

Vienna Center for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation

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

Between July 2023 and June 2025, the VCDNP has significantly advanced the inclusion and empowerment of youth in disarmament and non-proliferation efforts through a multi-pronged approach emphasizing education, mentorship, capacity building, and outreach.

Under the Young Women and Next Generation Initiative (YWNGI), for the EU Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Consortium, the VCDNP led numerous activities designed to inspire and engage young professionals. This included six webinars addressing pressing issues such as artificial intelligence in conflict, feminist perspectives in security, and the diversion of conventional weapons, among others. In parallel, the VCDNP conducted four outreach events at European Universities combining seminars with information on career pathways in disarmament and non-proliferation.

A central youth-focused effort of the VCDNP has also been the Mentorship Programme under the YWNGI. During the reporting period, two cohorts were completed, engaging 42 young women paired with mentors from international organizations, academia, and think tanks. Participants received career guidance and professional development support, including training on public speaking and open-source intelligence, and were given the opportunity to attend international conferences. Many mentees secured positions or internships at key institutions such as the IAEA, UNODA, and OPCW, or pursued advanced academic studies—demonstrating the programme's tangible impact.

The VCDNP also actively contributes to global disarmament education through regular lectures for students and young professionals, including participants in the UN Disarmament Fellows Programme and various academic institutions from across the world. In addition, it regularly hosts paid internships (7 in the reporting period) for graduate-level students with policy or scientific backgrounds.

The Center's online training modules remain publicly accessible, thereby expanding access to quality educational resources globally. Enhanced outreach efforts also include active engagement on social media and staff's participation in podcasts such as the Arms Control Poseur or UNODA's Disarmament Today, targeting youth with free, accessible and insightful content.

Of particular note, an event co-hosted with the EU Delegation in July 2023 brought together 50 interns and junior staff from 34 countries. This networking event offered practical career advice and direct engagement with senior officials, highlighting the VCDNP's commitment to nurturing the next generation of experts.

Through these initiatives, the VCDNP continues to provide the next generation with the knowledge, tools, and networks necessary to become effective practitioners in the community.

The organization's contributions in this field continue to be recognized by the UNGA, including in resolution A/RES/79/63 (2024), while the YWNGI specifically has been commended in the 2023 and 2024 statements of the G7 Non-Proliferation Directors Group.