



UNIDIR

UNIDIR Roundup and Outlook 2025





Peacekeepers at work in Juba, South Sudan. © UNMISS/Gregorio Cunha

A challenging year for international security

2024 was a year of growing challenges.

Persistent and devastating conflicts continued to plague various regions of the world, with a raft of interconnected global crises only aggravating divisions and tensions. The threat of nuclear escalation cast an ever longer shadow across the globe, and the great promise of emerging technologies was too often tainted by the risk of their abuse and misuse.

Not for the first time, the need for disarmament and arms control became clearest just as hopes for their achievement appeared most distant.

Shaping the future

But with the eyes of the world once again on weapons, we have both an opportunity and an obligation to remind the international community of what arms control can do.

The adoption in September of the Pact for the Future has helped to lay the foundations for this vital work, reasserting multilateral support for nuclear disarmament, recognizing technology's central role in the changing nature of conflict and identifying steps that we can collectively take to promote and sustain peace – even in times of growing tension.

The UNIDIR Futures Lab has already played a part in this through the Summit of the Future Action Days, sharing findings from our International Security 2045 foresight study on future threats to international security. Other innovative projects on maritime security and air, land, and sea drones illustrate our readiness to tackle complex security issues even as they emerge. And on AI specifically, our newly launched Roundtable on AI, Security and Ethics now provides a vital platform for inclusive, interdisciplinary dialogue on AI in the military and security domains.

“

The Pact for the Future ... includes measures to mount an immediate and coordinated response to complex global shocks.

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Secretary-General António Guterres



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UNIDIR: A key role in troubled times

UNIDIR is the United Nations' only think tank focusing on disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation. It has a particularly important role to play in helping the international community navigate the rapidly evolving global security landscape.

In November, the General Assembly underlined:

"the significant contribution of the Institute to innovative analysis and productive thinking on multilateral disarmament and international security issues, and acknowledg[ed] the adaptation and expansion of its programmatic work better to follow the contours of a rapidly changing international security environment."

UNIDIR's impact

Responding to rising demand for our independent research on an array of global security issues, the impacts of our work have been many and varied:

- **We addressed existential risks of all kinds**, whether from nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, from emerging technologies like AI, or from their growing convergence.
- **We helped States around the world save lives** by reinforcing their control over weapons and approaches to improvised explosive devices.
- **We boosted transparency** by creating digital confidence-building measures and fostering dialogue between those in conflict.
- **We provided innovative, evidence-based research, ideas and advice** on complex global security challenges in key moments, helping to shape policy at every level.
- **We pushed for diversity and inclusion at every turn**, from highlighting perspectives of the Global South on space security to providing capacity-building programmes on AI for women diplomats.

187
EVENTS



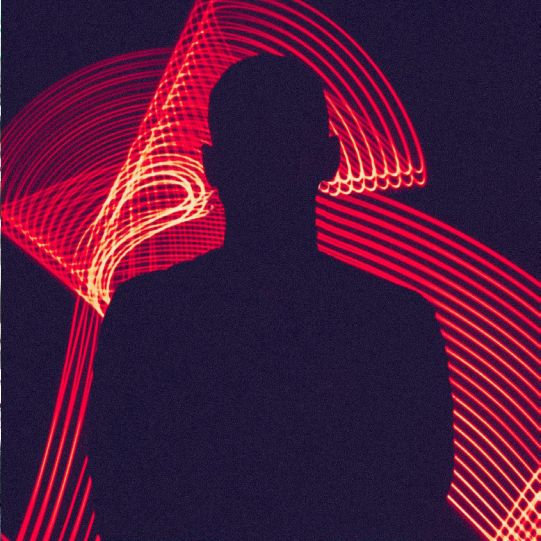
10K+
PARTICIPANTS



132
PUBLICATIONS



193
COUNTRIES
DOWNLOADING
OUR RESEARCH



UNIDIR's research agenda

In 2024 as ever, our research analysed and addressed a broad spectrum of complex global security challenges.

Some 45 years on from our founding, we have deep experience and expertise on longstanding threats from nuclear, biological and chemical weapons of mass destruction, as well as on the conventional arms and ammunition behind 40 per cent of violent deaths in today's world.

But UNIDIR is also at the forefront of research in areas undergoing rapid technological change, such as space security, cyber security, enabling technologies and AI.

UNIDIR also pursues cross-cutting issues such as gender and youth, as well as supporting exits from armed conflict through unique, data-driven research. The Middle East WMD-Free Zone project promotes WMD non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament in the region through research, capacity-building and dialogue.



Pushing the boundaries

A series of major UNIDIR conferences in 2024 **pushed the boundaries of knowledge** in increasingly salient domains of international security.

Our annual Cyber Stability Conference offered **in-depth technical and legal insights** into cyber technologies, types of attack and threat actors.

The UNIDIR Outer Space Security Conference addressed complex threats to and from space systems, **supporting multilateral efforts to improve space security and prevent an arms race in outer space.**

We took an **innovative, data-driven approach to conflict prevention**, pooling knowledge from around the world and every level of governance to analyse how arms flows data can reinforce conflict early-warning systems.

And as the United Nations geared up for 2025's International Year of Quantum Science and Technology, we brought together policymakers, diplomats, scientists, industry, academia and civil society **to explore quantum technology's implications** for security and global governance.



The UNIDIR Outer Space Security Conference explored challenges and solutions in this increasingly important domain. (NASA, public domain)



UNIDIR Senior Fellow Madame Bineta Diop discusses gender issues with Geneva-based disarmament diplomats as part of the 2024 Disarmament Orientation Course.

Capacity-building at our core

Committed to ensuring the informed and expert participation of all States, we also **redoubled our capacity-building efforts**.

Our [Women in AI Fellowship](#) endowed women diplomats from all over the world with the latest knowledge on every aspect of AI. Our [Training on Norms, International Law and Cyberspace](#) empowered 90 officials from nearly 60 countries. We now offer a digital [Biological Weapons Advanced Education Course](#) that will enable delegates to build a stronger, more effective Biological Weapons Convention. As every newly arrived disarmament diplomat in Geneva soon learns, **the UNIDIR-UNODA Disarmament Orientation Course is a cornerstone of arms control expertise**, and our commitment to delivering it also remained undimmed.

These efforts were explicitly recognized by the General Assembly, which in 2024 underlined:

"the valuable contribution that the Institute makes and should continue to make in the field of disarmament, non-proliferation education and capacity-building in all regions of the world."

UNIDIR: Strength in diversity

Diversity is key at UNIDIR, and in many different ways.

In 2024, **our commitment to global outreach** saw us hold events in Togo, Liberia, Pakistan, the Maldives and Bahrain, to name but a few. We integrated the views of small island nations into work on space security. We briefed the UN's five regional groupings on military AI, gender-responsive arms control, space security and explosive weapons in populated areas.

We held **French-language seminars** on everything from disinformation to ammunition management, from biorisks to security in outer space. We helped countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America to stop guns falling into the wrong hands. And using innovative research methods, we **raised the voices of conflict-affected young people** in Colombia, Iraq and Nigeria.

UNIDIR itself is also more diverse than ever, with well over half of our staff being women, three quarters under the age of 40, and 57 per cent from outside Europe. **This richness of experiences and ideas is what underpins our truly global outlook and unique identity.**



76
FULL-TIME STAFF

39
COUNTRIES

62%
WOMEN

76%
UNDER AGE OF 40



UNIDIR Global Disarmament Research Network

Our expertise is today bolstered further by a vast web of partnerships and alliances that makes us **a hub for engagement with leading thinktanks, academic institutions and industry players all over the world**. Our fellowship programme brings in **knowledge, ideas and good counsel at every level**, from specialists in vital niche technologies to seasoned leaders who have had the privilege of accepting the Nobel Prize for Peace.

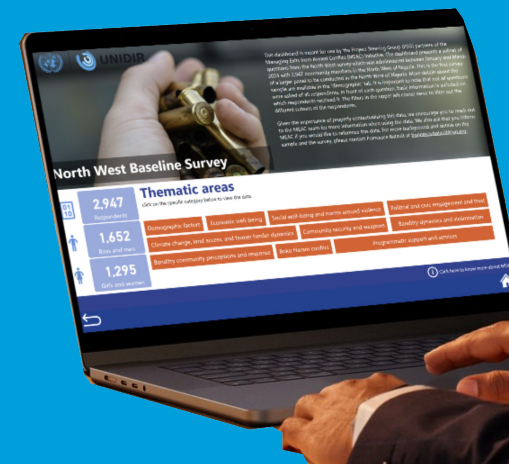


Innovating for impact

Our range of innovative digital tools for building trust and shared understanding expanded once again in 2024. Our Managing Exits from Armed Conflict dashboards began to provide real-time, dynamic access to local insights on a number of ongoing conflicts. A new tool offering access to these dashboards via a unified digital portal is on the way.

The Middle East WMD-Free Zone Compass maps the statements, proposals and postures of stakeholders in the WMD-free Zone initiative to help find room for understanding amid diverging views.

And we also developed a fully interactive version of our groundbreaking Lexicon of Outer Space Security, ready for launch in 2025.



Your steadfast support

In 2024, your support has been vital to our success, with 90 per cent of our activities funded by voluntary contributions. That **these come from every corner of the globe, including all five permanent members of the Security Council**, speaks to the independence and inclusiveness of our research.

As we work towards ensuring the sustainability of the Institute in an increasingly difficult funding landscape, we were particularly heartened by the **General Assembly's recognition by consensus** of UNIDIR's significant contribution to innovative analysis of today's volatile world.

This broad and steadfast backing from so many donors, partners and allies gives us great confidence as we move into 2025, which will be not only our 45th anniversary but also the launchpad for our next five-year strategy.



UNIDIR Director Robin Geiss briefs the Security Council on the impact of scientific advances for international peace and security. © 2024, UN Photo



Making a difference in 2025

In 2025, **UNIDIR** will remain at the frontier of technological change, examining the convergence of AI with other technologies and domains, building capacity in areas like cybersecurity to bring in the full diversity of global perspectives, and giving partners a head start on key technologies, from 6G and synthetic data to 3D-printed weapons and drone warfare.

The **reduction of nuclear risks** will remain a core part of our **work**, while a new digital repository will support progress on nuclear disarmament verification. To promote peer-learning and mutual trust, we will complete our mapping of national implementation measures by the 187 States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention.

We will explore ways to integrate community-led arms control into peacebuilding and armed violence reduction. Real-time analysis of the drivers of armed-group recruitment will shape programming on the ground. We will work to weave gender-sensitive victim assistance into multilateral instruments. And in the face of tension and upheaval, **we will seek out vital spaces for dialogue** on arms control in the Middle East.

Though new challenges will arise in 2025, with
diplomacy, dialogue and your vital support, **we
can – and we must – build a more secure,
more peaceful world.**

Thank you.



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