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 2025 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. It is not intended to be exhaustive.

Together with the Chair's summary of the 2024 session, the present summary is intended to support States' further consideration of the agenda item with a view to reaching agreement on recommendations in the final session of the present 3-year cycle.

In advance of the session, the Chair provided the Working Group with a set of guiding questions to support delegations in narrowing the scope of their consideration of the agenda item in order to lay the groundwork for discussions in the final year of the cycle.

The Working Group began its work with a general exchange of views. As a basis for further substantive discussions, the Working Group reviewed the sections of the latest report of the Secretary-General on current developments in science and technology and their potential impact on international security and disarmament efforts (A/79/224), hearing presentations from the UNODA and UNIDIR authors of those sections.

In order to inform deliberations and with a view to avoiding duplications and overlaps, the Working Group heard briefings on 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 a brainstorming exercise on potential common understandings.

Summary of deliberations

1.   Delegations underscored the transformative effect of emerging technologies for societies, economies and individuals. They stressed the importance of ensuring that this effect could be harnessed for the benefit of humanity, including for development. Delegations emphasized that innovation should advance human dignity and global security.

2. Several delegations reflected on the dual-use nature of many emerging technologies. In that regard, many delegations noted that technology itself was neutral and could be harnessed both for peaceful purposes as well as in ways that raised concerns for international peace and security. Many delegations emphasized that steps taken to prevent the weaponization, proliferation or misuse of emerging technologies should not prevent the peaceful uses of these technologies, particularly by developing countries.

3. Delegations noted that there was no agreed definition of the term "emerging technologies," nor agreement on which technologies are considered "emerging." It was noted that emerging technologies were at different stages of their lifecycle.

4. Many delegations expressed concerns about the risks and challenges to international security emanating from emerging technologies. In this connection, several delegations referred to the rapidly evolving threat landscape, while some noted, inter alia, how emerging technologies could exacerbate existing weapons-related threats or be used to circumvent non-proliferation efforts. The view was expressed that the Disarmament Commission should not focus on this aspect but rather only the potential benefits of emerging technologies in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation.

5. Several delegations noted the effect of the convergence of emerging technologies with each other, as well as with established technologies.

6. Several delegations expressed the view that governance of emerging technologies had lagged behind the rapid and accelerating pace of technological developments. In view of this, several delegations called for agile use of existing governance structures and for the creation of frameworks flexible enough to adapt to technological advancements.

Approach of the Working Group and way forward

7. Delegations deliberated whether the common understandings to be recommended by the Disarmament Commission should focus on specific technologies or be broadly applicable to all emerging technologies. Many delegations advocated for broadly applicable recommendations. The view was also expressed that certain technologies present immediate challenges to international security and should be addressed by the Working Group. Several delegations identified specific technologies, such as artificial intelligence and quantum technologies, as potential areas of focus. The view was expressed that military necessity and humanitarian concerns should be considered in a balanced manner.

8. Delegations considered the agreements reached in other United Nations processes on emerging technologies and the extent to which these could be more applicable to all emerging technologies. Many delegations considered that the work of related United Nations bodies could serve as points of reference for the Disarmament Commission. At the same time, delegations emphasized that the Disarmament Commission should not duplicate the work of other processes but rather respect the mandates of such processes and focus on areas where it can add value. The view was also expressed that Working Group II must respect the mandate of Working Group I and avoid issues being addressed there.

9.   Several delegations noted the benefits that emerging technologies, in particular artificial intelligence, could have for the verification of agreements in the area of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. Delegations addressed both opportunities and risks posed by these technologies in relation to international peace and security. It was noted that quantum technologies were not currently addressed by any dedicated United Nations process.

10.   Several delegations considered that the governance of emerging technologies required a **multi-faceted approach** including existing international law, legally binding obligations on certain specific technologies, as well as non-binding agreements such as norms rules and principles of responsible behaviour. The view was also expressed that voluntary norms were inadequate, and that legally binding instruments were necessary to ensure the exclusively peaceful use of emerging technologies.

General principles and possible recommendations

11.   Several delegations emphasized the applicability of **international law**, including the Charter of the United Nations, international humanitarian law and international human rights law, to emerging technology. Several delegations noted, however, that the question of how international law applied to emerging technologies required further discussion. It was suggested that the two-tier approach of the Group of Governmental Experts on LAWS, whereby a technology that cannot be used in accordance with international humanitarian law must not be developed or used, while other technologies must be used in accordance with international law, may be applicable to other emerging technologies.

12.   Delegations stressed the importance of **transparency and confidence-building measures.**

13.   Several delegations emphasized the importance of transparency as a key element of fostering trust and confidence and reducing risks. It was noted that many emerging technologies are not currently subject to international verification regimes, were widely available and, by their nature, difficult to supervise. It was suggested that the Working Group consider how best to make use of existing points-of-contact arrangements in order to facilitate transparency and information sharing. Other transparency measures suggested included:

- Notification of tests and deployments,
- Voluntary exchanges of technical information, and
- Periodic reports on domestic legislation, regulations and policies.

14.   Several delegations noted the benefit of information exchange, including best practices, lessons learned and legal reviews of new weapons, means and methods of warfare. The view was expressed that risk assessments and risk mitigation measures should form part of the development of any new technology and would constitute a confidence-building measure.

15.   Several delegations stressed the importance of adopting good practices and technological safeguards, including those related to testing, training and evaluation, and suggested that the Disarmament Commission recommend the voluntary adoption of measures in this regard.

16.   The view was expressed that confidence-building measures, such as those adopted in the framework of the Biological Weapons Convention, had proven insufficient, and that legally binding instruments were necessary to ensure that emerging technologies were employed exclusively for peaceful uses.

17.   Several delegations emphasized the importance of **meaningful human control** including in connection with, but not limited to, artificial intelligence, autonomy, and machine learning. This issue was considered particularly salient in connection with the use of force. Several delegations stressed, in this regard, the importance of human responsibility and accountability.

18.   Delegations emphasized the importance of **capacity building**, which supported States to meaningfully participate in discussions on the governance of emerging technologies. The view was expressed that dedicated efforts were required to avoid the marginalization of developing countries.

19.   Delegations emphasized the importance of **international cooperation and assistance,** including to bridge the divide between developed and developing countries. It was suggested that the harmonization of national policies with regional frameworks was an important step to that end. The importance of ensuring non-discriminatory access to emerging technologies was also stressed. Suggested measures related to international cooperation included codes of conduct for scientists.

20.   Delegations expressed concern regarding the risk of the proliferation of emerging technologies to non-State actors. The need to strengthen **export controls** was emphasized by several delegations in this connection. It was also noted export control regimes should not become tools for technology monopolization.

21.   Delegations emphasized the role of the **United Nations**, noting in particular the inclusivity and legitimacy of its forums, in multilateral discussions on governance of emerging technologies. In this regard, reference was made to the importance of the principle of consensus for ensuring that the priorities of all States are taken into account. The view was expressed governance initiatives outside the United Nations framework should be avoided.

22.   The view was expressed that the Disarmament Commission should develop common **terminology** and definitions, including for the term "emerging technology" itself.

23.   Delegations recognized that innovation in the area of emerging technologies was largely driven by the **private sector**. Several delegations emphasized the importance of including stakeholders, including civil society, academia and industry, in discussions regarding the governance of emerging technologies. The importance of adequate regulation of the private sector operating within a State's jurisdiction was also noted.