



UNIDIR Roundup and Outlook 2026





Remembrance, collective action and hope

In 2025, the 80th anniversary of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings in 1945 served as a stark reminder of the devastating impact of nuclear weapons.

But the chance to reflect on the founding of the United Nations in that same year – as well as the eight decades without nuclear conflict that have followed – also reaffirmed that **collective action can achieve the seemingly impossible**.

Even as established structures come under increasing strain and struggles to shape a new global order intensify, these lessons from the past offer a source of hope.

Facing the future

But learning from the past also means doing better in the future.

Faced with an increasingly challenging global funding environment, the Secretary-General's UN80 Initiative rightly demands that we ask ourselves the same vital question every day: **How can we make the best use of our resources to bring the greatest benefit to States and their peoples all around the world?**

Thankfully, UNIDIR has been honing its lean, cost-efficient, high-impact approach for many years, adopting a startup mindset to find creative ways to demonstrate the enduring value of multilateralism.

Combining this approach with our 45 years of experience and expertise on key international security issues allows us to find innovative and effective solutions to the global challenges of today and tomorrow.

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How can we be more nimble, coordinated and fit to face the challenges of today, the next decade and the next 80 years?

Secretary-General
António Guterres

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A new strategy for a new reality

UNIDIR's newly launched [Strategic Framework 2026-2030](#) focuses our work on three core areas of excellence.

On **arms control and disarmament**, we advance efforts to curb the development, proliferation and use of weapons of mass destruction while also mitigating the huge impact of conventional arms on people around the world. By **working to prevent conflict at multiple levels**, we reduce risks of escalation, reinforce resilience, empower communities and make space for diverse perspectives. And on **governance of emerging technologies**, we help shape policies and decision-making frameworks that keep risks contained while allowing opportunities to be harnessed for the benefit of all.

Across these areas, the coming five years will see us deliver evidence-based research, foster dialogue for greater trust and cooperation, generate data-driven insights to provide tailored advice, and strengthen global capacity for more informed, effective policymaking.

What we do

- Our **Weapons of Mass Destruction Programme** advances research and dialogue to prevent the development, spread and use of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons.
- From diversion and trafficking to weapons and ammunition management, the **Conventional Arms Programme** addresses risks posed by conventional weapons, limiting their role in armed violence.
- The **Security and Technology Programme** analyses emerging and enabling technologies, working to mitigate risks and harness benefits.
- The **Space Security Programme** helps develop norms and transparency measures that preserve peace in the space domain.
- The **Integrated Approaches Programme** promotes disarmament and arms control efforts that deliver for everyone, especially women and young people.
- The **Middle East WMD-Free Zone Project** supports dialogue and capacity-building to advance regional non-proliferation and disarmament.
- And the **Managing Exits from Armed Conflict Project** generates vital data on how to ensure that people get out and stay out of armed groups.



21K
EVENT PARTICIPANTS



193
COUNTRIES DOWNLOADING
OUR RESEARCH



Making a difference

As demand for UNIDIR's independent insights intensifies, the influence of our work continues to expand in scope and significance. In 2025:

- We **tackled existential threats** in all their forms – from nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons to emerging technologies like AI and their gradual interweaving into more established weapon systems.
- We supported States worldwide in **saving lives** by strengthening arms control and improving responses to improvised explosive devices.
- We **advanced transparency** through digital confidence-building and by fostering **inclusive dialogue**, even among parties in conflict.
- We delivered **innovative, evidence-based research and actionable advice** on complex global security challenges at critical junctures, including through briefings to the Security Council on AI safety and maritime security.
- We **championed fairness and opportunity**, amplifying Global South perspectives on emerging technologies and equipping women diplomats with AI-focused capacity-building programmes.

The future starts today

In 2025, UNIDIR convened a series of major conferences that advanced global understanding in critical areas of international security.

The inaugural **Global Conference on AI, Security and Ethics** marked a milestone in addressing the profound security implications of artificial intelligence, from governance and accountability to mitigating risks posed by autonomous systems and algorithmic decision-making.

The **Innovations Dialogue** explored the implications of neurotechnologies for international security, bringing together experts to explore risks, opportunities and governance frameworks for this rapidly evolving field.

The **Cyber Stability Conference**, held as part of our first co-hosted **Geneva Cyber Week**, provided deep technical and legal insights into cyber threats, attack vectors and evolving threat actors, reinforcing global efforts to build resilience in the digital domain.

And the **Outer Space Security Conference** examined risks to and from space systems, supporting multilateral initiatives to prevent an arms race beyond the bounds of our shared planet.





In April, UNIDIR travelled to Colombo, Sri Lanka, to provide a wide-ranging, two-day seminar on disarmament and arms control in the 21st century.

Global insights for global action

In 2025, UNIDIR activities undertaken all over the world helped more and more States participate as informed experts in multilateral negotiations.

With threats from AI-enabled cyber operations intensifying, **we redoubled our efforts on cybersecurity**, delivering 28 initiatives on international law in cyberspace to over 750 diplomats and policymakers, mainly from and in Africa, Asia-Pacific and Latin America. Taking our insights and advice to wherever they make most impact, we provided **a wide-ranging disarmament and arms control seminar** for 40 diplomats in Sri Lanka.

The **Women in AI Fellowship** **equipped women diplomats from all regions with the very latest knowledge** on every aspect of artificial intelligence and its security implications. And our hybrid, five-month **Biological Weapons Convention Advanced Education Course** **empowered delegates to shape the Convention's future**.

Crucially, the latest generation of **disarmament diplomats to arrive in Geneva were brought up to speed** by the annual UNIDIR-UNODA **Disarmament Orientation Course**.

For and from every corner of the world

We trained members of the African Union verification and compliance mission in **Tigray, Ethiopia**; worked on community-based reconciliation in **Abuja, Nigeria**; and provided technical support on the Al-Shabaab arms embargo in **Somalia**. We helped **Costa Rica, Senegal and OSCE States** improve their management of weapons; **Uganda** benefited from our assistance on countering improvised explosive devices; and we joined UNOCT in **Central Asia** to help prevent terrorists from acquiring weapons.

We also played a role in **regional consultations on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty** in **Vietnam and Ethiopia**, as well as providing **briefings to all five UN regional groups** on this issue, on craft-produced weapons, on the future of cyber, and on armed conflict and sexual violence.

This inclusive, global outlook is born of our own diversity. Our 77 staff speak some 38 languages and represent 40 different countries. 63% of us are women and two thirds are under the age of 40.



77

FULL-TIME STAFF



39

COUNTRIES



63%

WOMEN



65%

UNDER AGE OF 40



Innovation and the next generation

Our suite of online portals and tools also **opened up new digital spaces for young people in 2025**.

The [UNIDIR Youth and Disarmament Hub](#) offers a gateway to youth-empowering actions, resources and engagement pathways, while the [Youth Disarmament Orientation Course](#) was made available in [French](#) and [Spanish](#) as well as being expanded to include modules on Youth, Peace and Security and Women, Peace and Security.

A new digital portal for [Data Dashboards on Managing Exits from Armed Conflict](#) also provided **real-time, dynamic access to local insights on ongoing conflicts** in Cameroon, Chad, Iraq and Nigeria, with Colombia and Niger soon to be added.

And the [Arms Flows and Early Warning Dashboard](#) was established to foster cross-thematic knowledge exchange and serve as a **unified reference for arms flows and early-warning experts**.

Broad-based support from around the globe

In 2025, the continued **support of our donors has been the cornerstone of our work**, with voluntary contributions accounting for 93% of our funding.

The fact that **this support spans the globe – including all five permanent members of the Security Council** – both reflects and reinforces the independence and inclusivity that define our research.

Despite an increasingly challenging financial environment, we were able to secure **major, multi-year funding agreements** to monitor the security implications of frontier technologies and to deepen our research, evidence-based advisory support and confidence-building on space security.

The widespread and unwavering backing of donors, partners and allies in 2025 has only **strengthened our resolve and reinforced our confidence in the Institute's future**.





Making a difference in 2026

Looking ahead, one key aim for 2026 is to cement our place at the frontier of innovation in AI governance, not least through a new programme of work dedicated to **developing a Framework of Responsible Industry Behaviour for AI in the Military Domain**.

With the NPT Review Conference coming up in April, UNIDIR will also focus on **preparing States and stakeholders** through dedicated events, workshops on risk reduction, and a digital compendium of risk-reduction measures. A new Space Security Law Bootcamp for Geneva diplomats and a series of tabletop exercises will **stimulate novel thinking** in this area.

Zooming in, our work will facilitate **reintegration of Syrians from the Al-Hol camp** and help **prevent conflict in northern Kenyan communities** where unregistered firearms proliferate. Even amid much regional tension and upheaval, we will continue to create spaces for **constructive dialogue on arms control in the Middle East**.



Despite the volatile times in which we live,
there is one thing we can say with certainty:
**the actions we take in these years of
momentous change will be decisive.**

The recognition that **we can shape our
collective future by making the right
choices in the here and now** will drive and
guide UNIDIR's work in 2026 and beyond.

Thank you!