General Assembly First Committee
Disarmament and International Security

Education for Disarmament

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Introduction

What role should the United Nations play in promotion of support for global disarmament? Whether the focus is on weapons of mass destruction—chemical, biological and nuclear weapons—or conventional weapons including the illicit trade in small arms (firearms), the UN has long been the center of global activism.

Cultivating support for disarmament has long been part of the UN programme. Disarmament education has strong support from many Member States. But it is under greater stress than ever. For the first time, great powers are challenging initiatives previously taken for granted. For delegates at ODUMUNC 50, the future of disarmament education is far from clear.

Since its creation, the United Nations has maintained disarmament as one of its central responsibilities. The effort to reduce, control, or eliminate weapons, and the dangers created by them has produced several UN resolutions. This includes the very first resolution adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1946, Resolution 1(I), which established a commission to target issues caused by atomic energy and weaponry (the UN Atomic Energy Commission).

Due to the fact that weapons, including nuclear, chemical, biological, and conventional weapons, as well as newer applications of artificial intelligence, have remained commonplace in international conflicts and conversations, disarmament continues to be a frequently debated topic. Today, nine states possess nuclear weapons, and it is estimated that there are 12,187 nuclear warheads worldwide. While the United Nations itself emphasizes that disarmament should not and is not limited to nuclear weapons, statistics concerning nuclear weaponry aid in painting a clear picture as to why disarmament is important.

As noted on the United Nations web page *Disarmament Education: Building a Safer World for All through Education*, "With increasingly sophisticated means of production, delivery and dissemination of armaments, it is not only soldiers on the battlefield who are casualties, but an increasing number of civilians". Addressing disarmament through international agreements such as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (1968) or the Arms Trade Treaty of 2013 handles only one side of the issue, failing to account for the usage of smaller, conventional weapons for activities used in wars today, terrorism and organized crime. This other half of disarmament must be handled differently.

In order to reach affected civilians worldwide, the United Nations has made efforts in the field of disarmament education, shifting into the role of professor to maintain its role as peacekeeper. This shift notably led to the 2002 United Nations study, *Study on Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Education,* which identified education as an underutilized tool for disarmament and offered thirty-four recommendations for action, encouraging the prioritization of education in terms of promoting peace and reducing the damage done by weapons.

Rather than teaching people worldwide a list of treaties, the goal of education for disarmament is to allow everyone to become a capable participant in the process of disarmament. The study emphasized that different audiences educational may have different educational needs, suggesting that educational materials on disarmament “need to be adapted and integrated into existing educational or training materials at various levels of education and for different target audiences”.

Disarmament education is an essential component of international efforts to prevent and reduce armed conflict and build a culture of peace. Education can not only address the conditions that allow cycles of violence and insecurity to persist, but it can create generations of people who are understanding of and willing to support international peace and security through long-term disarmament efforts. Simple exposure and education on the topic of disarmament can foster tolerance, respect for international systems, critical thinking, and create conditions in which disarmament and conflict prevention are more sustainable.

Through its disarmament bodies, peace and security initiatives, and partnerships with governments and educational institutions, the United Nations can establish command standards and expand access to effective disarmament education. Despite its importance, disarmament education faces challenges in the form of limited resources, uneven access to educational opportunities, the persistence of armed conflict, and growing public exposure to misinformation and disinformation. As a result of these issues, it’s been difficult to cultivate and maintain a shared global understanding of the risks associated with weapons and the importance of disarmament.

Background

Disarmament education, the process of teaching people about disarmament, arms control, and the role these issues play in international peace and security, has two sides according to the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA). UNODA explains on their webpage on the topic of disarmament education that the matter includes "encompass[es] both education *on* and *for* disarmament", meaning that students should learn not only about the weapons and international agreements, but students should also develop the knowledge and skills necessary to participate in efforts to reduce weapons and conflict.

The United Nations recognized the importance of such education for decades, tracing back to the first Special Session of the General Assembly Devoted to Disarmament in 1978, in which member states emphasized the need for education and research on disarmament. In 1989, the General Assembly adopted Resolution 44/123, aptly titled "Education for Disarmament", which encouraged both member states and international organizations alike to develop educational programs on the topic. These initial efforts are what led to the aforementioned 2002 study, *Study on Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Education*, which recommended the expansion of educational opportunities and types of education provided.

Education on and for disarmament is especially important for youth, something that has been noted by the United Nations. In 2019, UNODA created the *#Youth4Disarmament* initiative, reaching out to connect young people with experts and encourage meaningful participation in disarmament discussions.

The United Nations has since emphasized the role young people can play in raising awareness, developing new approaches to challenges, and contributing to a global culture of peace and security. This emphasis has made schools an important environment for introducing students to and educating them on the matter of disarmament and how international decisions can affect their future.

The UN's Office of Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) has also created resources specifically designed for teachers and students, including *Disarmament: A Basic Guide* for students at the high school level and a free Disarmament Education Dashboard that provides educational websites on the topic. These resources allow students to study complex security issues while considering different perspectives and strategies to solve them.

Increasing access to disarmament education, however, remains a challenge as students around the world have varying levels of access to the educational resources and technology necessary to participate in this growing international discussion. Governments, schools, international organizations, educators, and youth must all cooperate in order for effective disarmament education to spread further.

Ultimately, disarmament education can help create a global population that understands the risks posed by weapons and the importance of non-violent conflict resolution. Until this education can reach every corner of the world, however, it remains unclear just how far disarmament education can carry humanity into the future.

Current Situation

Despite the United Nations' promotion of disarmament education, recent developments in weaponry, technology, and armed conflict have made the issue more urgent. Now, most debates and discussions surrounding disarmament education question not its effectiveness but how it should be implemented. The United Nations' Secretary-General's 2024 report on disarmament and non-proliferation education emphasizes the continuing need to educate students, young professionals, and the broader public about weapons, arms control, and peaceful conflict resolution. In December of that year, the General Assembly adopted Resolution 79/28 without a vote, reaffirming international support for continued work on disarmament education.

The first and most frequently debated issue is in terms of disarmament education is unequal access to quality education on the topic. Despite the development and production of educational materials, online resources, fellowships, and youth programs by the United Nations, disarmament is a topic that is applied to school curriculums inconsistently. This creates significant differences in students' knowledge, even as they attend the same schools. For students without access to technology, the knowledge gap widens exponentially.

Work done by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) on education for disarmament and peace also stresses the importance of integrating human rights and global citizenship into educational systems. Access to quality disarmament education also includes the challenge of teaching competing perspectives while emphasizing verified, evidence-based information alongside humanitarian consequences and international law. Disarmament debates can be politically sensitive, especially in regards to nuclear deterrence, national security, and domestic conflicts. In order to effectively educate, such issues need to be considered heavily.

Another issue that the United Nations faces is keeping education relevant to new security threats rather than solely focusing on nuclear weaponry and conventional arms. There is an increasing need for students to understand technologies such as artificial intelligence, autonomous weapons, and biotechnologies. The rapid development of science and technology outpaces the response rate

of many of the educational systems currently in place. The third challenge is meaningful participation of youth, as future generations are the key to maintaining international peace. Expansion of youth initiatives and opportunities such as the UNODA Youth4Disarmament initiative is necessary to ensure that education creates a knowledgeable and capable generation rather than simply passing off information.

UNODA is the leading international actor on education for disarmament, as it actively works to develop educational resources, coordinate youth initiatives, and support training. UNESCO is another notable UN actor as its broader mandate concerning peace education and its 2023 *Recommendation on Education for Peace, Human Rights, and Sustainable Development* overlap with disarmament education.

Among states, Japan stands out as dedicated to the issue, having been affected historically by the usage of nuclear arms in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Japan has even submitted a dedicated disarmament and non-proliferation education working paper to the 2026 Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) review conference in Spring of 2026. Other states, mostly those that are more developed, have also participated in the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative (NPDI), including the United States, Australia, Canada, Germany, and the United Arab Emirates, amongst others.

Other important actors include Peace Boat, a non-governmental organization that uses international dialogue, survivor testimonies, and youth programs to teach about the consequences of nuclear weaponry. The Open Nuclear Network also contributes through lectures, training, research, and workshops on nuclear security. United, governments, UN organizations, NGOs, and educators alike can make disarmament education practical and accessible to people worldwide.

The Role of the United Nations

Despite certain limits, the United Nations plays a central role in the coordination and promotion of disarmament and non-proliferation education. Though its ability to directly change national education systems is severely limited, and, under the UN Charter, member states are primarily responsible for disarmament, the UN offers an open forum for cooperation and supports governments and organizations in implementing new, international norms. The General Assembly is the most important body regarding disarmament education as Article 11 of the UN Charter specifically gives the General Assembly authority to consider disarmament and arms regulation and to make recommendations to Member States and the Security Council. Through the General Assembly's First Committee, which addresses disarmament and international security directly, resolutions on disarmament education are considered. The General Assembly is also able to request reports on the topic from the Secretary-General, such as the 2024 *Eleventh Biennial Report of the Secretary-General on Disarmament and Non-Proliferation.*

Supporting the General Assembly is UNODA, the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, the main UN office responsible for supporting this issue. UNODA creates and develops educational programs, youth opportunities, and a wide variety of resources on the topic of disarmament. Its efforts seek to improve the reach, coordination, and sustainability of UN educational programs. The initiatives created by UNODA are especially important due to their bridging the gap between youth and disarmament education and international discussions.

The Secretary-General also contributes by reporting progress, encouraging international cooperation, and using diplomatic influence to promote disarmament. While UN agencies and bodies can support education and research and partnerships with NGOs and academic institutions can extend the United Nations' reach, the UN

cannot force countries to adopt curriculums, nor can it guarantee that governments are implementing its recommendations. It is crucial to note that these recommendations are not binding laws. Legally binding disarmament requires Member States to negotiate, sign, and implement international agreements. The UN's ability to coordinate international action and establish international norms is its biggest strength, rather than directly controlling national educational policies.

Landmark UN Resolutions

A major precedent was General Assembly Resolution 55/33 E (2000), which initiated the creation of a comprehensive United Nations study on disarmament.

This process culminated in General Assembly Resolution 57/60 (2002), which welcomed the Secretary General's study and its recommendations for immediate and long-term implementation. The resolution called on several actors including member states, international organizations, NGOs, the United Nations, and civil society to implement the recommendations wherever possible and appropriate.

Resolution 57/60 was adopted without a vote, demonstrating broad support for disarmament education. This commitment was reaffirmed through a series of resolutions, including 59/93 (2004), 61/73 (2006), 63/80 (2008), and, more recently, 75/61 (2020) and 77/52 (2022). The repeated adoption of these resolutions has established a continuing precedent that education should work alongside formal arms-control and disarmament agreements.

Even more recent developments include Resolution 78/31 (2023), Y*outh, Disarmament, and Non-Proliferation,* and Resolution 79/28, adopted in December of 2024. The first resolution strengthened the connection between youth participation and education, reflecting a shift from viewing education simply as the transfer of information towards viewing education as a tool to prepare youth and give them the skills necessary to participate in diplomacy and peacekeeping. The second recognized the usefulness of UNODA's online educational resources and was adopted without a vote, indicating continued agreement amongst UN Member States on the topic of disarmament education since Resolution 57/60.

Country and Bloc Positions

China generally stands in support of disarmament education, notably through the UN framework and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). China's particular position emphasizes the strengthening of international cooperation and ensuring that education supports peaceful uses of nuclear technology. UN-led programs and respect for national sovereignty are both favored by China.

The European Union and its 27 Member States, is one of the strongest supporters of the expansion of disarmament education. Collectively, these states argue that education gives individuals the knowledge needed to contribute to disarmament and future peacekeeping. Not only this, but the EU asserts that disarmament education can improve society's ability to identify misinformation regarding powerful weapons. The EU supports the Proliferation and Disarmament Consortium, which provides educational and training opportunities for young professionals. Proposals involving youth programs, teacher training, and civil-society participation are likely to be preferred by members of the EU.

Japan is one of the most committed advocates of disarmament education due to its history. As a result of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, disarmament is a personal issue to the state. It strongly supports education that preserves the testimony and experience of survivors, promotes nuclear disarmament, and prepares younger generations to address nuclear risks specifically. In March of 2026, Japan submitted a dedicated working paper to the NPT Review Conference on disarmament

and non-proliferation education. Japan is a supporter of stronger UN educational programs with an emphasis on survivor testimonies.

The Non-Aligned Movement, or NAM, is the UN's largest bloc with 120 Member States and 18 observers. It generally emphasizes the importance of the UN as a central institution for international disarmament. NAM states frequently stress that quality disarmament education should be available to developing countries and should address all the humanitarian consequences of weapons as well as the currently unequal distribution of disarmament educational expertise and resources. Historically, the NAM has argued for equal participation of all states in multilateral disarmament negotiations and is likely to support increased access and a larger emphasis on nuclear disarmament within disarmament education.

Russian Federation: Officially, Russia supports the UN disarmament system and the institutions involved in it, including the General Assembly First Committee, the Disarmament Commission, and the Conference on Disarmament. However, educational initiatives that may seem to put what Russia considers unfair pressure will be opposed by Russia. Russian middle school and high school public education stresses military values and military training for all students. In the UN, it supports 'balanced treatment' of different national security perspectives within disarmament education. In practice, this requires leaving policy-making up to each state individually.

T**he United States** government at the UN is suspicious of disarmament initiatives, which it believes are designed against America's right to self-defense and help other countries cheat. The US also opposes any initiative by the UN affecting education. The United States regards education as the unique responsibility of each sovereign state to decide as it will, free of international pressure of any sort. It will oppose resolutions on this topic. If preventing or stopping debate is not possible, expect the US to work to dilute the impact of any draft resolution.

Some Possible Proposals for Action

The UN is actively engaged in disarmament education. But the future of these efforts is not certain. Will they expand or be reduced? Delegates at ODUMUNC 50 will decide. Below are some major proposals for action to be considered.

The Member States of the UN General Assembly are free to choose any path of action—or non-action—that they prefer. As sovereign states, they are not bound by the precedence of past UN resolutions, or even by their own votes. But they are limited by the UN's preference for consensus decisions when possible, and a majority vote when necessary. Unlike resolutions of the Security Council, General Assembly resolutions are not enforceable. A Member State that votes against a GA resolution is likely to ignore it even if it passes.

Expand access to free, multilingual digital education, particularly for students and teachers living in developing countries. This builds off Resolution 79/28's call for electronic distribution of disarmament education in as many official UN languages as possible, encouraging expert networks and "educate the educator" programs.

Request voluntary funding from Member States may increase to support UNODA's educational programs. An increased and consistent amount of funding would allow for the expansion of fellowships, teacher-training programs, youth exchanges, and educational materials. Internationally coordinated projects may offer better results in comparison to individualized projects dependent on small-time voluntary contributions.

Make education more relevant to newer technologies as students find themselves living in a world unlike yesterday. Nuclear risks now must be understood alongside other technologies such as artificial intelligence, autonomous weapons, and biotechnology. To this end, UNODA could work with educators to develop updated curricula.

Make youth participation a permanent pillar in disarmament diplomacy. The 2025 Youth4Disarmament Forum produced several recommended courses of action on nuclear weapons and emerging technologies, demonstrating that young people can contribute directly to international discussions and policy. Expanding these programs would aid in the creation of a new generation of diplomats, educators, and policymakers capable of addressing future issues of disarmament.

Abandon the precedents of previous resolutions and direct global policy in a new direction. This could leave issues of education policy entirely up to each Member States, including responsibility for national priorities and funding. This will be string opposed by Member States who previously supported cultivation of a global consensus in favor of disarmament, such as Europe and Japan. But will attract support of states stressing national sovereignty, including Russia, the United States, any maybe even members of the Non-Aligned Movement.

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