

Report of the Secretary-General of the 69th Session of the General Assembly

“Implementation of the 34 Recommendations Contained in the 2002 UN Study on

Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Education”

Vienna Center for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation

Education and Training Efforts Covering the Last Two Years

(June 2022 to May 2024)

Executive Summary

1. The Vienna Center for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation (VCDNP) was established in 2010 at the initiative of the Austrian Foreign Ministry as an international non-governmental organisation. The Center serves as a dedicated non-governmental platform for independent debate, research, outreach, and education and training. Among the Center’s feature programmes are its short intensive courses on non-proliferation and disarmament for diplomats and practitioners. The VCDNP also has a strong focus on the next generation, in particular women, through a dedicated mentorship programme and outreach activities. The role of the VCDNP in building capacity in these areas continues to be recognised by the UN General Assembly in its resolutions (latest A/RES/77/81 (2022)). More recently the VCDNP engaged parliamentarians stressing their key role in adherence to legal instruments. To reach diverse audiences, the VCDNP offers webinars and hybrid events and makes recordings available online. For more information on the Center’s activities please visit <https://vcdnp.org/>.

Recommendations 13, 21 and 23

2. During the reporting period, the VCDNP continued to promote international peace and security through education and training of a wide range of professionals. To this end, the Center held six short intensive courses. The courses held during the reporting period are covered in brief below and more information on each course can be found on the VCDNP website here: <https://vcdnp.org/category/courses/>

2a) **Four courses were focused on nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament** (October 2022, March 2023, October 2023, March 2024), with the goal of enhancing knowledge about nuclear disarmament and arms control issues among government representatives of mostly developing countries to strengthen their input into their countries’ policies. The course programme, aimed primarily at junior to mid-career diplomats, covers different elements of the international non-proliferation regime, its scientific and technological underpinnings, disarmament efforts, and specific regional concerns. The course consists of a one-week in-class session in Vienna, Austria, featuring lectures by prominent experts from the VCDNP, relevant international organisations and other well-known scholars. The course also provides interactive components through group discussions, a quiz activity and tours of the International Atomic

Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards laboratories and Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization's (CTBTO) International Monitoring System. Prior to the in-person course, participants are provided with an online preparatory module. The preparatory component provides the trainees with online access to key reading materials, video lectures and presentations, organised into several introductory topics, each followed by an online quiz. The online preparatory module has, since the COVID-19 pandemic, been made publicly available to all individuals interested in learning more about non-proliferation, disarmament and arms control issues. For the course participants, a separate, password protected portion of the module was created to share additional resources as well as provide the presentations from the in-person lectures. The online preparatory module is available here: <https://course.vcdnp.org/online-course/> [Also compliments Recommendations 2 and 4]

2b) **One specialised course with a focus on nuclear safeguards** (February 2023) was also conducted. The course aimed at training diplomats and practitioners in more detail on a wide range of IAEA safeguards issues from the legal framework to implementation and verification techniques to future challenges to the safeguards regime. The programme also included interactive elements, including a demonstration of IAEA inspector tools and a tour of Zwentendorf Nuclear Power Plant. Participants were able to learn from senior experts, policy specialists, IAEA staff, including safeguards inspectors, and national regulators.

2c) **One course for ambassadors new to Vienna** and responsible for covering nuclear issues. The minicourse was held from 17 to 19 April 2023, and included the participation of fifteen ambassadors in Vienna. The programme provided a broad overview of the IAEA and CTBTO as well as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and its review process. Nuclear safeguards, nuclear security and peaceful uses were also addressed.

3. In the framework of the EU Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Consortium (EUNPDC), and in collaboration with the International Affairs Institute (IAI) in Rome, Italy, the VCDNP continues its work under the **Young Women and Next Generation Initiative (YWNGI)** to encourage more young women and the next generation to enter the non-proliferation and disarmament field. During the reporting period, six topical webinars were organised ranging from young professional and student engagement to artificial intelligence on the battlefield to feminist perspectives in conflict regions. In addition, four university visits were conducted. The university visits took place at the University of Roma Tre (October 2022), Charles University in Prague (April 2023), the University of Innsbruck (October 2023) and the University of Valencia (February 2024). All university visits included a topical session as well as a session focussed on resources and opportunities offered by the EUNPDC and other organisations and networks for young people to become more engaged in the field. [Also compliments Recommendation 4]

4. As part of the YWNGI, the VCDNP and IAI continue to offer a **Young Women in Non-Proliferation and Disarmament (YWNPD) Mentorship Programme**. During the reporting period two mentorship cohorts were completed. Both mentorship programmes lasted 8-months from 15 September to 15 May and paired successful applicants with well-established experts in the field to engage in discussions on non-proliferation, disarmament and arms control, as well as seek career advice and network. The first mentorship cohort (2022/2023) paired 20 Mentees with 20 Mentors, while the second mentorship cohort (2023/2024) paired 22 Mentees with 22 Mentors. The programme also included subsequent events to engage the group as whole, such as informal virtual socials, skills building workshops (e.g., public speaking, op-ed writing and open-source intelligence tools) and a final meeting (virtually) where Mentees were given the opportunity to present original research. The mentorship programme also included an in-person meeting in Brussels, Belgium, on the margins of the EUNPDC Annual Conference. In addition, mentees were given the opportunity to attend external events (e.g., conferences, courses) related to non-proliferation, disarmament and arms control, through a dedicated sponsorship programme. During the programme many of the Mentees secured internships at relevant international organisations in the field, including the IAEA, UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) in Vienna and New York, and the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). Others started jobs in the field, some as consultants at international organisations, others as researchers in European think tanks. Several received outstanding recognitions on their academic work inspired by the programme and aided by their Mentors. Many have also decided to continue their academic careers and start master's or PhD programmes in the field or a relevant subject matter. [Also compliments Recommendation 19]
5. The VCDNP, in collaboration with the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies (CNS), organised two online and one in-person workshops between January and April 2023 in support of the **Working Group on further strengthening the review process**, established by the decision of the Tenth NPT Review Conference. The final in-person workshop was attended by representatives of 26 NPT States parties, along with UNODA officials. Based on the series of workshops, personal experience with the past review cycles and review of earlier proposals on strengthening the review process, a paper containing reflections and recommendations for improvement of the review process was released in May 2023 and many NPT States parties used recommendations from the paper in their own contributions. The paper is available on VCDNP's website here: <https://vcdnp.org/further-strengthening-npt-review-process/>
6. Between June 2022 and May 2024, the VCDNP organised **two high-level diplomatic workshops**. The 15 June 2022 workshop was convened ahead of the long-awaited Tenth NPT Review Conference that had been delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The workshop was attended by over 50 senior diplomats, officials and experts from national governments, international organisations and civil society, to focus on nuclear safeguards, nuclear security and

peaceful uses of nuclear science, technology and applications, the so-called “Vienna Issues,” and the potential challenges and opportunities in those areas at the upcoming review conference. The 2023 annual diplomatic workshop was conducted on 26 to 27 May 2023 in Krems, Austria, in advance of the first NPT Preparatory Committee meeting in Vienna. The workshop focused on the Eleventh NPT Review Cycle. Over 60 senior diplomats and representatives of international and non-governmental organisations discussed main challenges facing the regime at the start of a new review cycle and potential areas for common ground.

7. The VCDNP in collaboration with the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) held **one high-level workshop for Members of Parliament and senior officials** on the importance of nuclear security and parliamentarian’s key role in achieving adherence to and implementation of legal instruments for nuclear security. The event featured senior speakers, including IAEA Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi who opened the event, Directors of IAEA’s key divisions, offices and programmes, local ambassadors working on the topic and the Executive Secretary of the CTBTO Dr. Robert Floyd. The programme also incorporated interactive elements, including a threat scenario activity utilizing Mentimeter, tours of the IAEA laboratories in Siebersdorf, and visits to the Austrian Parliament and CTBTO. [Also compliments Recommendation 8]

Recommendations 2, 4 and 21

8. Since June 2022, the VCDNP started a series of publications known as the “Governing the Atom” brief series to present easily digestible and factual information to experts and government representatives on key nuclear governance issues. During the reporting period, the VCDNP produced five briefs focused on a variety of topics, ranging from an explainer on the NPT Review Process and International Conference on Nuclear Security to Naval Nuclear Propulsion, the IAEA’s budget process and Small Quantities Protocols.
9. The VCDNP regularly delivers lectures to professionals and students at CNS in Monterey, California, and in Washington, DC, on nuclear arms control and disarmament matters via Zoom video conferencing software.
10. The VCDNP often provides lectures to student and other groups, including to participants in the UN Disarmament Fellows programme, local universities, and other universities in Europe and around the world. Often these lectures are in person and the VCDNP frequently hosts student groups at the Center. The visits include lectures and discussions on non-proliferation and disarmament issues, as well as briefings on the work of the Center and discussion on the role of non-governmental organisations in shaping the international non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament agenda. VCDNP experts are also frequently invited by academic institutions, international organisations, and civil society to deliver lectures and participate in courses and conferences around the world. One example worth mentioning is the VCDNP’s engagement in

the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Scholarship for Peace and Security in the OSCE Area in-person training held in Vienna, Austria.

11. The VCDNP increasingly utilizes social media such as Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), and LinkedIn to disseminate information regarding publications and events to a wider range of audiences. The Center also created an Instagram account to expand outreach to diverse audiences and age groups. X continues to be the VCDNP's primary platform and the VCDNP increased its number of followers to 8666.
12. The VCDNP launched a re-design of its website, including a mobile friendly version. The redesign provides a simplified layout and navigation, filter for publications based on research areas and types of publications, and comprehensive expert profiles. The VCDNP also launched a quarterly e-newsletter that highlights notable events and publications.

Recommendations 19 and 24

13. The VCDNP offers three- to six- month long paid internships to graduate level students with a policy and/or scientific background who are looking to gain practical experience in disarmament and non-proliferation. Interns conduct independent research projects on related issues, working alongside VCDNP experts and contributing to the Center's activities. During the reporting period, the VCDNP hosted eight interns, four were from developing countries.
14. On 6 July 2023, the VCDNP and the Delegation of the European Union to the International Organisations in Vienna held an event bringing together 50 interns and junior staff from 34 countries working in Vienna, Austria, at the international organisations, diplomatic missions and civil society organisations, to discuss the role of identity, hand-on career advice and working methods in the nuclear field. The event also included a networking session allowing junior staff to interact with each another as well as senior officials, contributing to participants overall hand-on training and networking opportunities.
15. The VCDNP offers fellowship opportunities to pre- and post-doctoral and sabbatical applicants. Fellowships are offered for a period of six months to a year, during which each of the fellows conduct research and publish/prepare for the publication of a significant work in the field of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, or a related field. Fellows also contribute to the ongoing research and other activities of the VCDNP. During the reporting period, the VCDNP hosted one fellow.

Recommendation 26

16. The VCDNP continues to offer webinars and hybrid events. If speakers agree, all events are recorded and made available to viewers and interested individuals to access later in different time zones. Recordings are accessible on the VCDNP website and the VCDNP YouTube channel (<https://vcdnp.org/category/events/> / <https://www.youtube.com/c/VCDNP>).
17. VCDNP staff have also been asked to appear as guests on various podcasts. Two worth mentioning include: (1) the *Disarmament Today* podcast produced by UNODA; and (2) the *Arms Control Poseur* podcast produced and published by the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) on behalf of the EUNPDC, and widely available on various platforms including Spotify, YouTube, SoundCloud and Apple products.
18. The VCDNP recorded two instructional videos on the history of IAEA safeguards for use and preparation for the CNS Intensive Short Course for diplomats from Latin America and the Caribbean. The videos have also been made available to the VCDNP short course participants. [Also compliments Recommendation 2 and 21]