



THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY FIRST COMMITTEE: DISARMAMENT AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY

Purview of the Simulation: The General Assembly First Committee addresses the disarmament of conventional weapons and weapons of mass destruction and related international security questions. The First Committee makes recommendations on the regulation of these weapons as they relate to international peace and security. The First Committee does not address legal issues

surrounding weapons possession or consider complex peace and security issues addressed by the Security Council. For more information concerning the purview of the UN's General Assembly as a whole, see page 16.

Website: www.un.org/ga/61/first/first.shtml

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DISARMAMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

The relationship between disarmament and development, more commonly referred to as the “guns and butter debate,” hinges upon an economic production possibility curve. This curve is a visual representation of the trade-offs governments must make when deciding what interests to economically pursue. In layman's terms, this economic theory states that when limited resources are available, a government is forced to make a choice between interests. Often the interests between which governments must choose are interests of disarmament and development.

The United Nations has long been interested in the relationship between development and disarmament since the first proposals linking the two were introduced in the 1950's. These proposals mostly focused on encouraging the reduction of military spending so as to dedicate the monetary funds which were freed to development measures. In 1968, under the auspices of the UN, a panel released a statement which declared Disarmament, Development, and Security to be a “Triad of Peace.”

During the first Special Session on Disarmament in 1978, numerous links were made between development and disarmament, and further proposals were initiated. The majority of these proposals centered around reductions in military spending that would create excess funds which could be placed into a global development fund. The UN was hesitant, however, to draw too strong of a link between the concepts of development and disarmament. This hesitancy ended in 1982, however, when the United Nations released the Thorsson study on disarmament and development. The report concluded that there was a negative relationship between the two concepts, and that Member States could pursue either an arms race, or a developed world, but not both. This declaration of a relationship has framed the United Nation's attitude towards disarmament and development in subsequent years, including the subsequent declaration in 1994 that the relationship between disarmament and development was not only symbiotic, but also growing in importance.

The 1987 Conference on Disarmament and Development had 40 members and a permanent agenda of 10 items. The Conference established several subsidiary bodies to continue to address disarmament questions within the framework of the permanent agenda, including committees on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, a radiological weapons ban, a comprehensive programme of disarmament and security assurances for non-nuclear-weapon States, and the Ad Hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons. In 1999

the Secretary-General created a Steering-Group to continue the mandate of the 1987 Conference. The Steering-Group focused on including NGOs and civil society in its efforts, and particularly noted the growing awareness by international financial institutions, such as the World Bank, of the relationship between development and disarmament.

In Millennium Development Goal (MDG) Eight, the UN pledged to develop a global partnership for development. The international community has become increasingly aware that without sustainable peace and security, sustainable development is nearly impossible. Likewise, a lack of focus on development and the corresponding poverty invites armed conflict and violence. At the 2005 Conference on Disarmament in Geneva the Secretary-General addressed the interplay between these realities, and further emphasized that the MDGs could not be achieved without a corresponding focus on peace and security.

In June 2006 42 states adopted the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development, which focuses on the connection between disarmament and development in a few specific countries. The Declaration centered around three principles: advocacy of the Declaration itself to increase awareness, measuring and researching the impact of armed violence on development, and developing effective programs to prevent armed violence. National Armed Violence Prevention Programmes have seen some success in Brazil and El Salvador; in 2007 the Programme focused on developing analogous strategies for Africa, Asia and Europe. Disarmament initiatives have also been supported at the regional level, such as the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa's (UNREC) involvement in projects such as the Small Arms and Light Weapons Register for Africa.

The current relationship between development and disarmament may not be as straightforward in reality as the theories and documents imply. Many economists have pointed out possible flaws in the economic production possibility curve, especially in its applicability to free market economies. Furthermore, questions have been raised regarding the potential undermining of sovereignty, and thus development, that vast reductions in military spending could cause. These issues have become more prevalent in recent years, as developing states often find themselves competing with more developed neighbors both in terms of military and economic strength.

The current state of international relations is markedly different than when the topic of a relationship between development and disarmament was first approached. The end of the cold war changed

the scope of international military spending, and many countries have seen a reduction in military spending coinciding with this development. Simultaneously, modern terrorism has brought about new and different threats to human security, and the militaries of member states have been forced to change many of the ways in which they operate in response. It must be the goal of the United Nations to find a balance between disarmament and development that is able to foster not only development throughout the world, but also protections of human security.

Questions to consider from your government's perspective on this issue include:

- To what extent can a reduction in security spending lead to increased funding for development initiatives?
- What measures can the United Nations take to promote disarmament while also supporting state sovereignty and human security?
- Does the relationship between disarmament and development differ from state to state depending on the system of government or economy? How can solutions be tailored to account for these differences?
- What role might other NGO's play as it pertains to the issues of disarmament and development? What advantages or disadvantages might exist from such involvement?

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Additional Web Resources:

- disarmament.un.org/cab/d&d.html - UN documents relating to Disarmament and Development
- disarmament.un.org/education-new/resources.html - Disarmament resources
- www.oecd.org/home/0,2987,en_2649_201185_1_1_1_1_1,00.html – Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

REGIONAL DISARMAMENT

Regional disarmament involves a wide variety of issues ranging from nuclear weapons, anti-personnel landmines, and illicit trade of small arms. Given global political diversity, disarmament at a regional level is ideal for several reasons. First and foremost, the needs of particular regions or sub-regions are generally similar. This works to the advantage of the concerned parties as there is less need to appease foreign non-indigenous powers in the local arena. Secondly, regional organizations better understand and can more effectively address the true arms control problems affecting the region without focusing on tangential issues. Finally, as conflicts are historically more inclined to occur on a regional level than for example an intercontinental level, the transparency and confidence building emphasized in regional arms control and disarmament has the potential to prevent conflicts.

Disarmament at the regional level has been an explicit goal of the United Nations since 1985. With the growing shortage of peacekeeping manpower, coupled with the increasingly complex operations and logistics associated with maintaining peace, the roles of regional organizations has become tantamount to the success of the perpetuation of peace. In the Agenda for Peace set forth by Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali in 1992, the importance of regional organizations in maintaining international peace and security was stressed. This role is not merely confined to negotiating peace once an impasse has been reached, but avoiding the conflict altogether. The United Nations has created Regional Centres for Peace and Disarmament in Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa, and Asia and the Pacific. These centers are designed specifically to assist in the implementation of the existing international disarmament accords at the regional and sub-regional levels. The Regional Disarmament Branch of the Office of Disarmament Affairs serves to facilitate effective and comprehensive arms control through such practices as the education of law makers on arms control laws and enforcement, thus preventing ineffective governance through legal loopholes.

Since the easing of tensions in the Cold War, the United Nations has begun to view the goals in the disarmament arena as genuinely achievable. Moreover, with cohesive international actions on a number of different topics within the arms control issue, the regional organizations have been given a guideline for action. The United Nations has diligently supported the efforts of regional organizations

in curtailing the proliferation of all varieties of armaments. Given the particular effectiveness of the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific, the United Nations has made special emphasis of education and regional meetings in what is generally known as the “Kathmandu Process.” This process is neither an institution nor an agenda, but instead is a means of promoting and facilitating communication between states. The importance of maintaining the Regional Centres for Peace and Disarmament as effective support structures has become a self-evident priority, resulting in continued funding.

As a result of globalization and dramatic developments in computerized weapons technology, the international community is confronted with new challenges to disarmament. New non-state actors, such as terrorist groups, are neither party to disarmament treaties nor interested in disarmament. New weapons are more destructive and varied than in the past. Additionally, clandestine weapons programs have undermined the disarmament agenda and threaten to destabilize regions where the programs are conducted.

The United Nations must now explore methods of continued effectiveness for regional peace, cooperation, confidence building, transparency and legal consensus. The Regional Centers have proved effective, albeit geographically confined, and therefore the UN should strive to impress upon existing regional organizations the importance of general disarmament and the models previously set forth. The use of existing organizations would serve to allay the budgetary demands of setting up new organizations, while at the same time, utilizing a previously established route for dialogue. In the absence of any existing structures, the UN must urge Member States to reasonably address this need by creating appropriate Regional Centres, which must be prepared to confront the modern challenges of weapons development and non-state actors.

Questions to consider from your government’s perspective on this issue include:

- What existing organizations adequately address regional disarmament, confidence building, and transparency?
- Would arms control on a regional level more adequately address the concerns of my Member State?
- Are the existing regional models sufficient to be applicable to all states? If not, how can the models set forth by the United Nations be sustained and applied to other regions?

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Additional Web Resources:

www.armscontrol.org - Arms Control Association
disarmament.un.org – Office for Disarmament Affairs
www.globalsecurity.org - Global Security
www.humansecuritygateway.info - Human Security Gateway