

UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY DISARMAMENT AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY COMMITTEE



STUDY GUIDE



**UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
DISARMAMENT AND INTERNATIONAL
SECURITY COMMITTEE**

AGENDA

Deliberating upon Global Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Efforts, with Special Emphasis on Countering the Spread of Untraceable Small Arms and Light Weapons and Advancing Nuclear Weapon Free Zones.

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ELEVENTH EDITION

Broaden your vision, Deepen your roots

Letter from the Executive Board

“I saw young Americans killed by the very weapons I created to defend them and protect them. And I saw that I had become part of a system that is comfortable with zero accountability.”

-Tony Stark

Greetings Delegates,

It is our pleasure to welcome you to the United Nations General Assembly, Disarmament and International Security Committee. We are really looking forward to the committee, and see what you all cook. For us, this agenda was chosen keeping quite a lot of things in mind, since we wanted an agenda which offered everything an ideal committee should, scope for dramatic (but realistic) communiques, space for rhetoric, and enough material to allow us to actually grade you all on.

The agenda, *Deliberating upon Global Disarmament and Non- Proliferation Efforts, with Special Emphasis on Countering the Spread of Untraceable Small Arms and Light Weapons and Advancing Nuclear Weapon Free Zones*, is much more vast than it seems, allowing every State to engage and contribute to the discussion, no matter how “relevant” the allotment may seem. Each of the 193 nations in the UN have a commitment towards peace, and therefore a duty to fulfil the objective of disarmament. We wish the delegates to actively focus on solutions, use legalities, and debate to ensure the solutions and legalities do not violate your State's policy. In Model United Nations, everyone will be out to get you to violate your policy, mandate and international laws every step of the way. It's your job to be prepared enough not to fall for it. Understand the consequences of the debate, and how it sets the stage for the committee to take actions.

However, above all else, we want the committee to be something you can look back to with fondness, and something which has been a stepping stone in your journey as a delegate, allowing you to obtain valuable knowledge. We hope you have fun amidst all the deadlines, sleepless nights and research. Please feel free to reach out to the Executive Board, we are here to make this conference a memorable experience for you. Looking forward to meeting you all soon!

– The Executive Board, UNGA DISEC

Introduction to the Committee

The First Committee deals with disarmament, global challenges and threats to peace that affect the international community and seeks out solutions to the challenges in the international security regime.

It considers all disarmament and international security matters within the scope of the Charter or relating to the powers and functions of any other organ of the United Nations; the general principles of cooperation in the maintenance of international peace and security, as well as principles governing disarmament and the regulation of armaments; promotion of cooperative arrangements and measures aimed at strengthening stability through lower levels of armaments.

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND DISEC

The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) is the principal deliberative, policymaking, and representative organ of the United Nations (UN). Comprising of 193 Member States, each with one vote, it serves as the primary global forum where nations discuss international issues, formulate policies, and foster multilateral cooperation. Established in 1945 under the Charter of the United Nations, the General Assembly plays a central role in promoting international peace and security, developing international law, advancing human rights, and encouraging cooperation across political, economic, social, cultural, educational, and humanitarian fields. The United Nations General Assembly's primary role is to provide a platform for international dialogue and cooperation. Its functions are outlined in Chapter IV of the UN Charter, and some of the responsibilities relevant to this committee include:

- Addressing issues relating to international peace and security, disarmament, international law, humanitarian assistance, sustainable development, and global governance.
- Providing a forum where all Member States, regardless of size or power, have an equal opportunity to express their views and participate in international decision-making.
- Coordinating with various specialized agencies and bodies of the United Nations, such as UNESCO, WHO, UNICEF, UNHCR, FAO, and others, to ensure that the objectives and programmes of these agencies remain aligned with the priorities of the international community.

- While resolutions adopted by the General Assembly are not legally binding, they carry significant political and diplomatic weight. They often influence the development of customary international law, guide state practice, shape global norms, and serve as the foundation for future treaties, conventions, and multilateral agreements.
- Decisions of the General Assembly are generally taken by a simple majority of members present and voting. However, recommendations regarding peace and security, membership, finances and elections of organs, and amendments to the Charter, require a two-thirds majority, as provided under Article 18 of the UN Charter.

THE SIX MAIN COMMITTEES OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

First Committee – Disarmament and International Security (DISEC): Works on disarmament and regulation of nuclear and conventional weapons to ensure global security and cooperation regarding the same amongst the States.

Second Committee – Economic and Financial (ECOFIN): Deals trade, sustainable development, global finance, and uplifting the economically backwards regions

Third Committee – Social, Humanitarian and Cultural (SOCHUM): Focuses on human rights, culture, refugees, and social development.

Fourth Committee – Special Political and Decolonisation (SPECPOL): Takes on decolonisation, peacekeeping, Palestine, landmines, space cooperation, and more.

Fifth Committee – Administrative and Budgetary: Manages the UN's budget, staff, and administrative matters.

Sixth Committee – Legal: Tackles legal queries and helps develop and organise international law.

MANDATE AND SCOPE OF DISEC

DISEC is tasked with the responsibility to uphold disarmament, arms regulation and global security.

1. Nuclear Weapons and Non-Proliferation

- Nuclear disarmament and cutting down nuclear weapons.
- Promoting and backing up international agreements like the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).
- Strengthening nuclear-weapon-free zones and taking the humanitarian and environmental consequences of nuclear weapons seriously.

2. Other Weapons of Mass Destruction

- Addressing problems with chemical and biological weapons.
- Supporting ways to check, verify, and prevent dangerous development and use of these weapons.

3. Conventional Weapons and Arms Control

- Regulating conventional weapons— guns, artillery, and all kinds of military equipment.
- Stopping illicit gun manufacturing and trafficking.
- Considering landmines, cluster bombs, and how to manage responsible arms transfers.

4. Outer Space and Emerging Security Challenges

- Preventing an arms race in space and encouraging responsible behaviour out there.
- Taking on new threats like cyber weapons, artificial intelligence, and autonomous weapons.
- Promoting international rules and trust for new technology.

5. Regional Disarmament and Conflict Prevention

- Focusing on regional security, lowering tensions, and confidence-building.
- Tackling arms build-ups, coups, instability, and the political messes that can lead to conflict.
- Supporting cooperation that lowers armaments and boosts trust and transparency.

KEY FUNCTIONS OF DISEC

1. Arms Control and Disarmament

DISEC aims to promote disarmament across all member States and halt the illicit trafficking of arms. This initiative includes the following points:

- Reduction in the number of nuclear weapon stockpiles and support the observance of treaties like the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).
- Regulation of conventional arms, which includes small arms, light weapons, and heavy military machines like artillery or any military equipment.
- Proliferation of chemical and biological weapons that can be a great threat to international peace and security.

2. Promotion of Multilateral Diplomacy

The UNGA DISEC allows all UN member States to be part of discussions on peace and security.

3. Coordination with other Bodies of the UN

While DISEC itself is not able to take direct action as its resolutions aren't legally binding, it works with the Security Council, while also collaborating with the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) and other UN agencies in order to implement security measures and carry out its responsibilities.

4. Preventing and Managing Armed Conflicts

Addressing regional conflicts and power struggles, and this includes those that are caused by revolutionary movements, political instability, economic issues, and military coups.

LIMITATIONS OF DISEC

It's key to remember what DISEC can't do. It can recommend, deliberate, and set norms, but is merely a recommendatory body. It can't independently enforce rules, hand out sanctions, or deploy peacekeepers. Its resolutions are usually just recommendations and not binding in nature.

Introduction to the Agenda

Deliberating upon Global Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Efforts, with Special Emphasis on Countering the Spread of Untraceable Small Arms and Light Weapons and Advancing Nuclear Weapons Free Zones

Since the establishment of the United Nations, disarmament has remained closely connected with the broader objective of maintaining international peace and security. The importance attached to the issue was evident from the very beginning. In January 1946, the General Assembly adopted its first resolution, which addressed the problems arising from the discovery of atomic energy and called for proposals concerning the elimination of atomic weapons and other weapons capable of mass destruction. Nearly eight decades later, the concerns that shaped those early discussions remain relevant, although the nature of the challenge has changed considerably.

The international community today faces a security environment in which different forms of weapons proliferation create different, but often interconnected, risks. Nuclear weapons continue to raise questions concerning strategic stability, deterrence and the possibility of catastrophic destruction, while the widespread availability of small arms and light weapons contributes to armed conflict, organised crime, terrorism and political instability in many parts of the world. The present agenda therefore brings together two areas that are often discussed separately: the long-term effort to prevent the spread and eventual elimination of nuclear weapons, and the more immediate problem of controlling the illicit circulation of conventional weapons.

Small Arms and Light Weapons and the Problem of Traceability

Small arms and light weapons (SALW) occupy a particularly important position within the contemporary disarmament debate because of their widespread availability and continued use in both conflict and non-conflict settings. Unlike nuclear, chemical or biological weapons, small arms are relatively inexpensive, portable and comparatively easy to acquire. They can remain in circulation for decades, often moving through several owners and jurisdictions during their lifetime.

The problem becomes particularly serious when weapons are diverted from legal channels and enter illicit markets. A weapon may originate from a legitimate

manufacturer or state stockpile but subsequently be stolen, illegally transferred, trafficked across a border or sold through an unauthorised intermediary. Weak stockpile management, inadequate record-keeping, corruption and falsified documentation can make it difficult to establish where a weapon came from or how it reached its final user.

Traceability is therefore an important part of addressing illicit arms trafficking. Proper marking and record-keeping can allow authorities to reconstruct the movement of a weapon from its manufacture or import to its subsequent transfer. Where markings have been removed or records are incomplete, however, this process becomes considerably more difficult. The development of new manufacturing technologies, including privately produced firearms and additive manufacturing such as 3D printing, has also introduced additional questions regarding how existing tracing mechanisms can be applied to weapons that may not pass through conventional manufacturing and distribution systems.

The consequences of this traceability gap extend beyond the movement of individual weapons. Illicit arms can contribute to the continuation of armed conflicts, strengthen organised criminal networks and increase the capacity of non- state armed groups. Regions affected by prolonged instability, including parts of the **Sahel and the Horn of Africa**, have experienced the effects of illicit arms flows alongside other political, economic and security challenges. The issue, therefore, is not limited to controlling the production of weapons; it also concerns what happens to those weapons after they leave the hands of legitimate manufacturers and authorities.

Broaden your vision, Deepen your roots

International efforts such as the **United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons (PoA)**, the **International Tracing Instrument (ITI)** and the **Arms Trade Treaty (ATT)** have sought to address different aspects of **this problem. Their implementation, however, continues to depend substantially on national legislation, institutional capacity, cooperation between states and the ability of authorities to maintain reliable information throughout the life cycle of a weapon.**

Nuclear Weapons and the Advancement of Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones

At the other end of the disarmament debate is the question of nuclear weapons. Their destructive capacity and the possibility of their use, whether intentional or accidental, make nuclear weapons a continuing concern for international peace and security. The international community has consequently developed a range of

treaties and institutions aimed at preventing proliferation, promoting arms control and reducing nuclear risks.

The **Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)** remains one of the central instruments of this framework. Opened for signature in 1968 and entering into force in 1970, the NPT seeks to prevent the further spread of nuclear weapons while recognising the right of states to pursue nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. It also contains, under **Article VI**, a commitment by the parties to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to nuclear disarmament.

One of the important developments alongside the NPT has been the establishment of **Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones (NWFZs)**. Through regional treaties such as the **Treaty of Tlatelolco**, **Treaty of Rarotonga**, **Treaty of Bangkok**, **Treaty of Pelindaba** and the **Treaty of Semipalatinsk**, states in different regions have undertaken legally binding commitments not to develop, acquire, possess or station nuclear weapons within their territories, subject to the terms of the respective treaties.

These arrangements demonstrate that regional approaches can complement global non-proliferation efforts. NWFZs can strengthen confidence among participating states, establish regional norms against the possession and deployment of nuclear weapons, and provide mechanisms for verification and cooperation. The protocols associated with several of these treaties also seek commitments from nuclear-weapon states, including assurances concerning the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons against members of the relevant zone.

Nevertheless, the development of NWFZs has not been without difficulties. The extent to which nuclear-weapon states have accepted the additional protocols differs across regions, while proposals for new zones have sometimes faced significant political and security disagreements. The proposed **Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction**, for example, has remained subject to prolonged diplomatic difficulties. These challenges illustrate the broader difficulty of advancing disarmament when regional security concerns and competing national interests remain unresolved.

The Role of DISEC

It is against this broader background that the issue comes before the **Disarmament and International Security Committee (DISEC)**. The objective of the Committee is not simply to create new international instruments, but to examine

whether existing mechanisms are sufficiently effective and how their implementation can be strengthened.

Delegates will therefore need to consider the practical aspects of weapons control alongside the larger political questions surrounding disarmament. In the case of SALW, this includes issues such as marking and tracing, stockpile management, border controls, information-sharing, end-user verification and cooperation against illicit trafficking. In relation to nuclear weapons, delegates may examine the strengthening and expansion of Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones, compliance with existing non-proliferation obligations, verification mechanisms and the role of regional confidence-building measures.

The agenda ultimately brings together two different dimensions of international security. The illicit circulation of SALW demonstrates how relatively small and easily transferable weapons can contribute to persistent violence and instability, while nuclear weapons present the possibility of destruction on a fundamentally different scale. Addressing both within the framework of DISEC requires delegates to move beyond broad calls for disarmament and consider the legal, institutional, financial and political measures through which international commitments can be translated into effective practice.

For this reason, the discussion should not be limited to whether additional treaties or resolutions are desirable. A more fundamental question is whether existing mechanisms are being implemented effectively, where their gaps lie, and what forms of international cooperation could realistically strengthen them. The challenge before the Committee is therefore one of turning established principles of disarmament and non-proliferation into systems that are capable of functioning in practice.

Key Terminology

Disarmament

Disarmament is generally understood to be the act of reducing or eliminating arms and, as such, is applicable to all weapons systems, ammunition and explosives, including nuclear, chemical, biological, radiological and conventional systems.

After World War II, one of the biggest priorities of the United Nations was to ensure reduction and eventually eradication of all weapons which posed a threat to mankind, which includes but is not limited to, nuclear weapons, chemical weapons, biological weapons and all weapons of mass destruction. Despite this being the original objective, with technological evolution, the scope of disarmament has also extended to accommodate the need to address how weapons like small arms, light weapons and landmines also pose a threat to society and communities.

Through global efforts, several multilateral treaties and instruments have been established with the aim of regulating, restricting, or eliminating certain weapons. These include the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, the Biological and Chemical Weapons Convention, the Anti-Personnel Landmine Convention, the Convention on Cluster Munitions, the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and the Arms Trade Treaty.

Arms Control

Arms control in international relations refers to managing weapon development, usage, and deployment among countries through cooperation. It acknowledges the world's anarchic nature and the absence of a central authority.

In a broad sense, arms control grows out of historical state practice in disarmament, which has had, since the 20th century, a long record of successes and failures. A narrower definition of each term, however, reveals key differences between disarmament and arms control. Complete or general disarmament may involve the elimination of a country's entire military capacity. Partial disarmament may consist of the elimination of certain types or classes of weapons or a general reduction (but not elimination) of all classes of weapons. Whereas disarmament agreements usually directly prohibit the possession or production of weapons, arms-control

agreements often proceed by setting limitations on the testing, deployment, or use of certain types of weapons.

Arms control aims to encourage countries to manage their weapons in limited cooperation with each other. Treaties and agreements, such as the Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty and the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), have been established to limit testing, proliferation, and possession of weapons.

Arms control gained prominence during the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union to limit the nuclear arms race. Though the UN's goal of arms control and disarmament has proved elusive, the UN has facilitated the negotiation of several multilateral arms control treaties.

Arms control treaties often address various weapon types, including nuclear weapons, as seen in the Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty of 1963 and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons of 1968. Treaties may also limit chemical weapons, as demonstrated by the Chemical Weapons Convention, which aims for total chemical disarmament, and biological weapons, which are prohibited by the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC). Additionally, arms control can involve setting limitations on the testing, deployment, or use of certain weapons.

Non- Proliferation

The United Nations Nuclear Non Proliferation efforts centre on the Treaty on the Non Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons(NPT), a landmark international agreement that entered into force in 1970.

The NPT is the centrepiece of global efforts to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons, to promote cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and to further the goal of complete nuclear disarmament. With 191 States parties as of 2026, it is the most widely adhered to treaty in the field of nuclear non-proliferation, peaceful uses of nuclear energy and nuclear disarmament.

The United States was the first, and is so far the only, country to use atomic weapons. In the final days of World War II, it dropped two bombs on the Japanese cities Hiroshima and Nagasaki, destroying them and killing more than one hundred thousand people in minutes. Less than six months after the bombs dropped, in 1946, the UN General Assembly called for the total elimination of nuclear

weapons. Over the next few years, a draft of the non-proliferation treaty was made and submitted and in 1968, the General Assembly opened the treaty for signature.

Under the NPT, non-nuclear-weapon States parties have committed themselves to not manufacture or otherwise acquire nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices while nuclear-weapon States parties have committed to not in any way assist, encourage or induce any non-nuclear weapon State party to manufacture or otherwise acquire nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. Nuclear weapon States parties under the Treaty are defined as those that manufactured and exploded a nuclear weapon or other nuclear explosive device before 1 January 1967. There are five nuclear-weapon States parties to the Treaty. The NPT encourages using nuclear materials peacefully, such as for energy and medical purposes. NPT non-nuclear-weapon states are required to conclude safeguards agreements with the IAEA. States outside the NPT, including India, Israel and Pakistan, have accepted safeguards on particular facilities or materials under item-specific agreements.

Currently, full disarmament still remains a distant possibility. The five countries that had nuclear weapons when the NPT went into effect- the United States, China, France, Russia, and the United Kingdom, still maintain sizable nuclear arsenals. Many countries without nuclear weapons argue that those countries have not met their commitments under the NPT to “pursue negotiations in good faith” and disarm and some countries have pursued nuclear weapons despite the NPT.

Demilitarisation

The concept of demilitarisation denotes the reduction or total abolishment of armament and military presence in a specific geographic area. It implies the dismantlement of arms and ammunition order to put them beyond military use.

This process is often characterised by increasing civilian control over the armed forces, reduced reliance on the use of force in conflict management, a decline in the size of the armed forces, and a reduction in military expenditure. Often times, demilitarisation coincides with the reallocation of military resources to civilian purposes. This civilian reintegration dimension is also reflected in UN post-conflict disarmament work, which supports the disarming and demobilising of former combatants and their reintegration into civil society, a process commonly referred to as DDR (Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration).

Demilitarisation may result from a self-selected policy of a State to not have military forces; it may also relate to a specific geographical area between conflicting parties where armed forces and military equipment and resources are not allowed or to a specific area beyond the limits of national jurisdiction where States agree to refrain from military presence or activity, including the stockpiling of weapons.

Small Arms and Light Weapons

Small arms and light weapons (SALW) are defined in the 1997 UN Panel of Governmental Experts as follows-

Small Arms are those weapons designed for personal use, and light weapons are those designed for use by several persons serving as a crew. The category of small arms includes revolvers and self-loading pistols, rifles and carbines, sub-machine guns, assault rifles and light machine-guns.

Light Weapons include heavy machine-guns, hand-held under-barrel and mounted grenade launchers, portable anti-aircraft guns, portable anti-tank guns, recoilless rifles, portable launchers of anti-tank missile and rocket systems, portable launchers of anti-aircraft missile mortars of calibres of less than 100 mm. Ammunition and explosives form an integral part of small arms and light weapons used in conflicts, and include cartridges (rounds) for small arms, shells and missiles for light weapons, anti-personnel and anti-tank hand grenades, landmines, explosives, and mobile containers with missiles or shells for single-action anti-aircraft and anti-tank systems that expels or launches, is designed to expel or launch, or may be readily converted to expel or launch a shot, bullet or projectile by the action of an explosive.

Illicit Arms

The United Nations Firearms Protocol considers firearms illicit when manufactured without a licence or authorisation from a competent authority of the State, or in the case of manufacture or assembly without a marking compliant with the Protocol requirements. Firearms manufactured from illicitly trafficked parts and components are also illicit and subject to criminal sanction.

Untraceable Weapons

Untraceable Weapons are broadly classified as weapons whose manufacture lacks human oversight and bypasses traditional marking and manufacturing registries, causing conventional tracing methods to fail, as the legally binding UN Firearms Protocol and the political UN International Tracing Instrument (ITI), rely heavily on physical serial numbers and markings to track weapon diversion. Such instruments include “Ghost Guns” or Privately Made Firearms (PMFs). The term “ghost gun” is used by media, police, and sometimes the firearms industry to describe homemade weapons devoid of serial numbers or other identifying markings that enable them to be tracked to their maker, seller, or original owner.

Diversion

Diversion occurs when firearms, their parts or ammunition cease to be produced, possessed or used consistently with the legal authorisation issued from a competent national authority and pursuant to existing domestic law. Diversion is a prerequisite for trafficking: if a gun is to be illicitly trafficked, then it must also have left the domain in which it exists according to relevant laws and regulations. The concept of diversion has been developed within the United Nations since the inception of the organization, and since 1991 it has been used to describe the transfer of conventional arms to unauthorized destinations. Diversion can occur throughout the life cycle of a firearm, from production to export and storage. Diversion may take place in a variety of contexts, including straw purchases by civilians, corrupt sale or theft from government stocks and with the use of forged documentation in international trade.

Stockpile

A stockpile can be termed as large systematic storage of arms and weapons, humanitarian aid or economic goods, reserved for future emergency use. The United Nations broadly classified stockpiles into two types, based on their function. One refers to humanitarian aid or emergency reserves. Other refers to weapons and arms, which is heavily monitored by the United Nations, for purposes of elimination and disarmament. Through several protocols, such as the United Nations Mine Action Service and Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons, stockpiles are regulated and managed. These protocols are engineered

towards limiting and controlling the stockpile, as one of the main objectives of the United Nations is disarmament.

Arms Trafficking

It is the import, export, acquisition, sale, delivery, movement or transfer of firearms, their parts and components and ammunition from or across the territory of one State Party to that of another State Party if any one of the States Parties concerned does not authorise it or if the firearms are not marked under the UN Firearms Protocol.

Marking

Marking refers to the protocol of engraving, stamping, or printing unique identification symbol on a firearm to last its lifetime, showcasing its country of origin, manufacturer and year of import, allowing the firearm to be traced to its origin. As a key provision to the United Nations Firearms Protocol, marking allows regulation of trade of firearms, and preventing its diversion into illegal markets. It also supports record keeping of the number of firearms produced and helps in tracking the origin of firearm and the illegal trade distribution from there on forth. Article 8 of Firearms Protocol requires the firearm to be marked at three instances- at the time of manufacture, at the time of import and at the time of transfer from government stocks to civilian use, with the exceptions for temporary imports, and each type of marking differing at every stage. It is illegal and a criminal offense to remove any of the markings on a firearm, under Article 5 of the same Protocol.

Tracing

Tracing is the systematic tracking of firearms, where possible, their parts and components and ammunition from manufacturer to purchaser for the purpose of assisting the competent authorities of States Parties in detecting, investigating and analysing illicit manufacturing and illicit trafficking. As a precursor to disarmament, the United Nations has adopted The International Tracing Instrument (ITI), a politically binding framework helping the parties counter illicit trade of Small Arms and Light Weapons. Tracing is carried out through 3 main pillars- marking, record-keeping and cooperation between States.

Non-Proliferation

Non-Proliferation generally means the controlling of the spread and/or amount of something, especially nuclear or chemical weapons. Non-proliferation refers to the efforts and measures aimed at preventing the spread of nuclear weapons and ensuring that nuclear technology is used solely for peaceful purposes. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is the centrepiece of global efforts to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons, to promote cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and to further the goal of nuclear disarmament and general and complete disarmament. It prevents non-nuclear States from buying, manufacturing or otherwise acquiring nuclear weapons, and prevents the nuclear States from transferring nuclear weapons, control over them, or technical assistance to any other country and also prevents the diversion of peaceful nuclear materials and energy technology toward the secret creation of weapons.

Nuclear Deterrence

Nuclear deterrence refers to a principle in international relations where the retaliatory potential and destructive force of nuclear weapons prevents nations from launching a nuclear attack. It is the concept that possessing nuclear weapons prevents potential adversaries from engaging in threatening activities. As posed, the constant, credible threat of use deters other nations from an attack. It has its foundations in criminal theory in which threat of punishment deters violations of the law.

This is generally a criticised policy, viewed as unstable and derogatory towards the aim of disarmament, by several States and the United Nations. They state that relying on the threat of mass destruction encourages ongoing arms races, increases the risk of accidental war, and blocks true global nuclear disarmament. The States Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons have asserted that deterrence destabilizes the nuclear non-proliferation regime and endangers every nation, including the nuclear armed ones.

Nuclear Weapon Free Zone

A nuclear-weapon-free zone (NWFZ) is a specified region in which countries commit themselves not to manufacture, acquire, test, or possess nuclear weapons. Five such zones exist today, with four of them spanning the entire Southern Hemisphere. The regions currently covered under NWFZ agreements include:

Latin America (the 1967 Treaty of Tlatelolco), the South Pacific (the 1985 Treaty of Rarotonga), Southeast Asia (the 1995 Treaty of Bangkok) Africa (the 1996 Treaty of Pelindaba) and Central Asia (the 2006 Treaty of Semipalatinsk). The international community has long considered the establishment of such zones an important disarmament measure and called for their establishment to be encouraged, with the ultimate objective of achieving a world free of nuclear weapons. Article VII of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons states, "Nothing in this Treaty affects the right of any group of States to respective territories."

Negative Security Assurance

Negative Security Assurance NSAs are the promise of nuclear weapon States (NWS) not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States (NNWS). Although the five NPT NWS have made various pledges regarding NSAs, each has been either non-binding, limited in scope, or qualified in some way. The NPT NNWS have consistently pushed for NSAs in the form of a free-standing treaty or a protocol to the NPT. The demand for such a conclude regional treaties in order to assure the total absence of nuclear weapons in their commitment has increased in recent years, particularly from the Non-Aligned Movement. These States seek assurances that are legally binding, unconditional, and apply to all NPT NNWS. The hesitation from the NWS stems from their concern that a binding, universal NSA treaty would constrain their military options for dealing with unforeseen events and weaken the security umbrellas they provide around the world.

Positive Security Assurance

A Positive Security Assurance (PSA) is a commitment by a nuclear-weapon state to provide or support assistance to a non-nuclear-weapon state that becomes the victim of, or is threatened by, nuclear aggression. PSAs are typically offered to encourage states to join and remain in the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons by reducing the perceived security cost of forgoing nuclear weapons. They are distinguished from negative security assurances, which are pledges not to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon state.

Nuclear Sharing

Nuclear sharing is a practice of a Nuclear Weapon State having a Non-Nuclear Weapon State involved in usage, production or storage of nuclear weapons. That includes, maintaining nuclear forces to provide nuclear protection for non-nuclear countries, permanently hosting another country's nuclear weapons or delivery systems, providing delivery systems to be capable of employing another country's nuclear weapons, providing conventional capabilities to support another country's nuclear strike mission or cooperating with another country on nuclear planning and targeting. United States has stationed nuclear weapons in NATO allies, under nuclear-sharing agreements. Russia has also reportedly stationed nuclear weapons in Belarus. This dangerous and opaque practice allows nuclear-armed states to make other countries complicit in the responsibilities, management and eventual use of nuclear weapons with other countries by stationing the weapons on their territory and cooperating on matters such as aircraft, infrastructure, planning and training.

International Atomic Energy Agency

The International Atomic Energy Agency is the world's central intergovernmental forum for scientific and technical cooperation in the nuclear field. It works for the safe, secure and peaceful uses of nuclear science and technology, contributing to international peace and security and the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. The IAEA was created in 1957 in response to the deep fears and expectations generated by the discoveries and diverse uses of nuclear technology. The Agency's genesis was U.S. President Eisenhower's "Atoms for Peace" address to the General Assembly of the United Nations on 8 December 1953.

Safeguards

The objective of IAEA Safeguards is to deter the spread of nuclear weapons by the early detection of the misuse of nuclear material or technology. This provides credible assurances that States are honouring their legal obligations that nuclear material is being used only for peaceful purposes. Safeguards are a set of technical measures applied by the IAEA on nuclear material and activities, through which the Agency seeks to independently verify that nuclear facilities are not misused and nuclear material not diverted from peaceful uses. States accept these measures through the conclusion of safeguards agreements. IAEA safeguards are an essential component of the international security system.

Historical Background of Global Disarmament Efforts

Post-WWII Origins of the Disarmament Architecture

The modern disarmament regime was born directly out of the ashes of the Second World War, a conflict that had demonstrated, with unprecedented and terrible clarity, the destructive potential of modern weaponry when placed in the service of unrestrained state aggression. The atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945 did not merely end a war; they inaugurated an entirely new category of existential threat, one that rendered the traditional calculus of military victory obsolete. It was against this backdrop that the founders of the United Nations wrote into the Charter itself, under Article 11, that the General Assembly "may consider the general principles of co-operation in the maintenance of international peace and security, including the principles governing disarmament and the regulation of armaments." Disarmament was thus not an afterthought bolted onto the UN's mandate; it was embedded in the Organization's constitutional architecture from the outset, reflecting the founding conviction that a durable peace could not be built while the means of total destruction remained unregulated and unaccountable.

This conviction was translated into concrete action with remarkable speed. At its very first session, before addressing questions of trade, development, or the myriad other concerns that would come to occupy the Organization, the General Assembly adopted Resolution 1(I) on 24 January 1946, establishing the UN Atomic Energy Commission. The Commission was charged with an ambitious set of tasks: promoting the exchange of scientific information for peaceful purposes, ensuring atomic energy was used solely for peaceful ends, eliminating atomic weapons and other weapons adaptable to mass destruction from national arsenals, and establishing effective safeguards through inspection to protect states from violations of any future agreement. That this resolution was the Organization's very first act of substantive business is telling; it signalled, in the clearest possible terms, that the post-war international order would define itself, at least in part, by its capacity to control the instruments of mass destruction.

Yet the early ambitions of the Atomic Energy Commission ran quickly into the hardening realities of great-power politics. The Baruch Plan, put forward by the United States in 1946, proposed international ownership and control of atomic materials and technology, but was rejected by the Soviet Union, which viewed the

proposal as an attempt to lock in American nuclear superiority while denying the USSR the ability to develop its own deterrent. The Soviet counterproposal, calling for the immediate prohibition of nuclear weapons before any inspection regime was established, was in turn rejected by the West. This impasse the inability to reconcile calls for disarmament with the deep mistrust generated by an emerging bipolar rivalry would come to define the entire subsequent history of the disarmament project. The Commission was effectively dissolved by 1952, and with it, the brief postwar window in which a genuinely internationalised, multilateral control of nuclear technology seemed possible closed. In its place emerged the far more constrained and incremental model of disarmament diplomacy that has persisted, in various forms, to the present day: a model built not on the wholesale abolition of weapons, but on treaty-based limitation, verification, and the gradual construction of normative constraints around their use and spread.



Evolution Through the Cold War: From Arms Race to the Non-Proliferation Treaty

The decades that followed were shaped by the central strategic reality of the Cold War: the nuclear arms race between the United States and the Soviet Union. Rather than the singular, internationally administered system envisioned by the Baruch

and Soviet plans, the world instead witnessed a rapid vertical proliferation of nuclear arsenals, as both superpowers raced to develop increasingly powerful and numerous weapons, alongside the means to deliver them across intercontinental distances. The United Kingdom tested its first nuclear device in 1952, France in 1960, and China in 1964, bringing the total number of nuclear-armed states to five by the mid-1960s. This horizontal spread of nuclear capability – the acquisition of nuclear weapons by additional states beyond the original two – generated growing international alarm that the world was moving toward a future in which dozens of states might possess nuclear arsenals, dramatically multiplying the risk of nuclear war, whether through deliberate use, miscalculation, or accident.

It was this fear of unchecked horizontal proliferation that catalysed the negotiation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), opened for signature in 1968 and entering into force in 1970. The NPT rested on a carefully negotiated bargain among three distinct groups of state interests. The five recognized nuclear weapon states – the United States, the Soviet Union (later Russia), the United Kingdom, France, and China – agreed, under Article VI, to pursue negotiations in good faith toward nuclear disarmament, while non-nuclear weapon states agreed, under Articles I and II, not to acquire nuclear weapons. In exchange, Article IV guaranteed all parties the right to develop nuclear technology for peaceful purposes, such as energy generation, under international safeguards administered by the International Atomic Energy Agency. This tripartite bargain – disarmament, non-proliferation, and peaceful use – became, and remains, the normative and legal cornerstone of the global nuclear order, eventually achieving near-universal membership, with only a small handful of states remaining outside the treaty.

The Cold War period also witnessed the parallel emergence of regional and bilateral arms control measures that would shape the broader architecture delegates engage with today. The Treaty of Tlatelolco, signed in 1967, established the world's first Nuclear Weapon Free Zone in a densely populated region, covering Latin America and the Caribbean, and would later serve as the template for subsequent zones in the South Pacific, Southeast Asia, and Africa. Bilaterally, the United States and Soviet Union pursued a succession of strategic arms limitation and reduction agreements, including SALT I and II and later START, which sought to place ceilings on the growth of nuclear arsenals even as broader disarmament remained elusive. Throughout this period, however, progress on conventional weapons and the still-nascent problem of small arms proliferation remained

comparatively neglected, overshadowed by the existential stakes of the nuclear standoff between the superpowers. Disarmament diplomacy, in other words, was overwhelmingly nuclear in focus, a reflection of where the international community perceived the gravest threat to lie.

The Post-Cold War Shift: Intra-State Conflict and the Rise of Illicit Arms Flows

The end of the Cold War in the early 1990s fundamentally reshaped the global security landscape, and with it, the priorities of the international disarmament agenda. The collapse of the bipolar order did not, as many had hoped, usher in an era of diminished conflict. Instead, it coincided with a marked shift in the character of armed conflict itself: away from the interstate, superpower-aligned wars that had dominated the twentieth century, and toward a proliferation of intra-state conflicts – civil wars, insurgencies, and communal violence – often fought not with the sophisticated strategic weapons that had preoccupied Cold War arms control, but with small arms and light weapons. Conflicts in the Balkans, the Great Lakes region of Africa, West Africa, and elsewhere throughout the 1990s demonstrated with brutal clarity that the weapons driving the era's deadliest violence were not intercontinental ballistic missiles, but assault rifles, machine guns, and other light weapons, often supplied through the vast surplus stockpiles left over from Cold War-era military assistance programs, and increasingly diverted into illicit, cross-border trafficking networks.

This recognition prompted a decisive reorientation of the international disarmament agenda toward conventional weapons, and specifically toward the problem of small arms and light weapons as what came to be termed the "real weapons of mass destruction" – a designation reflecting their outsized contribution to global conflict deaths, despite their comparatively low individual lethality. The United Nations responded institutionally: a 1997 Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms laid the groundwork for sustained multilateral attention to the issue, culminating in the adoption of the UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects in 2001. This was followed by the International Tracing Instrument in 2005, aimed at improving the marking and record-keeping practices necessary to trace weapons back to their point of diversion, and eventually the Arms Trade Treaty in 2013, which sought for the first time to establish binding international standards

governing the conventional arms trade. This period also saw the emergence of a threat largely absent from earlier disarmament discourse: the acquisition and use of weapons, including in some cases weapons of mass destruction-related materials, by non-state actors terrorist organizations, organized criminal networks, and armed groups operating outside the control of any recognized government. The September 11, 2001 attacks and the subsequent global concern over terrorist access to unconventional weapons prompted the UN Security Council to adopt Resolution 1540 in 2004, obligating all states to adopt and enforce effective measures against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction to non-state actors.

Simultaneously, the illicit trafficking of small arms became increasingly intertwined with transnational organized crime, narcotics trafficking, and, in various regions, violent extremism, further complicating the task of tracing weapons flows and holding accountable those responsible for their diversion. This evolution – from state-centric nuclear arms racing to a far more diffuse landscape of intra-state conflict, illicit trafficking, and non-state armed actors – is the direct historical lineage from which the present agenda emerges, and it is this trajectory that continues to inform the twin emphasis, in contemporary disarmament diplomacy, on both strengthening the traceability of conventional weapons and extending the reach of nuclear restraint through mechanisms such as Nuclear Weapon Free Zones.



Understanding Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW)

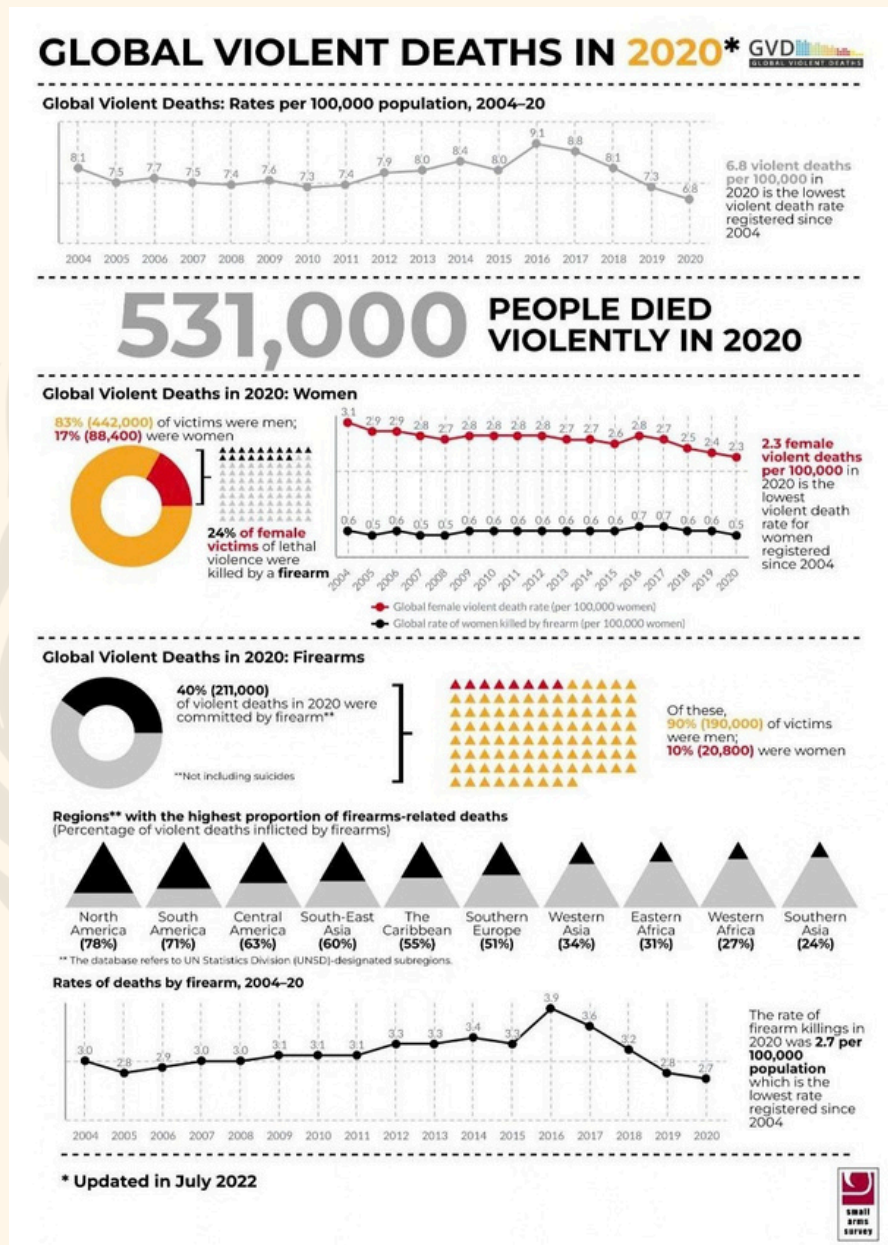
Before talking about how to stop the spread of small arms and light weapons (SALW), or how to trace them, we need to know exactly what we're dealing with. People often toss around “small arms” and “light weapons” as if they’re the same thing. Yet, in the world of arms control and disarmament, these terms mean specific, different things. That distinction isn’t technical nit-picking it affects international law, treaties, reporting, and control measures on a core level. Small arms are weapons meant for individual use.

The main thing tying these together? One person can carry and fire them, and often hide them easily. That’s a big part of why small arms show up everywhere from national soldiers to rebel groups, gangs, and private citizens. Light weapons are a step up. They’re built to be used by a small team a crew of two or three but sometimes even one person can manage, depending on the weapon and the situation. This group includes heavy machine guns, all kinds of grenade launchers, small mortars (less than 100 mm), portable anti-aircraft and anti-tank systems, and the infamous MANPADS (shoulder-fired missiles you can use to shoot down planes).

Light weapons are more destructive than small arms. They threaten aircraft and armoured vehicles while being more mobile and easier to move across borders or hide than tanks or jets which are covered by other, stricter treaties and reporting standards. We owe these definitions to the UN’s 1997 Panel of Governmental Experts. Since then, they’ve shaped the whole international toolkit such as the UN Programme of Action, the International Tracing Instrument, or the Arms Trade Treaty. SALW sits uneasily in the middle. SALW are not harmless civilian firearms (which most countries regulate domestically), and they’re not the heavy, conventional military gear tracked by high-level international registries. That’s why SALW keep slipping through cracks, they’re easy to move, dangerous enough to change the balance in a war, and often hard to trace.

According to the Small Arms Survey 2017, there were more than one billion firearms floating around the globe. Most about 857 million were in civilian hands. Military stockpiles account for roughly 133 million, while police control about 23 million. All these guns fuel a huge market. The legal, documented trade in small

arms, light weapons, and their parts and ammo is worth at least \$8.5 billion a year. That's twice what it was in 2006. The boom comes from government stockpiling (especially during big conflicts like Iraq and Afghanistan) but also the steady rise in civilian purchases, especially in places like the U.S.



On top of that legal market is the shadow economy the illegal side, impossible to measure accurately because by nature it's hidden. UN estimates put the annual illicit small arms trade at "about" \$1 billion, but most experts agree the real number's higher; due to black market circulation.

Behind these numbers is a much grimmer reality. In total, 531,000 people died violently in 2020, out of which 40 per cent (211,000) were killed by firearm. Year in, year out, small arms are behind almost half a million deaths. Former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan famously commented that these statistics rival the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki every year, except it's quieter, steadier, and spread out across every part of the world, hitting especially hard in places like Latin America, the Caribbean, and parts of Africa. These deaths aren't just products of war— they occur in homes, streets, and police operations, through murders, suicides, and accidents. SALW deaths don't just happen in battlefields they are deeply woven into the fabric of everyday violence and insecurity. That's why some call SALW the "real weapons of mass destruction." The phrase isn't just a rhetorical flourish it's an indictment. Nuclear arsenals capture headlines, but SALW do most of the killing.

Three reasons make them especially hard to bring under control.

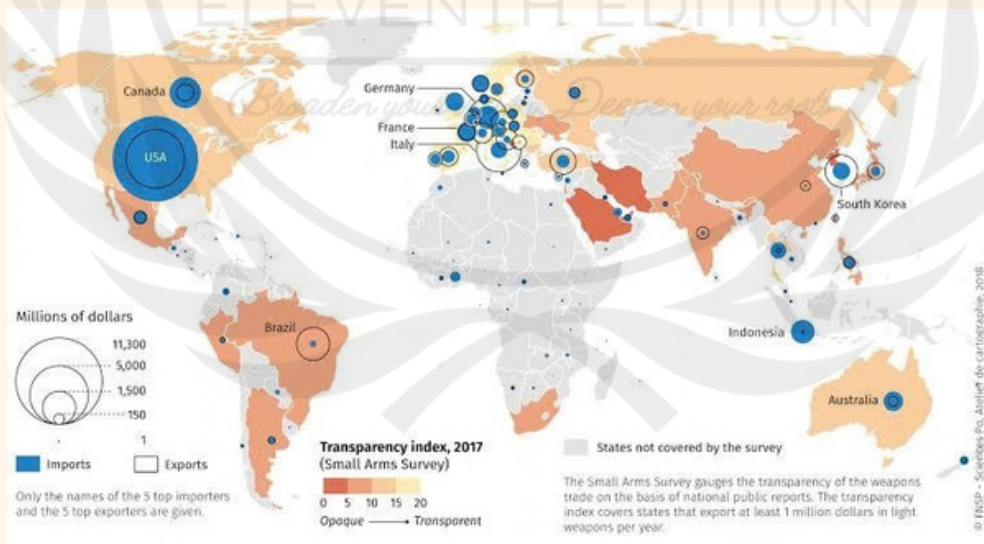
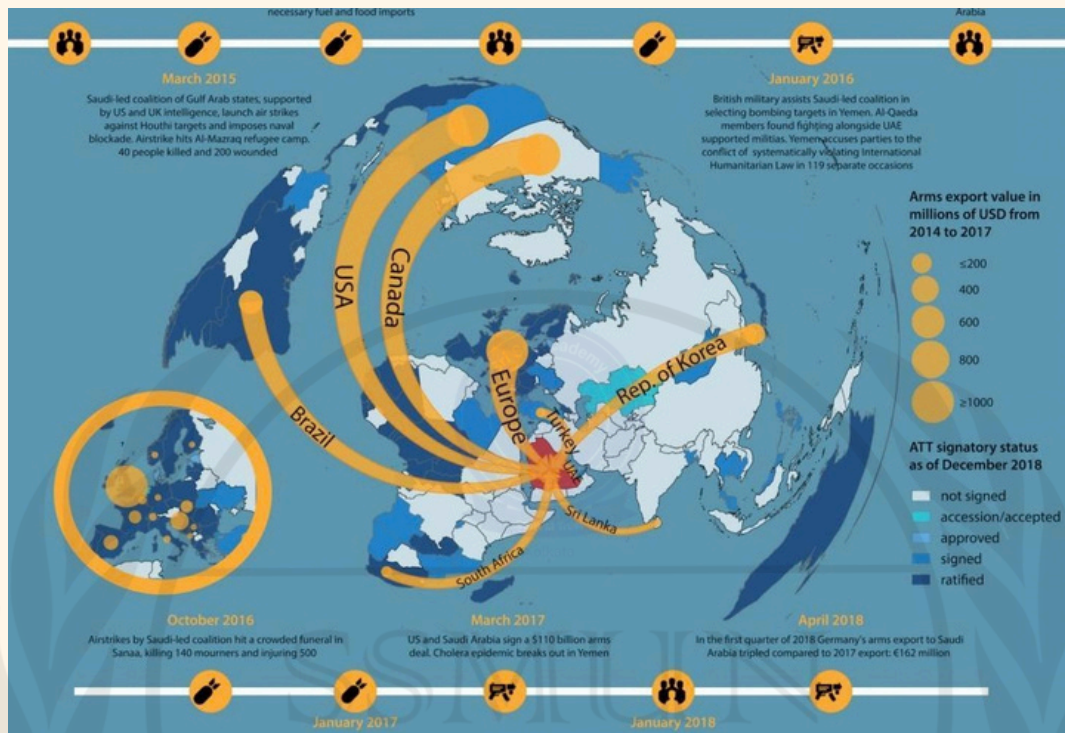
First, they're cheap. States don't need lavish budgets or advanced factories to churn out small arms. Insurgents, criminals, even broke individuals can afford to buy them; sometimes, the price is no more than a cow or a bag of grain.

Second, they last. Small arms can keep working for decades if maintained. Weapons built for Cold War proxy battles or left over from the collapse of the Soviet Union still circulate and are in use. Unlike sophisticated weapons tanks, planes which need steady maintenance and complex parts, a basic rifle or grenade launcher can just keep changing hands, conflict after conflict, year after year, unless someone collects and destroys it.

Third, they're portable and easy to hide. One person can carry, move, and hide them without specialized gear or a logistics chain. Smugglers can break shipments into pieces, mix them with legitimate goods, or carry them across borders almost unnoticed, a far cry from hiding a tank or a helicopter. These weapons also don't need much in the way of training to use; in fact, some of the most tragic stories involve children forced into combat with assault rifles.

Together, these three traits low price, long life, easy movement make small arms and light weapons a persistent, diffuse danger. Nuclear weapons destroy on a massive, sudden scale, but they're hedged in by international law, deterrence, and sheer technical barriers. Small arms, in contrast, bring death and suffering incrementally, day after day, in ways that rarely hit international headlines but add up to enormous loss. Their danger is quiet, cumulative, and global. That's why tracking and controlling SALW isn't just a bureaucratic process it's a live security

and humanitarian issue that touches millions each year. And that's why the work of clear definitions, better traceability, and tighter controls matters so much.



The Core Problem: Untraceable Weapons

Why So Many Guns Disappear

The heart of the global small arms crisis isn't just that so many guns exist— it's that once these weapons are out in the world, nobody really knows where they end up. Traceability means being able to pick up a gun and track its journey: from the day it was made, right through to the exact moment it slipped into the wrong hands. To make this possible, the International Tracing Instrument (ITI), adopted back in 2005, outlined three main requirements: marking, record-keeping, and international cooperation.

Firstly, marking. If a manufacturer doesn't stamp a gun with a unique identifier—the company's name, country, serial number— right as it comes off the line (and ideally again at import), the gun is then a “ghost gun”. Thousands of identical pieces could have rolled out of the same factory, and there would be no identification mechanism without marking. Next, record-keeping. It's not enough to simply mark a weapon; there must be solid records showing who received it and when. The ITI expects governments to keep manufacturing records for at least twenty years, transaction records for at least ten. However, this falls apart in countries with weak administration or those ravaged by conflict. Governments, especially in these situations, often rely on incomplete, sometimes handwritten, and sometimes entirely missing, documentation.

Somalia's a textbook example. Despite a 2013 exemption (which allowed weapons transfers as long as the weapons remained traceable), only about 35% of imported arms were actually marked. Even then, the markings and paperwork didn't link specific guns to individual soldiers.

So, the whole “traceability” requirement evaporated.

The third pillar, cooperation: if one country inquires where a recovered weapon came from, the supplier or importer must submit the corresponding documents. Except, often, they don't. Political concerns can shut down communication and often, there is administrative overload. Too many requests, not enough capacity.

But the biggest leak isn't underground factories— it's government armories. Theft, sloppy security, corrupt officials selling weapons, or battlefield losses: all of these

put guns into circulation. Fieldwork by Conflict Armament Research shows recovered weapons from armed groups can be traced directly back to national stockpiles. In the Sahel, for example, 17% of weapons seized from Boko Haram fighters in Niger came from Chad, Niger, or Nigeria's own military stockpiles. Extremist groups in Mali and Burkina Faso have similar arsenals—sourced from their own regional militaries. Weapons stolen on the battlefield are a vast issue by themselves, however when those guns go on to be trafficked and used by other actors, the problem multiplies.

Craft Guns and the "Ghost Gun" Boom

A separate and rapidly growing problem is weapons made entirely outside licensed systems. "Craft production" covers all equipment assembled by hand, often in informal workshops with basic tools with which materials are available. These weapons have always been in demand in conflict zones and places with little formal industry. There's no serial number, no manufacturing record, no paperwork. Today, this old practice has a new twist: digital manufacturing. These firearms anyone can build from kits—unserialised parts, unfinished receivers, sometimes entirely 3D-printed.

Are these guns truly untraceable? The short answer is— not quite, but close enough to matter. Forensics show that 3D printers can leave unique marks and chemical traces. These indicators sometimes point back to the specific printer or batch of filament. However police and customs agencies rarely use these tools, and they only work after the fact, not as a prevention measure. So, the core of the problem is that traceability systems built on ITI standards assume there's a licensed facility, a point of production you can identify and regulate. With craft or 3D-printed guns, that point can be a bedroom, a garage, or anywhere. The traceability system just catch up.

Weak End-User Controls and the Brokering Gap

Even legitimate, licensed arms deals have a huge weak spot: the end-user certificate (EUC). This document is supposed to guarantee that the purchasing government or agency is the weapon's final user—and shall not be passing it on. In theory, this should stop weapons from ending up somewhere, there location unverified. However in reality, not so much. EUCs can be forged, or more commonly, bought blank from corrupt officials and filled out later—naming whatever supplier, buyer, or destination the trafficker wants. Researchers found you can pick up a legitimate, stamped blank EUC for as little as \$300 and once you've got it, you can route

weapons anywhere if no one checks the paperwork. Which happens more often than not. Arms brokering makes things messier. Brokers arrange deals, shipping, and delivery, usually without ever touching the weapons themselves. They use shell companies, route shipments through countries with weak oversight, mislabel cargo, and fake paperwork. They know the system's weaknesses and exploit them thoroughly.

For example, in Brazil, Taurus executives were accused of hiding the true broker and destination in a deal that diverted 8,000 small arms to Yemen. The broker had already been sanctioned by the UN for earlier arms violations but kept operating. In the UK, two brokers tried to send everything from assault rifles to tanks from old Soviet stocks into places under embargo, faking documents and using convoluted routes to stay under the radar. In those cases, prosecutors found the defendants openly discussing how to beat the system. It's not that there aren't rules; it's that the rules are easily dodged if you know where to push.

Case Studies:

These interlocking failures aren't just theoretical they show up in real-world weapons flows that fuel violence across the globe.

Libya and the Sahel. After Gaddafi's fall in 2011, Libya's huge stockpile— the Kalashnikovs, ammo, explosives, and more— was left virtually unguarded. The weapons soon spread not just within Libya, but into Algeria, Egypt, Niger, and Mali. They fed the Tuareg rebellion and Islamist insurgencies in Mali. Even today, over a decade later, weapons from the Gaddafi era still show up in Sahel conflicts. As the Libyan outflow slowed, the arms crisis shifted, with guns now coming from other poorly secured countries like Central African Republic and Sudan, and even from the Middle East, further straining already unstable regions.

The Horn of Africa and the Gulf of Aden. Weapons supplied by Iran to Yemen's Houthi forces don't just stay in Yemen. They're trafficked across the Gulf of Aden into Somalia, arming groups like al-Shabaab and ISIS affiliates. These networks can stretch into Kenya, Ethiopia, Mozambique— the weapons, once in circulation, keep moving. Tracing these shipments requires investigators to match serial numbers and analyse data from smuggling vessels that slip through normal tracking systems. This corridor proves how quickly weapons can spill over borders, escalating conflict far beyond the initial point of supply.

Latin America and the “Iron River.” The flow here runs from the U.S. to Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean. ATF data shows most firearms recovered at crime scenes in Mexico— often up to 70%— trace directly back to legal purchases in the U.S. The guns usually cross legally, hidden in cars or cargo, and end up with cartel or gang hands. Unlike the Libyan or Sahel cases, where guns started as military stock, here a well-regulated commercial market in the United States unintentionally seeds illicit proliferation through volume, straw-purchasing, and repeated small-scale smuggling. This poses a policy challenge— one needing regional teamwork rather than unilateral or conflict-specific fixes.

FIREARM DESCRIPTION			
MANUFACTURER	TYPE	MODEL	CALIBER
Glock	Pistol	19	9mm
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN		IMPORTER	
Austria		Glock, Inc. Smyrna, Georgia	
OTHER MARKINGS OR INFORMATION			
Ex., proof marks, obliterated serial number, etc.			

The Bottom Line Untraceability, in all its forms— weak marking and records, home-brew and 3D weapons, holes in certification and brokering, and the well- trodden trafficking routes, creates a seamless system of failure. Delegates shouldn’t view these as stand-alone problems. A weapon that slips through marking, leaks from a stockpile, rides a corridor enabled by fake paperwork, and lands in the hands of an armed group doesn’t represent four separate mistakes. It’s a single chain of accountability, broken at every link.

Existing Legal & Policy Framework

The international response to small arms, illicit arms trafficking, and nuclear weapons isn't just a patchwork of laws. Over the years, governments built an elaborate web of treaties, policies, and commitments some are enforceable, others more aspirational that shape national action and foster cross-border teamwork. For this agenda, it makes sense to split this framework into two main branches: managing and tracing small arms and light weapons (SALW), and a separate track for nuclear non-proliferation, disarmament, and nuclear-weapon-free zones. While SALW and nuclear issues need different tools, they both circle around a few shared pillars: responsible state control, open collaboration, transparent procedures, verification systems, prevention of diversion, and solid national implementation.

I. Small Arms and Light Weapons: Laws and Policy

UN Programme of Action on SALW, 2001

The UN's Programme of Action (PoA), launched in 2001, sits at the heart of international efforts against illicit SALW. It's not a treaty as States aren't legally bound, but it drives action through practical steps: tighten national laws, keep an eye on manufacturing and transfers, block unauthorised access, secure stockpiles, destroy surplus weapons, ramp up border checks, keep reliable records, and work together to trace illegal arms.

Crucially, PoA recognises that fighting the problem means watching over every stage— manufacture, transfer, storage, use, even disposal. Waiting until weapons surface on the black market isn't enough. The PoA's focus on tracing ties directly into this agenda. Tracing only works **if** states know where each weapon came from and where it's been.

International Tracing Instrument, 2005

Adopted in 2005, the International Tracing Instrument (ITI) gives governments a way to identify and trace illicit weapons, fast and reliably. It spells out the steps: mark weapons clearly, keep good records, and trace them when needed. Without markings, records, or cooperation, tracing runs into dead ends, you can't tell who made a weapon, who bought it, or how it ended up in criminal hands.

UN Firearms Protocol, 2001

The Firearms Protocol takes things further, binding states legally and plugging the gaps left by PoA and ITI. In force since 2005, with 127 countries on-board (as of

September 2026), it targets illicit manufacturing and trafficking, not just of guns but their parts and ammunition. States must mark arms, keep records, license dealers, criminalize illegal acts, and work together internationally. Tracing becomes part of law enforcement. Since organized crime often traffics arms across borders, this protocol plants firearms control firmly within the broader criminal justice system. However, the Protocol covers only “firearms” as it defines them, so its scope doesn’t line up perfectly with the UN’s wider category of SALW.

Arms Trade Treaty, 2013

The Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), which took effect in 2014, is the leading global treaty for regulating conventional arms trade, including SALW. Its standout requirement: states must assess risks before exporting arms, with restrictions built into Articles 6 and 7. Here’s how it fits. - ATT sets standards for transfers.

- ITI makes tracing possible.
- Firearms Protocol criminalizes illicit acts.
- PoA offers a broader political push.

Together, these build a layered defence, blocking legal transfers from becoming illicit supply. The ATT now has 118 parties and 25 signatories yet to ratify.

National and Regional SALW Frameworks

International rules only matter if governments translate them into law and practice on the ground. Countries develop their own licensing systems, controls on manufacturing/imports, mark weapons, track inventories, manage borders, certify end users, criminalise illegal trade, destroy surplus arms, and investigate trafficking. Regional bodies add another layer. ECOWAS, the Nairobi Protocol, the Kinshasa Convention, and the EU have built their own frameworks because weapons slip through weak borders— meaning coordination between neighbours is key. To stop trafficking, regions need to harmonise laws, share intel, shore up borders, conduct joint investigations, and trace arms across jurisdictions.

II. Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament

The nuclear side moves within a distinct, yet interlinked, set of treaties and institutions.

Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), 1968

The NPT forms the backbone of the global effort against nuclear weapons. Its three guiding aims:

- Stop the spread of nuclear arms.
- Push for disarmament.
- Encourage peaceful nuclear uses.

Article VI commits states to work in good faith toward ending the nuclear arms race.

Article VII stands out for this agenda— it explicitly allows states to create nuclear-weapon-free zones, giving legal shelter to regional bans. The NPT anchors these zones within the larger non-proliferation web.

Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaties

Regional nuclear bans—Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones generally prohibit nuclear weapons from the territory covered. Five major treaties do this:

- Treaty of Tlatelolco (Latin America & Caribbean, 1967)
- Treaty of Rarotonga (South Pacific, 1985)
- Bangkok Treaty (Southeast Asia, 1995)
- Pelindaba Treaty (Africa, 1996)
- Central Asian NWFZ Treaty (2006)

Each combines bans, safeguards, verification, material control, and regional cooperation. They directly support the agenda's second pillar.

Negative Security Assurances

Many nuclear-free zones count on negative security assurances: promises from nuclear-armed states not to threaten or use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear members, as laid out in relevant protocols. The deal is clear— non-nuclear states commit not to pursue nuclear weapons, nuclear states respect the zone and offer security assurances, creating a balanced system.

Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT)

The CTBT seeks a total halt to nuclear explosions, military and otherwise. Although not yet in force, it's shaped an enduring global norm and set up an international verification system. For nuclear zones, banning tests builds trust and strengthens non-proliferation, with CTBT's monitoring complementing regional efforts.

Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), 2017

Entering into force in 2021, the TPNW is the first treaty to ban nuclear weapons outright covering development, possession, use, threats, and handling fallout. It doesn't replace the current system, but plugs into it, working alongside NPT, CTBT, and NWFZs. The TPNW and nuclear-free zones share a common theme: countries can voluntarily lock in bans on nuclear arms, advancing disarmament one region at a time.

IAEA Safeguards and Verification

No treaty works without checks. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) verifies compliance with safeguard agreements and reports if any concern arises to UNSC. Its safeguards cover:

- Nuclear material accounting
- Inspections
- Facility monitoring
- Building trust

Most nuclear-free treaties require IAEA oversight, making these zones more than paper pledges they rest on real, enforceable mechanisms.

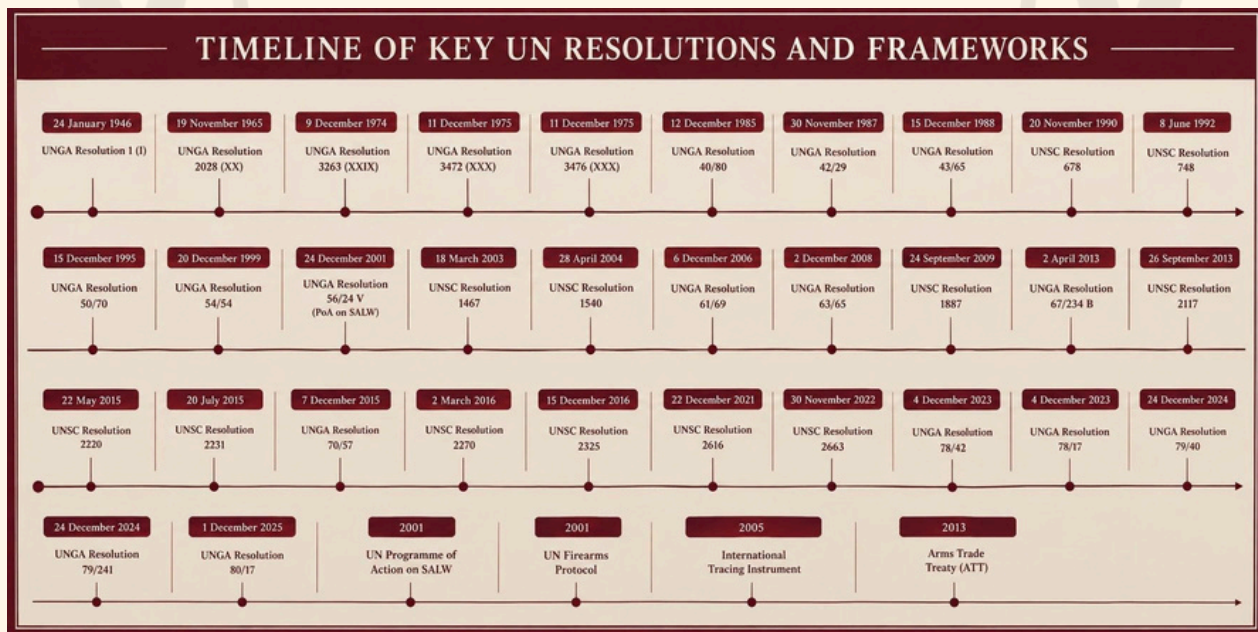
In short, the framework isn't just a set of documents. It's a living system global, regional, and national that relies on law, policy, cooperation, verification, and political will to tackle the dangers of small arms and nuclear weapons.

Relevant United Nations Resolutions

United Nations has passed several resolutions, through both General Assembly and Security Council, regarding Small Arms and Light Weapons, as well as Nuclear Weapons. Below, the relevant ones are listed.

- **United Nations General Assembly Resolution 1 (I)**
- **United Nations General Assembly Resolution 2028 (XX)**
- **United Nations General Assembly Resolution 3263 (XXIX)**
- **United Nations General Assembly Resolution 3472 (XXX)**
- **United Nations General Assembly Resolution 3476 (XXX)**
- **United Nations General Assembly Resolution 40/81 United Nations**
- **Nations General Assembly Resolution 42/29 United Nations**
- **General Assembly Resolution 43/65 United Nations**
- **Security Council Resolution 678**
- **United Nations Security Council Resolution 748**

- **United Nations General Assembly Resolution 50/70**
- **United Nations General Assembly Resolution 56/24V**
- **United Nations Security Council Resolution 1467**
- **United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540**
- **United Nations Security Council Resolution 1887**
- **United Nations General Assembly Resolution 67/234B**
- **United Nations Security Council Resolution 2117**
- **United Nations Security Council Resolution 2220**
- **United Nations Security Council Resolution 2231**
- **United Nations Security Council Resolution 2270**
- **United Nations General Assembly Resolution 77/38**
- **United Nations Security Council Resolution 2663**
- **United Nations General Assembly Resolution 78/17**
- **United Nations General Assembly Resolution 79/40**
- **United Nations General Assembly Resolution 80/17**



Nuclear Weapon Free Zones (NWFZs)

Introduction

Nuclear Weapon-Free Zones are among the most impactful strategies for promoting regional non-proliferation and disarmament. Imagine a group of countries banding together, signing a treaty, and promising to keep their region clear of nuclear weapons. The specifics change from one treaty to another some ban making, testing, or deploying nuclear weapons; others focus on possession or stationing.

The basic concept feels almost intuitive: when everyone in a region agrees to abandon nuclear weapons, the threat of a local arms race fades. Instead of each country independently deciding if it needs nuclear weapons to feel safe, they create a shared legal promise to exclude them altogether. NWFZs sit right at the crossroads of disarmament, non-proliferation, regional security, and trust-building. They aren't a simple copy of the global regime; they add extra layers of obligation and custom-fit mechanisms for each region's needs.

The UN portrays NWFZs as region-specific boosts for global norms supporting non-proliferation and disarmament. Today, five established regional NWFZ treaties anchor this approach: Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Bangkok, Pelindaba, and the Central Asian NWFZ.

Legal Basis: Article VII of the NPT

Article VII of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) gives formal recognition to NWFZs.

It says:

“Nothing in this Treaty affects the right of any group of States to conclude regional treaties in order to assure the total absence of nuclear weapons in their respective territories.”

This matters—it officially affirms that countries can push their nuclear obligations further than what the NPT demands.

The NPT provides the global skeleton. NWFZs flesh out the details regionally:

- NPT- sets the global framework
- NWFZs- make those obligations under the framework stricter and more specific for certain regions.

The UN General Assembly sets criteria for NWFZs to be recognized internationally. Usually, a zone needs a treaty freely agreed upon by the concerned

States, a clear definition of its boundaries, strict bans on nuclear weapons, and systems for verification and compliance.

So, an NWFZ is more than talk; it's formal:

- Specific territory
- Binding legal duties
- Nuclear restrictions
- Verification and compliance tools
- Relationships with States outside the zone

Existing Regional Nuclear Weapon-Free Zones

There are five established regional NWFZs covering inhabited territories. These are:

Region	Treaty	Adopted / Opened	Entry into Force
Latin America and the Caribbean	Treaty of Tlatelolco	1967	1968
South Pacific	Treaty of Rarotonga	1985	1986
Southeast Asia	Treaty of Bangkok	1995	1997
Africa	Treaty of Pelindaba	1996	2009
Central Asia	Treaty of Semipalatinsk	2006	2009

These treaties differ in certain details because each region has different geographical, political and security circumstances. Nevertheless, they share the central objective of preventing nuclear weapons from becoming established within their respective regions.

Treaty of Tlatelolco – Latin America and the Caribbean

Opened in 1967, the Treaty of Tlatelolco was the first to create a nuclear-free zone in a populated area. During the Cold War, after the Cuban Missile Crisis showed

just how close nuclear conflict could hit home, Latin American and Caribbean countries decided to act.

Their treaty bans nuclear weapons and establishes a compliance system, even linking safeguards for peaceful nuclear energy. Tlatelolco showed the world that regional countries could commit to serious nuclear limits even amid global tension. That precedent shaped later NWFZs.

Treaty of Rarotonga – South Pacific

Signed in 1985, the Treaty of Rarotonga declared the South Pacific off-limits for nuclear devices– making, buying, possessing, or testing them all prohibited. The region had suffered through years of nuclear testing and contamination. These environmental and health worries became central to the treaty, highlighting how NWFZs can tackle not just deterrence, but broader nuclear-related risks.

Treaty of Bangkok– Southeast Asia

The 1995 Bangkok Treaty set up Southeast Asia's NWFZ. It bans development, production, ownership, stationing, and control of nuclear weapons. A unique aspect here is the region's geography. The treaty covers land and maritime areas– territorial seas to include the continental shelves and the exclusive economic zones (EEZ) of the contracting parties. Southeast Asian States also pushed for commitments from nuclear-weapon States, reflecting how outsiders' behaviour can influence the success of the zone.

Treaty of Pelindaba – Africa

Adopted in 1996, the Pelindaba Treaty launched Africa's NWFZ but only entered into force in 2009. Africa has a nuclear history– mining uranium, testing, and legacy contamination. Pelindaba thus mixes nuclear bans with protections for the environment and public health.

Central Asian Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone– Treaty of Semipalatinsk

The Treaty of Semipalatinsk, signed in 2006, covers Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. Kazakhstan inherited Soviet nuclear infrastructure and testing sites like Semipalatinsk after the USSR collapsed. This treaty is both a non-proliferation move and a statement against repeating the region's nuclear past. NWFZs born from local experiences can reinforce commitments and shape new norms.

Antarctica, Outer Space, and Other Nuclear-Free Regimes

Beyond the five main NWFZs, international law has separate treaties for nuclear restrictions in special zones:

Antarctica - The Antarctic Treaty (1961) insists the continent is for peaceful purposes— no military activity, no nuclear explosions, no radioactive waste disposal.

Outer Space- The 1967 Outer Space Treaty forbids putting nuclear weapons in orbit or stationing them in space. With the growing military interest in space, these rules are crucial.

Seabed - The Seabed Arms Control Treaty (1971) bars nuclear or other weapons of mass destruction from the ocean floor beyond a certain distance from shore.

These treaties make clear: nuclear restraint isn't only about national borders. The law extends to global commons.

How Do NWFZs Work

Details differ among treaties, but most NWFZs use a few basic tools:

Nuclear Weapons Ban - Each zone prohibits nuclear weapons for States within it— making, buying, owning, testing, stationing, and even aiding others constitute as banned activities. The core idea is if everyone is bound by the same obligations, no State has to fear secret nuclear build-ups nearby.

Verification and Safeguards - NWFZs usually enlist the IAEA's safeguards to assure peaceful nuclear activities aren't secretly diverted to weapons. Medical research, energy, agriculture those uses remain legal, so the verification focus is tight. The IAEA points out that NWFZ treaties tailor verification to local needs, but all hinge on ensuring nuclear activities stay peaceful. The UN repeatedly calls for these assurances to be formalized.

NWFZs as Confidence-Building Measures

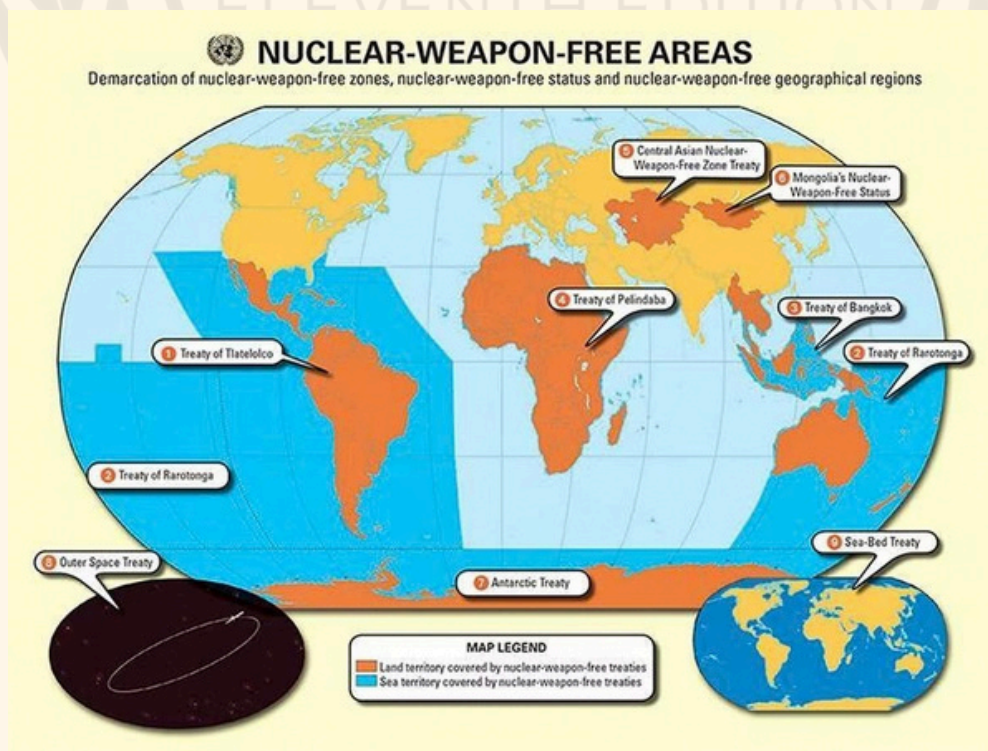
One major advantage of NWFZs is that they help build trust. Picture a region burdened by suspicion. If one State goes nuclear, others may rush to follow it into escalation. The NWFZ snaps this chain. Instead, nations make a joint commitment to stay nuclear-free. The new legal structure lowers uncertainty about each State's probability of using nuclear weapons. Of course, it doesn't erase all disputes or risks, but it adds a useful tool for managing nuclear tensions.

Preventing a Regional Nuclear Arms Race

NWFZs rely on removing nuclear weapons as a viable instrument from a state's armoury. Instead of a threat, which leads to nuclear build up which further leads to counter acquisition and arm race, the NWFZs creates an agreement followed by a legal ban and then a verification which leads to trust building among the member states which results in less nuclear competition. Conventional geopolitical tensions may persist, but nuclear weapons become prohibited by law. Which is why NWFZs are credited with supporting stability and the global non-proliferation push. The UN repeatedly states that NWFZs bolster peace, strengthen non-proliferation, and cut back opportunities for arms races.

NWFZs and the NPT Working Together

The NPT provides the global non-proliferation framework, while Article VII explicitly authorises states to establish Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones (NWFZs). NWFZs reinforce the NPT by imposing stricter, legally binding regional prohibitions on nuclear weapons and enhancing verification through IAEA safeguards. Together, they create complementary layers of obligation: the NPT sets universal norms, and NWFZs deepen regional implementation and security assurances.



Challenges Facing Nuclear Weapon Free Zones

Nuclear Weapon Free Zones (NWFZs) stand out as one of the few genuine successes in international disarmament. Today, five vast and heavily populated regions Latin America and the Caribbean, the South Pacific, Southeast Asia, Africa, and Central Asia have all officially sworn off nuclear weapons on their own territory. That's in addition to special agreements covering Antarctica, outer space, and the seabed. For a zone to be truly effective, it needs a second, equally solid layer: legally binding security protocols. Here, the five recognised nuclear powers under the NPT China, France, Russia, the UK, and the US— must formally accept the obligation to respect the zone and guarantee there shall be no violation of the aforementioned obligations. Here is where the cracks truly starts.

Non-Ratification of Protocols by Nuclear-Armed States

Signing a protocol is one thing; ratifying it is quite another. The Treaty of Pelindaba, which creates Africa's NWFZ, is a perfect example. All five major nuclear states signed its key protocols back in 1996, stating they wouldn't use, threaten, or test nuclear weapons there. Eventually, China, France, the UK, and Russia ratified their commitments, though Russia only did so in 2011, which is hardly swift action. The US, on the other hand, has stalled. It sent the protocols to the Senate in 2011, after the then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's announcement at the 2010 NPT Review Conference, but the Senate has left them in limbo ever since. So, nearly three decades after signing, the US still hasn't turned its promises to Africa into binding commitments. Then there's Protocol III, which places extra constraints on nuclear-armed states with territory inside the zone. France ratified it back in 1997; Spain, whose Canary Islands fall in this region, is not a signatory.

The Treaty of Bangkok, Southeast Asia's NWFZ agreement, faces an even worse situation. More than twenty-five years after the treaty came into force, none of the five nuclear weapon states has even signed, let alone ratified, the required protocol. The US and France object to its tough language and its definition of the zone's boundaries, which include regional waters that the US says should stay open to international shipping, including nuclear submarines. Recently, China and Russia have shown some willingness to sign, while the US is reportedly "reviewing" its stance. But so far, no one has moved. The result for both Africa and Southeast Asia is the same, regional states have taken on tough, binding legal obligations, but the

nuclear powers these deals seek to contain have failed to match their commitment. Critics say that's a big issue as it undermines the very balance of assurance and responsibility that gives NWFZs credibility.

Stalled Proposals: The Middle East, Northeast Asia, and South Asia

It's not just about strengthening protocols in existing zones; there's also the matter of zones that never get off the ground. The most visible example: a Middle East NWFZ. Following a 2018 UN General Assembly resolution spearheaded by Egypt, the UN launched an annual conference cycle in New York dedicated to negotiating allegedly binding Middle East NWFZ treaty, called the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction. Multiple annual conferences have been held in New York, most recently in November 2025, led by Morocco, where UN Secretary-General António Guterres warned that weapons of mass destruction have put regional stability "out of reach." But Israel, the region's only country widely believed to have nuclear weapons, has boycotted the conference, and not attended a single session. This glaring absence is the central roadblock. Other participants, including Palestine, never miss a chance to point it out. There's been procedural progress, drafts, observer rules, longer agendas, but without Israel's participation, the whole process risks being written off as well-meaning but irrelevant.

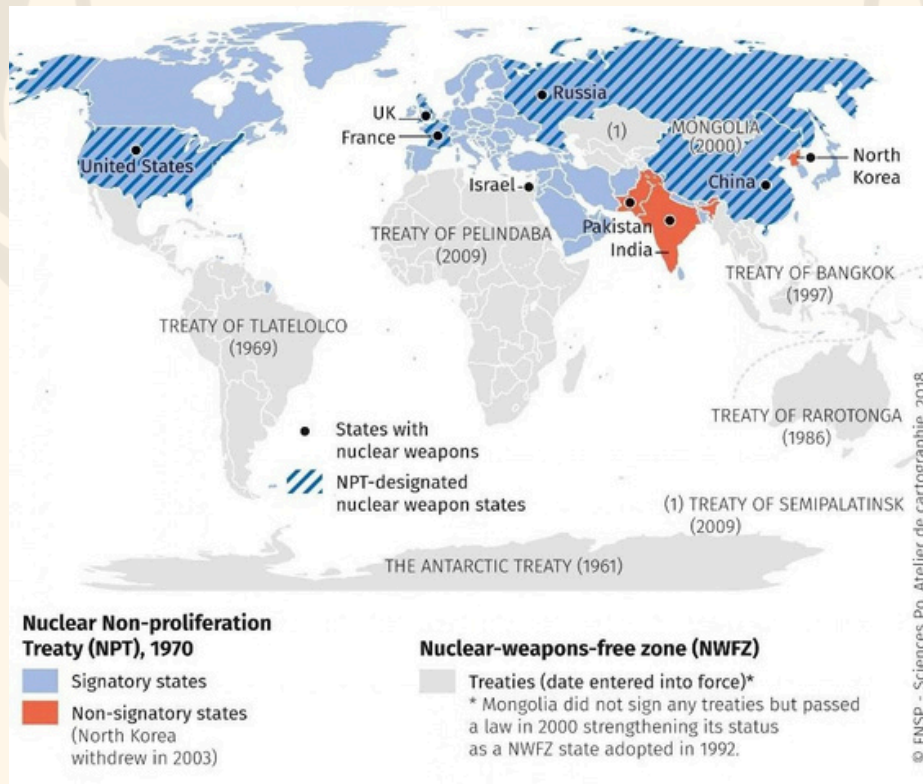
Proposals for NWFZs in Northeast Asia and South Asia have gone even less far. In Northeast Asia, North Korea's active nuclear program and America's extended deterrence arrangements with Japan and South Korea have kept these ideas stuck at the think-tank stage. Scholars have floated "3+3" schemes: North and South Korea plus Japan, with China, Russia, and the US offering security guarantees on the side. But the idea never left drawing boards or academic roundtables. In South Asia, the barrier is even more fundamental: India and Pakistan both have their own nuclear arsenals and aren't NPT signatories. Neither is interested in locking themselves into a binding renunciation of nuclear weapons as long as their wider rivalry stays unresolved.

Tension Between Regional Disarmament Ambition and Great-Power Strategic Postures:

When you look past the details, a bigger underlying tension drives all these struggles- regional states want NWFZs for their own security, making a statement

about regional peace and disarmament— while the recognised nuclear states always ask how these zones might limit their own global strategy. Take the US and French objections to the Bangkok Protocol. They aren't really about Southeast Asian security, but about keeping strategic options— like submarine routes— open. The US's slow walk on Pelindaba isn't about opposing African denuclearisation; it's just not a domestic political priority, and senators worry that saying 'yes could become a precedent for trickier regions. In the Middle East, Israel skips NWFZ talks because it and its allies demand broader peace first the lesson is, for them, security must come in a full package, not through piecemeal arms control.

All this is getting worse as strategic competition between the US, Russia, and China grows sharper. Arms control treaties have eroded, nuclear modernisation plans are accelerating everywhere, and the world's nuclear powers are even less likely to accept new legal limits— anywhere, anytime— out of fear of giving away flexibility to their rivals. For diplomats and drafters working on these issues, the lesson is harsh: technical changes or smoother treaty procedures can help, but they won't fix the core problem. Ultimately, NWFZs are only as strong as the willingness of the most powerful states to put regional security ahead of their own strategic latitude. Without that underlying shift, the promise of a nuclear-weapon-free world remains fragile.



Role of Key Stakeholders/Organizations

Introduction

Combatting the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons (SALW), tracking untraceable firearms, preventing nuclear proliferation, and setting up Nuclear Weapon-Free Zones (NWFZs) requires cooperation, binding framework and dedicated effort. No State can alone tackle the issue. Smugglers don't respect borders, and nuclear issues always spill over into regional and global territory. Which is why states, international and regional organisations, law enforcement, technical agencies, and civil society need to work together.

The global security system is layered. Governments deliberate and undertake several key responsibilities, as they control borders, manage weapons stockpiles, write and enforce laws, and are the ones signing international treaties. However it's international and regional organisations that turn all these commitments into substantive actions. They set standards, share information, introduce technical expertise, and ensures the enforcement.

That matters because the challenges are connected, but not identical. Efforts to counter SALW usually revolve around marking weapons, record-keeping, tracing, stockpile security, borders, customs, and targeting illegal trafficking networks. Nuclear issues demand focus on non-proliferation, verification, safeguards, disarmament, test bans, and regional security frameworks.

United Nations

When it comes to both conventional arms and nuclear disarmament, the United Nations is the most vital organ. Several bodies of UN is involved: the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), the Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and the Disarmament Commission.

The United Nations establishes the normative framework for global disarmament and non-proliferation by developing international standards, convening multilateral negotiating forums, and assisting Member States in addressing violations and emerging security challenges.

UNODA and SALW

A big milestone was the 2001 Programme of Action (PoA). Through it, states pledged to strengthen their gun laws, manage and secure arsenals, mark and record weapons, improve tracing methods, tighten borders, and fight trafficking. The 2005 International Tracing Instrument (ITI) followed, reinforcing the toolkit for tracking illicit SALW.

UNODA also organizes regular meetings— Biennial Meetings of States, Review Conferences, and the like— where governments review the progress and undertake new commitments. The fourth PoA Review Conference wrapped up in 2024.

UNODA and Nuclear Weapons

UNODA is essential to nuclear disarmament, as it helps with dialogue, assists in treaty negotiations, and pushes for multilateral disarmament. The UN backs NWFZs as a way to strengthen global non-proliferation by carving out major regions where nuclear weapons are outlawed. Article VII of the NPT formally recognises the right of groups of States to set these zones up.

United Nations General Assembly

The General Assembly is where states discuss the policy on disarmament and non-proliferation. Here, the First Committee takes up issues like nuclear disarmament, SALW, arms control, new military technologies, and international security. The Assembly played a vital role in launching the 2001 PoA and the 2005 ITI, and it continuously supports the creation and strengthening of NWFZs.

However, General Assembly is a recommendatory body, and its resolutions are non-binding in nature.

United Nations Security Council

The Security Council is responsible for undertaking necessary measures to ensure peace and can pass legally binding decisions. The Council steps in if illicit arms flows fuel conflicts, terrorism, break sanctions, or threaten global stability. Arms embargoes and sanctions often begin with a Security Council resolution. Security Council can enforce embargoes, impose sanctions and authorise use of force.

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

UNODC tackles the firearms problem by targeting the organised criminal networks behind trafficking. Through the Firearms Protocol (part of the UN Convention against Transnational Organised Crime), it provides the main legal framework for

states: making it mandatory to criminalise illegal manufacturing and trade, enforce proper marking, keep records, and trace weapons.

UNODC offers legislative guidance, technical help, capacity building, data analysis, international cooperation, and direct support for investigations. It's especially important when the goal is to break up criminal supply chains, not just confiscate illegal guns.

INTERPOL

While the UN sets international rules, INTERPOL coordinates on-the-ground law enforcement.

Its iARMS database connects police globally to help trace illicit, stolen, or lost firearms. INTERPOL's Firearms Reference Table (IFRT) helps police identify weapons accurately, which is the first step in tracking origin and movement.

With its Ballistic Information Network (IBIN), investigators can match ballistic evidence across borders and piece together criminal networks. INTERPOL also coordinates sting operations and trains law enforcement to tackle international firearms trafficking.

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

When it comes to nuclear issues, the IAEA is the technical expert. It isn't about politics— it's about verifying that nuclear material stays peaceful. IAEA encourages civilian nuclear use, but constantly checks-up on how states use materials and technology, drawing a sharp line between energy and weapons.

NWFZs typically allow peaceful nuclear use, and IAEA safeguards make sure those activities never cross into weapons territory.

Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO)

This body verifies compliance with the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty. Its monitoring network (the International Monitoring System, or IMS) uses seismic, hydro acoustic, infrasound, and radionuclide sensors to detect blasts. The International Data Centre analyses this information. Once the treaty enters force, CTBTO will lead on-site inspections as well.

Nuclear tests undermine trust and feed weapons programs, so having both IAEA and CTBTO working together closes the circle— IAEA watches material use, CTBTO watches testing.

Nuclear-Weapon States

Five countries— China, France, Russia, the UK, and the US— are formally recognized by the NPT as nuclear-weapon states. Their agreement is critical to NWFZ treaties. While regional states outlaw nuclear weapons in their own territory, the nuclear-armed states are expected to pledge not to threaten, use, or support nuclear activity there (such as “negative security assurances”). Each NWFZ includes protocols for these pledges.

Regional Organizations

Problems like weapons trafficking and border security are often regional. Regional organisations adapt solutions to local realities and foster neighbour-to-neighbour cooperation. The African Union, for instance, has been active on SALW, launching regional initiatives on peace, disarmament, reintegration, security-sector reforms, SALW control, and even countering WMD proliferation. Its track record shows why regional coordination matters— guns cross porous borders, so single-country action doesn’t do the job.

The OSCE, another major player, sets standards for SALW control and works to prevent destabilising arms buildups in Europe. Regional organisations make the leap from high-level commitments to concrete action on the ground.

National Governments and Law Enforcement

At the end of the line, it’s up to national governments to deliver results. Treaties set the scene, but day-to-day tasks fall to national agencies: licensing, export/import controls, manufacturer regulation, firearm marking, maintaining records, securing stockpiles, policing borders, investigating trafficking, prosecuting offenders, and disposing of surplus arms.

This is especially crucial for tracing: without solid records, proper markings, and attention to detail, any weapon can slip through and disappear from sight. Global tracing only works if every country sets up a solid foundation.

The Firearms Protocol guides states to criminalise manufacturing and trafficking, and to set up solid marking and record-keeping systems.

Customs and Border Authorities

Customs and border control serve as the frontline defences. Guns don’t respect frontiers, so effective border management inspecting suspicious cargo, verifying paperwork, sharing data, assessing risks, and working with police is key. Customs

must also partner with their foreign peers, since traffickers exploit gaps at the border.

INTERPOL highlights the need for tight cooperation among police, customs, and border agents for effective tracing.

Arms Manufacturers and the Private Sector

Manufacturers and gun dealers control the basics of weapon traceability. Solid manufacturing markings, well-kept sales records, due diligence on customers, reporting red flags, and safeguarding inventory all matter. If the process is handled properly at the factory and sales floor, it's much easier later to track a gun's journey.

Civil Society and NGOs

Civil society groups, academic researchers, and humanitarian organizations bring something unique. They document the impact of armed violence, track illicit arms flows, audit international commitments, raise public awareness, advise policymakers, provide support to affected communities, and join policymaking negotiations. Their perspective is crucial, especially when it comes to the long shadow of SALW and nuclear weapons—SALW continues to harm civilians years after a conflict, and nuclear tests leave lasting environmental damage.

Cohesive Working of the Various Organisations-

Disarmament and non-proliferation demand full-spectrum cooperation.

UN/UNODA: Sets the standard and frameworks- treaties, standards, coordination

Regional Organisations: Adapt and implement the obligations regionally

National Governments: Enact and enforce the laws, manage stockpiles, license, prosecute

Customs, Police, INTERPOL: Detect and investigate trafficking, trace arms

Manufacturers/Dealers: Handle markings, maintain records, ensure responsible transfers

For nuclear matters:

UN/NPT: Sets global non-proliferation framework

NWFZ Treaties: Enforce regional bans

IAEA: Provide safeguards and verify compliance

CTBTO: Monitor nuclear testing

Nuclear-weapon states: Offer security assurances and respect the zones

Bloc/Country Positions

The question of Nuclear Weapon-Free Zones (NWFZs) divides States less over the general principle of preventing nuclear proliferation and more over how quickly disarmament should proceed, the role of nuclear deterrence, the obligations of nuclear-weapon States, and the security conditions required before new zones can be established.

Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and NWFZ States

The Non-Aligned movement has consistently advocated for nuclear disarmament, emphasising that such obligations should be universally, indiscriminately adopted and implemented. They often say you can't just block new states from getting nuclear weapons (horizontal proliferation) without also dealing with countries that still hold and improve their arsenals (vertical proliferation). On international forums, NAM nations often highlight and bring to attention concerns regarding modernisation and military doctrines on nuclear armaments.

For these states, NWFZs are not just local arrangements; but a dedicated and effective effort towards global nuclear disarmament.

African States and the African Union

African countries have a direct stake in NWFZs as the Treaty of Pelindaba establishes the entire continent nuclear-weapon-free. The African Group calls NWFZs a vital step toward global disarmament and keeps promoting the Pelindaba Treaty. They also support a Middle East free of all WMDs.

African states argue that non-proliferation shouldn't cause developing nations from using nuclear technology for peaceful means, and they rely on IAEA support for that. Their priorities usually include: full implementation of the Pelindaba Treaty, respect for all NWFZs, legally binding security assurances, a Middle East WMD- free zone, upholding the NPT's commitments, advancing peaceful nuclear cooperation.

ASEAN and Southeast Asian States

ASEAN's position is rooted in the Bangkok Treaty, which establishes Southeast Asia as an NWFZ. It is focused on keeping the region nuclear-free, strengthening

the Treaty's enforcement, and working with other NWFZs. The Bangkok Treaty's protocol even seeks explicit commitments from nuclear-armed states.

ASEAN countries often stress upon keeping Southeast Asia nuclear-free, getting nuclear-weapon states to sign and ratify the Treaty's protocols, legally binding security assurances, peaceful nuclear energy and regional confidence-building.

Latin American and Caribbean States

Due to the Treaty of Tlatelolco, this was the world's first densely populated NWFZ. States which fall under this NWFZ tend to focus on: universal respect for Treaty of Tlatelolco, maintaining nuclear-free status, better verification and safeguards, supporting new NWFZs, fulfilling NPT obligations, peaceful nuclear technology, and legally binding security guarantees.

Central Asian States

Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan are covered by the Semipalatinsk Treaty. Their stance is shaped by the legacy of nuclear testing, especially in Kazakhstan. Central Asian states highlight: keeping their region nuclear-free, stopping nuclear testing, cleaning up environmental damage, promoting disarmament, getting strong international security assurances, and advancing peaceful nuclear work. Kazakhstan, in particular, often leads discussions on the humanitarian impact of nuclear testing.

Arab States and the Middle East

This region has long been stuck on the NWFZ question. Arab states support a zone free of all WMDs in the Middle East, pointing to the 1995 NPT Resolution as the foundation. The main snag is getting states with huge security differences to agree on terms. Arab countries advocate:

implementing the 1995 NPT Resolution, creating the zone, universal participation, nuclear transparency, IAEA safeguards, confidence-building, international assistance, and legally binding commitments.

It is important to note that a Middle East WMD-free zone goes beyond nuclear weapons it covers chemical and biological weapons and delivery systems.

NATO and European Nuclear-Umbrella States

NATO stands apart from NAM and NWFZ states. Despite publicly spraking regarding a nuclear-free future, NATO insists nuclear deterrence is still needed as long as nuclear weapons exist anywhere. NATO claims its arsenal serves defence

and deterrence, but backs arms control and disarmament, too. The UK has signed onto several NWFZ protocols and is open to signing others, but always with strong caveats. NATO emphasises the NPT as the global foundation, gradual and verifiable disarmament, strategic stability, balanced arms reductions, robust verification, national and allied security, keeping deterrence while nuclear weapons are around, and voluntary regional agreements. It doesn't support the TPNW, arguing that it doesn't fit the current security or non-proliferation setup.

United States

The United States acknowledges the NPT as the foundation of global non-proliferation but retains nuclear deterrence to be important to its national security strategy. It advocates and implements arms control through bilateral and multilateral agreements, emphasising verification, strategic stability and the security of allies under its nuclear umbrella. On SALW, the U.S. supports measures to combat illicit trafficking, strengthen border controls and improve tracing, while under scoring the rights of responsible civilian firearm ownership under domestic law. It is a party to the UN Firearms Protocol but has not ratified the Arms Trade Treaty, citing concerns over sovereignty and potential impacts on its domestic firearms industry and foreign military sales.

China

China adheres to a no-first-use policy and advocates the ultimate complete prohibition and thorough destruction of nuclear weapons, while maintaining a limited nuclear arsenal for deterrence. It upholds the NPT as the cornerstone of global non-proliferation and urges nuclear-weapon states to fulfil their Article VI disarmament obligations. China supports Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones and has ratified protocols to all existing treaties. On small arms and light weapons (SALW), China emphasises combating illicit trafficking through strengthened national controls, regional cooperation and UN mechanisms such as the Programme of Action and International Tracing Instrument, while opposing measures that could infringe state sovereignty or be misused for political interference.

France and the United Kingdom

France and United Kingdom support the NPT, gradual and pragmatic disarmament, arms control, and NWFZs, Notwithstanding these commitments, both states maintain that nuclear deterrence remains a necessary component of their national

security doctrines for as long as nuclear threats persist globally. Paris has consistently advocated for the universalisation and ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), the negotiation of a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT), and disarmament measures subject to robust verification mechanisms. The United Kingdom similarly articulates the ultimate objective of a world free of nuclear weapons, while underscoring that progress towards this goal must be incremental, multilaterally negotiated, and grounded in verifiable reductions that preserve strategic stability.

Russia

Russia's position is firmly tied to its ideas about strategic stability and deterrence. The Russian Federation regards the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) as the cornerstone of the global nuclear order. It maintains that nuclear disarmament must proceed through negotiated, reciprocal measures among major powers that preserve strategic stability and fully account for the security interests of nuclear-armed states.

With respect to Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones, the Russia supports arrangements founded upon genuine regional consensus and appropriate security guarantees that do not undermine existing commitments or the strategic balance, while reserving the right to oppose proposals perceived as detrimental to its security or to overall strategic stability.

Israel

Israel occupies a distinctive position in discussions on Nuclear Weapon-Free Zones because it has not joined the NPT and maintains a policy of nuclear ambiguity, meaning that it does not officially confirm or deny possessing nuclear weapons. UN materials have historically described Israel's nuclear posture in these terms, while noting that Israel has repeatedly stated that it would not be the first country to introduce nuclear weapons into the Middle East.

With regard to a Middle East Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone, Israel has stated that it supports the eventual establishment of a mutually verifiable regional zone, but argues that such an arrangement should emerge through direct negotiations among the States of the region and alongside broader regional peace and security arrangements. Israeli statements have historically emphasised a step-by-step approach, beginning with confidence and security-building measures and addressing conventional as well as non-conventional weapons within a comprehensive regional framework.

This position differs from that of many Arab States and NAM countries, which have called for Israel to join the NPT as a non-nuclear-weapon State and place its nuclear facilities under comprehensive IAEA safeguards as part of establishing a Middle East NWFZ. The disagreement therefore concerns not only the objective of a nuclear-free Middle East, but also the sequence and conditions under which that objective should be achieved.

India

India maintains a policy of credible minimum deterrence and a declared no-first-use posture, while advocating universal, non-discriminatory and verifiable nuclear disarmament. It remains outside the NPT, objecting to the treaty's perceived hierarchy between nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon states. On small arms and light weapons (SALW), India emphasises the need for stronger national controls, regional cooperation against illicit trafficking, and capacity-building for developing states, while safeguarding its sovereign right to regulate civilian firearms. It supports the UN Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument, but has not joined the Arms Trade Treaty, citing concerns over potential constraints on legitimate defence procurement and the risk of politicised implementation.

Pakistan

Pakistan's nuclear posture is shaped primarily by its security competition with India, leading it to maintain a growing arsenal as a deterrent against conventional and nuclear threats. It remains outside the NPT and rejects what it terms discriminatory non-proliferation norms that legitimise existing nuclear arsenals while restricting others. On SALW, Pakistan highlights the destabilising impact of illicit arms flows, particularly in conflict-affected regions, and supports regional and UN-led efforts to enhance marking, tracing and border management. It participates in the UN Programme of Action and related processes, while stressing the need for balanced approaches that address both supply and demand factors, including poverty, weak governance and cross-border criminal networks.

Japan and South Korea

Both countries are non-nuclear under the NPT, but face unique security challenges from North Korea and rely on US extended deterrence. Japan strongly supports

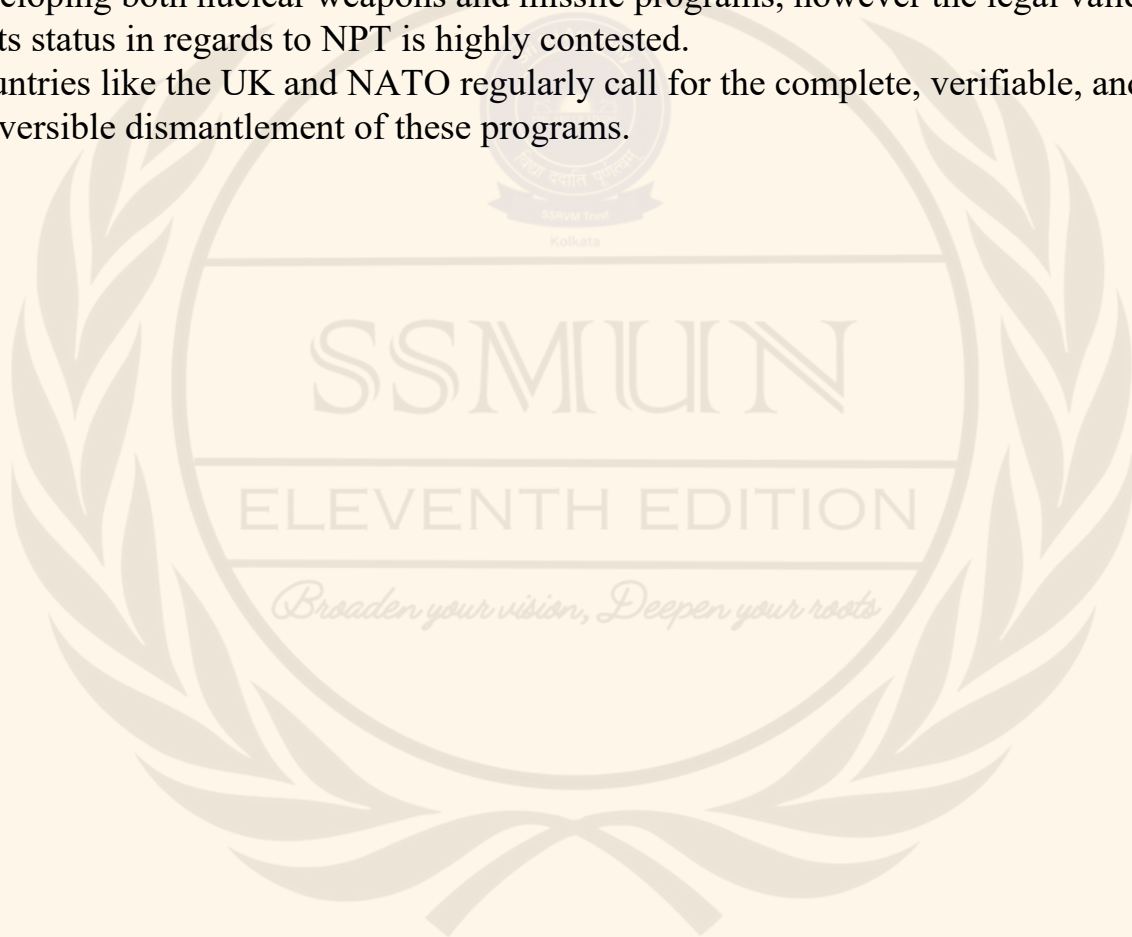
non-proliferation and disarmament, but leans on the US alliance. South Korea shares the same approach.

Their key question: How do you advance nuclear disarmament while dealing with real nuclear threats? They're central to discussions on Northeast Asian security, extended deterrence, confidence-building, Korean Peninsula denuclearisation, no-first-use, risk reduction

North Korea (DPRK)

North Korea is the major regional obstacle. It left the NPT in 2003 and is developing both nuclear weapons and missile programs, however the legal validity of its status in regards to NPT is highly contested.

Countries like the UK and NATO regularly call for the complete, verifiable, and irreversible dismantlement of these programs.



Questions Delegates Must Answer

1. How can Member States prevent the illicit manufacture, trafficking and diversion of small arms and light weapons (SALW)?
2. How can States ensure that SALW are properly marked, recorded and traceable throughout their entire lifecycle?
3. How can the international community address weapons whose identifying marks have been removed, altered or deliberately obscured?
4. How can States strengthen border controls, customs cooperation and law-enforcement mechanisms to prevent illicit arms trafficking?
5. How can international organisations such as the UN, UNODC and INTERPOL improve cooperation and information-sharing for tracing illicit SALW?
6. How can developing countries be provided with the financial, technological and technical assistance necessary to establish effective SALW tracing and stockpile-management systems?
7. How can States prevent legally manufactured or legally transferred weapons from being diverted into illicit markets?
8. How can emerging technologies, including 3D-printed and privately manufactured firearms, be addressed within existing SALW control frameworks?
9. How can existing international frameworks such as the UN Programme of Action, International Tracing Instrument, Firearms Protocol and Arms Trade Treaty be implemented more effectively?
10. How can regional cooperation be strengthened to facilitate joint investigations, intelligence-sharing and cross-border tracing of illicit weapons?

11. How can existing Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones (NWFZs) be strengthened and their implementation made more effective?
12. What measures can encourage States to establish additional NWFZs in regions where such proposals remain under discussion?
13. How can the international community address regional security concerns that prevent progress towards the establishment of new NWFZs?
14. How can nuclear-weapon States be encouraged to provide meaningful negative security assurances to States covered by NWFZ arrangements?
15. What verification and monitoring mechanisms should accompany commitments to establish or maintain NWFZs?
16. How can the UN, IAEA and relevant regional organisations assist States in negotiating, implementing and verifying NWFZ agreements?
17. How can existing instruments such as the NPT, CTBT, TPNW and NWFZ treaties complement one another in advancing nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament?
18. How can the international community strengthen transparency, confidence-building and compliance in global disarmament efforts without undermining legitimate national security concerns?
19. What financial, technical and institutional mechanisms are necessary to ensure that States can actually implement the commitments contained in the resolution?
20. How will the proposed measures be monitored, evaluated and enforced, and which international or regional bodies should be responsible for implementation?

What the Executive Board Expects

This Committee allows the delegates to deliberate upon an issue which contains many facets, as each State in the United Nations has a sole responsibility to ensure there is no threat whatsoever to its sovereignty, however the policy of disarmament raises concerns against that very priority. Thus, it creates the intractable issue of how to ensure security and sovereignty while reducing the very thing giving us a sense of security.

The delegates for this committee are recommended to brush up on their legalities and knowledge of foreign policies, which will be tested by the crises introduced sporadically in the Committee. The Executive Board recommends the delegates to have an approach of realism, which is to be kept in mind for Paperwork and speeches. Carefully consider whether your stance is something which has a probability of occurring or not.

The Executive Board looks forward to well researched delegates, who offer more than just empty words in the committee, but rather have their stance filled with facts, uplifted by legalities and then backed by rhetoric. The subject of disarmament is not a one-dimension issue, but has to be carefully navigated, through the geopolitical tensions and unfulfilled promises. We look forward to seeing the solutions and actions undertaken by the delegates.

P.S. the Vice Chair loves easter eggs, and cheeseburgers. That's supposed to be a hint in itself. To make sure the amount of work we have put in does not go to waste, there are few, let's say surprises hidden in the study guide. Surprises which, rest assured, you'd really wish to find. So, ONE of the surprises is prettyyy killer, both figuratively and literally. The police would certainly agree. X marks the spot. So go through the study guide REALLY well. Email us the location of the surprise, and we'd lead you onto the next step.
Enjoy ;)

Reference Link

1. <https://disarmament.unoda.org/en?utm>
2. <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/firearms-protocol/?utm>
3. <https://treaties.un.org>
4. <https://whatson.unodc.org>
5. <https://www.thearmstradetreaty.org>
6. <https://www.interpol.int>
7. <https://www.interpol.int/Crimes/Firearms-trafficking/Illicit-Arms-Records-and-tracing-Management-System-iARMS?>
8. <https://www.un.org/en/conf/npt/2015/text.shtml?>
9. <https://disarmament.unoda.org/en/nwfz>
10. <https://disarmament.unoda.org/en/nwfz>
11. <https://www.ctbto.org/our-mission/the-treaty>
12. <https://www.ctbto.org/resources/for-member-states/legal-resources>
13. <https://www.un.org/disarmament/tpnw/>
14. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4108948?utm=&v=pdf>
15. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4081582?ln=en&utm=&v=pdf>
16. <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-187249/?utm>
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18. <https://www.smallarmssurvey.org/resource/estimating-global-civilian-held-firearms-numbers>
19. <https://www.wcoomd.org/en/topics/enforcement-and-compliance/activities-and-programmes/security-programme/small-arms-and-light-weapons.aspx>
20. <https://www.unodc.org/documents/organized-crime/Firearms/ITI.pdf>
21. <https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/disarmament>
22. <https://www.rug.nl/rudolf-agricola-school/research/themes/development-security-and-justice/illegal-arms-trafficking-illicit-trade.pdf>
23. <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/firearms-protocol/the-firearms-protocol.html>
24. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/act300222004en.pdf>
25. https://www.unodc.org/documents/firearms-protocol/2024/DISRUPT_publication.pdf
26. https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/doc.44_convention_antipersonnel_mines.pdf
27. <https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/ctc/content/border-security-and-arms-trafficking>
28. https://www.unodc.org/unodc/frontpage/2025/November/firearms-trafficking-explained_10-key-questions-and-answers.html
29. <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/firearms-protocol/the-firearms-protocol.html>
30. <https://share.google/LmajOA3EVM2hR40W1>
31. <https://www.iaea.org/>

Guide to Paperwork

Below are the paper-works which shall be accepted in the committee. Please refer to the handbook for the format of the paperwork, along with the list for accepted perambulatory and operative clauses.

The email-ID for paperwork submissions and any official communication is- unga.ssmun2026@gmail.com.

Kindly note that the standard font size for all paperworks should be 12.

1. Position Paper

A position paper is sent before the actual committee begins. It is meant to highlight your policy on the agenda provided. It is divided into 3 sections: statement of the problem, policy pertaining to the agenda, and solutions that you as a country propose to resolve the issue at hand. The deadline for Position Paper is **7th October 11:59 p.m.** Kindly keep the content to maximum of 6 pages.

2. Communique

The dynamism of the committee must have become evident by now having read and understood the agenda and the various aspects that it holds. In a committee like this which is characterized by a lot of complexities and crises, a quintessential tool which we expect all delegates to use is – communique. A communique is written by the delegate representing the country used to contact entities outside of your committee in order to involve them with the crisis in a certain way. They are written as formal correspondence to outside actors as a way of enticing them to take action, even though they aren't under your direct control. These communiques are essentially used to take executive action either openly or covertly. However, this document requires a fair share of key points to be fulfilled. The communique should be realistic and naturally viable, they should be ordinarily highly detailed with painstaking attention to details, a covert communique need not follow international rules and regulations. Delegates can create a series of inter-related communiques in order to achieve a particular objective as well. All communiques, however, are subject to ratification by the executive board before it can be considered viable enough in committee. Communiques can

primarily be distinguished on the basis of accessibility and number of authors.

On the basis of accessibility-

1. Public Communique
2. Private Communique

On the Basis of Number of Authors-

1. Individual Communique
2. Joint Communique

Please ensure that there is a summary at the beginning of each communique. The deadline for pre-committee communique is **9th October 11:59 p.m.** and we will be accepting maximum of **2 pre-committee communiques.**

3. Presidential Statement

It is, as the name suggests, a statement from the President (or the equivalent head of state in countries where this position does not exist) of a particular country to the entire world. Generally, they are used to outline a major shift in policy or take decisive action which the Executive Board feels is relevant enough to be revealed to the committee.

4. Working Paper

A working paper is a precursor to the Draft Resolution. It is mainly a loosely formatted document that has recommendations to the committee or solutions for the given agenda that the authors feel should be implemented. A working paper is generally not formally voted upon (informal voting) and serves as a way of foreshadowing the solutions to be present in the end paperworks, i.e, the draft resolution.

5. Draft Resolution

A draft resolution is the ideal end product of any committee. Solutions that are proposed in the committee will be bundled together into the final paperwork which is called the draft resolution. It is a formal document upon which voting take place and amendments shall be made by the committee itself. For format and accepted clauses kindly refer to the conference handbook.