the structuring of gender roles and relations.<sup>72</sup> Power relations are at the core of most feminist analysis, looking at the privileges, exclusion and inequalities that policies produce. In studying gender and international relations, the social construction of masculinity and femininity, and their influence on the theory and conduct of international relations, are scrutinized.<sup>73</sup>

cluded that women ‘have rightly observed that armament policies and the use of armed force have often been influenced by misguided ideas about masculinity and strength. An understanding of and emancipation from this traditional perspective might help to remove some of the hurdles on the road to disarmament and non-proliferation.’<sup>65</sup>

Many proponents of a ‘discursive turn’—including those viewing nuclear weapons through a gender lens—have argued that, in order to make disarmament possible, these weapons must be ‘devalued’ through a conscious deconstruction of the discourse that legitimizes them as symbols of status and masculinity.<sup>74</sup> They have thus welcomed a renewal of international attention to the humanitarian impacts of the use of nuclear weapons, rather than the usual nuclear deterrence and non-proliferation-centred discourse in processes like the NPT. They see this as a constructive challenge to the prevailing understandings of key concepts such as ‘security’, ‘disarmament’ and ‘proliferation’ that embed nuclear weapons as ‘normal’.<sup>75</sup>

The way that many states talk about nuclear weapons at the multilateral level has certainly altered since 2010.

The way many states talk about nuclear weapons at the multilateral level has certainly altered since 2010, when concerns about the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons were

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- 65 WMD Commission, ‘Weapons of Terror: Freeing the World of Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Arms’, 2006: [http://ycsg.yale.edu/sites/default/files/files/weapons\\_of\\_terror.pdf](http://ycsg.yale.edu/sites/default/files/files/weapons_of_terror.pdf), p. 160.
- 66 Oxford English Dictionary Online, ‘Discourse’, <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/discourse> (accessed 9 August 2016).
- 67 Merriam-Webster Dictionary Online, ‘Discourse’, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/discourse> (accessed 9 August 2016).
- 68 J. Milliken, ‘The Study of Discourse in International Relations: A Critique of Research and Methods’, *European Journal of International Relations*, vol. 52, no. 2, p. 229.
- 69 *Ibid.*
- 70 I. B. Neumann, ‘Discourse Analysis’, pp. 61–77 in Audie Klotz and Deepa Prakash (eds), *Qualitative Methods in International Relations: A Pluralist Guide*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.
- 71 See, for instance, L. J. Shepherd, *Gender matters in global politics: A Feminist Introduction to International Relations*, Routledge, 2010.
- 72 L. Disch and M. Hawkesworth, *The Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theory*, Oxford University Press, p. 618.
- 73 R. Grant and K. Newland, ‘Gender and international relations’, Open University Press, 1991, p. 5.

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- 74 See, for instance, R. Acheson, ‘Sex, gender and nuclear weapons’, *Reaching Critical Will/International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN)*, 2015.
- 75 See N. Ritchie, ‘Valuing and Devaluing Nuclear Weapons’, *Contemporary Security Policy*, vol 34, no. 1, 2013, pp. 146–73.

first mentioned in the outcome document of a five-yearly NPT Review Conference.<sup>76</sup> This has caused discomfort and even opposition from some states counting on nuclear weapons for their security.<sup>77</sup> In 2015, at the next NPT Review Conference, a large group of states tried to obtain more extensive language on the humanitarian risks nuclear weapons pose in the draft outcome document. This was strongly resisted by the five NPT nuclear-weapon states, although the meeting eventually broke down over other issues.<sup>78</sup>

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In 2016, an Open-ended Working Group (OEWG) on taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament was set up by the General Assembly after a resolution voted on in late 2015.

In 2016, an Open-ended Working Group (OEWG) on taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament was set up by the General Assembly after a resolution voted on in late 2015. The OEWG's exchange of views was very different in tone from the NPT deliberations, in part because the nuclear-armed states chose not to attend, perhaps due to their discomfort about a process in which majoritarian rules held sway.<sup>79</sup> In August 2016, the OEWG voted on its report, which among its recommendations, proposed that the General Assembly 'convene a conference in 2017, open to all States, with the participation

and contribution of international organisations and civil society, to negotiate a legally-binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination'.<sup>80</sup> Such an approach is already being pursued through at least one General Assembly resolution likely to be voted on in late 2016.<sup>81</sup>

As pointed out above, most discourse analysts hold that discourses not only make particular acts more or less thinkable, they also empower particular interlocutors. As new avenues for altered discourse, the humanitarian initiative and the OEWG have set a course for an objective more or less unthinkable only a few years ago—negotiations on a legal prohibition on nuclear weapons. Viewing nuclear weapons from different perspectives, including through a gender lens, has contributed to this change. Discourse, though, is not just about what people say, it is also about who speaks in the first place. In that spirit, the following section examines gender balance in diplomatic forums dealing with disarmament and nuclear weapons.

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Most discourse analysts hold that discourses not only make particular acts more or less thinkable, they also empower particular interlocutors.

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76 See J. Borrie, J. and T. Caughley, 'After Oslo: Humanitarian Perspectives and the Changing Nuclear Weapons Discourse' in *Viewing nuclear weapons through a humanitarian lens*, UNIDIR, 2013.

77 See, for instance, the statement of the 'P-5' about the Oslo conference on the humanitarian impacts of nuclear weapons in 2013, *Ibid*, pp. 97–100.

78 T. Rauf, 'The 2015 NPT Review Conference: setting the record straight', SIPRI Comment, 24 June 2015: <http://www.sipri.org/media/newsletter/essay/june-15-NPT>.

79 See UNIDIR 'Taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations: The 2016 Open-ended Working Group' (OEWG Brief no. 3), October 2016.

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80 Report of the Open-ended Working Group taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations, paragraph 67.

81 Draft resolution on 'Taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations' by Austria, Mexico and other states, September 2016.

# 5 Gender imbalance in nuclear disarmament forums

## CHAPTER SUMMARY

- Men continue to be heavily over-represented and women under-represented in multilateral forums concerned with security issues, including nuclear weapons.
- This holds true across all United Nations regional groups, although with some variation.
- Men's over-representation/women's under-representation seems to be even more pronounced in forums concerned with security issues and disarmament than in others (such as the Third Committee).
- While women are still seriously under-represented in multilateral forums dealing with security issues, there has been a positive development over the past few decades, with an overall increase of more than 20 percentage points since 1980.

Over the last two decades, the international community has increasingly acknowledged the importance of women's participation in peace and security issues, (as explained in section 2 of this paper). How is women's participation

reflected in multilateral forums dealing with nuclear weapons?

The analysis of the representation of women in multilateral forums presented here concludes that men are still heavily over-represented. These findings are based on data collected from the official delegation registration lists of a total of 26 multilateral meetings over the past 35 years (see Box 6).

## 5.1 SHARE OF WOMEN IN DIPLOMATIC DELEGATIONS

In two of the most important forums where nuclear weapons are discussed, the meetings of the parties to NPT and the First Committee (which deals with disarmament and international security), the numbers show a clear gender imbalance. For example, of 693 diplomats registered for the First Committee meeting in 2015, around 70 per cent were men and 30 per cent (29.7 per cent) were women. Similarly, at the NPT Review Conference in 2015, 901 of the 1226 registered diplomats were

### BOX 6

## METHODOLOGY

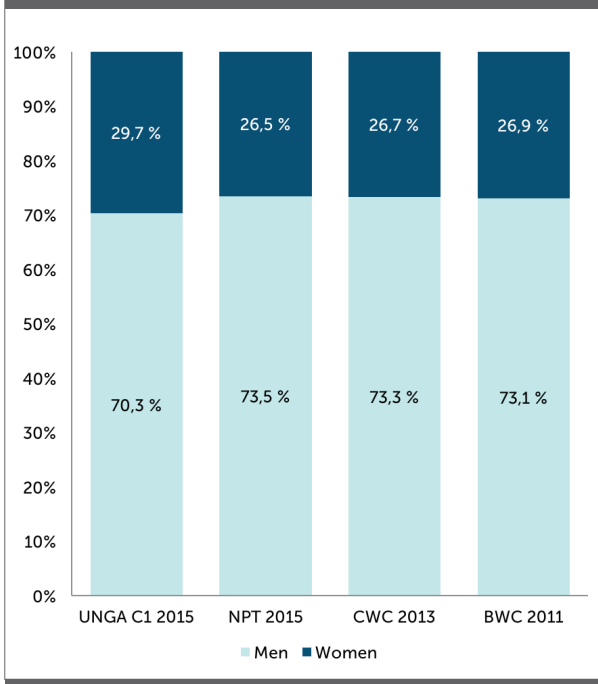
The 26 meetings over the past 35 years that we have examined include all of the five-yearly NPT review conferences since 1980, plus the UNGA First and Third Committees for the same years (1980–2015, i.e. at five-year intervals). We also included the most recent five-yearly review meetings of the 1993 Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), for comparison. The United Nations OEWG on taking forward multilateral disarmament negotiations was not examined, because as of writing official participation data was not available.

When coding the participant lists, the number of men and women in each delegation was counted, and we also checked if the head of delegation was a man or a woman (determined by the prefix used (Mr or Ms). In participant lists where several individuals were named as head of delegation (or 'representative'), the person listed first is the one used. Note that the lists do not purport to reflect the actual presence of that person in the room at a given meeting, nor do they necessarily contain the names of all the individuals that attended. Some delegates may have participated without having been registered, and some states seem to routinely register more participants in the list than others (or do not register at all), a difference that is not necessarily visible in the meeting room.

Despite these data limitations, the lists of participants provide open and accessible sources for identifying patterns over time. While there may be some systematic imbalances in the observations (e.g. due to some states registering more consistently for meetings than others), there is little reason to believe that this tendency should be correlated with the gender balance variable, which would thus render the results invalid. In total, the dataset contains 15,366 unique observations (197 states and 26 meetings).

FIGURE 1

## GENDER BALANCE IN SECURITY FORUMS



men (73.5 per cent) and 325 women (26.5 per cent).

This gender imbalance is not limited to nuclear weapons forums, as it also occurs in other WMD treaty stewardship processes. At the most recent review conferences of the CWC and the BWC, the distribution was similarly skewed towards men, who outnumbered women more than two to one at all of these meetings (See Figure 1).<sup>82</sup>

Research by the non-governmental organisation Article 36 comparing the gender balance in official country delegations with civil society delegations has found that the latter, on average, send more gender equal delegations than states. However, these too fall short of gender parity.<sup>83</sup>

82 These findings are all statistically significant at the one-per cent level, meaning that we can be 99 per cent confident that the imbalance observed is not due to 'natural' variation (i.e. chance). In all four cases, the margin of 95 per cent confidence is between two and four percentage points (the variation is due to the differences in sample size).

83 Article 36, 'Women and multilateral disarmament forums: Patterns of underrepresentation', London, 2015: <http://www.article36.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Underrepresentation-women-FINAL1.pdf>.

Focusing on nuclear weapons, the low overall percentage (26.5) of women in national delegates at the 2015 NPT Review Conference plainly indicates a lack of gender balance, but it also hides some important regional variations. As Figure 2 shows, the difference between the most and least gender-balanced regional groups was almost 20 percentage points (18 per cent and 37 per cent respectively) in 2015. While this difference is considerable, it is worth noting that even the group with the highest share of women (Latin America and the Caribbean) fell well short of parity.

More positively, the graph also shows that considerable gains have been made overall since the 1980s. On average, the share of women at NPT review conferences went from 7 per cent in 1980 to 27 per cent in 2015. The two European groups (EEG and WEOG) experienced a slight drop between 2010 and 2015, but the average share across all groups still rose, though only by 1 percentage point (from 26 to 27 per cent).

On average, the share of women at NPT review conferences went from 7 per cent in 1980 to 27 per cent in 2015.

The proportion of women on national diplomatic delegations to the First Committee broadly follows a similar pattern (see Figure 3). The Latin America and Caribbean group have made the greatest strides, and have the highest proportion of women delegates, but still fell more than ten percentage points short of parity in 2010, after having peaked at about 45 per cent in 2010. The WEOG and the Asia-Pacific group both had percentages just above 30 per cent by 2015, while Africa had yet to reach 20 per cent—less than one woman in five First Committee delegates from that region.

The finding that there is a lack of gender balance in security forums dealing with WMD is perhaps not surprising. Women are under-represented in most parliaments, governing cabinets, peace negotiations, business boards and management teams around the world (see Box 7). But is this gender imbalance in WMD-related disarmament simply an expression of the poor representation of women in general?

FIGURE 2

SHARE OF WOMEN IN NPT REVIEW CONFERENCE DELEGATIONS

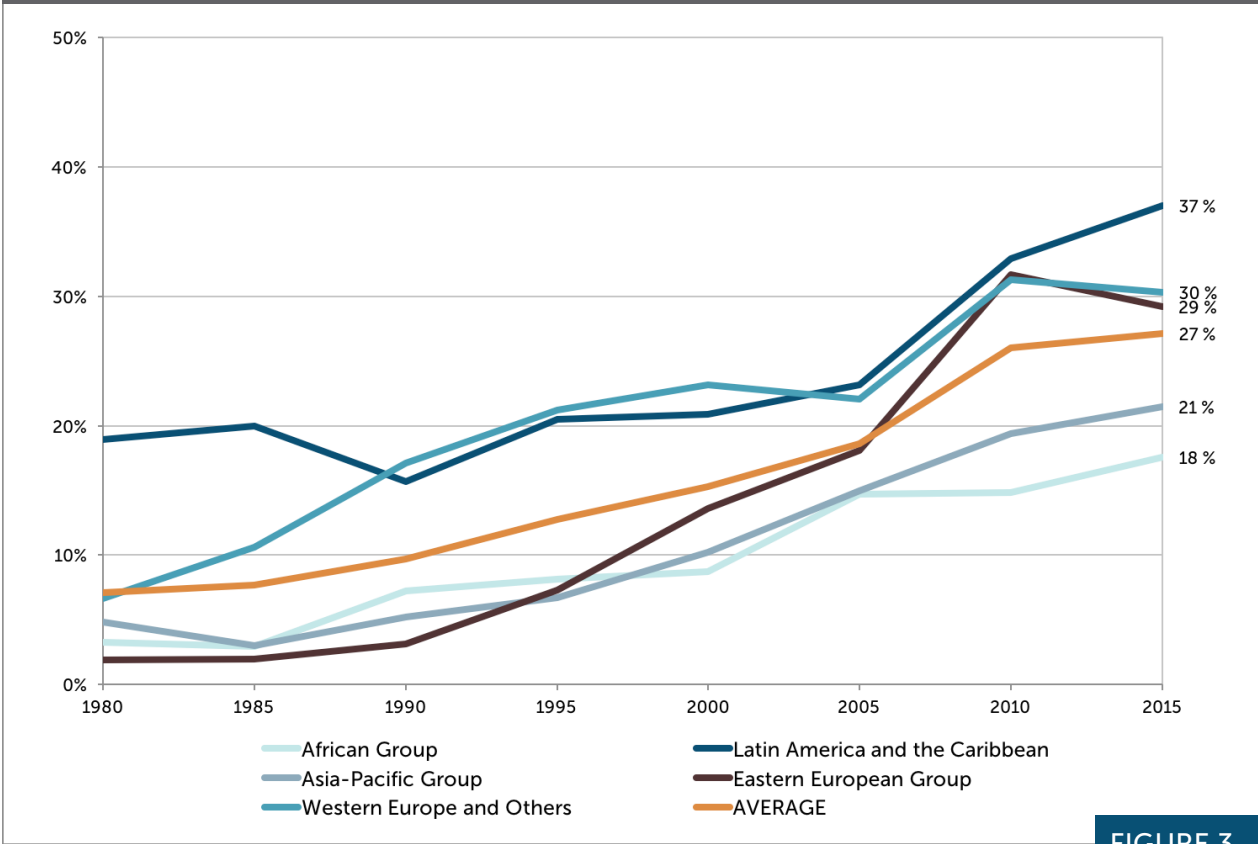


FIGURE 3

SHARE OF WOMEN IN FIRST COMMITTEE DELEGATIONS

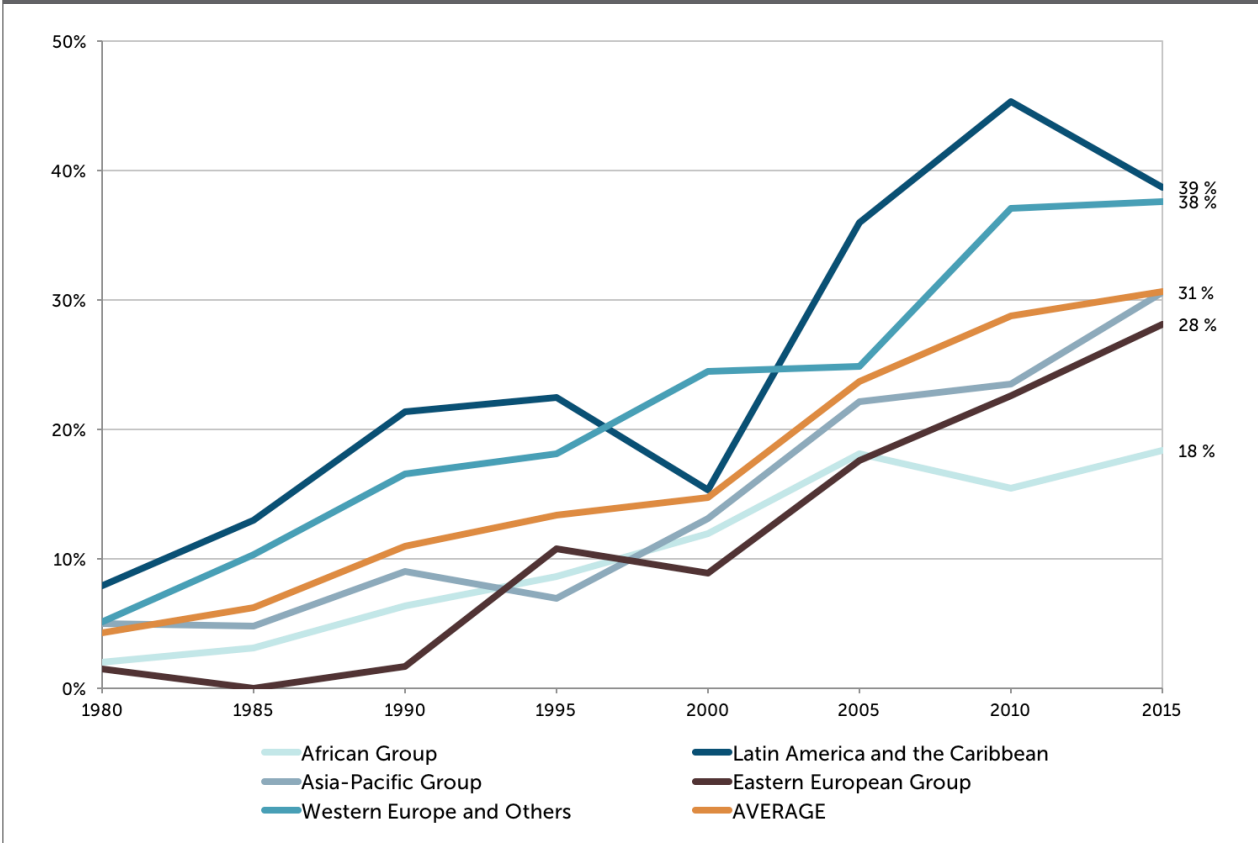
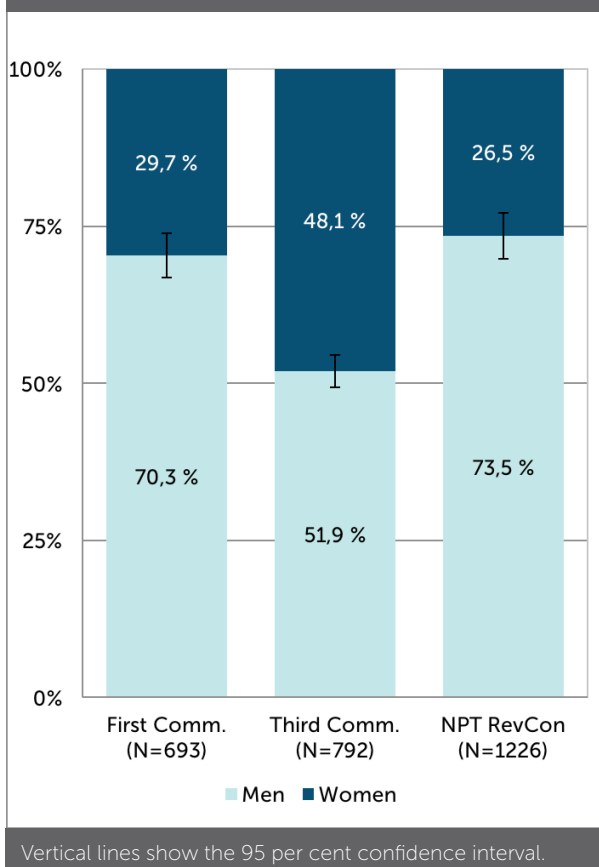


FIGURE 4

## GENDER IMBALANCE, 2015



In order to test this idea, we also gathered data for the meetings of the Third Committee (which deals with social, humanitarian and cultural issues) over the same period. Illustrating both the pervasiveness and impact of gender within

the work of the United Nations, the Third Committee has at times been referred to as the 'ladies' committee', seen to be dealing with 'soft' issues, in contrast to the 'hard' issues of the First Committee.<sup>84</sup>

In 2015, women made up 29.7 per cent of the total number of registered diplomats to the

84 C. Cohn and C. Enloe, 'A conversation with Cynthia Enloe: Feminist Look at Masculinity and the Men Who Wage War', *Signs*, 28:4 (Summer 2003), pp. 1187-1107, p. 1189.

85 United Nations Protocol list, 1 June 2016: <https://www.un.int/protocol/sites/www.un.int/files/Protocol%20and%20Liaison%20Service/hspmfm.pdf>.

86 *Ibid.*

87 Embassy Barometer, Embassy, 38, accessed 23 August 2016: [http://www.embassymagazine.com/barometer/bar\\_issues/emb38\\_bar.html](http://www.embassymagazine.com/barometer/bar_issues/emb38_bar.html).

88 List of permanent representatives to the United Nations in New York, (accessed 23 August 2016): <https://www.un.int/protocol/sites/www.un.int/files/Protocol%20and%20Liaison%20Service/headsofmissions.pdf>.

89 See P. Castillo Diaz and S. Tordjman, 'Women's Participation in Peace Negotiations: Connections Between Presence and Influence', UN Women, 2012, p.2.

90 See V. Fisas, 'Anuario 2008 de Procesos de Paz' (Icaria editorial), Escola de cultura de Pau, 2008: <http://escolapau.uab.es/img/programas/procesos/08anuarie.pdf>, p. 20.

## BOX 7

## MALE DOMINANCE IN DIPLOMACY AND FOREIGN POLICY DECISION MAKING

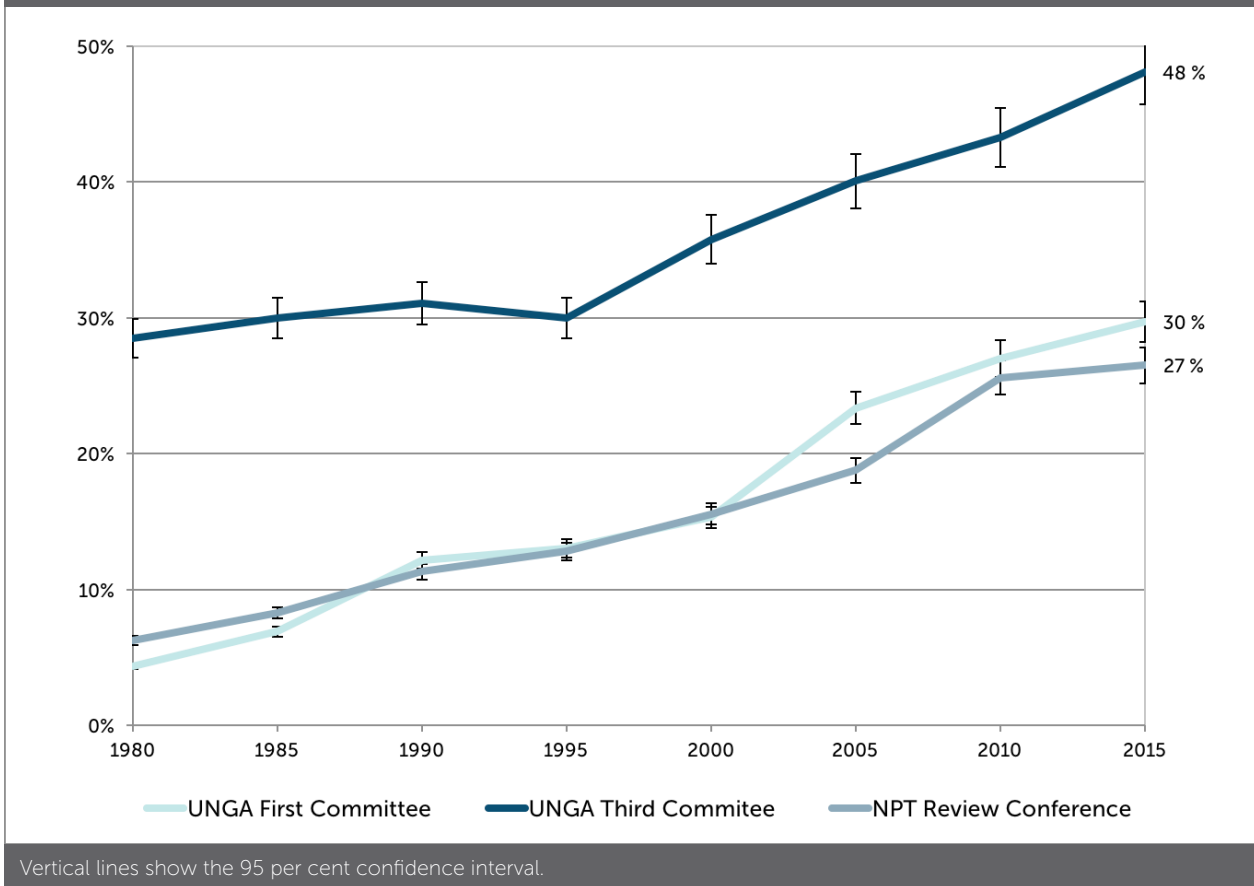
The under-representation of women in disarmament forums must be seen in the broader context of male dominance in diplomacy and international politics:

- As of August 2016, only thirteen of the heads of state of United Nations member states (and observers) were female.<sup>85</sup> That amounts to less than seven per cent. The number of heads of government is even lower, at a total of eight, which constitutes just over four per cent.
- Among the United Nations' 195 member states and observers, only 29—less than fifteen per cent—have female foreign ministers.<sup>86</sup>
- The percentage of women heads of diplomatic mission globally was fourteen per cent in 2012 (versus seven per cent in 2000).<sup>87</sup>
- As of writing, there are 37 female Permanent Representatives to the United Nations in New York, approximately 20 per cent of the total.<sup>88</sup>

Despite several UNSC resolutions on women, peace and security underlining the importance of the roles of women in the realms of peace and security, women are still largely under-represented at peace negotiation tables.<sup>89</sup> For example, one study found that in 33 recent peace negotiations involving governments and armed groups in 20 countries, there were only eleven women of 280 people participating—just four per cent.<sup>90</sup>

FIGURE 5

## SHARE OF WOMEN IN DELEGATIONS, 1980–2015



First Committee (see Figure 4). In contrast, the share of women delegates to the Third Committee was 48.1 per cent.<sup>91</sup> Circumstantially, at least, this suggests there might be something to the hypothesis that the representation of men and women is linked to the issues being discussed (see section 4). Male over-representation is especially pronounced in forums concerned with ‘hard’ security issues like nuclear weapons.

This under-representation becomes even clearer if the proportion of women in delegations in total is compared over time in the First and Third Committees *and* the NPT review conferences (see Figure 5). While the proportion of women in delegations to the Third Committee is in the high forties and thus almost at gender parity in 2015, the First Committee lags approximately twenty percentage points behind, at an historical peak in 2015 of around 30 per cent. The NPT comes in lowest at 26.5 per cent in 2015. It is also notable that the 65-member Confer-

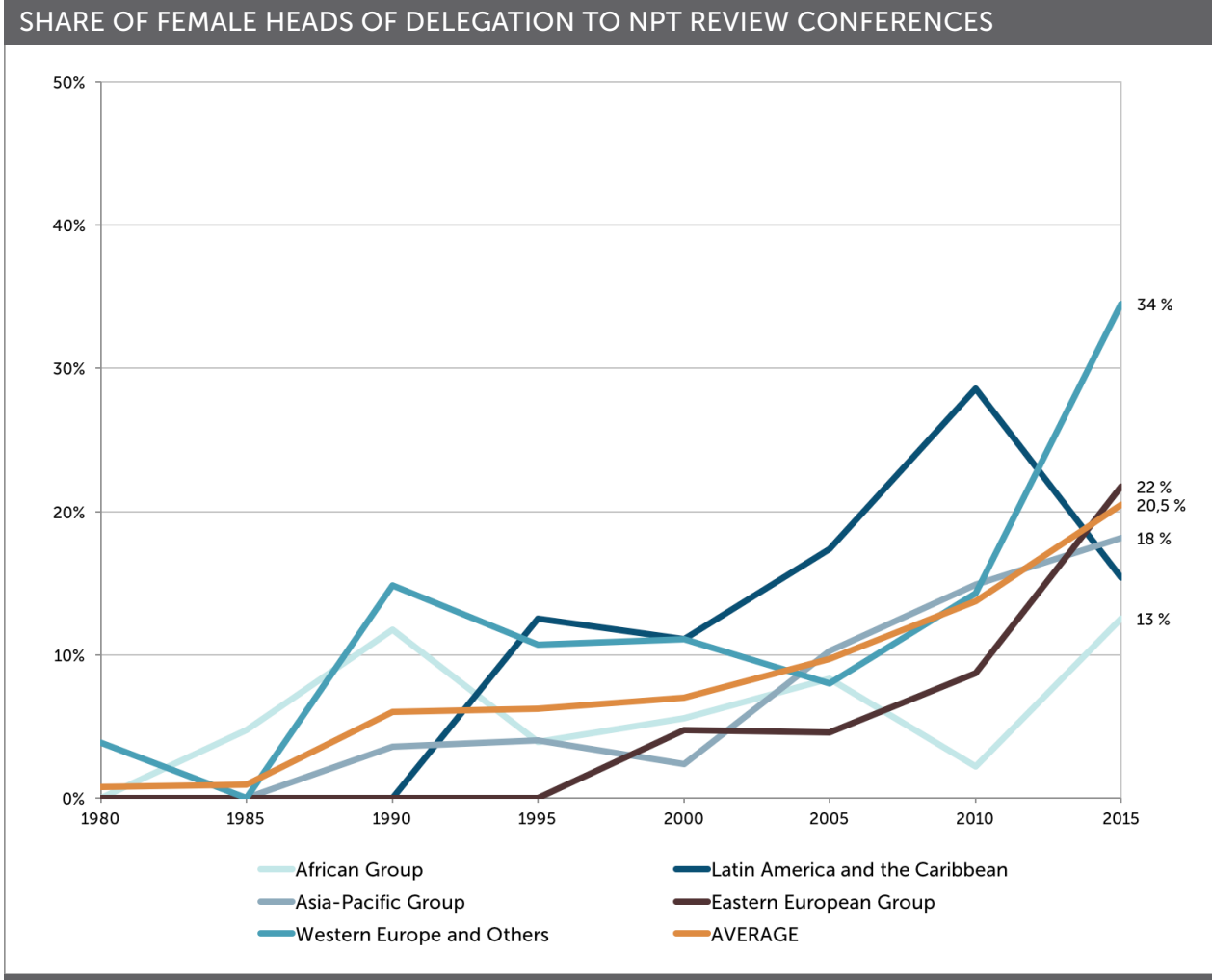
ence on Disarmament (which is not considered here on the grounds that it is not a near-universal body) appears to have a gender balance even more skewed toward male dominance than the NPT does, according to Article 36.<sup>92</sup>

All of this means that the picture for gender balance in security forums is a mixed one. There is a discernible historical trend toward parity. Nevertheless, women are still under-represented, particularly in security and disarmament forums such as the NPT and First Committee. As Figure 5 shows, women’s representation in national delegations in these two forums is only now approaching the level of the 1995 share of representation in the Third Committee. In quantitative terms, progress in gender parity in the NPT and First Committee lags approximately 20 years behind that of the Third Committee.

91 In the latter case, the share of women lies within a 50–50 gender balance given a 95 per cent confidence interval.

92 Article 36, ‘Women and multilateral disarmament forums’, Discussion Paper, October 2015: <http://www.article36.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Underrepresentation-women-FINAL1.pdf>, p. 4 (accessed 11 August 2016).

FIGURE 6



## 5.2 GENDER BALANCE AMONG HEADS OF DELEGATION

Being present in the meeting room is not the same as having an influence on decision-making (something also discussed in the next section). Perhaps a more telling indication is the rate of participation of women as heads of delegation, on the assumption that this more senior level participation increases the likelihood of that individual being more central in a given multilateral meeting.

Trends in the representation of women as delegation leaders at the same meetings show similar patterns as outlined for the gender composition of state delegations in general for these meetings, though with much higher variance. The trend is clearly in the direction of more women as heads of delegation in the NPT (as illustrated by the 'average' line in Figure 6), but every single regional group has had at least one period of decline within the period of study. Sec-

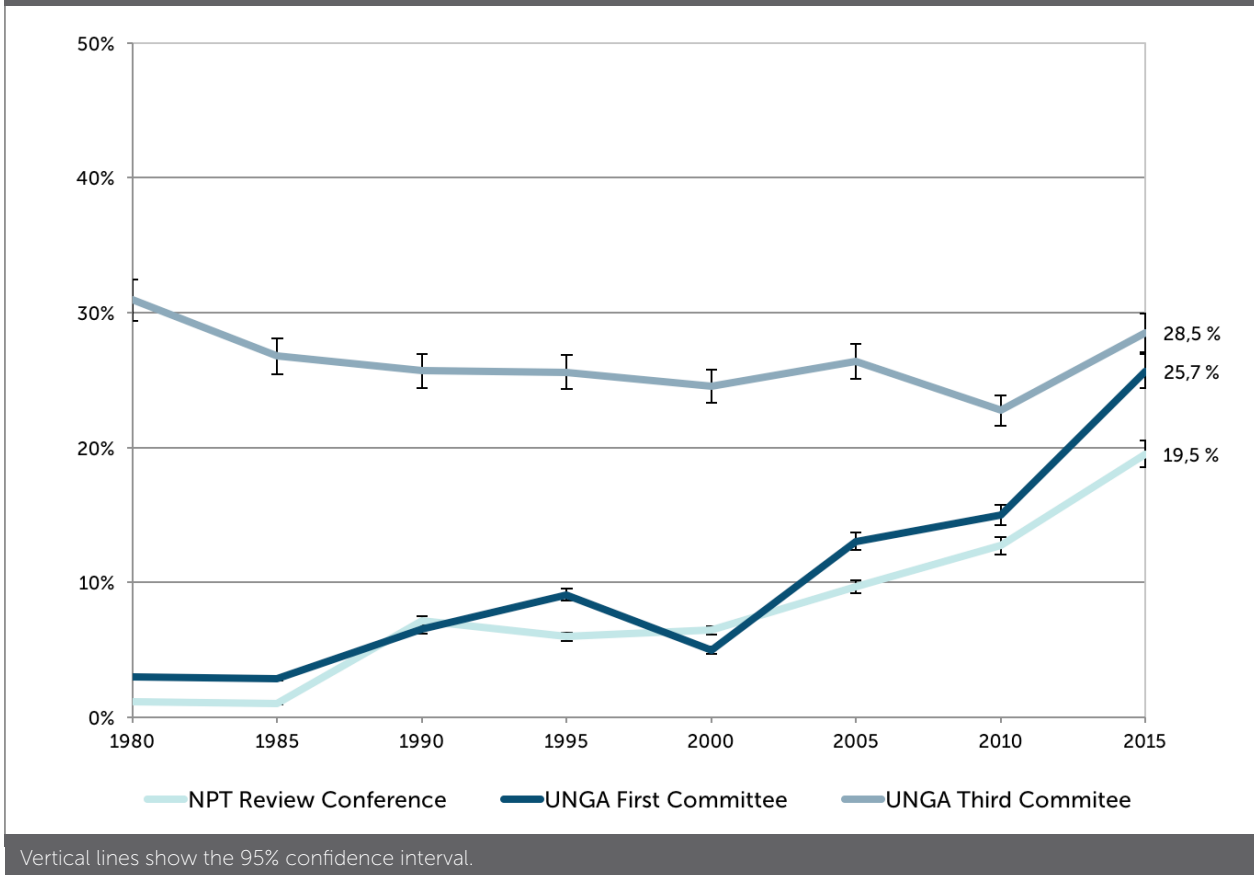
ondly, some of the decreases and increases in the graph are surprisingly large. For example, Latin America and the Caribbean had a jump from 17 per cent in 2005, to 29 per cent in 2010, and then dropped back to 15 per cent in 2015. It should be noted that the absolute numbers involved are quite low, since each country only has one head of delegation. For example, the abovementioned swing for Latin America and the Caribbean between 2005 and 2015 was caused by a difference of only four individuals—from four women to eight, and then back to four again (the discrepancy in terms of percentage points is caused by variation in total attendance from the region).

The reason for this variation could be that the political priority given to the promotion of female leadership fluctuates considerably. There might also be structural factors within the foreign policy apparatus of governments affecting the pool of personnel available. Another possible explanation is that states take into



FIGURE 7

## SHARE OF FEMALE HEADS OF DELEGATION ACROSS FORUMS



account a wide range of factors when selecting their heads of delegation—and for some, gender balance is more important than it is for others.

Despite an overall positive trend, the average share of female heads of delegation at the NPT's review conferences—which has risen steadily since the 1980s—was still only at 20.5 per cent in 2015, or one in five. The percentage in the First Committee in 2015 was slightly higher, at around 26 per cent on average for the United Nations regional groups—the highest it has ever been.

When these trends are seen alongside that of the Third Committee (see Figure 7), it is clear that historically the nuclear weapon-related multilateral forums have lagged far behind in terms of the proportion of female heads of delegation. By 2015, however, the gap had narrowed considerably. In 1980, the share of female heads of delegation was 30 percentage points higher in the Third Committee than in the NPT, and in 2015, this gap had shrunk to 9 percentage points. A point to note about the share of women among delegation leaders to the Third Commit-

tee, however, is that this proportion levelled out decades ago: it has since undulated since between 23 and 31 per cent, well short of gender parity. It will be interesting to see whether the proportion of women delegates in the First Committee and NPT review conferences eventually overtakes that of the Third Committee and continues to climb toward parity, or whether it too will level out short of 50 per cent.

Women's share of heads of delegation positions in multilateral meetings is one possible indicator of equal substantive representation. Their representation in United Nations groups of governmental experts (GGEs) is another. Much substantive work is done in GGEs to frame particular arms control and disarmament issues and build common understandings of suitable policy responses.

How close to gender parity are the GGEs? While for the purposes of this study the data has not been disaggregated between international security issues in order to know which are specifically nuclear weapon-related, the preliminary answer is that, historically, the proportion

overall has always been very low. Although women's share of participation in these expert groups has improved since 2007, there were fourteen GGEs in this period (2007–2016) with 129 male participants and only 31 women. Women comprised just 19 per cent of the nominated experts in the GGEs, and just two women chaired a GGE.<sup>93</sup>

Based even on this cursory analysis, it is clear that women have been and still are persistently under-represented—and men over-represented—in the United Nations nuclear disarmament machinery and, indeed, more broadly in WMD-related work. Even though there are signs of (gradual) improvement, this skewed gender balance and under-representation of women is clearly not consistent with globally endorsed aims for women's participation in political decision-making forums. Beyond the achievement of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda and the implementation of the SDGs, though, does it really matter? It does, for reasons explained in the next section.

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93 Information provided courtesy of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, August 2016.

# 6 Why does gender imbalance matter in nuclear disarmament?

We will look at three arguments for why the skewed gender balance matters in nuclear disarmament efforts. First, there are principled arguments about fairness and equality that come into play. On principle, individuals should be able to take part in decisions that affect their lives and opportunities. Second, complementing this there is also an instrumental case—backed by considerable evidence—that the involvement of both men and women in decision-making improves both its quality and effectiveness. Simply put, group problem solving suffers without the full involvement of diverse actors, and women in particular. Third, there is probably a link between participation and the nature of the discourse on nuclear weapons.

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Women have the right to full and equal representation, as confirmed by core human rights documents.

## 6.1 FAIRNESS AND EQUALITY

It is an established democratic ideal that the representatives of the people should mirror the population—its ethnic and linguistic groups, its different regions and religious communities, and the sexes. Having the people's representatives reflect the composition of the population is often thought of as a normative end in and of itself.<sup>94</sup> Although diplomats are not representatives in the same way that elected parliamentarians are, they are nevertheless the 'symbolic representatives of their countries' in international

affairs.<sup>95</sup> Diplomats are practitioners of politics and have considerable influence on political processes.

It is a matter of fact that women comprise almost 50 per cent of the world's population, and constitute a slight majority in many countries.<sup>96</sup> Women have the right to full and equal representation, as confirmed by core human rights documents. This is also the rationale behind the Women, Peace and Security Agenda. Also, as explained above, women are more vulnerable to the biological impacts of ionizing radiation than men, and so it stands to reason that they should be represented in forums dealing with nuclear weapons to a greater degree than they have been in the past. Historically, women tend to have experienced the broader impacts of nuclear weapon use to a greater extent than men due to the resulting displacement, discrimination and social stigma. For women—as well as men—to enjoy security and their human rights to the fullest possible extent, it is only fair that they are equally represented.

## 6.2 EFFECTIVENESS

In past research on disarmament and arms control processes, UNIDIR researchers have argued that to improve the efficacy of multilateral work, 'what we really need to identify are resilient conditions in which effective group prediction and problem solving are more likely to emerge.'<sup>97</sup> People's perspectives depend, in

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<sup>94</sup> See Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 'Political Representation', <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/political-representation/> (accessed 12 August 2016).

<sup>95</sup> H. J. Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, McGraw-Hill, 1993, p. 88.

<sup>96</sup> As of 2015, according to World Bank Data, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL.FE.ZS?end=2015&start=1960&view=chart> (accessed 23 August 2016).

<sup>97</sup> J. Borrie and A. Thornton, 'The Value of Diversity in Multilateral Disarmament Work', UNIDIR, 2008, p. 54: <http://unidir.org/files/publications/>

part, on their respective experiences, skill sets and backgrounds—including their gender, as it has contributed to shaping the context in which they have developed their individual perspective.

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**In some conditions, diverse individual perspectives make group prediction and problem solving more effective.**

In some conditions, diverse individual perspectives make group prediction and problem solving more effective. So, under-representation of women in multilateral forums dealing with nuclear weapons, especially at senior levels, should be of concern to all because this can inhibit the range of perspectives brought to bear on collective problems like nuclear disarmament. The CEDAW Committee observed the low participation of women in institutions working on nuclear disarmament and that ‘in addition to falling short of the Convention, such gender-blind conflict prevention measures cannot adequately predict and prevent conflict’.<sup>98</sup> As the abovementioned Chatham House study noted, women have distinct issues to raise in decision-making about nuclear weapons—‘issues that may not otherwise be placed on the negotiating table’.<sup>99</sup>

Moreover, a range of evidence supports the view that women’s greater involvement in groups performing prediction-and-problem-solving tasks improves performance. For example, one recent psychological study indicated the ‘ability of a group to perform a wide variety of tasks’—its ‘collective intelligence’—is a predictor of group

performance, and it appears to be positively correlated with the numbers of women within a group. The authors of this research attributed this effect, in part, to women’s better ‘social sensitivity’ than men, on average.<sup>100</sup>

In the broader security context, researchers have found evidence of positive effects of women’s inclusion.<sup>101</sup> An analysis of 40 different peace processes between 1989 and 2014<sup>102</sup> suggests that when women were able to have a strong influence on negotiations or press for a peace deal, the warring parties almost always reached an agreement.<sup>103</sup> Overall, the inclusion of civil society in peace processes increased the chances for a long-lasting peace, and lowered the risk of a given peace agreement collapsing by 64 per cent.<sup>104</sup> As far as women’s participation was concerned, statistical analysis showed it has also had positive impact on the durability of peace.<sup>105</sup>

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pdfs/the-value-of-diversity-in-multilateral-disarmament-work-344.pdf.

98 Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. General recommendation No. 30 on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations, CEDAW/C/CG/30, 2013, para 30: <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/CEDAW/GComments/CEDAW.C.CG.30.pdf>.

99 Chatham House, ‘Nuclear Disarmament: the Missing Link in Multilateralism’ in Ireland, ‘Nuclear Disarmament in context—a global governance issue’ (A/AC.286/WP.35), 3 May 2016, paragraph 37.

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100 A. Williams Woolley et al., ‘Evidence For a Collective Intelligence Factor in the Performance of Human Groups’, *Science*, vol. 330, issue 6004, 29 October 2010, pp. 686-688, p.688. For a less technical explanation, see A. Woolley, T.W. Malone and C.F. Chabbris, ‘Why Some Teams are Smarter Than Others’, *New York Times*, 16 January 2015: <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/18/opinion/sunday/why-some-teams-are-smarter-than-others.html>.

101 See ‘Preventing conflict, transforming justice, securing the peace. A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325: <http://wps.unwomen.org/~media/files/un%20women/wps/highlights/unw-global-study-1325-2015.pdf>.

102 M. O’Reilly, A Ó Súilleabháin and T. Paffenholz, ‘Reimagining Peacemaking: Women’s Roles in Peace Processes’, International Peace Institute, June 2015, p.33.

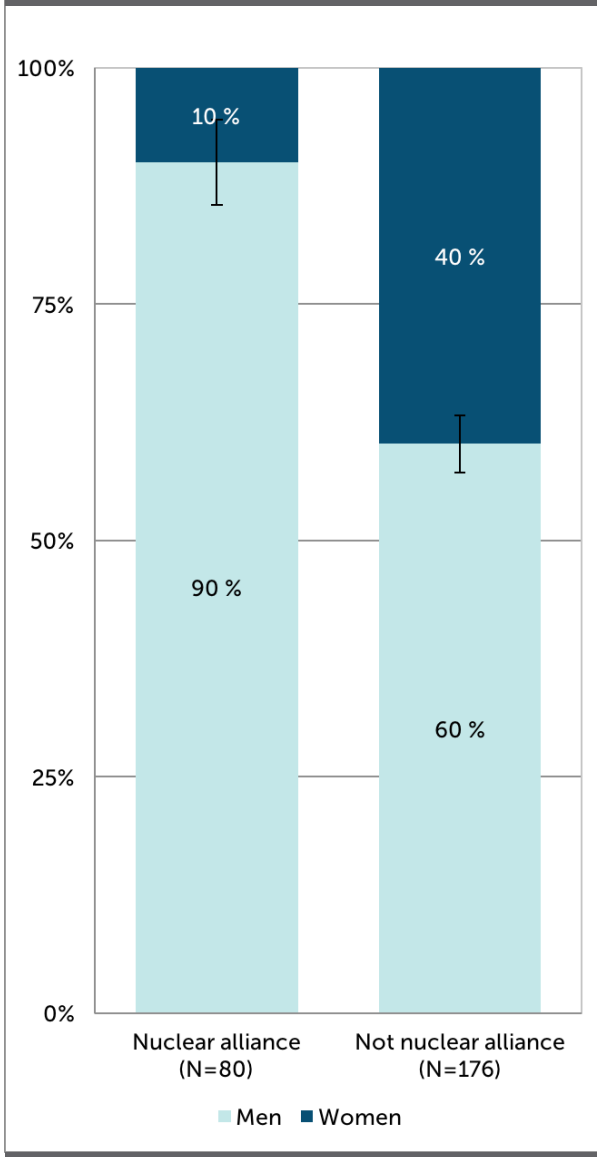
103 M. O’Reilly, A Ó Súilleabháin and T. Paffenholz, ‘Reimagining Peacemaking: Women’s Roles in Peace Processes’, *op.cit.*, p.11.

104 D. Nilsson, ‘Civil society in Peace Accords and the Durability of Peace’, in A. Ramsbotham and A. Wennmann, (eds.), *Legitimacy and Peace Processes*, Accord, Conciliation Resources, Issue 25, 2014, p. 30.

105 L. Stone in M. O’Reilly, A Ó Súilleabháin and T. Paffenholz, ‘Reimagining Peacemaking: Women’s Roles in Peace Processes’, *op.cit.*, p. 12.

FIGURE 8

OEWG SPEAKERS, MAY 2016



### 6.3 CHANGING THE DISCOURSE

As pointed out earlier, most discourse analysts hold that discourses not only make particular acts more or less thinkable, they also empower particular interlocutors. Discourse, in other words, is not just about what people say, it is also about who speaks in the first place. However, it is important to note that male–female (representation) and femininity–masculinity (discourse) are two distinct issues which are linked, but not necessarily in a 1:1 relationship. The relationship between gender balance and the degree to which nuclear weapons are seen as legitimate instruments of statecraft is not easily determined.

What the evidence described in this study indicates is that women can bring in new perspectives and views because of their different experiences. It seems likely that this would also have an effect on the nuclear weapons discourse if there was gender parity, which to date there has not been. At the May 2016 OEWG session for example, so-called nuclear-alliance states had a much lower share of female speakers (10 per cent) than delegations representing states that are not part of nuclear alliances (see Figure 8). While the former tended to argue for a ‘progressive’ approach to nuclear disarmament, the latter overwhelmingly advocated in favour of a legal ban on nuclear weapons. Many of the latter cited humanitarian and developmental grounds for supporting a legal nuclear weapons prohibition.

What the evidence described in this study indicates is that women can bring in new perspectives and views because of their different experiences.

One should be careful not to read too much into this finding, of course, as further investigation is needed, and there are doubtless other factors at work. However, it suggests that as the gender composition of nuclear disarmament forums is altered, this could create spaces for new perspectives to be brought into the discussion. This might affect both how the weapons and their impacts are perceived and the range of policy responses that are considered.

# 7 Concluding thoughts

Some in civil society have consistently raised concerns about the gendered impacts of nuclear weapons and their implications for the shape and effectiveness of policy discourse in United Nations forums on nuclear weapons and disarmament.<sup>106</sup> However, it is striking how little sustained attention states have given to it. This study has attempted to draw attention to nuclear weapons and gender in a considered way—how and why the two are connected, both to each other, and to the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development and the Women, Peace and Security Agenda.

At the same time, one state has described nuclear disarmament and its lack of progress as ‘a blind spot in the united global responsibility discourse’.<sup>107</sup> Broader global imperatives, whether for sustainable development, combating climate change, or the Women, Peace and Security Agenda garner attention, resources and support from a wide range of states, including from those continuing to rely on nuclear arms for their security. Meanwhile, nuclear weapons security discourse seemingly remains divorced from this work, as if in another world. The contradictions to the global development agenda that arise from the dire potential consequences of the use of nuclear weapons, the sheer costs of their maintenance and modernization and even the strange ways in which their continued possession is rationalized—overwhelmingly, although certainly not solely, by male statesmen diplomats and ‘experts’—is seemingly ignored.

This study has shown that:

- The use of nuclear weapons affects women and men differently, both in terms of the biological impacts of ionizing radiation and gender-specific impacts.

- Women are biologically more susceptible to harmful effects of ionizing radiation than men.
- The social impacts of nuclear weapon detonations are gendered, and research indicates that women often are the ones most affected in relation, for example, to psychological health, displacement, social stigma and discrimination.
- Applying a gender lens to the nuclear weapons discourse gives insight into how ideas and policies related to nuclear weapons are gendered.
  - A gender perspective contributes to diversifying the debate on nuclear weapons.
  - It challenges the established pattern of power relations, and is thus helpful for moving the disarmament agenda forward.
- In spite of international agreement on the importance of women’s participation in decision-making, there is a gender imbalance in multilateral disarmament forums.
  - In the nuclear-weapons related multilateral forums we examined, men continue to be over-represented and women under-represented.
  - This holds true across all United Nations regional groups, although with some variation.
  - Men’s over-representation and women’s under-representation is more pronounced in the First Committee and the NPT than in the Third Committee.
  - While women are still significantly under-represented in the First Committee and the NPT, an increase in their representation of more than 20 percentage points on average since 1980 is a positive development.

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<sup>106</sup> See ‘Civil society statement to First Committee on gender and disarmament’, 28 October 2014: <http://statements.unmeetings.org/media2/4654540/gender-and-disarmament.pdf>.

<sup>107</sup> Ireland, ‘Nuclear Disarmament in context—a global governance issue’ (A/AC.286/WP.35), 3 May 2016, paragraph 1.

- Lack of gender analysis and inclusion of female stakeholders may help to explain the current lack of nuclear disarmament progress, and why other agreements to tackle global problems seem to be so often ignored or contradicted in the prevailing policy discourse on nuclear weapons at the international level.
  - Such a situation is not simply rectified by the achievement of gender parity, although that would be a meaningful step and demonstration of commitment from states.
  - Existing assumptions and beliefs about nuclear weapons have to be challenged if a world free of nuclear weapons is to be achieved, and in that regard humanitarian and development perspectives have recently injected some useful new evidence.

Lack of progress on nuclear disarmament, as well as the narrowness of the established nuclear-weapons discourse, should be of concern beyond disarmament and security circles. The reality is that any conflict fought with nuclear weapons will greatly undermine the achievement of shared goals such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the agenda on women, peace and security; intended among their aims to empower women and ensure their voices are heard. Reporting on nuclear weapons and the consequences of their use in contexts such as the Agenda 2030 and climate change agreements would be a start (as a few have suggested), but nuclear disarmament efforts would probably also benefit from greater contact with and interest from this broader policy world.

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Lack of progress on nuclear disarmament and the narrow parameters of the prevailing multilateral discourse around nuclear weapons should be of concern beyond disarmament and security circles.

In some respects, this study has raised more questions than answers. The analysis in section 5 clearly shows gender imbalance in multilat-

eral policy discourse about nuclear weapons, but policy makers might benefit from a broader comparison of bodies beyond those covered in this study. For instance, the Third Committee was cross-compared as a ‘typical’ multilateral process outside disarmament and arms control, but understanding would be improved by wider comparison, such as with the 2016 OEWG, and the annual United Nations Disarmament Fellowship Programme, which trains many new diplomats working on these issues. These are likely to offer further insights into both quantitative and qualitative aspects of representation of men and women in nuclear disarmament and arms control.

Overall, this study concludes that a gender perspective is useful and highly relevant in order to understand the impact, discourse and actors dealing with nuclear weapons. There is an intrinsic link between the achievement of a world free of nuclear weapons and agreed global goals adopted in other policy areas. This should encourage policy makers in multilateral forums tasked with reducing the risk posed by nuclear weapons to consider broader imperatives connected to sustainable development and gender equality. Likewise, policy practitioners in those—and other—domains have a stake in the achievement of nuclear disarmament.



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