

United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR)

Submission to the Secretary-General's report on Youth, disarmament and non-proliferation
(A/RES/78/31)

The United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) is committed to engaging with youth and creating conditions that allow them to progress and play an active role in shaping decisions. This will enable the international community to build a strong foundation in arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament to safeguard the interests of present and future generations – in line with The Pact and the UN General Assembly resolution on “Youth, Disarmament and Non-proliferation” (78/31).

As part of our youth engagement approach, UNIDIR is working on three key fronts:

1) Promoting a youth-inclusive workforce

UNIDIR promotes youth inclusion in its practices by building disarmament research capacity among the next generation. We have a well-established Graduate Professional Programme, which provides young people with practical experience in a research institute that serves the global community on questions of international security and assists with disarmament efforts. In turn, Graduate Professionals are a diverse group, often fluent in a variety of languages, that bring innovative and valuable perspectives to the field of disarmament.

2) Raising awareness of arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament among youth

UNIDIR actively engages youth in arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament issues through outreach and awareness raising initiatives. We offer an online Youth Disarmament Orientation course which provides age-appropriate content, including key concepts on disarmament and up-to-date information on relevant topics. Our work also builds knowledge, capacity and skills on disarmament by offering lectures for students in higher education institutions upon their request. The Youth Disarmament Orientation course is available online at <https://unidir.org/what-we-do/unidir-academy/youth-disarmament-orientation-course/>

3) Fostering knowledge of youth, peace and security and amplifying perspectives

UNIDIR advances research on youth, peace and security issues, as well as engages youth in research and policy work on disarmament. We carry out research on the needs of young people during rehabilitation, reintegration and post-conflict reconstruction. We gather age- and gender-disaggregated data on youth in conflict, to understand their experiences and ensure their unique needs are addressed in programming.

Kay activities in 2024-25

In 2024, UNIDIR's Managing Exits from Armed Conflict Project in collaboration with partners held an exhibition at the UNHQ consisting of powerful photos and reflections documented by conflict-affected youth from Colombia, Iraq and Nigeria. This is the result of a participatory research intervention aiming to empower young people with photography and research skills, giving them a space to process their experiences. By sharing these through an artistic lens, practitioners and policymakers could see their experiences first-hand rather than having them interpreted by adults.

UNIDIR annually hosts sessions of the Model UN simulation, in partnership with the Geneva International Model United Nations (GIMUN) non-governmental organization. The 2024 edition was dedicated to the topic of “Preventing Non-State Armed Groups from Acquiring Weapons” and the 2025 edition focused on the “Women, Peace and Security Agenda”.

In addition to elevating youth's voice in policymaking discussions, UNIDIR regularly promotes competitions open to young participants. In 2024, a youth video competition called for submissions on why space security matters and how outer space can be kept sustainable. Three winners had the opportunity to come to Geneva, where their videos were premiered at UNIDIR's Outer Space Security Conference 2024 and they had a chance to meet with leading experts in the field. These competitions offer a platform for youth to share innovative solutions on pressing international security issues.