

BACKGROUND BRIEF

General Assembly First Committee
World Scout Jamboree Model UN 2019

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Whats is the role of the General Assembly, First Committee?

The First Committee addresses all matters related to disarmament and international security. The General Assembly has existed since the creation of the United Nations. It is one of the six main organs of the UN system established by the Charter of the United Nations in 1945.

Addressing nuclear disarmament since 1970 when the 1968 *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons* was ratified, the First Committee has played a very important role in the maintenance of international peace and security as a forum for international debates, as a space for the generation of ideas, and as a nucleus of new concepts and practices. Given its universal membership, the General Assembly is certainly a unique forum for discussion within the UN.

You can learn more about the role of the General Assembly in the global disarmament agenda: <https://www.un.org/disarmament/general-assembly/> and you can read about the disarmament and the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)**: <https://www.un.org/disarmament/sg-agenda/en/>

Governance, Structure, and Membership

As outlined in the Charter, the General Assembly is comprised of all 193 UN Member States. However, Observer status can also be granted to intergovernmental organizations such as the African Union and states without full UN membership: currently the Holy See and the State of Palestine are the only two non-Member States with permanent Observer status. In the General Assembly, each Member State has one equal vote.

Since its 44th session in 1989, the General Assembly is considered in session the entire year, but the most important time is the General Debate, which takes place from mid-September to the end of December and is called the “main part of the General Assembly.” For the remainder of the year, called the “resumed part of the General Assembly”, working group meetings take place and thematic debates are held. Decisions on important matters such as the maintenance of international peace and security, the admission, suspension, and expulsion of members, and all budgetary questions require a two-thirds majority. For all other matters, votes in the General Assembly require a simple majority and the majority of resolutions are adopted without a vote, illustrating the consensus-based nature of the General Assembly.

The First Committee receives substantive and organizational support from three important entities: the General Committee, the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), and the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management. The General Committee is comprised of the President of the General Assembly and the 21 Vice-Presidents of the General Assembly, as well as the Chairpersons of all the six General Assembly Main Committees; all positions are elected every session on a non-renewable basis. The General Committee’s main duty, besides making recommendations on organizational issues, is to determine the agenda of the General Assembly Plenary and its six Main Committees. After receiving a preliminary list of agenda items from the UN Secretariat, the General Committee allocates the different items to each Main Committee. The First Committee then votes upon its

own agenda based on the allocated agenda items. Within the UN Secretariat, UNODA provides “objective, impartial and up-to-date” information and promotes the implementation of practical measures on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, disarmament in the field of conventional weapons, and the general strengthening of mechanisms and frameworks bolstering disarmament. It further encourages norm setting at the General Assembly, CD, and UNDC. Additionally, the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management also provides valuable technical secretariat support and acts as the intersection between the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. The First Committee works in close cooperation with the UNDC and the CD. The CD has a crucial role in addressing issues of disarmament and has been central to negotiations of international agreements such as the NPT. Unlike the CD, the UNDC is a subsidiary organ of the First Committee and is composed of all 193 Member States. Primarily suggesting recommendations to the General Assembly, it has been important in the formulation of principles and guidelines that have subsequently been endorsed by the committee in its own reports. Both bodies report either annually or more frequently to the First Committee. Additionally, as a crucial partner with the UN system, civil society organizations have an important relationship with the General Assembly and are often invited to speak at the General Assembly.

Mandate, Functions, and Powers

The mandate of the General Assembly is set in Chapter IV of the Charter of the United Nations; Article 11 requires the General Assembly to address questions of international peace and security, particularly disarmament. This mandate has evolved over time and the growing range of issues facing the international community ultimately gave the First Committee its focus on disarmament and international security. The question of disarmament is organized into seven clusters: nuclear weapons, other weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), disarmament aspects in outer space, conventional weapons, regional disarmament and security, the disarmament machinery, and other disarmament measures and security. The mandate of the General Assembly allows it to be a conduit for ideas that can become the driver of new policies and shared norms through discussion and debate. This can be regarded as one of the main differences between the General Assembly and the Security Council. The Security Council is more concerned with concrete threats to security including ongoing conflicts, whereas the General Assembly aims to create peace by forming habits and means of cooperation. It is important to note, however, that the General Assembly considers matters of international security only when the issue is not under the consideration of the Security Council.

The General Assembly and its six Main Committees are the center of the UN System and represent its main deliberative, policymaking, and representative organs; their outcomes thus define new norms that can become treaties or conventions among UN Member States. The General Assembly is tasked with initiating studies and making recommendations to promote international cooperation in the political field; encouraging the development of international law; promoting the implementation of cultural, social, and human rights; and promoting fundamental freedoms free from discrimination. The body “receives and considers reports” issued by “the other principal organs established under the Charter as well as reports issued by its own

subsidiary bodies.” The General Assembly Plenary receives recommendations from the six Main Committees. Once the recommendations are sent to the Plenary Committee, the Plenary then votes on whether to adopt the resolutions as presented. **Although decisions reached by the General Assembly are non-binding, they are often adopted as customary international law and serve as key international policy norms. Additionally, the General Assembly can request the Secretary-General or other UN organs to issue a report to one of the Main Committees on a specified question such as the implementation of recommendations made by the General Assembly.** The First Committee is able to introduce resolutions that initiate new negotiations on arms control and disarmament. These, in turn, can lead to the creation and funding of agencies or meetings as well as ad hoc committees or working groups that consider a particular question with the purpose of reporting to the General Assembly. The General Assembly Plenary must also adopt resolutions adopted in the First Committee before they are put into effect. Though these resolutions are non-binding, consensus reached in the First Committee often leads to more concrete initiatives at the UN.

TOPIC 1: TOWARDS A NUCLEAR-WEAPON-FREE WORLD: ACCELERATING NUCLEAR NONPROLIFERATION AND DISARMAMENT



Is a free world of nuclear weapons achievable?

<https://unchronicle.un.org/article/nuclear-weapons-free-world-it-achievable>

Are countries making progress on disarmament?

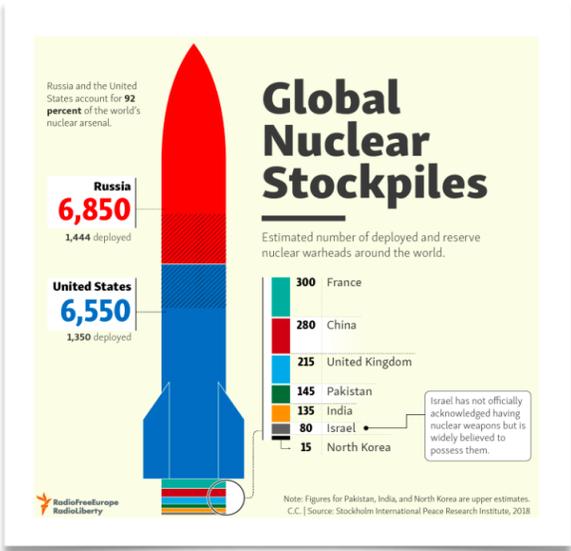
<https://www.bbc.com/news/amp/world-42873633>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7VB5nAQVI4&t=18s>

<https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/Nuclearweaponswhohaswhat>

<https://armscontrolcenter.org/nuclear-weapons/nuclear-weapons-infographics/#foobox-1/0/Infographic-nuclear-stockpiles-around-the-world.png>

<https://armscontrolcenter.org/non-proliferation/non-proliferation-infographics/>



<https://armscontrolcenter.org/nuclear-non-proliferation/>

<https://www.rferl.org/a/global-nuke-stockpile/28593554.html>

**Where are the world nuclear weapons stored?
You can get the answer to this very important question at:**



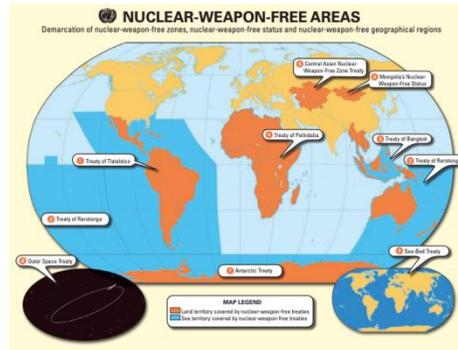
Where Are The World's Nuclear Weapons Stored?

https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=where+are+the+world%27s+nuclear+weapons+stored%3F

<https://www.armscontrol.org/treaties>

Are some areas of the world free of nuclear weapons?

<https://www.un.org/disarmament/wmd/nuclear/nwzf/>



What is needed to advance the goal of non proliferation?

<https://unchronicle.un.org/article/advancing-disarmament-within-2030-agenda-sustainable-development>

<https://unoda-epub.s3.amazonaws.com/i/index.html?book=sg-disarmament-agenda.epub>



TOPIC 2: ENDING THE USE OF IMPROVISED EXPLOSIVE DEVICES, LANDMINES, CLUSTER MUNITIONS, AND OTHER DEVICES



What are landmines?

Antipersonnel landmines are explosive devices designed to be detonated by the presence, proximity, or contact of a person. Placed under or on the ground, they can lie dormant for years and even decades until a person or animal triggers their detonating mechanism.



Incapable of distinguishing between the footfall of a soldier and that of a child, antipersonnel mines cannot be aimed. They indiscriminately kill or injure civilians, aid workers, peacekeepers, and soldiers alike.

They pose a threat to the safety of civilians during conflicts and long afterwards. You can read more about landmines and the **Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction** adopted in 1997 (entered into force on 1999) in these links:

<http://www.icbl.org/en-gb/problem.aspx>

<http://www.icbl.org/en-gb/the-treaty/treaty-in-detail/treaty-text.aspx>

You probably know Daniel Craig. He is famous for his role as James Bond. What you are probably not aware of about this actor is that in 2015 the United Nations appointed him as the first global mine action advocate.

Listen to what Daniel Craig says about landmines.
How do landmines affect the lives of people all around the world?



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pZJMpe-8dHk>

<http://www.stopclustermunitions.org/en-gb/cluster-bombs/what-is-a-cluster-bomb.aspx>

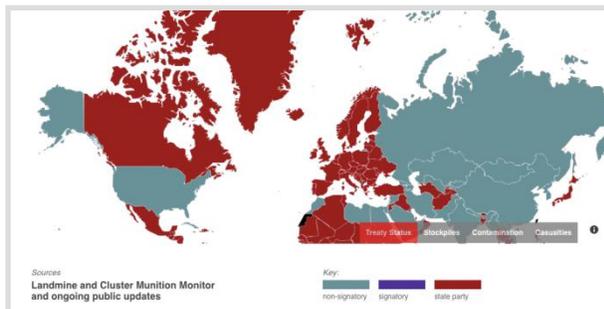
What is the difference between a landmine, clustered munition, and explosive remnant of war (ERW)?



<http://www.the-monitor.org/en-gb/the-issues/faqs/most-common/difference-between-lm,cm,-erw.aspx>

<http://www.the-monitor.org/en-gb/reports/2018/cluster-munition-monitor-2018/glossary.aspx>

The Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction is also known as the **Mine Ban Treaty**. Why the ban? <http://www.icbl.org/en-gb/problem/why-the-ban.aspx>



You can check the status of the Mine Ban Treaty and other important aspects about stockpiles, casualties and contamination which will be relevant for the discussion of **TOPIC 2**. <http://www.icbl.org/en-gb/the-treaty/treaty-status.aspx>

What is the problem?

Which countries still have active landmines?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M3n9AngJm3c>

The Problem
 Antipersonnel mines are indiscriminate weapons that injure and kill civilians in every corner of the globe, every day.
 Lying in wait for their victims, they don't recognize ceasefires, and continue to kill and maim long after the end of conflicts. They install fear in communities and are a lethal barrier to development.

WHAT IS A LANDMINE?
WHY THE BAN?
HISTORY OF LANDMINES
ARGUMENTS FOR A BAN
WHY LANDMINES ARE STILL A PROBLEM

<http://www.icbl.org/en-gb/problem/why-landmines-are-still-a-problem.aspx>

<http://www.icbl.org/en-gb/problem/arguments-for-the-ban.aspx>

Listen to the audio available at:
<https://www.kunc.org/post/heavily-mined-country-grapples-bombs-baby-food-jars#stream/0>

You should also check the slideshow available.

https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Handbook_English.pdf

How do landmines, clustered munitions, and ERW affect specifically children and civilians?

http://www.the-monitor.org/media/2921942/Children-Infographics_revised.pdf

THE CONVENTION ON CLUSTER MUNITIONS
 BAN POLICY
 STATUS OF THE CONVENTION ON CLUSTER MUNITIONS

CLEARANCE & CONTAMINATION
 STATES PARTIES' COUNTDOWN TO CLEARANCE & CONTAMINATION

CASUALTIES & VICTIMS
 TOTAL CLUSTER MUNITION CASUALTIES
 CLUSTER MUNITION CASUALTIES IN SYRIA AND OTHER COUNTRIES AND AREAS 2011-2017
 PERCENTAGE OF CIVILIAN CASUALTIES IN SYRIA DUE TO CLUSTER MUNITIONS 2011-2017

http://www.the-monitor.org/media/2903938/Convention-Cluster-Munitions_2018_Infographic.pdf

SYRIA'S WOUNDED

Approximately **3 MILLION** children in Syria are exposed to explosive hazards including landmines, unexploded ordnance and improvised explosive devices

More than **1.5 MILLION** people are now living with permanent, war-related impairments

86,000 have lost limbs

80% of injuries sustained by Syrian refugees in Lebanon and Jordan are a direct consequence of the war

MEM MIDDLE EAST MONITOR
 middleeastmonitor.com

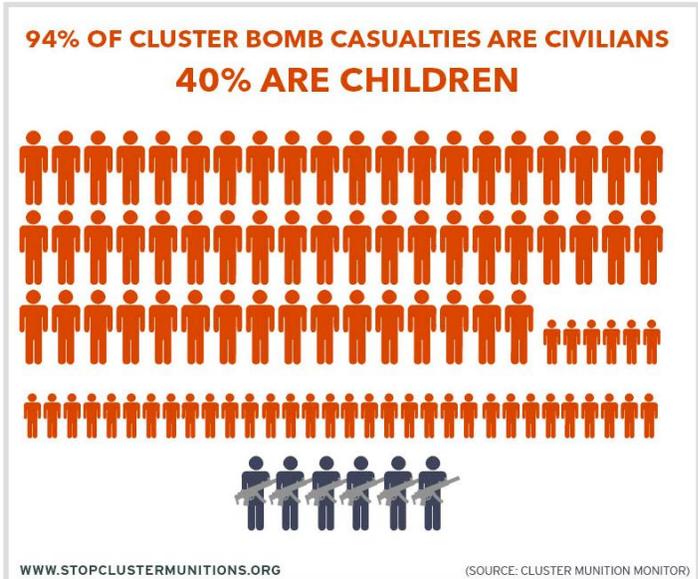
STOP CLUSTER MUNITION USE IN YEMEN

In 2015 and 2016 91% of all known cluster munition casualties in Yemen were civilians including deminers, of which at least 22% were children

For more than a year the Saudi-led coalition has repeatedly used internationally banned cluster munitions in Yemen

Following the use of cluster munitions in Sana'a, the capital of Yemen on 8 January 2016, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon expressed his deep concern and insisted that:
 "The use of cluster munitions in populated areas may amount to a war crime due to their indiscriminate nature."
www.stopclustermunitions.org

<https://twitter.com/MiddleEastMnt/status/1023191581619380224>



<http://www.stopclustermunitions.org/media/1571589/Syria-Infographic-7-casualty-breakdown-of-victims.jpg>

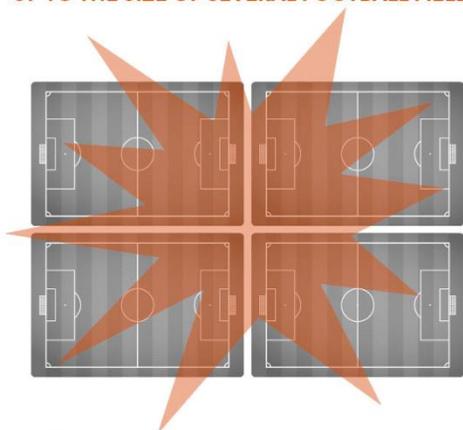


https://www.unicef.org/emergencies/index_landmines.html

There is a Convention on Cluster Munitions. What does it establish?

Check this link: clusterconvention.org

**DURING A CLUSTER BOMB ATTACK,
EACH BOMB COVERS A WIDE AREA OF LAND
WITH EXPLOSIVES AND SHRAPNEL:
UP TO THE SIZE OF SEVERAL FOOTBALL FIELDS**



**MANY BOMBLETS FAIL TO EXPLODE ON IMPACT
REMAINING A DEADLY RISK TO CIVILIANS**

What has been done recently within the UN?



<https://www.un.org/press/en/2017/sc12897.doc.htm>

<http://www.icbl.org/en-gb/finish-the-job.aspx>

<https://unchronicle.un.org/article/achieving-zero-new-victims-landmines>

<https://www.un.org/press/en/2017/sc12897.doc.htm>

<https://www.un.org/press/en/2017/sc12866.doc.htm>

What are the improvised explosive devices (IEDs)?



https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_72809.htm

<https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-evolution-of-improvised-explosive-devices-ieds/>

<https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/UNMAS%20Somalia%20KAPB%20Survey%20Report%20on%20IEDs%20in%20Mogadishu.pdf> Pay attention to the findings of this study. For example, in page 22, you can find figures like this. **What is the main reason a person would not report a suspect IED?**

Figure 21: What is the main reason you would not report about a suspect IED?

