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Contribution by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) to the UN Secretary General’s Report on Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Education for the 81st Session of the UN General Assembly

(Reporting period: June 2024 to May 2026)

Executive Summary (300 words)

UNIDIR continued to advance disarmament and non-proliferation education as a cross-cutting priority. It delivered capacity-building initiatives and educational materials at global, regional and national levels, benefiting government officials, international and regional organizations, the private sector, civil society and the general public, with a strong emphasis on empowering youth to address emerging security challenges. To ensure complementarity, UNIDIR often partnered across the UN system and beyond.

In 2024, the General Assembly ([A/RES/79/73](#)) recognized UNIDIR’s “valuable contribution” to “disarmament, non-proliferation education and capacity-building in all regions of the world.” Flagship initiatives included the annual UNIDIR–UNODA Disarmament Orientation Course for Geneva-based diplomats and regional briefings and tailored engagements in non-OECD countries to strengthen capacities and promote inclusive participation. Rising demand led UNIDIR to train hundreds of diplomats and experts for instance on cyber norms, biological weapons and conventional arms control. The Institute also supported regional programmes and national assessments to strengthen arms control and disarmament, particularly in developing contexts.

UNIDIR expanded its offering of open-access digital tools, such as policy portals and data dashboards. These tools support policy implementation and act as informal transparency and confidence-building mechanisms.

A strong focus was placed on youth engagement, with a wide range of initiatives offered through UNIDIR’s Youth and Disarmament Hub. These included the Graduate Professional Programme, dedicated research fellowships, youth-oriented online courses, competitions, simulations and participatory projects, all of which aimed to develop key skills and amplify youth perspectives in policy discussions.

In parallel, the Global Disarmament Research Network and various fellowship programmes, including the Women in AI Fellowship, promoted diverse and inclusive expert communities.

To expand the reach of disarmament education globally and ensure more inclusive access to knowledge and participation, UNIDIR provided multilingual educational and research outputs, leveraging artificial intelligence to provide content and digital tools across multiple languages and platforms.



Full report

As the only UN think tank working on disarmament, arms control and global security, UNIDIR carries out research, provides tailored advice, fills critical capacity gaps and creates spaces for constructive dialogue between Member States, the UN and other stakeholders. Education on disarmament and non-proliferation represents a vital, cross-cutting element of UNIDIR's vision for a more secure world. In its [Resolution 79/73](#), the General Assembly recognized "the valuable contribution that the Institute makes and should continue to make in the field of disarmament, non-proliferation education and capacity-building in all regions of the world."

In recognition of the Secretary-General's recommendation 2 regarding the preparation, adaptation and dissemination of a wider range of user-friendly educational material on disarmament and non-proliferation,¹ UNIDIR continued to deliver **educational materials** and key **capacity building initiatives** at the global, regional and national levels throughout the reporting period. These benefited government officials, international organizations, regional bodies, the private sector, civil society, the general public and particularly young people, enabling them to better address the 21st century's most pressing international security challenges. To foster greater complementarity and efficiency, many of these initiatives were jointly implemented or coordinated with partners from the UN system and beyond. UNODA and UNIDIR in particular continued to partner on key initiatives, engaging in regular dialogues to strengthen longstanding cooperation, enhance coordination and ensure strategic alignment across numerous areas of work, including disarmament education.

The annual [Disarmament Orientation Course](#), organized jointly by UNIDIR and UNODA, is a particularly illustrative example. The two-week course in 2024 and 2025 continued to provide newly arrived diplomats in Geneva with a comprehensive overview of current debates in disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation. Nearly 250 diplomats from more than 100 Member States, including all regional groups and all five permanent members of the Security Council, have participated in the course since its inception in 2019.

At the regional level, UNIDIR continues to provide [regular briefings to the UN regional groups](#). Recent briefings helped States to prepare for the 2026 NPT Review Conference; addressed arms control and conflict-related sexual violence ahead of a Security Council Open Debate on this theme; shared insights on countering the illicit production of small arms and

¹ References in parentheses in the following sections relate to UNSG recommendations from the 2002 report "United Nations study on disarmament and non-proliferation education" (A/57/124) which were addressed by particular UNIDIR activities.



light weapons, improvised explosive devices and uncrewed aerial systems; and provided an in-depth introduction to the Global Mechanism on ICT security. To work towards greater equality of capacity between States and to extend the reach of its work, UNIDIR regularly carried out key initiatives in non-OECD countries. Such activities took place in Benin, Brazil, the Gambia, the Maldives, Senegal and Sri Lanka, for instance, and covered topics like the relevance of space security for small island States, governance of emerging technologies and pathways towards stronger conventional arms control.

UNIDIR continued to provide issue-specific capacity-building initiatives around the globe during the reporting period. UNIDIR's [Training on Norms, International Law and Cyberspace](#) continued to strengthen the skills diplomats and policymakers, over 750 of whom have taken part in the 28 sessions offered since its inception. UNIDIR also delivered a five-month, hybrid [Biological Weapons Convention Advanced Education Course](#) for 25 diplomats and scientists, with the majority coming from the Global South. More than 50 diplomats and practitioners were trained on non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament in the Middle East.

Supporting conventional arms control and disarmament, UNIDIR provided an integrated capacity-building programme for the African Union Monitoring, Verification and Compliance Mission in Tigray, drawing also on research carried out by its Integrated Approaches Programme and Managing Exits from Armed Conflict Project. As part of a wider engagement with member states of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), UNIDIR in 2025 worked to build capacity on countering threats from improvised explosive devices and to strengthen prevention of violent extremism and illicit weapons proliferation. During the reporting period, UNIDIR supported assessments of national weapons and ammunition management capabilities in Costa Rica, [the Gambia](#), [Guinea](#) and [Senegal](#), as well as preparing for a further such assessment in Uruguay.

UNIDIR has also developed a wide range of digital tools offering easy access to knowledge and data pooled from across the international community, many of which have become informal transparency- and confidence-building tools in the process. Between 2020 and May 2026, a total of 19 tools were developed, all of which are accessible via UNIDIR's website. These represent a vital resource not only for Member States and UN entities but also for practitioners, academia and the wider public. Specifically, five [policy portals](#) outline the global policy landscape in key issue areas like AI, cyber and space security, while a further 14 [online resources](#) offer a range of interactive data dashboards, visualizations and practical implementation tools.



Engaging with and creating opportunities for the **next generation of disarmament and non-proliferation researchers** has been a particular focus of UNIDIR's engagement in disarmament education, as has **elevating the voices of young people in disarmament**.

The Institute's talent-building pipeline, the [Graduate Professional Programme](#), helps early career professionals to explore global security and disarmament as a potential career path. Through real-world, on-the-job training, this programme contributes to the development of future disarmament, peace and security experts (rec 13, 19, 24). In 2024 and 2025, the programme brought a total of 57 young researchers from five different regions to the Institute. UNIDIR's creation of remote positions in particular has improved accessibility and allowed for a more geographically diverse group of young scholars (rec 21). Since 2024, UNIDIR has had a Graduate Professional position dedicated to Youth, Peace and Security, with its occupant providing significant support for the mainstreaming of youth perspectives across all areas of UNIDIR's work.

A dedicated [Space Security Research Fellowship](#), established in 2026, fosters youth engagement, capacity-building and co-creation of knowledge with emerging talent all around the world. The inaugural Fellowship, offered to nine young professionals, uses structured learning to build knowledge on relevant multilateral processes and key concepts, as well as immersing Fellows in hands-on research activities that feed into UNIDIR's outputs and digital tools.

The Institute's online [Youth Disarmament Orientation Course](#), meanwhile, allows young people to explore fundamental concepts in disarmament and arms control and to get the latest insights on topics central to the field. New modules on Women, Peace and Security and Youth, Peace and Security were added in 2025.

Aside from educating young people about global security, UNIDIR helps to amplify their voices and promote their ideas. Launched in 2025 to serve as a gateway to a range of youth-led initiatives, UNIDIR's [Youth and Disarmament Hub](#) also publishes analyses and videos produced by young experts on key arms control and disarmament topics. In [2024](#) and [2025](#), UNIDIR organized two editions of the Outer Space Security Youth Video Competition, which together received 189 submissions from young people eager to share their reflections on the future of space security. The creators of the winning submissions were invited to participate in UNIDIR's Outer Space Security Conference in Geneva, where they presented their videos to an audience of diplomats and experts. They were also offered the opportunity to contribute to the drafting and publishing of related commentaries for the UNIDIR website.

Addressing recommendations around the use of photography and participatory approaches as educational tools, including with youth in conflict-affected contexts (rec 23,



27), UNIDIR's Managing Exits from Armed Conflict Project built on its earlier participatory interventions in Iraq, Colombia and Nigeria by joining forces with 100cameras and War Child UK to launch the global [Youth Visions of Peace](#) campaign. This campaign invited young people from across the world to submit photographs and written reflections on what peace looks like from their perspective. Out of nearly 100 submissions from over 25 countries, [six outstanding participants](#) were chosen to receive tailored photography training from 100cameras, thereby bolstering their ability to use the camera lens to communicate their visions of peace in the future. The project remains committed to bringing the voices of conflict-affected young people into policy conversations, with other innovative activities of this kind in the pipeline.

Acknowledging the many benefits of simulations as an educational tool (rec 23), UNIDIR and Geneva International Model United Nations (GIMUN) organizes annual Model UN events that address a wide range of pressing issues. The 2025 edition tackled [Women, Peace and Security](#), for instance, while in 2026 participants worked towards [regulating the use of certain conventional weapons in urban settings](#). These simulations provide students with an opportunity to engage with international security issues, to develop policy ideas and to familiarize themselves with the practical realities of intergovernmental negotiations.

In collaboration with its vast network of academic partner institutions, both within Geneva and beyond, UNIDIR also welcomes student visitor groups and delegations in Geneva throughout the year (rec 4). These briefings are an opportunity for students to get to know UNIDIR's diverse areas of work and for UNIDIR to engage with and learn from the next generation of experts in the field of disarmament and arms control.

Acknowledging the **value of diverse perspectives and ideas in producing forward-thinking research**, UNIDIR has expanded its [Global Disarmament Research Network](#), which brings together experts and research institutions from around the globe to address pressing global security issues. The wider Network is made up of six thematic sub-networks which pool perspectives on disarmament-related issues, generate new insights and seek out viable paths for progress, with the most recently added sub-networks focusing on space security and international law in the area of ICT security. As part of the space security network launched in 2024, the ongoing Map of Space Threats and Consequences project sees UNIDIR working with students from 11 partner institutions to produce an independent research report on threats to space systems and their consequences both in space and here on Earth. [Senior Fellows and Fellows](#) also form a crucial part of the Institute's wider network, with their vast



expertise, insightful ideas and exceptional contributions to their fields enriching UNIDIR's work across the board.

Aware also of the chronic underrepresentation of women in international security processes – especially those perceived as highly technical – the Institute launched its [Women in AI Fellowship](#) in 2024. This fellowship equips women diplomats with the essential knowledge, skills and resources needed to actively engage in multilateral discussions on artificial intelligence within the field of international peace and security. In 2025, UNIDIR welcomed a richly diverse cohort of 33 women diplomats representing 32 countries and one regional grouping. UNIDIR provided travel sponsorships to 15 Fellows coming from developing countries.

Moreover, UNIDIR has remained strongly committed to reaching a diverse range of audiences, particularly those historically underserved, by providing **multilingual educational and research outputs** (rec 3). Publications were made available in various languages other than English, with Spanish, Arabic, French, Hebrew and Persian the most common target languages in 2025. Various of the Institute's online tools, such as interactive policy portals and digital hubs, also leverage artificial intelligence to make their content accessible in all six UN official languages. UNIDIR's Middle East Weapons of Mass Destruction-Free [Timeline](#), [Document Depository](#) and [Compass](#) digital tools, meanwhile, are all offered in Arabic, Persian and Hebrew. The eight modules of UNIDIR's [Youth Disarmament Orientation Course](#) are now available also in [French](#) and [Spanish](#). And capitalizing on the notable diversity of its staff and its significant reach on social media, the Institute and its researchers have consistently used a variety of platforms to communicate about their work in all six official UN languages.

Various of the Institute's education-related activities that were described in previous Reports of the Secretary-General are ongoing. Detailed information on UNIDIR's related activities is available in its annual [Report of the Director](#) and at [unidir.org](#).