
LONE STAR MODEL UNITED NATIONS 2023
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
FIRST COMMITTEE (GA1)
Background Guide
Garland, February 25-26, 2023



What 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 Goal (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. **CHECK:** <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/non-member-states>



Source: <https://www.un.org/pga/72/2017/10/02/first-committee/>

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, **Conference on Disarmament (CD)**, and **United Nations Disarmament Commission (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.



Armed personnel getting trained to find explosive devices before they can cause casualties.
Photo: UNMAS Mali/Marc Kouadio/Imre Gelencser

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 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (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.

As you prepare for the discussion, **CHECK** what is the **Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)** and **other key treaties**:

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

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



TOPIC 1: TOWARDS A NUCLEAR-WEAPON-FREE WORLD AND NUCLEAR WEAPONS IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS



What is the problem?

Long-term goals and short-term actions are needed to reduce and to ultimately eliminate nuclear weapons. The problem is that as the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICANW) has put it, **the truth about nuclear weapons is that they produce catastrophic harm, and they are an existential threat.** What does this last phrase mean? **An existential threat? It means, that as** the professor in the Department of Atmospheric and Oceanic Sciences at the University of Colorado-Boulder, Brian Toon has affirmed, referring to the consequences of a **nuclear war between India and Pakistan**, "it **could potentially end global civilization** as we know it". In other words, he warns us that **"even a small nuclear war could destroy all life on earth."**



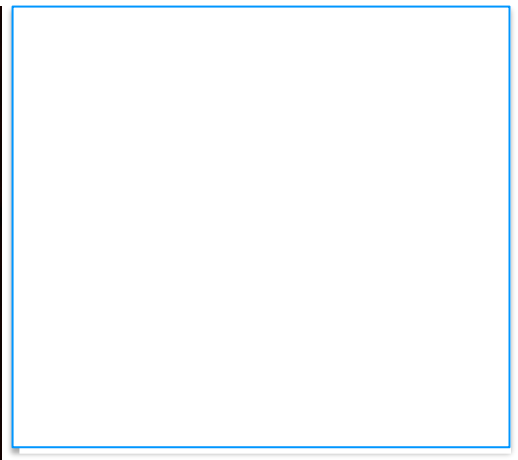
9,000 matches, 7,000 matches, and 2 adversaries?

The problem is one of disproportionate deterrents. **CONSIDER** an analogy to understand the magnitude and the nature of the problem. **LISTEN** to Carl Sagan

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V7R4nqyMMSg>

CONSIDER that the previous video is just part of the program described here <https://www.paleycenter.org/collection/item/?q=news&p=3&item=T84:0245>

Thousands of nuclear weapons remain on hair trigger alert. More States have sought and acquired them. Nuclear tests have continued. And every day, **we live with the threat that weapons of mass destruction could be stolen, sold or slip away.** As long as such weapons exist, so does the risk of proliferation and catastrophic use. So, too, does the threat of nuclear terrorism...**Nuclear disarmament is the only sane path to a safer world. Nothing would work better in eliminating the risk of use than eliminating the weapons themselves.**" (Ban Ki-Moon United Nations Secretary General (2007-2016))



<https://reachingcriticalwill.org/images/documents/Disarmament-fora/1com/1com22/briefingbook/FCBB-2022-nuclearweapons.pdf>

CHECK: <https://www.nti.org/education-center/glossary/> to increase your vocabulary to understand the role of the First Committee in addressing the items in its agenda.

PAY ATTENTION to the explanation given by Professor Brian Toon in his Ted talk titled *I studied nuclear war for 35 years –you should be worried*. Starting in minute 5:31, he explains how nuclear weapons kill people in 4 ways. **WATCH:** https://www.ted.com/talks/brian_toon_i've_studied_nuclear_war_for_35_years_you_should_be_worried



You might find interesting to listen to Erica Gregory...as you are probably part of her target audience, **Generation Possible!** **WATCH:** https://www.ted.com/talks/erika_gregory_the_world_doesn't_need_more_nuclear_weapons

The problem, in other words, is that despite the dangers of nuclear proliferation, only two nuclear weapons—the ones dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki—have been deployed in a

war. Still, writes the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, **"The dangers from such weapons arise from their very existence."** CHECK: <https://www.un.org/disarmament/wmd/nuclear/>

Could the world survive a nuclear winter? What is a nuclear winter?

LISTEN this episode in this podcast to learn what about a nuclear winter: <https://futureoflife.org/podcast/not-cool-ep-23-brian-toon-on-nuclear-winter-the-other-climate-change/> and <https://www.cpr.org/2020/01/09/a-colorado-professor-is-warning-the-world-of-nuclear-winter-again/>

CHECK what Carl Sagan had to say decades ago: <https://www.nytimes.com/video/us/100000004306826/nuclear-winter.html> and <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/when-carl-sagan-warned-world-about-nuclear-winter-180967198/> and Brian Toon warned us about. Likewise, nuclear testing has been qualified by UN experts as the legacy the **"cruellest" environmental injustice.** CHECK: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/07/1068481>

WATCH: <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2020/7/2/project-force-could-the-world-survive-a-nuclear-winter>

Global conflicts are escalating. Nuclear weapons are always in the international toolkit even if they are considered the last resort in diplomacy. Whether we think about Russia and Ukraine, India and Pakistan or North Korea, we are confronted by a dangerous situation. As, Toshiyuki Mimaki, a **hibakusha** and leader of a confederation of A-bomb survivor groups, told the Guardian at the Hiroshima office of Hidankyo in an article: **"My greatest fear is that the Ukraine conflict will escalate".** He added that **"when I think about what Putin said recently, I wouldn't be surprised if he used nuclear weapons. And what would the US response be? We could be on the verge of another world war. I don't think Putin is listening."** CHECK: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/30/hiroshima-survivors-plead-for-nuclear-free-world-as-global-tensions-rise>

CHECK: <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/how-advent-nuclear-weapons-changed-history>

Nuclear weapons are the most inhumane and indiscriminate weapons ever created. They violate international law, cause severe environmental damage, undermine national and global security, and divert vast public resources away from meeting human needs." **They must be eliminated urgently."** CHECK the destructive effects of nuclear weapons: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uas1WtocwOo>

WATCH <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kWGW7fRA6lk>



READ: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-45423575>

The problem is that nuclear causes great human suffering. The use of nuclear weapons leaves behind devastation and loss for communities and hibakushas. Did you notice that this is the second time that the word “hibakusha” has appeared? Have you heard the word hibakusha? **DO RESEARCH ABOUT IT! NOW LISTEN** and **READ** the stories of the hibakushas:



Hiroshima atomic bombing survivor Toshiyuki Minomaki (left) and others involved in collecting 2.96 million signatures calling for the abolition of nuclear arms, submit the petition to officials Friday at the U.N. headquarters in New York. | KYODO

CHECK: <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2017/06/17/national/nuke-ban-treaty-talks-kick-off-u-n-hibakusha-hand-petition-3-million-signatures/>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jul/31/japan-atomic-bomb-survivors-nuclear-weapons-hiroshima-70th-anniversary>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p5DT6xmL5HA>

<https://www.vox.com/future-perfect/2018/10/19/17873822/nuclear-war-weapons-bombs-how-kill>

“If we are using nuclear weapons in the world, there are no winners.” (Soh Horie, hibakusha)

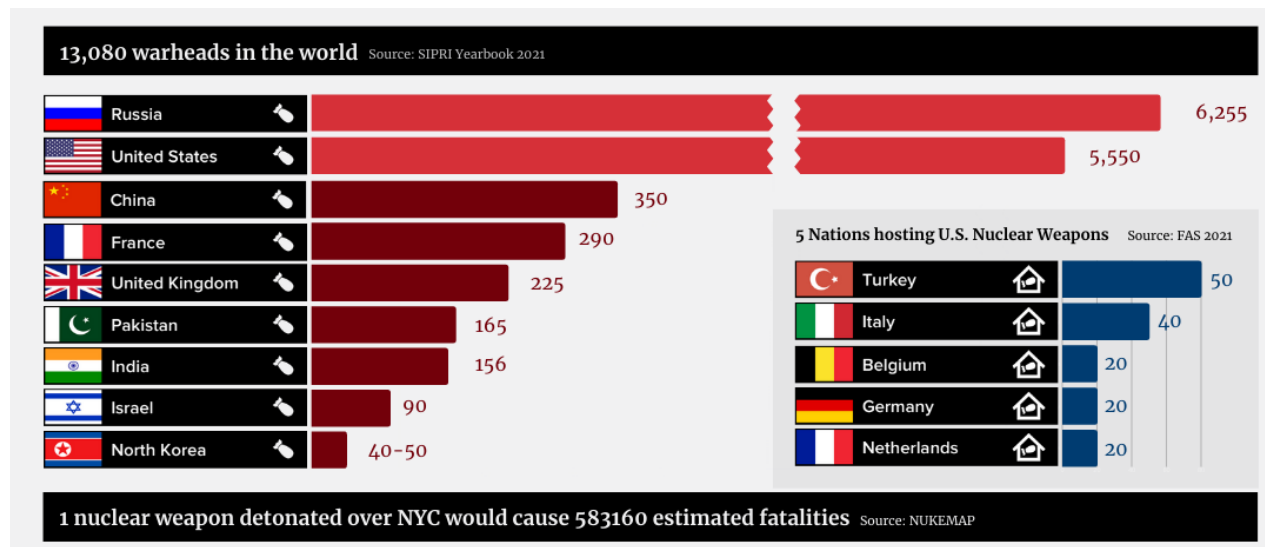
What is the problem?

The time frame for more total abolition may be too long. Should the focus be on more short-term actions? CONSIDER the immediacy of the NPT Review Process which continues in 2025. Changes are not happening as fast as ideally expected. Here is the case for a step by step approach, CHECK: https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/videos/2009/April/20090405_Prague.mp4



"Just as we stood for freedom in the 20th century, we must stand together for the right of people everywhere to live free from fear in the 21st century. And as nuclear power — as a nuclear power, as the only nuclear power to have used a nuclear weapon, the United States has a moral responsibility to act. We cannot succeed in this endeavor alone, but we can lead it, we can start it. So today, I state clearly and with conviction America's commitment to seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons. I'm not naive. **This goal will not be reached quickly -- perhaps not in my lifetime. It will take patience and persistence. But now we, too, must ignore the voices who tell us that the world cannot change. We have to insist, "Yes, we can."**

What is the magnitude of the problem?



CHECK: https://www.icanw.org/nuclear_arsenals




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

CHECK to learn about the **Treaty on the Prohibition on Nuclear Weapons (TPNW)**

https://www.icanw.org/how_the_tpnw_works

<p> Russia</p> <p>POSSESSES 5,977 NUCLEAR WEAPONS</p> <p>HAS NOT YET JOINED THE TPNW</p> <p>Status Russia has not yet signed or ratified the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). National position Russia has consistently voted against an annual UN General Assembly resolution since 2018 that welcomes the adoption of the TPNW...</p>	<p> United States</p> <p>POSSESSES 5,428 NUCLEAR WEAPONS</p> <p>HAS NOT YET JOINED THE TPNW</p> <p>Status The United States has not yet signed or ratified the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). National position The United States has consistently voted against an annual UN General Assembly resolution since 2018 that welcomes the...</p>	<p> France</p> <p>POSSESSES 290 NUCLEAR WEAPONS</p> <p>HAS NOT YET JOINED THE TPNW</p> <p>Status France has not yet signed or ratified the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). National position France has consistently voted against an annual UN General Assembly resolution since 2018 that welcomes the adoption of the TPNW...</p>
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and Turkey all host U.S. nuclear weapons. The United States insists that it maintains operational control of these weapons but their stationing in these countries helps U.S. nuclear war planning.

 Türkiye HOSTS 50 US NUCLEAR WEAPONS HAS NOT YET JOINED THE TPNW <p>Status Türkiye has not yet signed or ratified the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). National position Türkiye has consistently voted against an annual UN General Assembly resolution since 2018 that welcomes the adoption of the TPNW...</p>	 Italy HOSTS 40 US NUCLEAR WEAPONS HAS NOT YET JOINED THE TPNW <p>Status Italy has not yet signed or ratified the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). Nuclear weapons in Italy Italy is one of five members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) to host US nuclear weapons...</p>	 Belgium HOSTS 10-15 US NUCLEAR WEAPONS HAS NOT YET JOINED THE TPNW <p>Status Belgium has not yet signed or ratified the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). National position Belgium has consistently voted against an annual UN General Assembly resolution since 2018 that welcomes the adoption of the TPNW...</p>
------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

What is your country doing? What is your country's profile?

CHECK: <https://banmonitor.org/profiles>

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

<https://banmonitor.org/the-tpnw>

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

In the international arena, many countries have moved to reduce or to ban nuclear weapons. Multiple tools and agreements have been created.

ASK yourself: Has my country signed, ratified, and enforced these instruments?

- [Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons \(NPT\)](#)
[Latest status](#), UN Office of Disarmament Affairs (UNODA)
- [Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America \(Tlatelolco Treaty\)](#)
- [African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty \(Pelindaba Treaty\)](#)
(including Annexes and Protocols) and [Cairo Declaration](#)
- [South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty \(Rarotonga Treaty\)](#) (and Protocols)
- [Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone Treaty \(Treaty of Bangkok\)](#)
- [Agreement between the Republic of Argentina, the Federative Republic of Brazil, the Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials \(ABACC\) and the IAEA for the Application of Safeguards](#)
- [Verification Agreement between the IAEA and the European Atomic Energy Community \(EURATOM\)](#)
- [Convention Relating to Civil Liability in the Field of Maritime Carriage of Nuclear Material \(NUCLEAR\)](#)
- [Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapons Tests in the Atmosphere, in Outer Space and Under Water](#)

- [Paris Convention on Third Party Liability in the Field of Nuclear Energy](#)
- [Brussels Convention Supplementary to the Paris Convention](#)

CHECK:

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

<https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2017-06/features/addressing-verification-nuclear-ban-treaty>

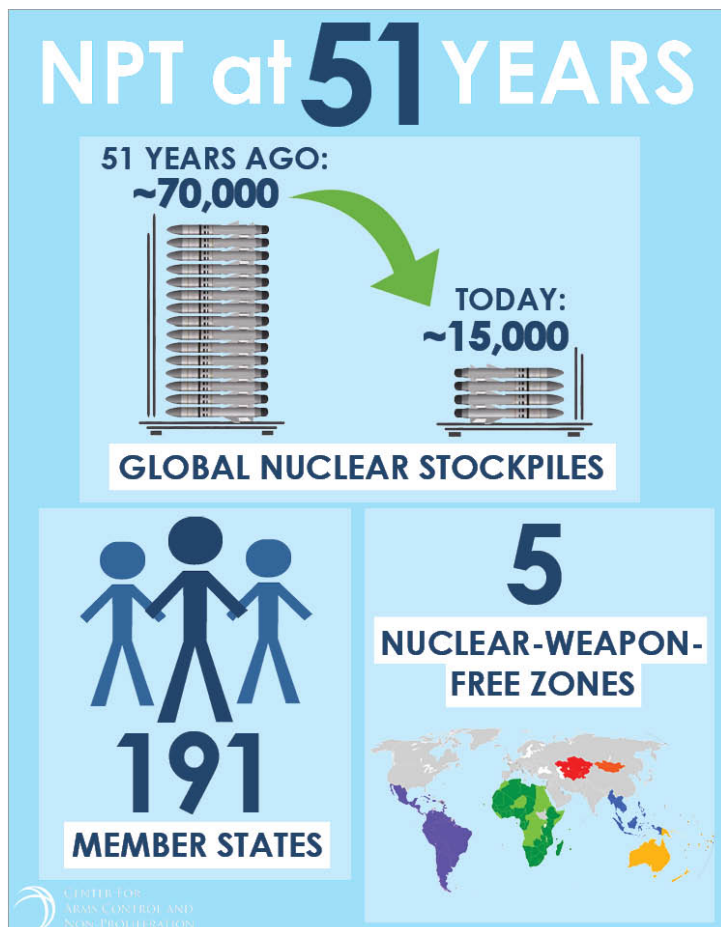
<https://www.icanw.org/region-africa#partners>

Is a free world of nuclear weapons achievable?

CHECK: <https://www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/nuclear-weapons-free-world-it-achievable>

<https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/is-a-world-without-nuclear-weapons-really-possible/>

Are countries making progress on disarmament?



CHECK: <https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/countryprofiles>

<https://www.armscontrol.org/issue-briefs/2022-11/plan-b-irans-accelerating-nuclear-program>

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

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

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

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

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

What is needed to advance the goal of non proliferation? **CHECK:**

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



Future Actions

What should your committee discuss?

Your committee should consider these questions:

- Should the global community focus on total elimination of nuclear weapons?
- Can the global community suggest ideas for the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) review?
- How can the commitments and of previous actions can be renewed? **CHECK:**

<https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UN-DOC/GEN/N18/420/25/PDF/N1842025.pdf?OpenElement>

EXPLOSIVE VIOLENCE MONITOR: 13 - 19 Jan 2023

ACTION ON
ARMED VIOLENCE
AOAV

116 incidents of Explosive Violence this week

641 casualties of Explosive Violence this week

446 civilian casualties of Explosive Violence this week

141
32%

Civilian casualties of air-launched explosive weapons this week

154
35%

Civilian casualties of ground-launched explosive weapons this week

144
32%

Civilian casualties of directly-emplaced weapons this week

4
1%

Civilian casualties of combined explosive weapons this week



UKRAINE

53 incidents of Explosive Violence this week

231 civilian casualties of Explosive Violence this week

Highest casualty incident: 14/01/23

46 civilians were killed and 80 injured in a Russian Kh-22 missile strike on an apartment block in Dnipro

SOMALIA

04 incidents of Explosive Violence this week

65 civilian casualties of Explosive Violence this week

Highest casualty incident: 14/01/23

18 civilians were killed and 24 injured in an Al Shabaab suicide car bomb attack on an admin building in Buulobarde, Hirshabelle

DRC

01 incidents of Explosive Violence this week

37 civilian casualties of Explosive Violence this week

Highest casualty incident: 15/01/23

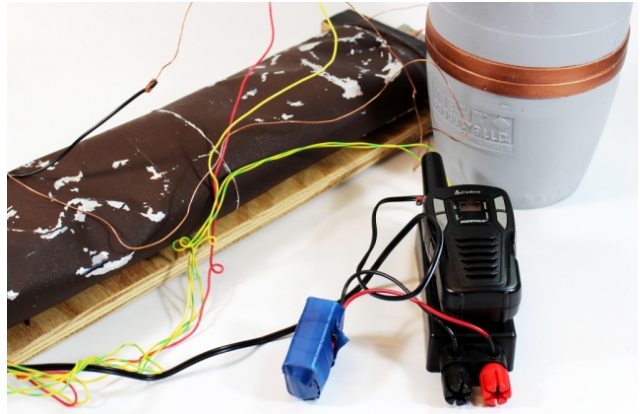
17 civilians were killed and 20 injured in an ADF attack on a church in Kasindi, North Kivu

CHECK: <https://aoav.org.uk/2023/explosive-violence-monitor-13-19-jan/>

TOPIC 2: COUNTERING THE THREAT POSED BY IMPROVISED EXPLOSIVE DEVICES



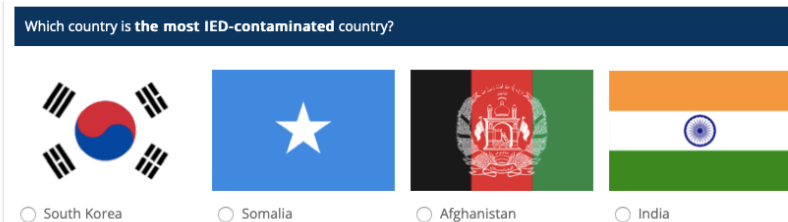
Risk-education materials distributed by UNMAS in northern Mali. Children are some of the primary victims of explosive remnants of war (ERWs) and Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs). Photo: UNMAS Mali



An Improvised Explosive Device (IED) created with common objects such as a mobile phone, common containers, and regular chords.

What is an Improvised Explosive Device (IED)?

The United Nations UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS) defines an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) as **“a device placed or fabricated in an improvised manner incorporating destructive, lethal, noxious, pyrotechnic, or incendiary chemicals and designed to destroy, incapacitate, harass, or distract. It may incorporate military stores, but is normally devised from nonmilitary components.”** You will probably need additional vocabulary to create plans and to propose solutions to manage IEDs effectively. **CHECK:** <https://unmas.org/en/improvised-explosive-device-lexicon>



TAKE A SHORT QUIZ to learn key facts about IEDS. **GO TO:** <https://take.quiz-maker.com/QHAV22A>

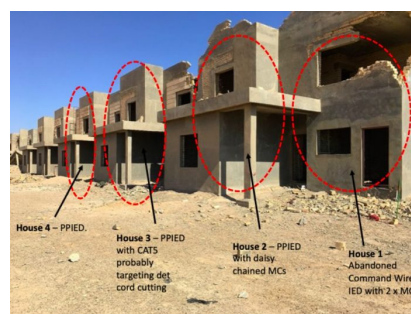
As Hannah Bryce and Henry Dodd reported in their research paper, *The Impact of IEDs on the Humanitarian Space in Afghanistan*, **“these devices can be cheap and simple to create, and their impact is disproportionately significant relative to their cost”**. These researchers estimated that **the average production cost of these IEDs in 2012 was comparatively low, at just over \$400**. However, a truck packed with explosives can cost almost \$20,000 to mobilize.”

Because these devices are improvised, they include extremely broad categories of weapons with significant variation across their means of manufacture and component parts. They can be made

from commercial, military, or home-made explosives, and vary considerably in their size and detonation methods. Some are buried under roads, others worn below clothes or disguised in empty Coke cans, or they may be so large that they need to be carried by vehicles. The levels of harm they cause differ accordingly. Devices such as car bombs, often containing larger amounts of explosive materials, can project the blast and carrying fragmentation over a very wide area.

"Improvised explosive devices are a uniquely dangerous weapon system due to their versatility, adaptability, and method of employment. IED incidents often result in a large number of civilian casualties, widespread destruction of infrastructure, and the economic disruption of entire communities". CHECK: http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/S_2014_41.pdf

Some IEDs are detonated on a time-delay using an analogue clock. Such devices are popular owing to their simplicity, but are notorious for being particularly hard to target at a specific objective. IEDs may also be victim-operated and activated when pressure is applied, functioning in the same way as anti-personnel landmines, which are banned by international law. In Afghanistan in 2014 there were 775 recorded civilian deaths and injuries from devices activated in this way.



They may also be command-operated and detonated from a distance using a remote-control device such as a mobile phone. In theory these devices can be more accurately targeted to detonate at an optimum time to hit a specific singular target and thus minimize wider incidental or unintentional damage. However, blast effects can still spread beyond the target. It was reported that at least 1,119 civilians were killed and injured in 2014 in incidents of armed opposition groups using remote control devices in Afghanistan.¹⁰ One particularly damaging subset of these command-control IEDs is the suicide-operated device initiated at a time of the bomber's choosing. In 2014 there were 1,582 recorded civilian casualties from suicide bombs in Afghanistan.

CHECK: https://unmas.org/sites/default/files/documents/understanding_ieds_iraq.pdf
<https://www.un.org/disarmament/convarms/production/>
https://www.unmas.org/sites/default/files/handbook_english.pdf

What is the problem?

WATCH: <https://youtu.be/TGb4b3V8SjA>

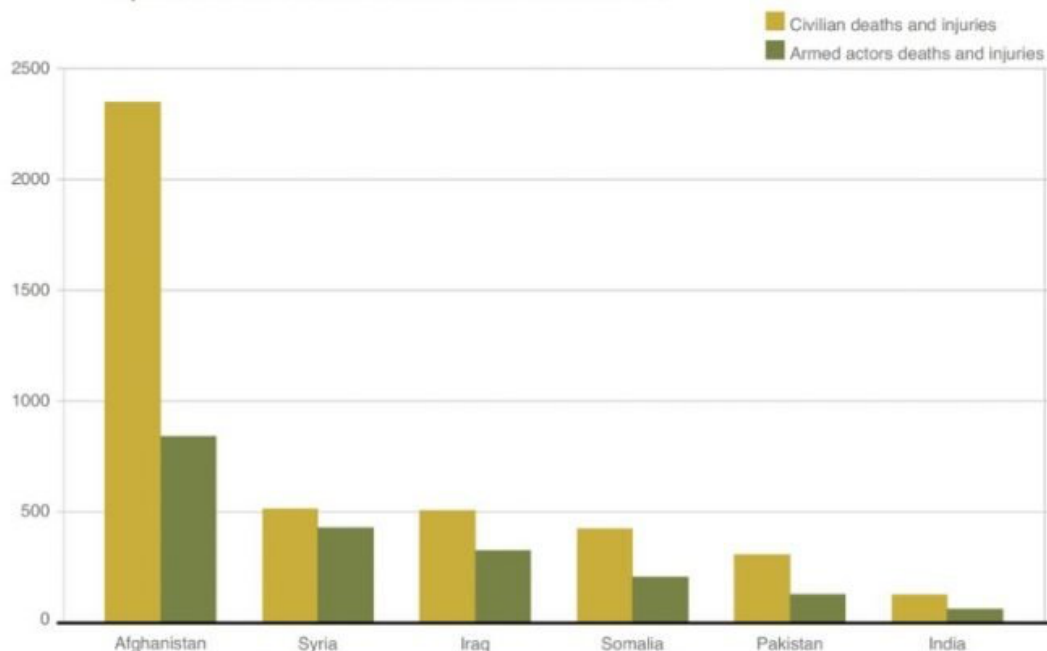
https://av.voanews.com/Videoroot/Pangeavideo/2016/10/f/f3/f3212616-54cf-4af0-b7a1-49a7eba79c33_hq.mp4

CHECK: https://minusma.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/202208_explosive_threat_overview_mali_en.pdf



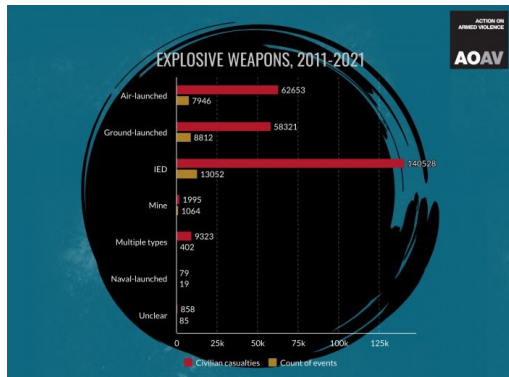
In 2021, according to the Action on Armed Violence (AOAV), **IEDs accounted for 43% of all global civilian casualties from explosive weapons, as reported in English-language media.** That year, some 4,726 people were killed or injured by a makeshift weapon that, over the last decade, has caused more harm to civilians than any other singular type of explosive device.

Top seven countries for civilian casualties of IEDs in 2021



To give this statement context, **between 2011 and 2020, IEDs caused 135,800 civilian deaths and injuries around the world.** When such weapons were used in towns and cities, 90% of those harmed were civilians.

Indeed, of all explosive weapon harm globally over 10 years, **53% of all civilians were harmed by IEDs**, compared to 23% by air-launched weapons, and 21% by ground-launched attacks.



Of note, in that 10-year period, the impact of IEDs was significantly higher than landmines. Whereas 55,275 civilians were reported killed or injured from car bombs, and 9,919 from road-side bombs, there were just 1,638 civilians harmed by mines as reported by English language media. In other words, suicide bombings – which resulted in 18,067 deaths and injuries, of which 14,112 (78%) were civilians – were reportedly almost nine times more injurious than all forms of mines (anti-personnel and anti-vehicle) combined, according to reputable English language media sources.

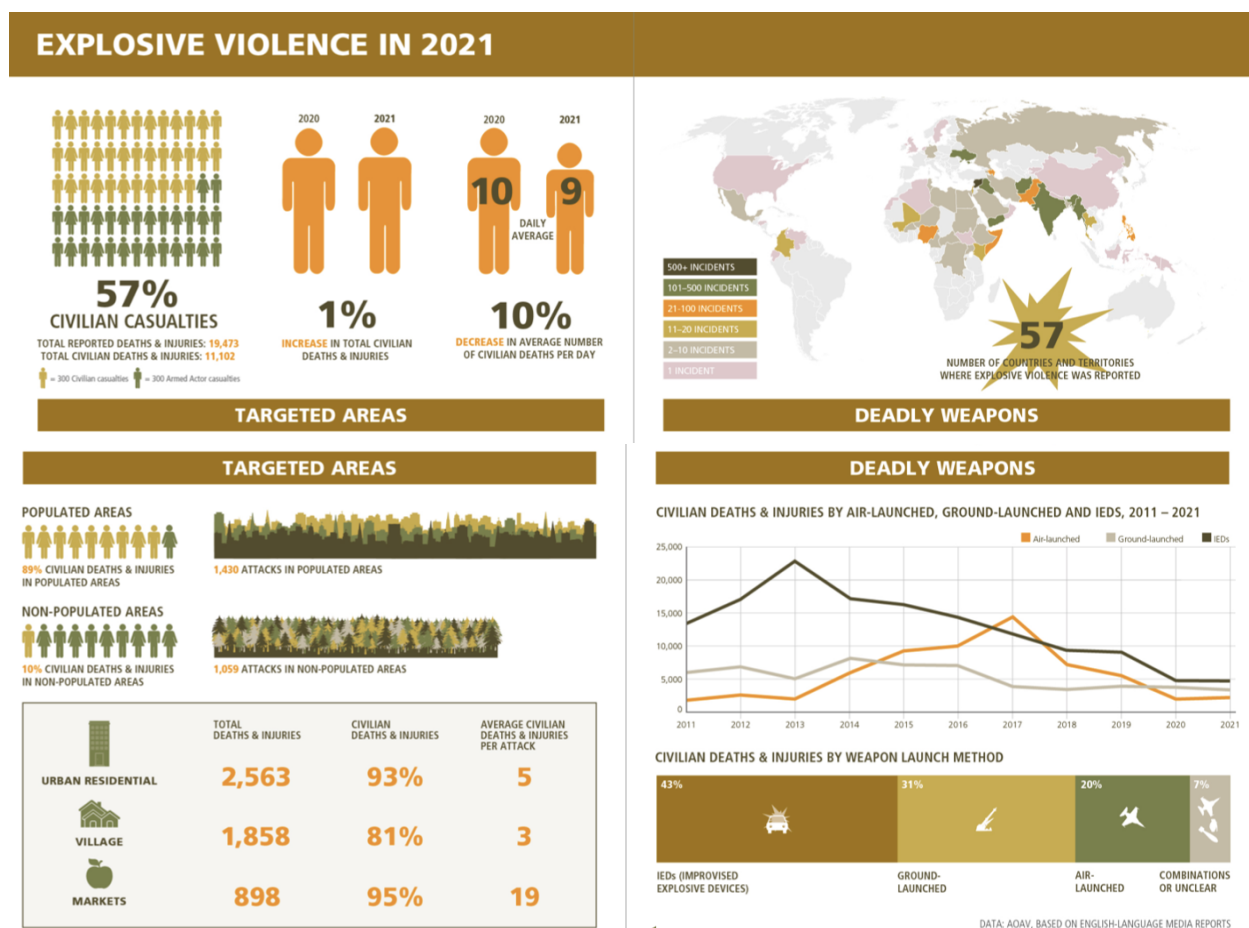


Peacekeepers are particularly affected too by IEDs. The United Nations Peacekeeping has reported that **“ninety-three peacekeepers have lost their lives to improvised explosive devices (IEDs) since United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali’s (MINUSMA) deployment to Mali in 2013. IED explosions have further injured 698 civilians and 596 peacekeepers to date (June 2022).** These recurring incidents constitute a stark reminder of the extent of the challenges that the Mission must face in its daily operations in pursuit of peace and security. Mines and IEDs continue to disrupt lives and hamper freedom

of movement for all alike in Mali; be it national authorities, civilians, uniformed service personnel or humanitarian organizations.

“These casualties and the injuries sustained by our service personnel demonstrate, if anything, the difficult operating environment in which we work. Nevertheless, the Mission continues to adapt to these complexities in northern and central Mali, in order to carry out the Mandate it was entrusted, a Mandate of accompaniment and support to the people and authorities of Mali,” expressed El-Ghassim WANE, the Head of MINUSMA, following the tragic passing of Captain Sameh ABDELGAWAD of Egypt’s convoy escort company on 17 March 2021.

Another dimension of the problem is that the use of IEDs is constantly increasing for several reasons. CHECK: <https://www.un.org/disarmament/convarms/ieds-a-growing-threat/>
<https://www.un.org/disarmament/convarms/ieds-a-growing-threat/>



Worst explosive incidents of 2021 in terms of civilian harm

Incident	Location	Civilian casualties
Islamic State suicide bombing outside Kabul's international airport ¹⁰	Kabul, Afghanistan	334
Car bomb at a girls school in Kabul ¹¹	Kabul, Afghanistan	330
Airstrike at a market in Tigray ¹²	Tigray, Ethiopia	244
Prison riot involving explosive and other weapons in Guayaquil ¹³	Guayas, Ecuador	197
Islamic State suicide bombing at Shia mosque in Kunduz ¹⁴	Kunduz, Afghanistan	150
Islamic State suicide bombing at mosque in Kandahar ¹⁵	Kandahar, Afghanistan	146
Twin suicide bombings at market in Baghdad ¹⁶	Baghdad, Iraq	142
Suicide car bomb attack, Logar ¹⁷	Logar, Afghanistan	134
Airstrikes on a residential building in Gaza ¹⁸	Gaza City, Gaza	121
Islamic state suicide bombing at market on eve of religious festival in Baghdad ¹⁹	Baghdad, Iraq	95

CHECK: https://aoav.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Explosive-Violence-Monitor-2021_v5.pdf

What has been the history of IEDs in the First Committee?

The First Committee has adopted multiple resolutions on the topic of **“countering the threat posed by improvised explosive devices”** in the last decade, most recently in 2022 with the adoption of **resolution 77/64, Countering the Threat Posed by Improvised Explosive Devices**. **CHECK:** <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3997945?ln=es> Expressing concern over the devastation caused by the increasing use of such devices by illegal armed groups and terrorists, it noted that attacks with IEDs have caused serious harm to UN staff and peacekeepers and to humanitarian workers. The resolution also encouraged states **“to respond to the needs of today’s peacekeepers to operate in new threat environments involving improvised explosive devices”**, including by providing the appropriate training, capabilities, and financial resources. **CHECK:** <https://aoav.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/UNGA77-1C-L41-IED-Resolution.pdf> Following up on resolution 70/46, the General Assembly adopted similar resolutions on countering the threat posed by improvised explosive devices in 2016, 2017 and 2018. **CHECK:** <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N16/423/71/PDF/N1642371.pdf?OpenElement> On 25 July 2016, the Secretary-General issued a report pursuant to resolution 70/46 with recommendations for ways forward on the issue. Amongst his findings, he noted that the use of IEDs was increasing and that “coordination and information sharing among member states” needed to be strengthened to counter this trend.

Two years before the First Committee adopted **resolution 75/59**. **C H E C K:** <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N20/356/30/PDF/N2035630.pdf?OpenElement> This

resolution included recognition of the increasingly sophisticated design and usage of IEDs by Non State Armed Groups (NSAGs) and acknowledges that existing multilateral arms frameworks do not sufficiently address the use of IEDs. It encourages Member States to improve local management of national ammunition stockpiles and commercial supply lines, while also highlighting the ability of international and regional organizations to provide technical, financial, and material assistance in countering IEDs. In 2020, the First Committee also received the report **“Countering the threat posed by improvised explosive devices: Report of the Secretary-General” (A/75/175)**, which provides an updated analysis of the proliferation of IEDs in an increasing number of conflict zones, most prominently in Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, and Libya, among others. It highlights the need for a “whole-of-system approach” from the UN in countering the threat of IEDs. Specifically, it tasks the **United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS)** with maintaining a toolbox that facilitates inter-organizational cooperation, enhanced synergies, the sharing of data and expertise, and the coordination of information. This whole-of-system approach encompasses the many organizations that work with the First Committee on IEDs, including the **Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA)**, United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS), and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). **CHECK:** https://front.un-arm.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/A_75_175-Improvised-explosive-devices.pdf

The General Assembly has played an important role in addressing the threat posed by IEDs as much as the Security Council has been a key player too. On 30 June 2017, the Council unanimously adopted **resolution 2365**, the first thematic resolution on mine action and IEDs. **CHECK:** <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/un-documents/document/sres2365.php> The resolution stressed the importance of both: **“ensuring, where appropriate, that peacekeeping operations are equipped, informed, and trained to reduce the threat posed by landmines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices”**; and “considering mine action during the earliest stages of planning and programming in peacekeeping operations”. Moreover, in his 21 June 2018 report, submitted pursuant to resolution 2365, the Secretary-General noted that “the use of small arms, improvised explosive devices, vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices and landmines resulted in the majority of fatalities among peacekeepers”.

Soon afterwards, on 2 August 2017, the Security Council adopted **resolution 2370**, which aims at preventing the flow of small arms and light weapons to terrorists and the obligations of member states in this regard. **CHECK:** <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/un-documents/document/sres2370.php> **Noting the increasing and frequent global use of IEDs in terrorist attacks, it calls on member states to: “raise awareness to the threats of IEDs, and enhance the institutional capabilities and resources for preventing and countering such threats, including by collaborating with the private sector”; and to “share information, establish partnerships, and develop national strategies and capabilities to counter IEDs”.**

In April 2021, during the presidency of Viet Nam, the Council will convene a ministerial-level open debate on mine action with a resolution as a possible outcome. That meeting may serve as a platform to discuss new threats and challenges posed by both landmines and IEDs.



It is important to keep in mind that from a legal perspective, according to United Nations Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) <https://unidir.org/sites/default/files/publication/pdfs/-en-641.pdf>, **“the only existing legal instrument that explicitly mentions IEDs is the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) Amended Protocol II. The Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects** was adopted on 10 October 1980 and entered into force on 2 December 1983. Its purpose is to prohibit or restrict the use in armed conflict of specific types of weapons that are considered to cause unnecessary or unjustifiable suffering to combatants or to affect civilians indiscriminately. It consists in a framework convention with general provisions and a series of protocols addressing specific weapons. The Convention was amended on 21 December 2001 by making it possible for states parties to apply the whole Convention not only to international armed conflicts but also to non- international armed conflict.

Additional Protocol II on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Mines, Booby Traps and Other Devices was adopted at the same time as the Convention in 1980. Protocol II was amended on 3 May 1996 and the Amended Protocol entered into force on 3 December 1998. The amendment extended the scope of application of the Protocol from international armed conflicts to non- international armed conflict in accordance with Article 3 common to the Geneva Conventions, and defined the various categories of mines whose use was restricted.

Amended Protocol II is the most relevant instrument to IEDs and the only legally binding one explicitly mentioning them. Due to the diversity in their composition, several provisions of the Protocol are particularly relevant:

Article 2 (4) on booby-traps: “any device or material which is designed, constructed or adapted to kill or injure, and which functions unexpectedly when a person disturbs or approaches an apparently harmless object or performs an apparently safe act.”

Article 2 (5) on “other devices”: “manually emplaced munitions and devices including improvised explosive devices designed to kill, injure, or damage and which are actuated manually, by remote control or automatically after a lapse of time.”

Check: <https://www.unmas.org/en/unmas/un-documents>

From an operational perspective, UNODA reports to the First Committee and is responsible for providing substantive and operational support towards the goal of general and complete disarmament, which includes the cessation of IED use. UNODA oversees **the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (PoA SALW)**, which monitors commitments from Member States on the improvement of weapon import and export controls, and stockpile management, both of which are essential in countering the proliferation of IED components. Member States are required to submit national reports that provide localized information on the implementation of the PoA. UNODA is also a signatory to the UN Counter-Terrorism Compact, a group of 40 UN entities and three observer organizations: International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), the World Customs Organization (WCO), and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). **CHECK:** <https://www.un.org/disarmament/convarms/salw/programme-of-action/> <https://smallarms.un-arm.org> to check the **COUNTRY REPORTS**

UNMAS has been designated by the General Assembly as the primary coordinator for mine action within the UN system. Although the UN places the primary responsibility for landmine clearance on national governments, UNMAS works to coordinate national responses, provide technical and financial assistance, and improve public awareness on the risk of landmines. Although IEDs cannot be considered universally synonymous to landmines, much of UNMAS' activities have cross-cutting impacts towards countering the proliferation of IEDs. For example, in 2018, UNMAS produced the *United Nations **Improvised Explosive Device Disposal Standards (IEDSS)***, which provides detailed technical guidance on IED disposal for IED disposal operators. These standards emphasize preparing to respond to IED threats before well-defined humanitarian consequences emerge, as IEDs are continuously altered to increasing complexity. UNMAS also facilitated the adoption of the ***United Nations Mine Action Strategy 2019-2023 (2018)***, which serves as the UN's primary framework for investment and delivery in mine action and response.

Given the nature of its work, the Security Council also plays a fundamental role in monitoring and regulating the proliferation and use of explosive devices, including IEDs, in conflict zones. In its country-specific work, it may include bans on components that can contribute to the construction of IEDs as part of international sanctions. For example, in response to increasing IED attacks by the NSAG Al-Shabaab in Somalia, the Security Council instated a ban on the direct or indirect sale or supply of components that may be used to manufacture IEDs, including certain chemicals and detonators.

INTERPOL has a key role in identifying and tracking those who manufacture the components of explosive devices, including IEDs. **Project Watchmaker** is an INTERPOL initiative providing a database of records to help Member States track individuals suspected to be involved in the manufacture or use of explosives. By working with national governments, law enforcement, and chemical industry partners, INTERPOL helps identify and reduce the risk posed by precursor chemicals that can be used to construct devices like IEDs. The Global Shield Programme, a collaboration between INTERPOL and the WCO, monitors the licit trade and movement of the most common chemicals and other materials that could be used to produce IEDs to combat their illicit trafficking. In addition to combating the diversion of materials used to manufacture IEDs, the Global Shield Programme also helps raise global awareness of the threats posed by dual-use materials and chemicals that can be used in the construction of IEDs, as well as collaborating with the private sector to establish best practices to avoid such illicit diversion in trade.

Civil society organizations play a significant role in supporting global commitments to mine action programs and reducing armed violence at large. They help provide monitoring and information sharing related to the causes of weapons-based violence; for example, **Action on Armed Violence (AOAV)** is a nongovernmental organization with a mission to disseminate information and evidence of explosive violence to national parliaments and other relevant stakeholders to help reduce the impact of armed violence. AOAV operates the Explosive Violence Monitor, a monitoring project using English-language media reports to capture information on incidents of explosive violence whose materials have been cited in this guide. Similarly, the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) is an organization dedicated to collecting and analyzing data on all political violence and protests across Africa, the Middle East, Latin America and the Caribbean, East Asia, South Asia, Southeast Asia, Central Asia and the Caucasus, Europe, and the United States. Data aggregated and mapped by ACLED is accessed by practitioners, researchers, and governments to develop more efficient solutions to armed violence worldwide.

There are also many humanitarian and civil society organizations, such as The HALO Trust and Mines Advisory Group, that manually remove IEDs in conflict-affected countries like Iraq and Afghanistan, through funding from Member States and private entities. These types of organizations are considered crucial partners in not only removing IEDs themselves, but also in piloting new technologies to destroy them more quickly and safely. They also help Member States better improve the security stockpiles of precursor items for IEDs, such as ammunition and explosives.

Illicit Diversion of Ammunition



As highlighted by UNODA, accurate information and data on global ammunition flows is a challenge to maintain, as more than 80% of ammunition trade lies outside of verifiable export data. **Ammunition diverted into illicit markets is a key enabler in IED manufacturing.** Although IEDs can be constructed from non-military components, the manufacturing process is significantly easier if military ammunition or explosives can be repurposed.

How this ammunition is diverted from official supply chains varies in sophistication, ranging from individual soldiers to complex forms of diversion and sale at higher levels of the command chain. This is generally enabled through a systemic lack of ammunition accountability and poor maintenance of government ammunition stockpiles. For example, the Security Council has noted that individuals within the national military of the Democratic Republic of the Congo have engaged in the sale of ammunition and weapons to NSAGs in contravention of the arms embargo that has been in place in the country since 2003.

Poorly managed ammunition tracking is also linked to an increase in conflict and crime overall, even in cases where IEDs are not present. The popularity of certain types of explosives among non-state actors seems to correspond to its availability, meaning that legitimate military forces may find themselves undersupplied and under-armed due to the diversion of supplies to the black market, and existing weapons may be rendered useless. As military-grade weapons and supplies also have higher manufacturing and processing standards than civilian supplies, these materials can be significantly more dangerous in the wrong hands, but may also provide increased opportunities for tracking due to military markings and headstamps. This is particularly true in the case of bullet cartridges, which contain explosive chemicals and are therefore desirable to black market traders, but are also more likely to be batch-stamped than other supplies, leading to easier tracing with appropriate forethought, planning, and tracking. **CHECK:** <https://www.un.org/disarmament/convarms/ammunition/more-on-ammunition/>

Additionally, in more than 103 countries over the past 50 years, poorly stored ammunition stockpiles have exploded accidentally, resulting in thousands of deaths and the disruption of already fragile communities. These cases of explosions due to poor management have also resulted in

a diversion of pilfered supplies to illegal markets, in which case the supplies might be poorly stored, unstable, or inappropriately packaged, increasing risks to transporters and handlers who may be unaware of what materials are contained within.

The First Committee has recognized the risks associated with Member States possessing surplus ammunition stockpiles and has called upon governments to reduce excess ammunition stock. These risks are exacerbated when ammunition stockpiles are poorly managed or in disrepair. At the request of the First Committee, UNODA established the SaferGuard programme in 2011 and adopted the **International Ammunition Technical Guidelines (IATG)**. The IATG provides extensive guidance for Member States on responsible ammunition accounting, storage, security, transport, and destruction. Although the IATG can assist Member States in the development of operational standards of practice, their implementation will generally fall to the national governments of the Member States themselves. Naturally, in areas of conflict where government control may be unstable, or where national borders are poorly secured, it can be difficult for these operational standards to be maintained, thereby exacerbating the risk of diversion or theft of ammunition.

Conclusion

IEDs are becoming more commonplace, available, and sophisticated and serve to exacerbate existing conflict, inequalities, and crisis. Given the nature of their production and usage, they exist outside of official government oversight and are disproportionately used to target non-combatants, such as civilians. At the broadest level, the international community has been unable to adopt a universal definition of IEDs and, as such, their place within international standards and controls remains ambiguous when compared with other SALW or anti-personnel landmines. At an operational level, the UN and national governments must endeavor to foster the “whole-of-system approach” called for by the Secretary-General, an approach that requires multi-faceted responses to complex challenges including the proliferation of ammunition, the transport of precursor chemicals, and the monitoring of NSAGs in areas of conflict.

Future Actions

What should your committee discuss?

Your committee should consider the following questions:

- How might the international community develop a definition of IEDs?
- How would this interface with existing frameworks, such as the IATG and UNMAS?
- How can national governments avoid the illicit diversion of ammunition or precursor chemicals?
- How can the sharing of guidance on the construction of IEDs be avoided?
- How do IEDs influence the effectiveness of peacekeeping missions, and how can the General Assembly and Security Council collaborate to mitigate this impact?