

INTERNATIONAL LEADERSHIP TEXAS/ OSGOOD CENTER  
LONE STAR MODEL UNITED NATIONS 2023 (LSMUN)

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**UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY GA1  
DISARMAMENT AND SECURITY COMMITTEE (DISEC)**

**Background Guide**

**Richardson, Texas / November 4-5, 2023**

## What is the role of the General Assembly, First Committee?

The First Committee (DISEC) 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/>



A cornerstone of **collective security**  
An irreplaceable component of **peacekeeping**

## Aim

**Limiting** the quantity of **nuclear weapons** worldwide.



# 191

States Parties

## NON-STATES PARTIES

India  
Israel  
Pakistan  
South Sudan

North Korea initiated a procedure to withdraw in **2003**.

**Iran is an NPT member and the nuclear deal rests on enhanced IAEA\* inspections.**

\* The IAEA is the International Atomic Energy Agency.

The NPT recognizes **FIVE** nuclear weapons States (NWS):

China  
France  
Russia  
United Kingdom  
United States

# THREE PILLARS

## RESOURCES TO GET STARTED

### TOPIC 1: MITIGATING THE HUMANITARIAN IMPACT OF CONVENTIONAL ARMS



**What are conventional arms? What are some other terms and issues that a delegate should know about to advance the work of the DISEC?**

**READ:** <https://disarmament.unoda.org/conventional-arms/>  
<https://disarmament.unoda.org/convarms/ammunition/>  
<https://press.un.org/en/2021/sc14656.doc.htm#:~:text=peace%20and%20security,-%E2%80%9CThe%20misuse%2C%20illicit%20transfer%20and%20destabilizing%20accumulation%20of%20small%20arms,populations%20already%20suffering%20from%20conflict%2C%E2%80%9D>

**What can be done to address the problem?**

<https://www.youth4disarmament.org/spotlight/how-can-action-conventional-weapons-help-us-achieve-sustainable-development-goals>  
[https://undir.org/sites/default/files/2022-08/UNIDIR\\_Initial\\_Impact\\_Ammunition\\_Profiling\\_Bedfordshire\\_Factsheet.pdf](https://undir.org/sites/default/files/2022-08/UNIDIR_Initial_Impact_Ammunition_Profiling_Bedfordshire_Factsheet.pdf)  
[https://undir.org/sites/default/files/2023-08/FPI\\_UNIDIR\\_Technologies\\_to\\_Counter\\_Diversion\\_of\\_SALW\\_and\\_Components\\_of\\_Conventional\\_Weapons.pdf](https://undir.org/sites/default/files/2023-08/FPI_UNIDIR_Technologies_to_Counter_Diversion_of_SALW_and_Components_of_Conventional_Weapons.pdf)  
<https://undir.org/programmes/caap>

**What are the guiding principles in addressing the use of conventional arms?**

<https://education.unoda.org/docs/pillar2.pdf>  
<https://education.unoda.org/docs/pillar4.pdf>  
<https://education.unoda.org/docs/sdg.pdf>

### TOPIC 2: ENGAGING YOUNG LEADERS TO SECURE OUR COMMON FUTURE IN THE GLOBAL DISARMAMENT AGENDA

**Why are young leaders key in the global disarmament agenda?**

<https://disarmament.unoda.org/disarmament-and-youth/#:~:text=Young%20people%20around%20the%20world,conventional%20arms%2C%20including%20their%20proliferation>  
<https://www.youth4disarmament.org/news/how-disarmament-and-arms-control-contribute-sustainable-development>  
<https://youth4disarmament.org/>  
<https://education.unoda.org/docs/youth.pdf>  
<https://education.unoda.org/docs/10-actions.pdf>