

## UNDC Working Group II

### Chair's summary

#### **Introduction**

*The present summary was prepared by the Chair of UNDC Working Group II on the basis of the Working Group's meetings during the 2024 session, which addressed agenda item 5 entitled "Recommendations on common understandings related to emerging technologies in the context of international security". This is an informal document which reflects the understanding of the Chair of key points raised, without prejudice to the position of any State. The purpose of the summary is to support States' further consideration of the agenda item in the subsequent two annual sessions of the present 3-year cycle.*

*As a basis for further substantive discussions, the Working Group reviewed the report of the Secretary-General on current developments in science and technology and their potential impact on international security and disarmament efforts (A/78/268). It then reviewed specific technologies, utilizing the headings in section II of the report as an organizational guide, hearing expert presentations and engaging in an exchange of views.*

*In order to inform deliberations and with a view to avoiding unnecessary duplications and overlaps, the Working Group heard briefings from Chairs of United Nations processes related to emerging technologies in the context of international security, as well as presentations by Member States on relevant State-led initiatives. It also conducted an exchange of views on the benefits and risks, as well as the threats, posed by emerging technologies in the context of international security.*

#### **Summary of deliberations**

1. Delegations underscored the transformative effect of emerging technologies globally and across all aspects of life. Many delegations emphasized the dual-use nature of many such technologies and stressed the importance of not hindering their beneficial applications, including for sustainable development, while at the same time, addressing their risks. Many delegations noted the need for a comprehensive approach. The view was expressed that emerging technologies had contributed to widening the technological divide between developed and developing countries. Many delegations called for the narrowing of this divide and noted that safeguarding the access of developing countries to these technologies for peaceful purposes was essential. In this regard, many delegations stressed the importance of international cooperation, technology transfer, technical assistance and capacity building.

2. It was noted that technological developments were, in some cases, already outpacing normative frameworks to manage risks and that there was a need to connect emerging technologies with consideration of the development of regulatory frameworks. Concern was expressed regarding the particular vulnerability of critical infrastructure, as well as the danger of emerging technology being utilized for malicious purposes by non-state actors, including terrorists.

3. Many delegations stressed the importance of utilizing emerging technologies in accordance with international law, especially the Charter of the United Nations, international humanitarian law and international human rights law. Delegations stressed that weapons systems based on emerging technologies that cannot be used in accordance with international humanitarian law must not be used and are already prohibited. It was also noted that emerging technologies could create possibilities for enhancing compliance with international law, including international humanitarian law. It was suggested that international law could be one useful specific focus for the Working Group.

4. Delegations noted the synergies between the work of the Working Group and other United Nations forums. Delegations stressed the importance of avoiding unnecessary duplications and overlaps. It was suggested that the Disarmament Commission could contribute to increasing transparency and predictability related to the use of emerging technologies in the context of international security. It was noted that, as technological progress is continuous, the Working Group needed to consider both future developments as well as current understandings.

5. Delegations took note of General Assembly resolution 78/22 entitled “Role of science and technology in the context of international security and disarmament” and the corresponding report of the Secretary-General on current developments in science and technology and their potential impact on international security and disarmament efforts (A/78/268). Delegations also took note of General Assembly resolution 77/96 entitled “Promoting international cooperation on peaceful uses in the context of international security”. Delegations further took note of the relevant portions of the Secretary-General’s policy brief on a New Agenda for Peace.

#### *Artificial intelligence and autonomous and uncrewed systems*

6. Delegations noted the accelerated progress that has been made in the field of artificial intelligence. It was noted that artificial intelligence was already being utilized in the military domain.

7. It was suggested that artificial intelligence in the military domain should be considered in an inclusive manner and that efforts to harness the benefits of artificial intelligence and autonomy should be accompanied by efforts to address its risks. Those risks could stem from malicious use, including by criminal and terrorist actors, as well as from unintended consequences like bias and discrimination. Concern was also expressed regarding possible interactions between artificial intelligence and weapons of mass destruction. Reference was also made to the benefits of the use of artificial intelligence in the military domain, such as optimization of resource allocation, enhancement of decision-making and strengthening data processing.

8. Many delegations stressed the importance of human control and accountability at all stages of the life cycle of artificial intelligence. The view was expressed that AI systems needed to be subject to human intervention at every stage, and should meet the highest technical and ethical standards. Many delegations stressed the need for collective action to prevent malicious use of AI systems by non-state actors.

9. The view was expressed that the United Nations plays an important role in addressing the governance of artificial intelligence. A view was expressed that the Member State-led initiatives in this field should be streamlined and be brought under the umbrella of the United Nations.

10. It was suggested that the Working Group could make recommendations on how to manage risks stemming from artificial intelligence. It was also suggested that the Working Group consider how best to harness the potential of artificial intelligence for the benefit of disarmament and non-proliferation.

11. Many delegations called for the negotiation of a legally binding instrument on lethal autonomous weapons systems. Many delegations noted that fully autonomous weapons systems could not be used in compliance with the principles of international humanitarian law. The view was expressed that the issue of lethal autonomous weapons systems was a fundamental component of the broader topic of military uses of artificial intelligence. Many delegations emphasized that it was important to avoid prejudicing the work of the Group of Governmental Experts of the High Contracting Parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons related to emerging technologies in the area of lethal autonomous weapons systems. The view was also expressed that that Group of Governmental Experts did not address the broader issue of the military applications of artificial intelligence, but just the particular issue of lethal autonomous weapons systems.

12. It was noted that the risks stemming from uncrewed aerial vehicles include interference with crewed aircraft, their use to illegally enter no-fly zones and diversion of civilian systems for malicious purposes.

### *Digital technologies*

13. Concern was expressed regarding the increasing frequency of malicious use of cyberspace and in particular the impact on critical infrastructure of such use. A call was made for greater cooperation between States and between States and the private sector to address related risks. Many delegations called for greater adherence to existing norms, rules and principles in this area and enhanced accountability in circumstances of non-adherence.

14. Delegations recalled confidence-building measures on the use of information and communications technologies in the context of international security that had been adopted by United Nations forums. It was suggested that the Working Group address the matter of capacity building in information and communication technologies security. The creation of a repository of threats was also suggested as a practical measure. A call was made for greater gender equality in the field of information and communication technologies security.

15. The view was expressed that the Open-Ended Working Group on security of and in the use of information and communications technologies (2021-2025) was the single intergovernmental mechanism to address information and communication technologies in the context of international security. The view was also expressed that the Disarmament Commission could contribute to fostering understandings on related matters.

### *Biology and chemistry*

16. Concerns were raised regarding the potential risks, unintended consequences, and ethical concerns stemming from advances in the life sciences such as genetic engineering and synthetic biology. It was noted that these concerns encompass ecological, safety and other health impacts. It was also noted that advances in life sciences could impact the implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004).

### *Space and aerospace technologies*

17. Delegations referred to recent, current and upcoming United Nations processes related to the prevention of an arms race in outer space. Additionally, many delegations emphasized the importance of progressing towards the development of a legally binding instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. Many delegations also noted the utility of achieving political agreements on norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviour in outer space. It was also stated that efforts in this regard should not hinder the eventual negotiation of an agreement of a binding nature.

### *Electromagnetic technologies and materials technologies*

18. Delegations raised questions related to the effect of electronic warfare on civilian systems, as well as its potential effect on military early warning systems. Reference was made to the use of electronic warfare during peacetime. Delegations also raised questions related to the spread of additive manufacturing technology, especially concerning its role in the proliferation of illicit small arms, light weapons, and their respective parts and components, as well as ammunition. A call was made to pursue additional measures to counter the circumvention of existing legal frameworks and technical standards, and to enhance the accountability of producers.

### *The way forward*

19. Many delegations expressed a preference for a more focused scope for discussions during the next session of the Disarmament Commission with a view to reaching substantive recommendations for further consideration by the General Assembly. Many delegations noted that the Working Group could either focus on one or more specific technologies or take a broader, technology-neutral approach. It was suggested that the Working Group develop principles for universal, rather than regional, application.

20. A proposal was made that the Working Group engage, during the intersessional period, including with relevant stakeholders.

21. It was suggested that the Working Group could focus on confidence-building measures that enhance predictability and measures that could lessen the risks emanating from the use of these technologies in the context of international security. It was stressed that any transparency and confidence-building measures to be discussed needed to take into account the national legislation of Member States.

22. It was stated that the conclusions of the Working Group should be understandable beyond the diplomatic community. Furthermore, many delegations stated that the Working Group's conclusions should not solely pertain to current emerging technologies but also take into consideration future ones, ensuring that any conclusions remain relevant and effective over time.