

## **STRENGTHENING THE WORKING METHODS OF THE UNITED NATIONS DISARMAMENT COMMISSION (UNDC)**

*Non-paper from France & Germany*

The UNDC is a universal, deliberative body within the UN system dedicated exclusively to disarmament issues. Its inclusive membership provides a unique forum for structured dialogue and the development of recommendations on key disarmament topics.

However, in recent years, the UNDC has experienced a gradual decline in relevance and impact. Lengthy negotiation cycles and limited use of intersessional processes have, among other factors, impacted its ability to respond effectively to evolving security challenges.

In light of the broader reform discussions associated with “UN80” and ongoing reflections on strengthening the multilateral system, it is timely to review and modernize the structures and working methods of the UNDC. The following non-exhaustive proposals are intended to stimulate discussion during the upcoming UNDC session on possible adjustments to the UNDC’s working methods, which was requested by paragraph 9 of the UNGA Resolution A/RES/80/66, with the objective of implementing adjustments as early as the next UNDC cycle.

### **1. Election of the bureau for the entire UNDC cycle**

Currently, the bureau is elected on an annual basis. Electing the bureau for the full duration of the UNDC’s three year cycle (or two year cycle, see proposal number three) would ensure greater continuity in negotiations, strengthen institutional memory, enhance the effectiveness of the intersessional process and allow for more strategic planning across the entire cycle.

A cycle-based bureau would be better positioned to guide discussions from agenda-setting to the finalization of recommendations.

### **2. Adjusting the length and/or structure of the annual sessions**

The current format of three consecutive weeks of negotiations may no longer reflect contemporary working practices. Particularly for smaller delegations, it poses a challenge to follow lengthy processes.

The calendar could be therefore restructured as follows:

Option A: Two consecutive weeks in April. This could ensure more focused deliberations, provide relief to smaller delegations, reduce fatigue and improve efficiency as well as enable concentrated higher-level engagement.

Option B: Two or three shorter sessions of one week each spread throughout the year (e.g., January, April, July). This could create opportunities to build incremental consensus over time and provide greater flexibility for delegations.

### **3. Shorten the UNDC cycle**

A shorter cycle could increase momentum, maintain political engagement and allow for more stable bureaus if their mandates span the full cycle.

A two-year cycle could be structured the following way:

#### Year 1:

- Panel discussions and expert briefings to generate substantive input;
- Structured thematic debates;
- Initial exchanges on States' priorities, proposals and red lines;
- Launch of informal consultations during the intersessional period to begin drafting elements of recommendations.

#### Year 2:

- Consolidation of proposals;
- Focused deliberations;
- Finalization and adoption of recommendations.

The greatest impact would be achieved if all proposals were implemented simultaneously. Together, they would improve continuity, strengthen political relevance, increase efficiency, better utilize intersessional processes and enhance the overall effectiveness of the UNDC.

However, reforms could also be introduced sequentially. As a first step, adjustments to the session structure and agreement on electing the bureau for the entire cycle could be implemented. Reform of the cycle length could follow at a later stage once further experience has been gathered.

Reforming the working methods of the UNDC is not an end in itself. It is a necessary step to restore the Commission's relevance as a universal forum for substantive deliberation and consensus-building on disarmament. A modernized UNDC, better aligned with current diplomatic realities and reform efforts within the UN system, would contribute meaningfully to strengthening multilateral disarmament diplomacy in the years ahead.