



MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
GENERAL DIRECTORATE OF EXTERNAL POLICY

UNGA Resolution 79/45 on “Observance of environmental norms in the drafting and implementation of agreements on disarmament and arms control”

Environmental sustainability and climate change have gathered greater importance and attention from Portugal over time.

Climate change causes global consequences at different levels – environmental, social, economic and security – thus exacerbating existing weaknesses.

The Climate Basic Act, passed in 2021, and which already identifies and considers the urge to adapt to the aforementioned phenomenon refers to the need to promote climate security and act to prevent and mitigate the consequences of climate change, all the while admitting to the need of integrating them into strategic reflection on the main national security and defence priorities.

The Climate Basic Act dedicates article 17 to climate security and National Defence, indicating that climate change must be established, internally and externally, as a fundamental assumption in the strategic planning for national defence, covering short, medium, and long-term scenarios.

At the Ministry of National Defence (MoD) level, legislation has been passed since 1989, regulating the disposal of war material by the Armed Forces, and any type of disposed weaponry, when dismantled and rendered unusable for scrap, must be previously demilitarized. The process of dismantling for scrap is committed to ensuring that national legislation on environmental protection and preservation is accredited.

Environmental sustainability is also a long-standing concern of the MoD, a fact that has been publicly recognized when it was awarded the National Defence and Environment Prize ever since 1993, and also through the implementation of the National Defence Environmental Directive in 2011, as well as through the creation of the Environmental Affairs Coordinating Structure, and most recently by the National Defence Strategy for the Environment, Security and Climate Change.

The challenges posed to military activities also reinforce the need for National Defence to be prepared, adapting itself to this phenomenon, in addition to actively contributing to its mitigation.

Inevitably linked to the combat against climate change is also energy transition, through the use of energy efficiency and renewable technologies.

In order to guarantee a holistic approach (whole-of-government approach) in the processes of acquisition and construction of new military resources and capabilities, coherence has been maintained with other national policies and documents, such as the National Strategy for Ecological Public Procurement 2030.

In order to effectively coordinate other entities in the areas of National Defence and Environment, the MoD has taken into account the following national references such as the National Strategy for Nature Conservation and Biodiversity for 2030, the Action Plan for the Circular Economy, with the Roadmap for Carbon Neutrality 2050, the National Strategy for Adaptation to Climate Change 2020 (extended until 2025) and the National Energy and Climate Plan 2030.

In the area of energy, and for Public Administration, the Resource Efficiency Program in Public Administration 2030 (ECO.AP 2030) has also been considered, whose objective is to promote the decarbonization and energy transition of activities carried out by the State, contributing to the targets of reducing Greenhouse Gases, cutting back energy, water and material consumption, and also incorporating renewables in gross final energy consumption, which have been established at national level for 2030.

An effective implementation of this Strategy, which has the time horizon of 2030, implies a holistic approach within the MoD and solid cooperation between National Defence entities, as well as strong interministerial and intersectoral cooperation.

In terms of cooperation in the field of environment, energy, and climate, it is worthwhile pointing out Portugal's active participation in various collaboration platforms, in the context of the UN, EU, NATO and European Defence Agency, including in the Energy Sustainability and Circular Economy forum, as well as in the group of AED's Energy and Environment Technological Training Program. As foreseen in the various strategic guidelines at the External Defence Action level, it has also been possible to place these themes on the bilateral National Defence agendas, as well as in the dialogue with civil society, contributing and sharing experiences and good practices.

Considering the surrounding national and international context, the National Defence Strategy for the Environment, Security and Climate Change, launched in October of 2023, thus reinforces the following assertion: «A National Defence committed and prepared for the challenges of a sustainable future».

Aware of its relevant contribution to environmental protection, the National Defence of Portugal will continue to fulfil its mission, bearing in mind the purpose of defending an environmentally sustainable society and continuing to adapt its planning, and its capability development and activities to climate challenges.

Giving particular relevance to point 2 of UNGA Resolution 78/25, a set of actions considered relevant have been elaborated to enhance the implementation of the Resolution:

1. **Integration and Assessment of the Environmental Impact:** Include provisions that require environmental impact assessments to be carried out prior to the drafting and implementation of agreements on disarmament and arms control. This will assist in identifying and mitigating possible negative impacts upon the environment.
2. **Promoting Sustainability:** Incorporate sustainable development principles into disarmament agreements, encouraging practices that minimize the use of natural resources, reduce waste production, and promote environmental conservation throughout the production, stockpiling and destruction of weapons.
3. **Transparency and Accountability:** Establish transparency and accountability mechanisms that enable the monitoring of the environmental impacts of activities related to disarmament and arms control, guaranteeing the responsibility of the parties involved.
4. **Capacity-building and Awareness:** Provide capacity-building and awareness towards environmental issues on disarmament and arms control, for those responsible for drafting and implementing agreements, as well as for the affected communities.
5. **Protection of Sensitive Ecosystems:** Guaranteeing the protection of sensitive ecosystems during the deactivation and destruction of weapons, avoiding damage to natural habitats, protected areas, and water resources.
6. **Hazardous-waste Management:** Establish protocols for the safe and adequate management of hazardous waste generated during weapons destruction, minimizing the risks of environmental and public health contamination.
7. **Promoting Green Innovation:** Promoting the research and development of disarmament and arms control technologies that are sustainable and environmentally friendly, assuring green innovation and the adoption of cleaner production practices.
8. **International Cooperation:** Encourage international cooperation and the exchange of best practices among UN Member States, regarding the incorporation of environmental considerations into agreements on disarmament and arms control.
9. **Civil Society Participation:** Actively engaging with civil society organizations and environmental groups to participate in the process of drafting and implementing agreements on disarmament and arms control, guaranteeing a diverse representation of interests and perspectives.
10. **Environmental Rehabilitation:** Commit to environmental rehabilitation efforts aimed at restoring ecosystems damaged by armed activities and promoting the environmental resilience of local communities.

11. Recognize the interconnection amidst security, peace and environmental protection.

Portugal has adopted the highest standards regarding environmental protection and pollution prevention. Moreover, best practice guidelines as well as recommendations from the relevant international organizations have been translated into national legislation, particularly in the Environmental Directive for National Defense, dated 19 April 2011. Furthermore, Portugal fully complies with EU Law concerning environmental norms.

The Portuguese Armed Forces, in operation theatres, comply with the most environmentally protective or favorable provisions enshrined either in the Portuguese or the host country legislations.

When drafting and implementing contracts for dismantling military equipments or demilitarization of ammunitions, the Portuguese MoD requires that the contractors have Quality and Environment Management Systems in place and be certified according to ISO 9001: 2015 and ISO 14001: 2015, or equivalent.

In this context, companies make a commitment to prevent pollution and comply with all the applicable european and national legislation concerning waste management, in particular for its collection, transport, storage, treatment, recovery and disposal, in order to avoid the generation of hazards or damage to human health and the environment, and avoid and or reduce emissions to air, water and soil and the generation of waste, in particular through recycling or its proper disposal.

When drafting and implementing contracts for the design and construction of military ships the Portuguese MoD requires that the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships - MARPOL 73/78 be observed.

In addition, Portugal is Party to all major disarmament and non-proliferation Conventions. In accordance to its international obligation under the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) and the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, Portugal has disposed or destroyed its stock of, inter alia, cluster munitions and landmines and, in doing so, fully respected applicable environmental norms, which includes standards agreed by the Members of the European Union on the incineration of hazardous wastes.

Being part to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC) requires from Portugal control measures that are either full in place or being implemented, thus contributing to environmental safety and security.

In addition, Portugal complies with such norms when destroying firearms that are found or seized by police forces. The procedures by which they are destroyed are described in more detail in the United Nations International Tracing Instrument report

and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons.

Portugal is committed to responsible multilateralism, the UN Charter and the rules-based international order. Disarmament, non-proliferation, and arms control architecture must foster environmental norms in the drafting and implementation of agreements.