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**Statement by Theresa Hitchens, Director, UNIDIR,
to the Panel on Disarmament Machinery of the
Sixty-sixth Session of the General Assembly
21 October 2011**

Thank you Mr Chairman,

Dear fellow panellists, dear colleagues,

In my statement this year I plan to confine myself to two matters of disarmament machinery—first, the Conference on Disarmament and, second, UNIDIR itself, which I like to think of as oiling that machinery.

Mr Chairman,

From where I sit in the Conference of Disarmament as the Director of a United Nations institute—one which enjoys the role of being an independent observer of the CD's sessions—it is difficult not to be deeply affected on a number of levels by the paralysis of the Conference.

In institutional terms, the Conference of Disarmament has long enjoyed the role of flagship of the disarmament community in Geneva. It has provided the *raison d'être* for Member States to locate their disarmament experts in Geneva, to negotiate in the CD as well as to serve the annual needs of the Biological Weapons Convention along with a steadily increasing range of treaties on international humanitarian law and, once in its 5-yearly review cycle, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

If the presence of a fully-functioning CD in Geneva provides a hub for disarmament experts from governments, so too does it for representatives of civil society. Any erosion of the standing of the CD risks also eroding the knowledge and skills base that serves and supports disarmament writ large.

Incidentally, the treaties to which I have just referred all undergo regular review, generally every five years. The CD, however, is subject to no review of any kind. The High-Level Meetings called by the UN Secretary-General partially redress that anomaly.

At another level, there are a number of aspects about the prolongation of the situation in the CD that I find disquieting. Many of them have been the subject of consideration by UNIDIR's Board of Trustees—the UN Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters—so I will be brief.

How do we confront the paradox that the CD is a negotiating body but has not found any *lasting* way for well over a decade to negotiate the issues that divide its Members? The break-through in 2009 was all too short-lived.

Why in this erstwhile successful forum are Members unwilling even to enter into a process to negotiate on the questions of substance that divide them? Given that the adoption of the product of any negotiation would require consensus, why has it been necessary on several occasions in the current unproductive phase of the Conference to block even the commencement of negotiations? Surely, the consensus rule offers reassurance that decisions of the Conference during or at the end of the negotiations—for example, the adoption of the negotiated text—will require the absence of an objection by any Member.

Is it a responsible use of multilateral diplomacy to deny to so many States the opportunity to contest opposing views and assert their own national security interests? Not to participate in a negotiation unless its terms are framed in a certain way is one thing, but to prevent every other Member from participating runs counter to international discourse let alone multilateral diplomacy.

Without entering into the vexed question of “ripeness” for negotiation of the CD's core issues, the phenomenon of linkage and the absence of a process for setting the relative priority to be accorded to those four issues are troubling. For many Members fissile material negotiations are the priority. For many others, the preferred negotiations are on nuclear disarmament in general. These insistences serve only to cancel each other out. The same is true in relation to negative security assurances and preventing an arms race in outer space. In the absence of an agreed order of priority, it may not be feasible, especially for small missions, to try to deal with all core issues simultaneously. But it is mystifying that even the allocation of time individually to each issue for the purposes of agreeing the necessary mandates, one by one, has not been thought worth trying by the Conference.

If the time is seen by a Member or Members as premature for the commencement of negotiations, what alternatives are acceptable to them that fall short of gridlock? What confidence-building measures would they propose? What pre-negotiation activities could they envisage? How can some form of dialogue short of unproductive repetition of diametrically opposed views be initiated?

In short, in the absence of constructive engagement on ways forward, is there not a risk that the loss of standing of the CD will also have broader consequences for the disarmament community in Geneva and for multilateral diplomacy in general? Indeed, it seems to me that the time has come for creative thinking in order to stave off this threat – which is why I am glad to see the resolutions put forward by Norway, Mexico and Austria, by Switzerland, South Africa and the Netherlands, and by Canada.

UNIDIR has been pleased, with the support of a number of CD Members and Observers, to hold seminars and publish papers on problems and possible solutions for the Conference, and I draw attention of delegates to our website: www.unidir.org. This leads me to the second and final segment of my statement—some insights into UNIDIR’s mandate and activities, and its pressures.

Let me remind you of UNIDIR’s mission. The Institute’s purpose is to propose new ideas for security thinking, in support of a key rationale of the United Nations—the belief that peace and security for all peoples would only be possible through disarmament. Relevant to my earlier comments about the CD, it is part of the Institute’s mandate to “assist ongoing negotiations on disarmament and continuing efforts to ensure greater international security at a progressively lower level of armaments, particularly nuclear armaments, by means of objective and factual studies and analyses”.

UNIDIR's action-oriented research programme works to bring together perspectives on national, regional and international security, disarmament and development with a fundamental focus on human security. Putting people first in global security debates is at the core of all UNIDIR efforts to contribute to the establishment of lasting peace.

The Institute’s work programme is reviewed annually and is subject to approval by the Secretary-General’s Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters, which also functions, as I mentioned, as UNIDIR's Board of Trustees.

How is UNIDIR supported? As an autonomous research body whose independence is a fundamental aspect of its *raison d’être*, the Institute is entirely separate from the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs. To discharge its mandate, the Institute is dependent almost exclusively on voluntary contributions from governments, intergovernmental organizations and foundations. A subvention contributed from the regular budget of the United Nations is only sufficient to secure the post of the Director of the Institute.

The infrastructure of UNIDIR is highly streamlined. The Institute comprises only eight full-time equivalent core staff, including editorial personnel who produce the quarterly journal “Disarmament Forum” (in English and French) and UNIDIR books and publications. The number of research staff is dependent on the needs of projects for which UNIDIR has been funded by donors. That is, researchers are recruited as experts on contract for the purposes of projects in hand, and are not permanent staff members of the Institute.

The Advisory Board has recommended to the UN Secretary-General that the subvention to UNIDIR be increased to cover a larger portion of institutional costs. For the meantime, however, the Institute remains very heavily dependent on voluntary contributions. Despite the tenuous funding basis on which it operates, the Institute has established a high level of productivity and a strong reputation. As I think Geneva-based delegates will attest, the Institute is not an “ivory tower” body.

In adverse global economic circumstances, it is natural that the highest standards of efficiency will be expected of voluntarily funded organizations. UNIDIR strives constantly to meet those standards. UNIDIR does not expect to be entirely funded from the UN regular budget. Indeed, its Statute envisages that voluntary contributions from States and private organizations will form the principal source of financing of the Institute. And, subject to protecting the independence of research, a certain reliance on *ad hoc* funding is healthy in engendering high standards of all outputs. Deeper, wider and longer-term bases for funding the Institute are, however, crucial for its sustainability and for underpinning the quality of its research and publications.

Let me make this point: the Institute's subvention—the contribution from the UN regular budget towards the costs of maintaining the Institute—for the last few years has barely covered the costs of the Director. Despite Member States political willingness to support an increase in the subvention towards “meeting the costs of the Director and the staff of the Institute” – most recently in 2010 via Resolution A/RES/65/87 – increased regular budget support has not been forthcoming. Thus, I return to you, the Member States, with a request for core support for the work of the Institute. Without voluntary contributions from Member States and others, the Institute would be unable to carry out its mandated functions. Indeed, it would not be able to exist.

In this regard, I draw your attention to the last page of the statement being being circulated which explains in more detail the funding mechanisms for UNIDIR.

From a disarmament perspective, and from a Geneva perspective at the least, given an ailing CD, the flagship of the multilateral disarmament machinery, the need for fulfilling UNIDIR's mandate has perhaps never been greater. I know that the average taxpayer in many of your countries is in difficult circumstances, and the Institute is immensely grateful to Member States that have so generously supported UNIDIR over the years, funding our research projects and supporting our very existence. I can only urge that this support be sustained, and indeed supplemented through an increase, however modest, in the UN regular budget subvention. In addition, I would also ask those benefitting from UNIDIR's products—that is, UN Member States—to consider increased support to the Institution. No amount of support is too small!

May I conclude, Mr Chairman, by drawing attention to an objective which I believe we all should share—that UNIDIR should be resourced to continue to facilitate progress,

particularly in the nuclear field, to quote from our mandate “through negotiations, towards greater security for all States and towards the economic and social development of all peoples”.

Thank you, Mr Chairman.

UNIDIR Financing and the Global Economic Situation

Through its research projects, publications, workshops and networks, The United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research promotes creative thinking and dialogue on the disarmament and security challenges of today and of tomorrow.

Over its 30 year existence, the Institute has established a strong reputation for analysis and has proven to be a valuable and cost-effective component of the UN's Disarmament Machinery.

The current funding context

The global economic crisis has forced governments to **sharply reduce their national budgets**. Donors are under significant pressure, with fewer resources, a preference for project funding over core funding, greater competition for the smaller funding pool, and more restrictions on the funds granted. Furthermore, the **recent weakness of the US dollar in combination with the strength of the Swiss Franc** has negatively affected UNIDIR's financial health; although the UN budget is in dollars, the largest single expense of the Institute is salaries, which are paid in Swiss Francs.

The consequences are already being felt by the Institute:

- In 2012 voluntary core funding is projected to decrease by at least 25%.
- From 2008 to a peak in 2011, the Swiss Franc appreciated 70% versus the US dollar; this resulted in unexpected budgetary shortfalls that the Institute was forced to cover using core funding.
- To remain competitive and cost-effective, the Institute maintains the smallest core staff possible to support the functions of the Institute and its projects; further personnel reductions would necessitate eliminating substantive outputs (such as publications or seminars).
- An imbalance between project and core funding compromises medium- to long-term planning as well as retention of substantive and institutional knowledge.

UNIDIR's response

- Since 2009, UNIDIR has implemented a **Resource Mobilization Strategy** focusing on both broadening the donor base and deepening the resources available.
- The Institute has striven to **broaden its donor base** among UN Member States. In 2011, less than 10% of Member States fund UNIDIR. While efforts to broaden the base have resulted in first-time contributors joining the ranks of the Institute's supporters, much work remains to create buy-in among a wider group of Member States.
- **Private sector support** is being actively pursued for specific research programmes.
- The Institute has conducted a full **review of its budgeting and project development process** to ensure that its activities are financially viable, cost-efficient and adhere to the principles of Results Based Budgeting.
- UNIDIR has **raised donor awareness** of the critical nature of core and programmatic funding to the financial health of the Institute. The Institute is pleased that in 2011 it has received its first pledges for multi-year support and funding at the programmatic level, which facilitate longer-term planning.
- The Institute's Resource Mobilization Strategy is being carried out in the knowledge that **broad, deep and multi-year funding is crucial** to the quality of the Institute's work, and ultimately UNIDIR's continued existence in service to all Member States.

How is UNIDIR supported?

- In accordance with its statute, voluntary contributions from governments, intergovernmental organizations, and foundations form the principal source of financing of the Institute. Aside from the post of the Director, **financing for all other activities and expenses is secured through voluntary contributions**.
- The administrative and technical support of United Nations Office Geneva (for use of UNOG facilities, processing and disbursement of donor funds, etc.) is provided on a cost-recovery basis or is paid via the Programme Support Cost (PSC) charged by UNOG as a percentage of each payment made by UNIDIR.

Five mechanisms for funding

UN Regular Budget

UNIDIR was established as a Trust Fund of the United Nations in 1980. The Statute of UNIDIR, approved by the General Assembly, states that a “subvention towards meeting the costs of the Director and the staff of the Institute may be provided from the regular budget of the United Nations.” A subvention currently covers the costs of the Director. Despite recommendations from the Secretary-General’s Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters, the UN’s Office of Internal Oversight Service and, moreover, the General Assembly supporting an increase from the regular budget to cover the Institute’s core staff, regular budget support in real terms continues to decrease.

Voluntary Project Funding

These funds are raised from donors (governments, foundations and international organizations) for specific activities and projects, based on a detailed project proposal and budget. These funds are earmarked by donors for a specific activity. The high standards of work and cost-effectiveness of the Institute are ensured and reinforced by the competitive market for project funding.

Voluntary Programmatic Funding

UNIDIR’s programme of work comprises five areas: Weapons of Mass Destruction, Weapons of Societal Disruption, Reconceptualizing Security, Emerging Threats, and Improving Processes. Funding at the programmatic level, rather than the project level, permits the development and retention of in-house expertise, enables long-term strategic investment and direction, and gives the Institute the ability to adequately respond to Member States requesting assistance or consultation.

Voluntary Core Funding

Core funding is not earmarked for a specific activity; rather it supports the basic functioning of the Institute as a whole—paying for core staff salaries, physical infrastructure such as computers, website maintenance, development of outreach tools and materials, telecommunications, upgrading software, etc. Core funding also serves the valuable functions of permitting the Institute to rapidly respond to current security events; serving as “seed money” to conduct research on emerging threats that are not yet ripe with the donor community; filling funding gaps; and undertaking activities that balance the security concerns of all Member States, not just those in a position to offer project support.

Requests by the General Assembly

According to UNIDIR’s statute, “Specific activities which the General Assembly may request the Institute to add to its regular work programme shall be paid for from the regular budget of the United Nations in amounts to be determined at the time the activities are requested.”

Staffing

- Researchers are recruited as experts for specific projects. Project budgets include personnel costs for the duration of the project.
- The Institute operates with less than 10 full-time core staff, the absolute minimum necessary to ensure adequate support for its research activities.
- Administrative assistance, editing, translation, meeting organization, IT support and management is provided by UNIDIR staff, none of whom is supported by the UN regular budget. In other words, the Institute must secure voluntary contributions to pay the staff each month.

Accountability and Oversight

- UNIDIR’s work programme is reviewed annually and is subject to approval by the UN Secretary-General’s Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters, which also functions as the Institute’s Board of Trustees.
- The Director reports yearly to the United Nations General Assembly on the activities of the Institute.
- UNIDIR is subject to UN monitoring, audit, inspection and evaluation.
- As an autonomous research body whose independence is a fundamental aspect of its *raison d’être*, the Institute is entirely separate from the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs.

For more information about how to support UNIDIR, please contact
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