THE FIRST COMMITTEE MONITOR

NGO Reporting on the General Assembly First Committee on Disarmament and International Security

Final Edition 2007

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Global Security Institute;  
International Action Network on Small Arms;  
International Association of Lawyers Against Nuclear Arms;  
Lawyers’ Committee on Nuclear Policy;  
Middle Powers Initiative;  
NGO Committee on Disarmament, Peace and Security;  
Peace Boat US;  
Quaker United Nations Office; and  
Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom

*The Monitor* is a weekly report produced by the NGO Working Group on the First Committee, a collaborative effort undertaken by non-governmental organizations to make the work of the UN General Assembly First Committee on Disarmament and International Security more transparent. *The Monitor* is compiled, edited, and coordinated by Reaching Critical Will, the disarmament project of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom.

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- Posting statements, draft resolutions, and First Committee information online at www.reachingcriticalwill.org;  
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- Serving as an information resource by email or phone; and  
- Providing a link between the First Committee and NGOs who are not in New York.
In his closing remarks on 2 November, First Committee Chairperson Paul Badji outlined the “productivity” of the 2007 session: more than 315 statements delivered and 52 draft texts adopted. If productivity can be measured by volume of paper circulated, then First Committee was extremely successful. If, however, we turn to Badji’s question of whether or not First Committee “advanced the cause of disarmament and international security,” the 2007 session could best be characterized as underwhelming.

Despite the introduction and adoption of new draft resolutions on depleted uranium and de-alerting, Sierra Leone’s proposal for First Committee to include human security as a topic in its Thematic Debate next year, and frequent panels of experts, First Committee largely consisted of familiar remarks interspersed with a few severe discrepancies. Most notable of these was the US statement regarding its nuclear posture, which contained several misleading or incorrect claims. It was met with rebuttals by prominent members of civil society, including Bruce Blair of the World Security Institute and Hans M. Kristensen of the Federation of American Scientists, and was the subject of a critical article appearing in the Washington Post. The US statement was a response to the tabling of draft resolution A/C.1/62/L.29 on de-alerting, which France, the UK, and the US voted against. The US delegation rejected the assertion that their nuclear weapons are on “launch on warning status” or “hair-trigger alert,” employing linguistics as cover, yet subsequently argued that as long as nuclear weapons exist, it is necessary to keep “some portion of our forces at some level of alert.” Perhaps in an attempt to be less conspicuously contradictory, the UK, whose single remaining nuclear weapon system is kept on several day’s notice-to-fire, simply argued that de-alerting is not a “useful priority.”

Disagreements abounded at First Committee, with the US and Pakistan, both nuclear weapon possessors, asserting supposedly different agendas for moving forward with disarmament and non-proliferation. Pakistan’s “new global consensus,” outlined in its non-paper and statements, emphasizes balanced reductions of military forces and weapons “based on the principle of undiminished security of the parties with a view to promoting or enhancing stability at a lower military level, taking into account the need of all States to protect their security.” Meanwhile, the US called for “a path to complete nuclear disarmament that avoids creating new instabilities potentially damaging to global security.” The similarities in goal are apparent, though while Pakistan’s delegation has set out suggestions for how to accomplish the task, the US has decided it is no longer useful to focus on the “frequently debated ‘how-to-do-it’ questions of controlling fissile materials, verifying reductions, or physically eliminating weapon systems,” and would prefer to analyze “the ‘why-to-do-it’ questions of how to create the underlying conditions that would make disarmament a reasonable policy choice.” Laying aside the glaring oversight that “why-to-do-it questions” in themselves contain “how-to-do-it questions,” it is remarkable that the US has clearly stated it believes that discussing steps to disarmament, including elimination and verification of weapon systems, are no longer valuable or relevant. The US assertion that “easing tensions and strengthening trust” are vital to the elimination of nuclear weapons, is out of step with the vast majority of the international community that argues easing tensions and strengthening trust requires concrete steps towards disarmament.

Productivity necessitates constructive engagement with others, and the promotion of ideas that reflect normative values and aspirations. While characterizing members of civil society as “sophists” who only “care about [disarmament] as an instrument of political coup-counting against the nuclear weapon states, rather than as a means of accomplishing anything constructive,” the US delegation neglects to acknowledge that while the intergovernmental community struggles to adopt agendas, civil society has been initiating and supporting many paths towards a new collective security environment where the interests of citizens and states are synonymous, and where weapons are obsolete. We just happen to believe that in order to get somewhere, you have to actually take steps, and not simply ridicule those you don’t want to take.

- Ray Acheson, Reaching Critical Will
The sponsors of the three key comprehensive nuclear disarmament resolutions decided not to try to break any new ground this year, and as a result, there were no surprises in either the debate or the voting.

The Japanese-led annual draft, “Renewed determination towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons” (A/C.1/62/L.30), was nearly identical to the 2006 version and therefore so was the vote (and even some of the explanations of vote). The New Agenda’s resolution, “Towards a nuclear-weapon-free world: accelerating the implementation of nuclear disarmament commitments” (A/C.1/62/L.9), repeated its language from last year, yet gained a bit more support, as did the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM)’s “Nuclear Disarmament” text (A/C.1/62/L.40).

The “Renewed determination” draft continues to hit the right tone and agenda for the vast majority of states. The vote was 165 to 3 (the US, India, and North Korea), with 10 abstentions. Last year’s draft was adopted 169 to 3 (the same three) with 8 abstentions. Using the same language as last year, the United States called the draft the “most balanced and realistic” of the nuclear disarmament texts but opposed it because of the endorsement of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. Russia, which voted in favor of the draft, called it “a good example of a balanced combination.”

The New Agenda draft was adopted 151 to 5, with 13 abstentions. This was a slight improvement over 2006’s tally of 148 in favour to 7 opposed, with 12 abstentions. This year’s five negative votes were the US, France, India, Israel, and North Korea. Last year, these five were joined by the United Kingdom and Pakistan, both of whom abstained this year. A separate vote on the paragraph calling on India, Pakistan, and Israel to join the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) as “non-nuclear weapon states promptly and without conditions” drew four negative votes (those three states plus the United States), 155 affirmative votes, and 2 abstentions (France and Bhutan). Russia and China voted yes; the United Kingdom did not vote.

Although the Japanese draft was more detailed than the New Agenda’s, at heart the two drafts endorse the same agenda: continued commitment to the non-proliferation and disarmament obligations embedded in the NPT and the decisions of the treaty’s review conferences. The main difference is that the Japanese text takes a more positive tone concerning progress in fulfilling NPT obligations, on issues including US/Russian strategic arms reductions.

The NAM text L.40, based on the declarations of several heads of state summits, has remained essentially the same for years. However, this year’s tally of 113 to 45, with 17 abstentions was an improvement over 2006’s 105 votes in favour to 45 opposed, with 16 abstentions. This draft always draws the most negative votes because its ambitious list of proposed initiatives includes proposals unacceptable to at least a few countries. Also, unlike the Japanese and New Agenda drafts, the NAM draft endorses initiatives that are not currently part of any treaty regime, such as no-first-use pledges and security assurances to non-nuclear weapon states.

Iran tabled its biennial draft on the NPT disarmament obligations (A/C.1/62/L.8) “Follow-up to nuclear disarmament obligations agreed to at the 1995 and 2000 Review Conferences of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons” at first looks like a straightforward endorsement of the unanimous decisions from those two review conferences, yet the vote was 103 to 53 with 15 abstentions. (In 2005, the vote on a similar resolution was 70-52-22.)

The negative votes came from NATO, Europe in general, and other Western-leaning states, such as Japan and Australia. China abstained, the other four nuclear weapon states party to the NPT voted no. Of the non-NPT states, India and Pakistan abstained, Israel voted no. The bulk of the abstentions came from smaller, non-nuclear states such as Guatemala and Samoa.

There was a separate vote on the preambular paragraph referring to the 1995 resolution on the Middle East. That vote produced a near identical tally to the vote on the draft as a whole: 102 to 48 with 11 abstentions. This was due to a few of the countries that voted no on the draft as a whole, but voted yes on that paragraph (Italy and New Zealand); countries that voted yes on the text, but
did not vote on that paragraph (China and North Korea), or registered a no vote on the whole draft, but abstained on the paragraph (Russia).

There was little debate and only one explanation of vote over the resolution. Typically some government goes on record as to why its votes differed between a single paragraph and the draft as a whole. With such a divisive tally, someone usually says something about their thinking. That did not happen in this case. Clearly, delegates simply wanted to get it over with. There were two problems with the draft for some delegations: first, it focused exclusively on disarmament, not non-proliferation, obligations; and second, the countries that voted no simply did not want to associate themselves with the draft’s sponsor. “Who made Iran the guardian of the NPT?” said a delegate from one of the countries voting against the draft.

The tone of the nuclear disarmament debate improved over last year, largely on the basis of the belief the key multilateral arms control conference of the year—the first session of NPT review cycle—went well. However, except for the de-alerting resolution (see Operational Status of Nuclear Weapons), there were no attempts to push the non-proliferation and disarmament agenda down any specific paths. The advocates of these resolutions believe that nothing of substance will change in First Committee without progress at the Conference on Disarmament and the NPT cycle. It is also clear that on those resolutions and issues where the opposition is a small minority, there is no chance of any movement unless India, Pakistan, and Israel change their minds on the NPT, and the US changes its position on the CTBT. Another unsaid calculation that there will be no change in the policies of the US until there is a change of administration in 2009.

- Jim Wurst, Middle Powers Initiative
(www.middlepowers.org)
rebutted by prominent experts Hans Kristensen, of the Federation of American Scientists and Bruce Blair, President of the World Security Institute.

US Ambassador Rocca only partially backed off her earlier position in her explanation of the US vote against the resolution. Disagreeing with the resolution’s assertion that the US level of readiness increases risk of accidental or unintentional use of nuclear weapons, Ambassador Rocca further stated that “the United States does not rely on launch-on-warning,” without explaining her understanding of this nebulous term. This denial fails to address the knowledgeable assessment of Bruce Blair and the crux of international concern of alert levels, that US command and early warning systems are “geared” to fire “friendly forces en masse before the anticipated arrival of incoming enemy missiles with flight times of 12-30 minutes.” Ambassador Rocca did, however, admit that some US SSBNs are always on alert, stating that “As long as nuclear weapons exist and are part of the U.S. deterrent, it is necessary for us to keep some portion of our forces at some level of alert.”

In explanation of their negative votes, nuclear weapon states France and the United Kingdom provided better reasoned rationales backing their national positions, but still obviously came up short of the resolution’s intent. The United Kingdom stated it disagrees with the resolution’s basic premise that the world is at risk due to the alert status of nuclear weapons. In the view of the UK, the issue has been adequately dealt with and is not a priority issue. French Ambassador Dobelle explained France was not against the idea of reducing operational status, noting France had taken the decision to de-target its nuclear forces in 1997, but France cannot go any further unless the strategic situation and France’s security needs allows for it.

The other resolution dealing with alert status, India’s draft, A/C.1/62/L.21, “Reducing nuclear danger,” was adopted in a vote similar to recent years with 113 in favor, 50 against, and 13 abstentions. The resolution, unchanged from last year, calls for a review of nuclear doctrines and for immediate steps by the nuclear weapons states to de-target and de-alert their nuclear forces, controversially noting, “hair-trigger alert of nuclear weapons carries unacceptable risks of unintentional or accidental use of nuclear weapons.” Speaking before the vote on L.29, India stated the two resolution had a high level of congruence and the Indian delegation invited those states who co-sponsored L.29, but opposed India’s resolution, to reconsider their position in the future. The Indian delegation did not, however, indicate if it would be willing to moderate their text, showing a similar flexibility as the co-sponsors of L.29, in order to ensure the widest possible support.

- Michael Spies, Lawyers’ Committee on Nuclear Policy (www.lcnp.org)

Nuclear Proliferation

The nuclear programmes of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) and Iran dominated discussions on nuclear proliferation in the First Committee (see previous reports on the DPRK’s nuclear programme). However, given the active engagement in the Iran issue by major powers who are also permanent members of the Security Council, the role of the General Assembly remained largely limited to reassertion of national positions in prepared remarks during the general and themed discussions.

The only exceptions were the votes over resolutions A/C.1/62/L.2 and A/C.1/62/L.8, both of which were affected, although in different ways, by the controversy over Iran’s nuclear programme. In recent years, the traditionally contentious resolution L.2, “The risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East,” has attracted increasing reservations, if only verbally. Despite its title, the resolution, unchanged in recent years, focuses on the need to universalize the nuclear non-Proliferation Treaty and singles out Israel in this context. Several Western delegations, including Canada and the European Union, suggested that the title is misleading, as the resolution does not address concern over Iran’s nuclear programme, leading these delegations and others to question its balance.

First introduced (and only narrowly adopted) in 2005, Iran’s resolution L.8, “Follow-up to
nuclear disarmament obligations agreed to at the 1995 and 2000 Review Conferences of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons,” now in its second year, gained a number of votes, easily passing with 103 in favor, 53 against, and 15 abstentions. The resolution continues to be seen by many delegations as more of a finger-pointing exercise and duplicative of existing resolutions. Despite having agreed to many elements of L.8 that are also contained in other resolutions, Europe and most Western and developed states continue to either actively oppose or abstain due to the resolution’s provenance (see also Nuclear Disarmament).

During the 62nd session of the First Committee, the issue of Iran’s nuclear programme was largely limited to the General and Thematic Debates, where the discussion revealed a high degree of divergence, contrary to exhortations of unity of the international community on the issue. This was readily apparent in the approach of the P5 on the issue, despite the 28 September P5+2 statement, in which the major powers agreed to seek a third sanctions resolution in the UN Security Council unless reports from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the EU High Representative show progress in November. The United States again adopted the hardest line against Iran and called outright for the Security Council to adopt a third sanctions resolution. Although the EU called upon Iran to suspend its enrichment programme, it expressed hope that the 21 August work plan would resolve outstanding issues, and made no reference to an additional Security Council resolution. The Russian and Chinese delegations both emphasized diplomatic and political solutions to addressing the Iran nuclear situation, without reference to the imposition of additional sanctions or even the 28 September P5+2 statement, indicating their lukewarm support for continued escalation of the situation (see Nuclear Proliferation Week 1).

First Committee also heard both the Iranian and Israeli viewpoints on this issue in their general remarks. Reiterating familiar rhetorical points, Iranian Ambassador Khazaee defended Iran’s nuclear programme as peaceful, touted the 21 August work plan, and denounced Security Council resolutions adopted on the nuclear issue. Israeli Ambassador Ziv, delivering general remarks from the viewpoint of her country’s unique perspective on matters of global security, urged states to regard Iran “as a threat well beyond the geographical limits of the Middle East” and also as “a threat not just to the regional stability but also to the global strategic situation.” Ambassador Ziv’s statements were in part based on the argument that weapons of mass destruction are dangerous only “in the hands of reckless and irresponsible actors,” a position that was flatly rejected by the Hans Blix-led Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission (see Nuclear Proliferation Week 2).

Perceptions of the Iran situation were also split along North-South lines. Delegations affiliated with the Non-Aligned Movement, of which Iran is a member, tended to adopt a softer tone, welcoming the agreement between Iran and the IAEA to resolve outstanding issues and calling for balanced and comprehensive pursuit of non-proliferation objectives while upholding the right to develop nuclear energy. Other Western delegations that spoke out on Iran, including Canada and New Zealand, tended to take an approach closer to that of the EU, emphasizing the need for Iran’s compliance with its Security Council-imposed obligations. No delegations suggested alternative solutions to the dispute. However, in the Thematic Debate on nuclear weapons, Ambassador Khan of Pakistan observed that further coercion could be counter-productive and place the whole region in jeopardy, noting also that “[a]symmetry, imbalance and discrimination” would ultimately propel proliferation rather than facilitating the goal of a nuclear weapon free zone in the Middle East.

- Michael Spies, Lawyers’ Committee on Nuclear Policy (www.lcnp.org)
The Nuclear Fuel Cycle

Amid the ongoing dispute over Iran’s nuclear programme and anticipation of a global renaissance in nuclear energy, the issue of the nuclear fuel cycle featured prominently at the sixty-second session of the First Committee. Responding to predictions of a nuclear renaissance, delegations, non-government organizations, and others addressed issues posed by the spread of nuclear power—namely, the proliferation of sensitive technologies related to the nuclear fuel cycle, usable either for peaceful civilian use or for use in the production of weapons (see previous Nuclear Fuel Cycle reports). Both inside and outside the First Committee, possible solutions to some of these dilemmas were heard, including potential multilateral approaches to the nuclear fuel cycle.

Unlike other substantive areas of the First Committee agenda where the international community is definitively stuck, on the seemingly equally fraught issue of the fuel cycle the Committee heard various proposals for solutions, some of which are actually in motion. Gustavo Zlauvinen, representative of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to the UN, addressing the First Committee, called for a new multilateral framework on both the front and back end of the nuclear fuel cycle. Mr. Zlauvinen described an incremental, three step approach to achieve such a framework, including: establishment of an adequate and reliable mechanism for supply; placing any new uranium enrichment and plutonium reprocessing facilities under multinational control; and extending multinational control over existing nuclear fuel cycle facilities (see Nuclear Fuel Cycle Week 2). At a 1 November event organized by the Middle Powers Initiative (MPI) he mentioned there are currently thirteen proposals, listed by the IAEA and submitted by member states, which he described as “mutually complimentary.”

At the MPI event, he elaborated on the first step—establishment by the IAEA of an adequate and reliable mechanism for supply. He explained the purpose of such a mechanism would be:

… to deal with possible consequences of interruptions of supply of nuclear fuel due to political considerations that are not related to non-proliferation, not related to commercial of other aspects in terms of fulfillment of contractual obligations … and, at the same time, to reduce the vulnerabilities that might create incentives for countries to build new national enrichment and reprocessing capabilities…. Therefore, an assurance of supply mechanism would be envisaged solely as a backup mechanism to the operation of the current normally functioning market…

Mr. Zlauvinen also explained aspects of an IAEA proposal, not yet made public, for nuclear fuel assurances presented to the IAEA Board on 15 June 2007 and welcomed by the European Union in its statement during the Thematic Debate on nuclear weapons. The proposal draws on a study by the four uranium enrichment companies under the auspices of the World Nuclear Association (WNA), which primarily calls for a three-tiered systems of assurances, which include: existing market based assurances; backup commitments provided by enrichment and fuel fabrication suppliers to be evoked when predetermined criteria are met following a political disruption of supply; and a physical low-enriched uranium reserve located in one or more locations, coupled with fuel fabrication development in “consumer” states. Under this proposal, it seems decision-making capacity for use of the mechanism would be held by the IAEA Board. Moreover, the proposal foresees the Board establishing non-proliferation criteria in advance so that it would not need to decide on a case by case basis. The IAEA Board has yet to have a full and comprehensive discussion on this proposal, but Mr. Zlauvinen anticipates this may happen in spring 2008.

In light of the disproportionate attention the fuel bank proposal has received in the United States over other proposals—it featured prominently at the IAEA special event on the nuclear fuel cycle in September 2006 and has been the objective of several pieces of legislation making their way through US Congress—a cautious approach is advisable. Any supply assurance mechanism alone would not be a panacea for proliferation concerns. As Dr. John Burroughs, executive director of the Lawyers’ Committee on Nuclear Policy, pointed
The Nuclear Fuel Cycle (cont.)

out at the MPI event, “for a country concerned about energy … the most reliable approach is having facilities on its own territory under its physical control.” Specifically referring to the WNA proposal, the fuel bank it would establish would operate as “more or less an afterthought to the real world of nuclear production and supply.” In reality, this business-as-usual model may dissuade only a few marginal nuclear states that are not likely proliferators, while providing a political weapon to those interested in opposing the nuclear programmes of others.

Another difficulty facing the international community in proceeding with this mechanism will be establishing functional non-proliferation criteria for use of the backup mechanisms. Given the dual-use nature of nuclear technology, in a dispute between a consumer state and a major power, recent history suggests any political dispute affecting supply could be characterized as motivated by “proliferation concerns.” The involvement of the IAEA Board as the decision-making authority in this context may undermine the credibility of the assurance. As a political (not technical or legal) body where the global-North-tilted assortment of Governors are national representatives upholding their countries’ interests, the Board’s suitability as an impartial guarantor of nuclear fuel supply is questionable. Establishing universally acceptable non-proliferation criteria before a fuel bank is set up may reduce this potential contradiction, but given the non-representative and non-inclusive nature of the Board, any formulation may still provide insufficient assurances to states not represented in this process or on the Board.

With these caveats in mind, any mechanism for credible fuel assurances could help alleviate proliferation concerns. However, the costs for taking a bad approach could be high. As an example, within a year of the US administration announcing its Global Nuclear Energy Partnership, a number of states expressed interest in pursuing the nuclear fuel cycle, as Dr. Burroughs pointed out, either to be recognized as a fuel cycle supplier state or to avoid becoming dependent on an emerging cartel. Therefore, as Mr. Zlauvinen in-

dicated in his remarks to the First Committee, attention must also be paid to other crucial aspects of achieving a new framework for nuclear fuel supply: extension of multinational control over new and existing facilities.

- Michael Spies, Lawyers’ Committee on Nuclear Policy (www.lcnp.org)

Disarmament Machinery

For years, First Committee has been a repository of complaints about the state of the disarmament agenda and the machinery designed to advance it. This year, however, the routine complaints made by virtually every delegation were limited to the stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament (CD), as opposed to previous years’ chastisement of the failure of other multilateral machinery. There was scant discussion on revitalizing the work of First Committee, or enhancing cooperation between the major pieces of machinery. Several delegations lamented the erosion of multilateralism, and pointed to the politicization of technical and legal issues and double-standards that are impacting and undermining the machinery once again called for change without offering concrete proposals.

The disarmament machinery procedural draft resolutions, and their voting results, were likewise stale. Draft texts on the CD, UN Disarmament Commission (UNDC), and the fourth special session on disarmament (SSOD IV)—each of which contain only technical updates from last year—were adopted last week.

A/C.1/62/L.11*, “Report of the Conference on Disarmament,” was adopted without a vote again. The text notes the increased deliberations and constructive contributions of member states to the 2007 session of the CD, welcomes intersessional consultations by the incoming presidents, and requests all member states cooperate to achieve “the early commencement of substantive work in its 2008 session.” During General and Thematic Debates, most delegations called for the adoption of the comprehensive programme tabled by the six presidents during the 2007 session.

Disarmament Machinery (cont.)

UNDC, recommends it continues deliberating on recommendations for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation and for confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons, and encourages increased cooperation between First Committee, the UNDC, and the CD. Though Benin’s representative referred to the UNDC as a “theatre of confrontations” during the Thematic Debate, he and most other delegates still feel the UNDC has potential to advance the disarmament and non-proliferation agenda.

However, while L.3 was adopted without a vote, the US delegation insisted, both in its explanation of vote and in its statement on disarmament machinery, that the UNDC “damaged its credibility” by electing a representative from Iran to serve as one of the vice-chairs in April 2007. The US refused to take part in the vote, arguing, “the conduct of the last UNDC session unfortunately does not give reason for optimism that the current three-year study cycle will have a productive result.” This position turns the UNDC from a theatre of confrontation into a theatre of the absurd—not to mention one of severe politicization.

For a nuclear weapon state to discredit a disarmament body, because of the election of a non-nuclear weapon state to a position in this body, carries the mark of the dramatic non sequitur.

A/C.1/62/L.17/Rev.1, “Convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament,” has been slightly rearranged from the original draft text, without significant substantive changes. Short of the CD creating an Ad Hoc Committee on disarmament to push the agenda forward, SSOD IV is the next logical step to review the current impasse in disarmament and to review the functionality of disarmament machinery. L.17/Rev.1 argues SSOD IV “would offer an opportunity to review, from a perspective more in tune with the current international situation, the most critical aspects of the process of disarmament and to mobilize the international community and public opinion in favour of the elimination of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction and of the control and reduction of conventional weapons.” The resolution was adopted 166-1-0 for the second year in a row, with the US voting against. The US delegation did not offer an explanation of vote for its rejection of this resolution either year, though its record of vote indicates it does not see any value in establishing SSOD IV.

Two weeks ago, Patricia Lewis of UNIDIR asked delegates, if SSOD IV is not the appropriate venue for the imperative review of disarmament machinery and lack of progress on disarmament, then what is? Her question emphasizes the necessity of changing, abandoning, or strengthening existing machinery—and of achieving disarmament. It also points to the lackluster and uninspired discussion taking place on these subjects. The situation demands creative, responsive people, such as Ambassador Labbé of Chile, Chair of the SSOD IV working group, and Dr. Lewis, who can establish creative, responsive instruments by which to make real progress. The system that currently exists is insufficient and inexcusable, and while calls for a new security environment, a new consensus, or a new architecture are welcome, they must be accompanied by concrete ideas that not only make the relevant players think differently, but act differently.

- Ray Acheson, Reaching Critical Will (www.reachingcriticalwill.org)

Nuclear Weapon Free Zones

While the world media draws attention to existing and emerging nuclear threats, states in over half the planet have quietly been taking their regions out of the nuclear equation by linking up with their neighbors in Nuclear Weapon Free Zones (NWFZs). The texts of NWFZ treaties recognize that denuclearized zones are not an end in themselves, but are steps towards global nuclear disarmament, and enhanced security for everyone. This year marked the 40th anniversary of the Treaty of Tlatelolco in Latin America and the Caribbean; and the 10th anniversaries of the Outer Space Treaty (creating a NWFZ in outer space) and the Treaty of Bangkok, establishing the Southeast Asian NWFZ. Discussions at this year’s First Committee emphasized the importance and contribution of these and all NWFZs to nuclear non-proliferation and the advancement of total

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Nuclear Weapon Free Zones (cont.)

nuclear disarmament.

Since the first historic gathering of all NWFZ countries in Mexico City in 2005, states have been working to strengthen dialogue and cooperation among existing zones and to establish new zones in other parts of the world. During the panel, “The Contribution of Nuclear Weapon Free Zones to Nuclear Disarmament and Non-Proliferation,” ambassadors from the Kyrgyz Republic and South Africa encouraged states and non-governmental organizations to promote dialogue between the zones, both among states and across civil society. All panelists spoke of the need to deepen these discussions and ties in preparation for the next meeting of all NWFZ countries, planned for 2010.

Brazil and New Zealand proposed the creation of a “Nuclear-weapon-free southern hemisphere and adjacent areas” (A/C.1/62/L.27), which would link existing zones in Latin America, the South Pacific, Southeast Asia, and Africa, and encourage future additions to the zone in the northern hemisphere. The proposal has received strong support in the past and was adopted again this year, with 162 votes in favour. Seven states, including Bhutan, India, Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Pakistan, and Russia abstained from the resolution. As in previous years, France, the United Kingdom, and the United States voted against it, questioning the effect the resolution would have on the Law of the Sea, despite New Zealand’s assurances the resolution did not contravene any international laws. Pakistan noted that “[t]he call in operative paragraph 6 of the resolution for the creation of a NWFZ in South Asia however fails to acknowledge reality on ground.” India’s delegation reiterated its explanation from previous years and noted that the proposal for the establishment of a NWFZ in South Asia “has no greater validity than the establishment of nuclear weapon free zones in other parts of the world such as in East Asia, Western Europe or North America.” Ambassador Jeenbaev of the Kyrgyz Republic reminded us that the first NWFZ in the northern hemisphere, the Central Asian NWFZ, came into being in the past year through the Treaty of Semipalatinsk.

A/C.1/62/L.10, “Consolidation of the regime established by the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (Treaty of Tlatelolco),” was adopted without a vote, as was A/C.1/62/L.26, “African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty,” which called upon all African states that have not yet done so to sign and ratify the Treaty of Pelindaba so that it may enter into force. The resolution further calls for the establishment of a NWFZ in the Middle East as a measure that “would enhance the security of Africa and the viability of the African nuclear-weapon-free zone.”

A number of delegations, including the Non-Aligned Movement, Syria, Egypt, Malaysia, Turkey, Viet Nam, Bangladesh, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Jordan, Iran, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, and Palestine have also called for the establishment of a NWFZ in the Middle East as a means of increasing stability and security in the region. As in previous years, resolution A/C.1/62/L.1, “Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East,” was adopted without a vote. Israel noted that the process of establishing a NWFZ in the Middle East “cannot begin in situations where some of the parties concerned still maintain a state of war with each other, refuse in principle to maintain peaceful relations with Israel and even call for its destruction.” The annual resolution “The risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East” (A/C.1/62/L.2), reaffirming “the importance of Israel’s accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and placement of all its nuclear facilities under comprehensive [IAEA] safeguards,” was rejected by the United States and Israel, with abstentions from Australia, Cameroon, Canada, Cote D’Ivoire, Ethiopia, and India. While voting in favour, the European Union noted that the resolution does not reflect the international community’s concern over Iran’s nuclear program and its failure to comply with Security Council resolutions.

Many states recognized the challenges in making NWFZ treaties fully effective and operational. States Parties to NWFZ treaties, including members of the Rio Group and ASEAN, called on nuclear weapon states (NWS) to accede to protocols providing security assurances for member states of NWFZs. Draft resolution A/C.1/62/L.19/Rev.1, “Treaty on the South-East Asia Nu-
clear-Weapon Free Zone”, calling on the five NWS to accede to the protocols of the Treaty, received 161 votes in favour, with abstentions from Andorra, France, Israel, and the United Kingdom. The United States voted against the resolution.

Motarilavoa Hilda Lini, chief of the Turaga Nation and former Minister of Health and Justice of the Republic of Vanuatu, speaking on the aforementioned panel, noted that all NWFZs are rooted in the traditional values of the peoples of their respective regions. She recalled that the Treaty of Rarotonga, creating the South Pacific NWFZ, took its inspiration from the Peoples’ Charter for a Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific. This prophetic document, adopted in 1983 in Vanuatu, called for a Pacific Nuclear Free Zone embracing all states and colonies in the region, banning all aspects of the nuclear fuel cycle, and giving us a compelling vision for the whole planet.

At a time when people and governments of nearly every persuasion look for better ways to be safe and create the conditions for their children and societies to flourish, the citizens and governments of the world’s NWFZs have much to teach us. Sustaining and expanding NWFZs, as underscored by this year’s First Committee resolutions, can lead the way to a Nuclear Weapons Convention, which would make the whole world a Nuclear Weapon Free Zone. When Ambassador Gumbi of South Africa said, “It’s an issue of humankind, not states,” he sounded very like the late Sir Professor Joseph Rotblat in his Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech, when he said, “Remember your humanity, and forget the rest.”

- Pamela Meidell and Monika Szymurska, Atomic Mirror (www.atomicmirror.org)

**Negative Security Assurances**

The First Committee adopted several draft resolutions that call for, or reinforce previous calls for, legally-binding negative security assurances (NSAs). Draft resolution A/C.1/62/L.8, “Follow-up to nuclear disarmament obligations agreed to at the 1995 and 2000 Review Conferences of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons,” introduced by Iran, “[n]otes that the 2000 Review Conference of Parties to the [NPT] agreed that legally binding security assurances by the five nuclear weapon states to the non-nuclear-weapon states parties to the Treaty strengthen the non-proliferation regime.” The resolution passed 103-53 with fifteen states abstaining (see Nuclear Disarmament for more details).

Draft resolution A/C.1/62/L.23, “Convention on the Prohibition of the Use of Nuclear Weapons,” included a preambular paragraph arguing, “a multilateral, universal and binding agreement prohibiting the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons would contribute to the elimination of the nuclear threat and to the climate for negotiations leading to the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons, thereby strengthening international peace and security.” Meanwhile, the resolution titled “Follow-up to the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons,” A/C.1/62/L.36, recognizes the need for negative security assurances for non-nuclear weapon states without explicitly calling for them. Brazil’s delegation, in explaining its vote on L.23, emphasized the importance of negative security assurances, but also stressed that they “cannot be a substitute for mutually agreed disarmament measures which should be irreversible, transparent and verifiable.”

A/C.1/62/L.44, “Conclusion of effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons,” focused on NSAs. The resolution “reaffirms the urgent need to reach early agreement on effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.” It also stressed the importance of the role of the Conference on Disarmament in trying to negotiate legally-binding negative security assur-
ances. The resolution had 27 sponsors, although Pakistan was the only state that possesses nuclear weapons to sponsor the resolution. The draft resolution passed 120-1 with 54 abstaining. The United States was the only state to vote against the resolution.

Support for the concept of NSAs has been gradually increasing in the United Nations. Only two years ago, a resolution very similar to this year’s L.44 received less than 100 votes. However, most nuclear weapon states are reluctant to provide guarantees outside of those already given in Security Council resolutions 255 and 984. China remains the exception, having voted in favour of resolutions on NSAs for the last several years.

- Nathan Band, Global Security Institute
(www.gsinstitute.org)

Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty

This year, the resolution on the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), A/C.1/62/L.28*, is co-sponsored by eight states, significantly fewer than its predecessor in 2006, which had 45 geographically and politically diverse co-sponsors. The only change to the text is that whereas the 2006 resolution condemned the announcement by the Democratic People’s Republic of North Korea (DPRK) that it had conducted a nuclear test, L.28* urges the continuation of the Six-Party Talks, a peaceful settlement to the issue, and “the successful implementation of Joint Statement of 19 September 2005.”

Like previous draft resolutions on the CTBT, L.28* emphasizes the importance of the cessation of nuclear tests to the non-proliferation regime, and “[u]rges all States to maintain their moratoriums on nuclear-weapon test explosions or any other nuclear explosions and to refrain from acts that would defeat the object and purpose of the Treaty, while stressing that these measures do not have the same permanent and legally binding effect as the entry into force of the Treaty.” It also urges those states that have not done so to sign and ratify the Treaty as soon as possible.

In a general statement before the vote, the European Union (EU) delegate emphasized that the CTBT is an essential instrument for disarmament and non-proliferation; therefore, it is vital that the countries in Annex 2 sign and ratify the Treaty for its entry into force. The EU noted the importance of the CTBTO Preparatory Committee, and called on the member states of the Treaty to meet their financial obligations. In addition, the EU stressed the importance of the moratorium on nuclear tests and the verification system of the CTBT.

On 31 October, the First Committee adopted L.28*, with 166 countries in favour, one (the United States) against, and four abstentions—Colombia, India, Mauritius, and Syria. Last year, the DPRK voted against the draft resolution, but did not vote at all this year. The list of states that abstained remained the same.

In its explanation of vote, Pakistan’s delegation reiterated its support of the CTBT over the years, which is reflected in its vote in favour of the resolution. The delegation expressed that it would like the moratorium to be reflected in the draft resolution.

In its explanation of vote, Israel’s delegation said that it signed the CTBT in 1996, and mentioned its contribution to the verification system of the CTBT, its payment of dues to the CTBT Organization, and its participation in workshops related to the Treaty. The delegation of Israel called for the compliance with the CTBT by “others” in the Middle East, and emphasized the importance of the moratorium on nuclear tests.

Iran expressed its “strong desire to ban any nuclear tests”; the delegation pointed out that while “[t]he principal objective of the Treaty is to terminate fully and comprehensively further qualitative and quantitative development of nuclear weapons,” some states, including the US, are modernizing and qualitatively upgrading their nuclear arsenals “in contravention with the letter and spirit of the CTBT” and in opposition to “the vision of systematic and progressive nuclear disarmament.”

Syria explained it abstained because the CTBT ignores the concerns of non-nuclear weapons states that request a guarantee against a nuclear attack. The Syrian delegation also argued that L.28* fails to mention the illegality of the
threat to use or actual use of nuclear weapons, or the nuclear weapon states obligation to disarm. Furthermore, the delegation of Syria criticized the draft resolution for not mentioning nuclear laboratory tests and the renovation of nuclear weapons by some nuclear weapons states.

Colombia reiterated that its abstention merely reflects the constitutional challenges its government is facing in ratifying the CTBT, and emphasized its support for the Treaty.

- Edgar Socarras, NGO Committee on Disarmament, Peace and Security (www.disarmtimes.org) and Anna Walther, Reaching Critical Will (www.reachingcriticalwill.org)

Verification and Transparency

The issues of verification and transparency remain vitally important for international peace, security, and stability. Transparency allows states to monitor implementation of agreements, while verification provides technical assurances, and both help the international community build confidence in states’ respect for international law and compliance with treaty obligations.

This year in First Committee, visions of a clearer and more successful verification and transparency regime were presented in the form of three resolutions: “Objective information on military matters, including transparency of military expenditures” (A/C.1/62/L.33), “Transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities” (A/C.1/62/L.41) (see Outer Space report) and “Verification in all its aspects, including the role of the United Nations in the field of verification” (A/C.1/62/L.47).

L.47 was adopted without a vote, but met concerns from Cuba and Pakistan. The Cuban delegation explained that it is too soon to reflect fully on the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) report, as it was circulated only recently. Pakistan explained, “we had decided in 2004 to go along with the resolution that established the Panel of Governmental Experts but we were neither convinced then nor now that any Panel of Experts with limited representation could make a significant contribution to the philosophy of verification.” The Pakistani delegation suggested that such a panel would be more widely accepted and more legitimate if representation of all relevant countries was ensured in future work.

L.33, “Objective information on military matters, including transparency of military expenditures,” was widely supported. During both the General and Thematic Debates, China proudly reiterated the specific measures it has taken to report its basic data of military spending, adding that military transparency is important because it promotes confidence-building and trust among member states. In addition, when introducing L.33 on 29 October, Ambassador Brasack of Germany asserted, “A fully updated UN reporting system on military expenditures could provide the internationally accepted information basis needed to contribute to transparency and confidence building.” The Cuban delegation supported L.33, but in its explanation of vote argued against the establishment of a new GGE. Cuba expressed concern about the trend of establishing GGEs in First Committee, arguing it should be an exception not a rule, and that priority should be given to transparent and open discussions where all member states can take part. Cuba would prefer that the high cost of an additional GGE ($11 million) be devoted to other priorities.

Throughout First Committee, most delegations continued to express support for treaties that include systems of verification, while calling for verification in treaties that do not provide for it, such as the Biological and Toxic Weapons Convention, and in those yet to be negotiated, such as a Fissile Materials Cut-off Treaty. Member states called upon one another to support these treaties to ensure a more effective verification regime, and to place confidence in and further support the verification work of organizations like the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Pakistan summed up many member states’ positions on verification in its explanation of vote, stating, “Verification is essential to promoting confidence among States in compliance with disarmament treaties and agreements to which they are Parties. Verification ensures the effectiveness and integrity of such agreements. How-

continued on next page
ever, the practice of verification is integral to arms limitation and disarmament agreements. Verification has no independent existence and concepts relating to verification cannot be promoted in a vacuum.”

- Sarmadi Almecci, Reaching Critical Will (www.reachingcriticalwill.org)

**Fissile Materials**

This year, the long-awaited start of negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile materials for use in nuclear explosives (FMCT) never seemed closer. At the end of its 2007 session, the Conference on Disarmament (CD) was near agreement on a package deal, L.1, which would have enabled it to begin negotiations on an FMCT in 2008 (see Disarmament Machinery Week 1). Many delegations expressed support for the package deal, including those of Canada, Japan, the Republic of Korea, and Australia. The Netherlands and the European Union called for commencement of negotiations without preconditions. Although the United States prefers to proceed with the FMCT without discussion of any other of the CD’s priority issues, the US delegation explained a conscious decision had been made this year to not block consensus on the P6 proposal.

Even once negotiations begin, the process toward achieving an effective FMCT may still be difficult to attain without political shifts in key capitals, as no consensus exists on a number of issues pertaining to its scope, definition, and verification. Most delegations that spoke about an FMCT in the General and Thematic Debates merely restated their national positions, revealing lingering differences. The Chinese and Indian delegations reiterated their support for a multilateral, non-discriminatory, and effectively verifiable FMCT. While Ambassador Khan of Pakistan agreed that any issue may of course be raised in negotiations, he stated that specific reference to such matters as verification in the negotiation mandate is crucial, as when entering negotiations “one has to be sure what is sacrosanct and what is not.”

At an event entitled, “Toward a Global Cleanout of Nuclear Weapon Materials,” members of the Princeton University-based International Panel on Fissile Materials (IPFM) highlighted a number of technical issues the international community will face in securing and irreversibly reducing fissile material stocks. One such issue is the continued production and stockpiling of highly-enriched uranium fuel for naval reactors and civilian stocks of fissile materials. Posing a dilemma for efficacy in a fissile material ban regime, stocks in these categories of materials will be vastly larger than military stocks once nuclear arsenals in Russia and the United States drop below 1000 warheads each (see Fissile Materials Week 2).

Unfortunately, as demonstrated by the outcome of the sixty-second session of the First Committee, the FMCT, commonly referred to as the next logical step in nuclear disarmament, remains out of reach. The Canadian delegation found itself unable to move forward with what Ambassador Grinius described as “a strictly procedural draft decision that would have added the issue of the prohibition of the production of fissile material to next year’s First Committee agenda,” due to lack of consensus in preliminary consultations. This outcome repeats that of the 2006 First Committee, where the Canadian delegation withdrew its “minimalist” draft resolution, A/C.1/61/L.23, which simply called on the CD “to commence immediately negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons,” without prejudice to any issue any delegation might want to raise in the course of negotiations. The failure to adopt the decision has no direct bearing on the struggle to adopt a programme of work in the CD, but further signifies lack of consensus on the issue.

Despite these outcomes, the necessity of a fissile material production ban, ideally in conjunction with a commitment to deep reductions in the US and Russian nuclear arsenals, has been made more urgent by the prospects of a nuclear arms race in South Asia. The IPFM noted that construction was continuing on a breeder reactor in India, exempt from safeguards under the proposed US-India deal, which would greatly in-
crease its plutonium production capacity. In addition, within the past year it has been revealed that Pakistan began construction of two additional plutonium production reactors, a development that also tends to cast doubt on Pakistan’s sincerity toward achieving an FMCT in the near term (see Fissile Materials Week 2).

The need for a “global internationally verifiable” FMCT was also emphasized by Gustavo Zlauvinen, representative of the International Atomic Energy Agency to the UN, in the context of achieving a suitable multilateral mechanism for control of the nuclear fuel cycle. Speaking on 1 November at an event organized by the Middle Powers Initiative, he stated, “As long as the loophole is there, any new framework for multilateral approaches to the nuclear fuel cycle will still have a backdoor.” In other words, unless there is a global and verifiable fissile material production ban regime in place, states will be able to legally stockpile nuclear weapons usable materials even if the global civilian nuclear fuel cycle is subject to international control.

- Michael Spies, Lawyers’ Committee on Nuclear Policy (www.lcn.org)

Missiles

First Committee adopted draft decision A/C.1/62/L.20, “Missiles,” introduced as in previous years by Iran and co-sponsored by Egypt and Indonesia. The decision recalls past resolutions and includes the item on the provisional agenda of the sixty-third (2008) session of the General Assembly. 117 states, generally affiliated with the Non-Aligned Movement but also including Russia and China, voted in favor, while 51 states, mostly coming from Europe and the West abstained. The six opposing votes were Denmark, France, Israel, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

Iran decided to introduce a draft decision on missiles rather than a substantive resolution, “as suggested by the 2005 Committee on “methods of work,” because the third Panel of Government

Experts on this subject, established by UNGA resolution 59/67 (2004), will have two additional sessions in 2008. The mandate of the third Panel is to “explore further ways and means to address within the United Nations the issue of missiles in all its aspects, including identifying areas where consensus can be reached.” It met in its first session in June 2007 and is to submit its report, expected to be completed by June 2008, to the next session of the General Assembly. Since its establishment there has been controversy over whether the Panel should draw on the work of the two previous Panels, as preferred by NATO-aligned states, or whether it should start its work anew. Although the United States voted against the decision, US Ambassador Rocca stated in her explanation of vote that the Panel should draw on previous sessions.

Statements made in the General Debate of the First Committee demonstrated continuing divergence on how to address the issue of missiles (whether in the context of nuclear disarmament delivery systems or as part of a broader mandate under general and complete disarmament) and in what setting (in a treaty regime or through voluntary measures; or on a case by case basis or in a comprehensive and universal manner). States showed little interest or will to bridge the gap. Nor were there any signs of a multilateral missile treaty emerging anytime soon, as was pointed out by High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Sergio Duarte. The European Union continued to approach the issue of missiles narrowly as a bloc, focusing on weapons of mass destruction delivery systems and urging universalization of the Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation. Developing and Non-Aligned states’ positions were exemplified by Myanmar’s statement on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, which called for a comprehensive approach in the shape of “multilaterally negotiated, universal, comprehensive and non-discriminatory” agreements (see Missiles Week 1). Ambassador Khan of Pakistan called for a multilateral treaty to prohibit deployment of ballistic missile defense systems, for an accompanying agreement for limitations on other kinds of missile systems, and for the Conference on Disarmament to take up the matter as a priority issue (see Missiles Week 2).
**Missiles (cont.)**

On 25 October, the United States and Russia presented a joint statement to the First Committee, noting the twentieth anniversary of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty and calling for interested countries to discuss the possibility of internationalizing the Treaty, “though the renunciation of ground-launched ballistic and cruise missiles with ranges between 500 and 5,500 kilometers, leading to the destruction of any such missiles, and the cessation of associated programs.” The statement, delivered by Russia, also describes the Treaty as an important and practical step toward fulfillment of Article VI of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and expresses concern about the proliferation of missiles in this range to an ever-greater number of countries (see Missiles Week 3). The US/Russian Joint Statement was welcomed by several European delegations, including Sweden, the Netherlands, Finland, Italy, who acknowledged the Treaty’s role in reducing tensions in Europe. The Netherlands expressed its readiness to participate in discussions on internationalizing the treaty as called for by the statement, although it remains to be seen how the United States and Russia might follow through with this proposal.

- Michael Spies, Lawyers’ Committee on Nuclear Policy (www.lcnp.org)

**Outer Space**

The 62nd session of the General Assembly First Committee on Disarmament and International Security overwhelmingly adopted two resolutions that seek to enhance the security of outer space.

Both draft resolutions garnered nearly exactly the same votes as they did last year. The Russian-sponsored A/C.1/62/L.41 on transparency and confidence-building measures was adopted overwhelmingly by 167 votes in favour, with one abstention (Israel) and the US voting against. Neither dissenting state provided an explanation.

The “omnibus” space resolution, “Prevention of an arms race in outer space” (A/C.1/62/L.34), also finished with nearly the same vote as last year. This year’s vote on the Sri Lanka-sponsored resolution won 170 in favour—up three from last year—with, yet again, Israel and the US abstaining and voting against, respectively. Neither provided an explanation on the floor, but the US’s oft-repeated assertion that “there is no arms race in space” is presumably the rationale behind their lone vote of opposition.

Some delegations voted in favor of L.34 despite some reservations they held. Brazil, Japan, and the European Union were a bit disappointed that the resolution failed to take into account the substantive discussions on the issue that took place in the Conference on Disarmament (CD) this year. They nonetheless offered their support to prevent an arms race in outer space in the framework outlined in this annual resolution.

There currently exist several possibilities for advancing a cooperative security regime in outer space. The Space Debris Mitigation Guidelines, adopted by the UN Committee on Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and now the General Assembly, could soon be vamped up into more official “rules of the road” sometime in the near future. The UN Secretary-General might convene a high-level panel to assess outer space security in all its aspects, as recommended by his Advisory Board and the community of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in their statement to First Committee last week. In addition, the CD might finally adopt a program of work, allowing it to further explore the issue in their 2008 session.

However the space regime moves forward in the coming year, move forward it must. For if it does not, as the NGOs said in their statement last week, “the security of our heavens, and those of us who live beneath them, remain at risk.”

- Rhianna Tyson, Global Security Institute (www.gs institute.org) and Secure World Foundation (www.secureworldfoundation.org)

**Correction:** Last week’s Outer Space report incorrectly identified the co-sponsors of the L.41 resolution, which are: Armenia, Austria, Belarus, China, Cyprus, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Kazakhstan, Luxembourg, Mongolia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Romania, Russia, Spain, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Venezuela.
Biological and Chemical Weapons

On 31 October 2007, the First Committee adopted draft resolution A/C.1/62/L.37, “Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction” without a vote. The Committee also adopted without a vote draft resolution A/C.1/62/L.7, “Implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction”. These voting results are consistent with previous years, which demonstrates a continuing universal commitment to the abolition of biological and chemical weapons.

The universalization of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC) was consistently called for in First Committee. The BTWC still faces gaps and challenges, foremost of which is its lack of a verification system. However, the BTWC Review Conference, which took place in December 2006, was frequently referred to as a success in strengthening the Convention through the establishment of confidence-building measures. The Conference also contributed to the implementation of the BTWC by establishing the Implementation Support Unit, which assists State Parties.

The implementation and universalization of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) was also a reoccurring theme this year. The States Parties to the CWC did not address the possibility of extending the deadlines for destroying their chemical weapons stockpiles, and Rogelio Pfirter, Director-General of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), expressed hope that the Second Review Conference, to be held in Den Haag in 2008, will not focus on the issue of non-compliance with the deadline. However, during the commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the entry into force of the CWC, which was held on 27 September 2007, the participants stressed the need to complete the destruction of chemical weapons by the deadline. Albania has been praised for being the first State Party to have completely eliminated its chemical weapons stockpile in July 2007, as confirmed by the OPCW. This achievement has been inspiring for the OPCW’s work in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation.

However, there has been an overall sentiment that the state possessors of the largest chemical weapons stockpiles, namely the United States and the Russian Federation, will not meet their deadline for destruction. According to Pfirter, 30 percent of the global chemical weapons stockpile has been destroyed over the last 10 years, while the other 70 percent must be destroyed in only 5 years.

- Edgar Socarras, NGO Committee on Disarmament, Peace and Security (www.disarmtimes.org)

Depleted Uranium

On 30 October, the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) submitted a revised version of draft resolution A/C.1/62/L.18, “Effects of the use of armaments and ammunitions containing depleted uranium.” The new text, A/C.1/62/L.18/Rev.1, does not contain operative paragraph 2, which requested member states “refrain from using armaments and ammunitions containing depleted uranium until studies to determine the effects of such armaments and ammunitions on human health and the environment are completed.”

The deletion of this paragraph means the resolution now only requests the UN Secretary-General “seek the views of Member States and relevant international organizations on the effects of the use of armaments and ammunitions containing depleted uranium,” and “submit a report on this subject to the General Assembly at its sixty-third session.” Though the revised text is significantly less substantive than the original, the deletion of this paragraph was key to its adoption—and was instrumental for dividing NATO member states. Of the 26 NATO countries, only five voted against the resolution. France, the United Kingdom, and the United States rejected it, along with the Czech Republic and the Netherlands, but Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Denmark, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, and Turkey abstained, while Germany and Italy voted in favour.

continued on next page
Depleted Uranium (cont.)

This is not the first time NATO has been divided over this issue. In 2001, the governments of many NATO countries called for urgent investigations into the use of depleted uranium (DU) in weapons in Bosnia and Kosovo after soldiers from nine countries reported developing leukaemia, and the UN found radioactive contamination at sites where DU weapons were used. At the time, the US, Germany, the UK, Spain, and Turkey argued they found no evidence of a link between DU and increased cancer rates among peacekeepers serving in the region, but Italy, France, Belgium, the Czech Republic, and Portugal expressed apprehension and called for further investigation of the issue. The Secretary General of NATO established an Ad Hoc Committee on Depleted Uranium, which concluded in November 2001 that “at present there is no scientific link established between DU and health complaints.”

In March 2007, citing among other reasons the precautionary principle, Belgium became the first country to ban the manufacture, use, storage, sale, acquisition, supply, and transfer of DU munitions and armour in its territory. Belgium is not a user of DU, but US DU shipments travel regularly through its port of Antwerp. Unfortunately, Belgium abstained from L.18/Rev.1. In a general statement before voting commenced, Cuba’s Rodolfo Benítez Verson expressed regret that certain states did not vote in favour—not because they necessarily disagreed with the text, but because they felt they needed to show political solidarity to their respective alignments.

Indonesia’s delegate, speaking on behalf of the NAM to present the revised text before the vote, argued, “There is not yet a clear understanding of the full impact that fine particles of DU may have on the human body,” and the International Atomic Energy Agency, the World Health Organization, and the UN Environment Programme “have all stated that more research is needed with respect to the immediate and/or long-term health or environmental effects of DU munitions.”

In her explanation of vote before the vote, Ambassador Rocca of the US insisted that L.18/Rev.1 “excludes controversial issues that were introduced in a previous resolution on this issue to the First Committee.” Fortunately, delegates ignored this call, and adopted the resolution with 122 in favour, 6 against, and 35 abstentions. The NAM, encouraged that the issue is now inscribed on the First Committee’s agenda, intends to return with a stronger resolution in the sixty-third session.

For more information on DU, please see the International Coalition to Ban Uranium Weapons website, www.bandepleteduranium.org, and RCW’s DU resources at www.reachingcriticalwill.org/resources/factsheets/du.html.

- Ray Acheson, Reaching Critical Will
(www.reachingcriticalwill.org)
During the final week of the First Committee, thematic debate on Conventional Weapons was completed and voting commenced on relevant resolutions.

Member states including the Republic of Korea, Sierra Leone, Lithuania, New Zealand, Pakistan, Sweden, Cuba, Israel, Bolivia and China spoke this week on the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), with many extolling its virtues as a cornerstone of conventional arms control. Earlier in the session, the European Union and the Office for Disarmament Affairs announced their joint initiative to promote the universality of the CCW (see Conventional Weapons Week 2). In November 2007, the First Meeting of States party to the Protocol on Explosive Remnants of War will be held in Geneva in November 2007, and should, according to the International Committee of the Red Cross, “produce clear guidelines for how all States Parties should proceed with the recording, retention and transmission of information required by the Protocol, and for it to establish an operational framework for addressing the massive problem of existing ERW.” Sweden, who again introduced draft resolution A/C.1/62/L.32 on the CCW on behalf of some 40 co-sponsors, summarized the new changes to the resolution from past years as continuing “to express support for the CCW, with particular focus on the universalization of the Convention and its Protocol(s) … [and] to follow up on the Third Review Conference.” L.32 was adopted without a vote, as it has been in years past.

This year, a main point of discussion on cluster munitions included whether an international instrument should be negotiated within the CCW or through the Oslo Process, which began last year in Norway—in the final week alone, nine member states made statements on this question. Canada, joined by a number of other states, “see[s] no contradiction in engaging in these two processes concurrently. Quite the opposite. As the membership within the two processes is not identical, more countries will be engaged by pursuing the Oslo Process and the work in the CCW in parallel.” The EU, however, believes that cluster munitions should remain within the purview of the CCW, and has submitted a proposal for a negotiating mandate on cluster munitions (CCW/GGE/2007/WP.3) to the CCW’s Group of Governmental Experts.

Regarding man-portable air defence systems (MANPADS), Australia introduced A/C.1/62/L.38/Rev.1, “Prevention of the illicit transfer and unauthorized access to and use of man-portable air defence systems,” on behalf of over 40 co-sponsors, stating, “support for this resolution would again send a clear signal of the depth of international concern about the threat of non-state actors using such weapons … and of states’ determination to prevent this.” Throughout First Committee, statements on the importance of regulating MANPADS were made by ASEAN, the EU, Canada, Norway, Australia, Kazakhstan, Israel, Belarus and Turkey. On 1 November, Australia’s delegate again took the floor to explain that since the reference to airport vulnerability assessments in preambular paragraph 10 of L.38/Rev.1 would not gain consensus, he orally deleted it. L.38/Rev.1 was subsequently adopted without a vote. Iran and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) explained their votes, though neither state was responsible for blocking consensus on the original text. According to sources it was Egypt’s objection to the phrase that required the oral amendment. However, the UAE only added itself as a co-sponsor after the oral amendment was made, and urged Australia to start consultations on this resolution earlier next time. In a right of reply, the Australian delegate explained that consultations on the draft resolution began on the first day of First Committee and that efforts were made to accommodate the views of all member states. Meanwhile, Iran’s explanation of vote did not concern this controversy; its delegation wanted to emphasize that while it “shared the main thrust of the resolution,” it does not want the international community to “lose sight of the fact that MANPAD[S are] primarily designed as a defensive tool against the aerial offensive attacks,” and to recognize that its importance as a defensive tool has increased along with the number of aerial threats against countries.

A/C.1/62/L.12, “National legislation on transfer of arms, military equipment and dual-use
The First Committee Monitor

Conventional Weapons (cont.)

goods and technology,” was adopted without a vote as it was in both 2005 and 2003. This resolution, which focuses on conventional weapons and terrorism, invites members, “without prejudice to the provisions contained in Security Council resolution 1540 ... to enact or improve national legislation, regulations and procedures” to exercise control over the transfer of certain goods and technology, and to voluntarily report to the Secretary-General on these changes. It is identical to the same resolution in 2005, save for a new preambular paragraph welcoming the establishment of an electronic database by the Office for Disarmament Affairs in which information relating to “National legislation on transfer of arms, military equipment and dual-use goods and technology” can be consulted.

As a transparency measure, the UN Register of Conventional Arms was praised this year by the Rio Group, the European Union, China, Turkey, Pakistan, the United States and Bolivia, with China noting that it has decided to “resume providing the Secretary-General annually with the requested data” for the register. However, Libya’s Ambassador Elgannas urged against a “selective approach” in the field of disarmament, and believes that “the approach characterized by transparency and the register of the United Nations of conventional weapons lacks balance in that it does not comprise other forms of weapons such as weapons of mass destruction and likewise, other aspects related to national capacities to produce, acquire and stockpile weapons.”

Concerned states, including Pakistan, France, Moldova, the Russian Federation, Ukraine and Georgia discussed the future of the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty. The Russian Federation reiterated its intention to suspend its participation in the CFE, effective 12 December 2007, though it is still open to “continuation of a dialogue on restoring the viability of the Treaty’s regime.” Ukraine’s Ambassador Pokotylo recognized that while the CFE is still “one of the most important multilateral documents on arms control ... the CFE Treaty of 1990 does not correspond to the current security circumstances in Europe.” Georgia’s delegation noted with concern the challenges in implementing the CFE Treaty and continued to call for a national or international monitoring team to inspect the military base in Gudauta to verify its closure, as claimed by the Russian Federation. France is organizing an informal conference on the CFE to be held in early November 2007, to which all States Parties and candidates for adhesion to the treaty are invited.

Overall this year’s First Committee saw strong support for the multilateral avenues that propel arms control and disarmament forward, as well as a recounting of actions that were taken in the past year on these issues. Statements supporting efforts to “save” the CFE Treaty and move forward on cluster munitions attest to this. Next year, we hope to see larger strides forward that build on the statements made this year—as well as creative action taken within the First Committee rather than only by recounting successes and failures of outside processes—to strengthen arms control and disarmament measures.

- Waverly de Bruijn, Global Action to Prevent War (www.globalactionpw.org)

Small Arms and Light Weapons

Discussion of small arms and light weapons (SALW) began promisingly during the General Assembly General Debate, when Ghana spoke as Chair of the African Union. President Kufuor said that the proliferation of illicit SALW “has wrought havoc and caused untold distress to millions of people and fuelled insecurity and instability across the globe.” He stressed the importance of the United Nations in leading efforts to stem the proliferation of SALW. All states are affected by SALW misuse, and this can have a particularly devastating effect in small developing states, as noted by the Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda. These small states do not produce SALW and require global cooperation to help reduce the impact of these weapons, a fact expressed by the Prime Minister of Saint Lucia, and supported by high-level representatives from Jamaica, Lesotho, and Nepal.

The need for concerted global action on SALW is universally accepted, yet the status of the UN process on SALW remains unclear. The 2006

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omnibus resolution on small arms (A/C.1/61/L.15/Rev.1) mandated a 2008 biennial meeting of states to consider implementation of the UN Programme of Action (PoA) on small arms, but did not guarantee further meetings, nor did it create a process to review the PoA. Establishing this process should have been a priority at the 2007 First Committee, according to the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA).

These expectations were put into weak practice by the 2007 omnibus resolution, A/C.1/62/L.49/Rev.1, authored as usual by Colombia, Japan, and South Africa and co-sponsored by an additional 49 states. Primarily, this resolution confirmed the dates for the 2008 biennial meeting of states (14-18 July), but there were some modest changes from previous resolutions. The biennial meeting was sanctioned “in conformity with the follow-up to the Programme of Action” (operative paragraph 4), suggesting that future biennial meetings will also be sanctioned on the same argument. The resolution also calls upon states to use the biennial meetings to identify priority issues and to highlight implementation challenges and opportunities (operative paragraph 8). This presupposes future meetings, and also provides a purpose for those meetings beyond merely “considering” implementation of the PoA and the international instrument on identifying and tracing SALW.

L.49/Rev.1 was adopted on 1 November, with 165 votes in favour and one against with no abstentions. Maintaining consistency with its previous statements, the US delegation voted against the resolution, arguing that a continuing series of UN SALW meetings is unnecessary.

Progress at the national and regional levels has been significantly faster for most states than at the global level. So it is perhaps unsurprising that a large number of states referenced their national and regional achievements during First Committee. States that have established National Commissions on SALW include Nicaragua, Peru, and Sudan. Regional initiatives were referenced by Ethiopia, the EU, MERCOSUR, Mexico, Nigeria, SICA, and Uganda. These experiences were relevant to the annual Mali-authored resolution on Assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in SALW (A/C.1/62/L.5). This resolution, fundamentally identical to the 2006 resolution of the same name, encourages the international community to support the ECOWAS Convention, and encourages Sahelo-Saharan Africa to facilitate functioning of effective National Commissions. It was adopted by consensus.

Unusual for a disarmament agreement, the PoA contains several references to the importance of civil society partnership. This partnership was reaffirmed by the two SALW resolutions, the statements of many states, and by the invitation to address the plenary on the topic of SALW. During her presentation, Rebecca Peters, Director of IANSA, admitted that her scepticism regarding the PoA when it had been agreed in 2001 had been proven wrong. A great deal of progress has taken place within the PoA framework, though with 1000 people dying by gunshot every day, much more remains to be done.

The commitment from states to reduce SALW proliferation and misuse is clear from the many statements made at the First Committee this year, even if the resolutions provided little opportunity to reflect this commitment. When the First Committee convenes in 2008, the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on Ammunition will probably be available, and the biennial meeting of states will have taken place. If states take advantage of that meeting as suggested in L.47, it is likely that the UN small arms process will start to reflect the progress already achieved in many regions and states.

- Mark Marge, International Action Network on Small Arms (www.iansa.org)
Arms Trade Treaty

Interest in an Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) continued to be expressed during this year’s First Committee. Resolution 61/89, “Towards an Arms Trade Treaty: establishing common international standards for the import, export and transfer of conventional arms” was adopted during the 61st session of the General Assembly with 153 votes in favour, 24 abstentions, and one vote against (the United States). This resolution asked the UN Secretary-General to take into account the views of member states on the creation of an ATT, and called for the establishment of a Group of Governmental Experts to examine the scope, feasibility, and draft parameters of such a treaty. Sergio Duarte, UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, noted that the Office for Disarmament Affairs has received an unprecedented 97 submissions from member states.

During the final week of the First Committee, Sierra Leone, New Zealand, Suriname, Pakistan, the Russian Federation, Malawi, Israel, Iran, Tanzania, Austria, Moldova, Gabon, Denmark, China, Niger, Belgium, and Bolivia joined the European Union, the Rio Group, the Caribbean Community, MERCOSUR, the Holy See, Mexico, Nigeria, Finland, Japan, Lesotho, the United Kingdom, France, Brazil, Egypt, Ukraine, Ghana, Norway, Canada, Togo, Iceland, Switzerland, the Republic of Korea, Colombia, Senegal, South Africa, Australia, Kazakhstan, Bangladesh, Turkey, Argentina, Kenya, Ethiopia, Albania, Georgia, the International Committee of the Red Cross, Jamaica, Thailand, Montenegro, Serbia and the United Arab Emirates in discussing the ATT during their general and thematic statements, making the ATT one of the most highlighted issues during First Committee. The Republic of Korea hailed the ATT as a “landmark initiative,” and Canada is “convinced that an Arms Trade Treaty … would lead to fewer conflicts around the world.” Ambassador Duncan stated that the United Kingdom’s vision of the Responsibility to Protect is to “improve our capacity to prevent the emergence of conflict…. A critical dimension is controlling the spread of weapons whose easy availability makes it so simple to set up militias, and provoke violence and mayhem.”

Some member states urged that an ATT be concluded in such a way so as to not interfere with the right of states to meet their legitimate defense needs. Sudan’s delegation, which abstained in voting on 61/89 in the General Assembly last year, is closely following the discussion on the proposed ATT and will “continue to engage constructively in this process, to figure out its feasibility, how far it will serve the disarmament objectives within the multilateral context and in full transparency without prejudice to the legitimate rights of the member states.” Iran (which also abstained on 61/89) stated that efforts towards implementation of the UN Programme of Action should not be abandoned, and that “given the current positions and disagreements on the issue of Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), it is also premature to begin a new process.”

On 17 October, the Non-Governmental Organizations ATT Steering Committee and the Control Arms campaign launched A Global Arms Trade Treaty: What States Want, an analysis of the 97 submissions made to the Secretary-General on the feasibility, scope and draft parameters for an ATT. The report concludes that “Some 86 of the 92 submissions analysed either explicitly reiterated their support or provided views as to how this initiative could move forward.” Regarding scope, 57 submissions expressed the view that an effective ATT should include “all” conventional arms, and that the range of activities (including a broad definition of transfers) that fall within the scope of an ATT must be clearly and precisely defined. The submissions of member states were compiled into a substantial list of recommendations to the GGE, with the understanding that “[i]f the GGE report is sufficiently constructive it could lead to the establishment by the UN General Assembly of an Open Ended Working Group in 2009 to negotiate the terms of a global Arms Trade Treaty so that the international community can agree and benefit from such a Treaty as soon as possible, hopefully by the year 2010.”

Forward motion on the establishment of an ATT is continuing. We look forward to the GGE in 2008 and fully expect the same strong, dedicated attention to the Arms Trade Treaty process to be present during the 63rd First Committee.

- Waverly de Bruijn, Global Action to Prevent War (www.globalactionpw.org)
Landmines

During the First Committee General Debate many governments expressed a strong commitment to the destruction and clearance of landmines. In support of the tenth anniversary of the Ottawa Convention on the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction (the “Mine Ban Treaty”), a number of delegates advocated the Convention’s role in banning an entire class of weapons and in establishing new international norms. Australia voiced its support for the Convention, noting that it has “stemmed the tide of suffering caused by landmines, by banning a heinous weapon class.” South Africa’s Ambassador Mtshali stated, “the fact that the Treaty has tarnished as morally reprehensible the transfer or use of APMs [anti-personnel mines] in modern warfare across the globe, speaks of its success as a highly effective instrument of international humanitarian law.”

Delegates from Australia, Turkey, South Africa, Honduras, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Dominican Republic (on behalf of the Rio Group), and Cambodia called for universal acceptance of the Convention, stating that progress in this area was key towards achieving a “mine free world”. Delegations also called for continued financial support from the international community for demining efforts and victim rehabilitation. While much enthusiasm was expressed for the Treaty’s achievements over the past decade, many challenges still remain, with 40 states yet to ratify and 160-180 million landmines still in stockpiles, not to mention the countless minefields that have not yet been cleared.

This year, Australia introduced draft resolution A/C.1/62/L.39 on the “Implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction,” with Jordan and Croatia as co-sponsors. The text included minimal changes from the previous year. On 31 October, the resolution was adopted, with 154 countries voting in favour, 3 less than last year. 18 delegations abstained (compared with 15 last year), while no states voted against the resolution.

Similar to last year, Pakistan, India, Cuba, Myanmar, Morocco, and South Korea made statements regarding their abstentions. India’s Counsellor, Mr. Kumar, stated that while his country supports a “vision of a world free of the threat of anti-personal landmines” it could not stop using landmines “due to the legitimate defence requirements of States, especially those with long land borders.” Pakistan reiterated this concern, stating that until a cost effective alternative is made available, it will use landmines for military purposes. Singapore, which voted in favour of the resolution, also supported the security concerns of the above states. While 18 states did abstain from voting, it is a positive sign that they did not vote against the Convention. This signifies a growing universal norm against the use of these indiscriminate weapons, and greater acceptance of the “spirit” of the Convention—who explained their abstention on the resolution emphasized their support for the Convention.

The Convention currently includes anti-personnel mines but does not extend to mines other than anti-personnel mines such as anti-vehicle landmines. These devices, along with cluster munitions and explosive remnants of war, are ongoing challenges the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), is trying to address. The CCW is meeting this week, and is also discussing the entry into force of Protocol 5 (on explosive remnants of war), albeit slowly.

The Mine Ban Treaty acts as a landmark Convention through its role in banning an entire weapon class, establishing international norms, and including victim rehabilitation as a key obligation. While much progress towards mine clearance and destruction has been made over the past 10 years, key challenges remain. The refusal of countries to destroy landmines due to self defence arguments must be addressed to enable universal ratification of the treaty. Further, financial support from the international community for rehabilitation, clearance, and destruction would reduce the humanitarian impact of anti-personnel mines.

- Kavitha Suthanthiraraj, Global Action to Prevent War (www.globalactionpw.org)
Disarmament and Development

First Committee adopted draft resolution A/C.1/62/L.50, “Relationship between disarmament and development,” with 166 in favour, one opposed (the United States, whose current military expenditures are in excess of $569 billion dollars per annum), and two abstentions (France and Israel). This resolution stresses the importance of the “symbiotic relationship between disarmament and development and the important role of security in this connection, and concerned at increasing global military expenditure, which could otherwise be spent on development needs.” It also urges governments to put forward measures to devote resources made available by disarmament to development programs.

France’s delegation objected to the term “symbiotic” as excessive, arguing that disarmament is only one aspect of development. In his explanation of vote, Ambassador Duncan of the United Kingdom similarly argued there is no automatic link between disarmament and development, and expressed regret that the complexity of the issue is not covered by L.50. During the Thematic Debate, other delegations expressed similar concerns about the fungibility of military expenditures. For example, the Secretary General of the Conference on Disarmament argued that even if military budgets were to shrink, such reductions would offer no guarantee that those funds would be redirected towards development. States have a myriad of competing interests and goals among which resources are divided and military and development expenditures are not necessarily inversely proportional (see Disarmament and Development Week 2).

Despite these arguments, many delegations recognized the link between excessive military expenditures and lack of development, and emphasized the need for reallocation of arms spending to development projects. During the General Assembly General Debate, several delegations brought these concerns to light. Cuba questioned continued military expenditures in the face of social and developmental needs, asking, “Why are such colossal resources squandered on the killing industry and not used to save lives? Why are schools not built instead of nuclear submarines? Why are not vaccines produced instead of armored vehicles and more food instead of fighter jets?” Cuba, Swaziland, and Costa Rica called for renewed recognition of programmes already developed to assist in disarmament for development and achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), including the United Nations Development Programme, which has contributed several policy initiatives specifically for the disarmament and development agenda. Costa Rica proposed that “international donors reward those developing countries that, while increasing social spending and reducing military spending, are making sustainable and verifiable efforts to meet the most pressing social needs, including the MDGs.”

Some elements of the draft resolution “United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean” (A/C.1/62/L.4), which was adopted in the First Committee without a vote, echo these concerns. It emphasizes the need for peace and disarmament in order to promote social and economic development, and promotes peace and disarmament education projects. Meanwhile, A/C.1/62/L.49/Rev.1, “The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons,” emphasized that the illicit traffic of small arms “in many regions of the world has a wide range of humanitarian and socio-economic consequences and poses a serious threat to peace, reconciliation, safety, security, stability and sustainable development at the individual, local, national, regional and international levels.”

With continued effort towards redistribution of arms and military funds, perhaps more countries will be able to say, as Sao Tome and Principe did in the General Assembly General Debate, “We spend almost no money on defence and we have never fought a war.”

- Gabrielle Walther, Reaching Critical Will (www.reachingcriticalwill.org)
Regional Disarmament

Several resolutions dealing with UN Regional Centres for Peace and Disarmament and other regional disarmament issues were voted upon during the last week of First Committee.

Pakistan’s delegation introduced two resolutions dealing with disarmament measures and cooperation at the regional and subregional levels, as a complement to global efforts, and as a useful way to address peace and security issues specific to a given region. A/C.1/62/L.42, “Conventional arms control at the regional and subregional levels,” seeks to address the problems of insecurity created by the proliferation of conventional arms within specific regions, and by the arms races that follow. In its introductory remarks, Pakistan referred not only to the complementarity of regional and multilateral efforts, but also to the ability of regional actors to address the local causes of insecurity in their regions. The needs and challenges faced by regions across the globe vary widely, and the actors within those regions might be able to forge agreements with specific measures that are necessary for their peace and security, yet unacceptable to actors in other regions where security needs are different.

Pakistan also introduced A/C.1/62/L.43, “Confidence-building measures in the regional and subregional context,” which, like L.42, is intended to increase cooperation among regional actors, but also seeks to promote transparency and confidence-building measures (TCBMs) so that needless arms races can be avoided, and regional security can be maintained. TCBMs help build trust among neighbors and alleviate the uncertainty surrounding delicate regional balances of power. This reduces the likelihood that the balance might be upset by a suspicion-driven escalation of conflict that could have been avoided.

L.42 was adopted with a recorded vote of 167-1-1, with India voting against and Bhutan abstaining. In its explanation of vote, the Indian delegation stated, “the security concerns of States often extend beyond narrowly defined regions. Consequently, the idea of preservation of a balance in defence capabilities in the regional or sub-regional context is both unrealistic and unacceptable to our delegation.”

Two other resolutions on regional disarmament and confidence-building were introduced and adopted this week. A/C.1/62/L.31, “Regional Disarmament,” and A/C.1/62/L.52/Rev.1, “Regional confidence-building measures: activities of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa,” were both adopted without a vote.

Three of the four resolutions dealing with the UN Regional Centres were also adopted without a vote, indicating near global acceptance of the importance of regional centres in the maintenance of global and regional peace and security. These included A/C.1/62/L.15, “United Nations regional centres for peace and disarmament,” A/C.1/62/L.35 on the Centre in Asia and the Pacific, and A/C.1/62/L.4 on the Centre in Latin America and the Caribbean. However, A/C.1/62/L.24/Rev.1 on the Centre in Africa was adopted with a recorded vote of 164-1-5. The United States was the sole vote against, and in its explanation of vote, the delegation cited the inclusion of language recommending that the Centre receive funds from the “regular budget” instead of the current “voluntary contributions” of states. Australia, Canada, Japan, and the United Kingdom cited similar reasons for their abstentions, and called for budgetary concerns to be dealt with in the Fifth Committee.

- Anna Walther, Reaching Critical Will (www.reachingcriticalwill.org)
Terrorism

This year, First Committee adopted three draft resolutions that address terrorism. India proposed draft resolution “Measures to prevent terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction” (A/C.1/62/L.22), which urges states to implement the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism and requests the drafting of reports on measures that address the connection between terrorism and weapons of mass destruction (WMD). It was adopted without a vote, as in 2006.

The French draft resolution “Preventing the acquisition by terrorists of radioactive materials and sources” (A/C.1/62/L.46/Rev.1), was also adopted without a vote, after the members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) agreed to withdraw their proposed amendments. L.46 expresses support for the role of the International Atomic Energy Agency in securing radioactive material, and urges member states to strengthen national measures and support international efforts to protect these materials from terrorist access. The draft resolution also invites member states to sign and ratify the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism. Barbados formally withdrew its tabled amendments (A/C.1/62/L.53) to L.46/Rev.1, which tried to extend the focus on the cessation of the transport of radioactive materials through the regions of small island developing states. Barbados expressed frustration that concerns of CARICOM members have not been considered in the resolution, but wanted to secure an unanimous vote for L.46/Rev.1, especially after France threatened to withdraw L.46/Rev.1 if it would not be met with consensus.

First Committee also adopted draft resolution A/C.1/62/L.21, “Reducing Nuclear Danger,” which stresses the need to review nuclear doctrines and to de-alert and de-target nuclear weapons to reduce the risk of accidental use and the danger of acquisition through non-state actors. The adoption of L.21 with 113 votes in favor and 50 oppositions shows a slight increase in support for this draft resolution compared with last year.

Throughout First Committee general and thematic discussions this year, Security Council Resolution 1540 (UNSCR 1540) was touted as a central instrument in the attempt to prevent non-state actor acquisition of WMD-related materials and equipment. Several delegations expressed their countries’ support for UNSCR 1540 during the First Committee, though there is resentment in parts of the international community to accept binding resolutions by the Security Council addressing a global problem.

As called for by UNSCR 1540, most states have submitted reports on measures taken or planned. According to these reports, the resolution has spurred states to accomplish tasks already on the international agenda like criminalization of chemical weapons and acceptance of the additional protocol of the IAEA safeguards. Another main goal of UNSCR 1540 is to reduce proliferation related dangers of nuclear weapons falling into the hands of non-state actors. In its report to the UNSCR 1540 Committee, New Zealand demonstrates that it went one step further in preventing risks of nuclear proliferation by adopting legislation criminalizing nuclear weapons activities by both non-state and state actors. Many member states, along with civil society, regard the possible acquisition of nuclear weapons by terrorists as another reason to work towards the abolition of nuclear weapons.

- Christoph Pilger, Middle Powers Initiative (www.middlepowers.org)

Disarmament Education

Though there was no draft resolution on disarmament and non-proliferation (DNP) education this year, its importance was stressed several times by High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Sergio Duarte, as well as by Japan, and was a prevalent issue in First Committee side events. On 8 October, Duarte commented that the Secretary-General’s (SG) Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters 2007 report “encouraged the SG to continue his efforts to raise public awareness of DNP issues, including through initiatives in the field of education.”

Last year in First Committee, Mexico introduced the draft resolution A/C.1/61/L.30, “United Nations study on disarmament and non-proliferation education,” which was adopted by consen-
Disarmament Education (cont.)

The resolution followed-up on the milestone UN Expert Group on DNP Education, authorized by UN Resolution 55/33E of the General Assembly in 2000. After two years of meetings and contributions to the study from academics and activists from all over the world, the report (A/57/124) was submitted in 2002. In July 2006, the SG released a follow up report reviewing the results of the implementation of the recommendations to the study. The report concluded that there is a great “interest” in DNP education, but that funding is a persistent challenge.

Japan, one of the members of the 2002 UN Study on DNP education, issued a statement at the Thematic Debate on DNP Education. Japan’s Ambassador Tarui highlighted some initiatives his country has taken on DNP education, including a UN Disarmament Fellows Program, and an annual UN-Japan co-sponsored conference on disarmament issues in various cities throughout Japan. In addition, at the 2007 nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Preparatory Committee, Japan announced its decision to launch “New Initiatives on Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Education,” focused on disseminating information to a younger generation. Some of the new and creative initiatives will range from holding an international student debate on DNP, to using manga or animation, a prominent part of Japanese pop culture, as a tool for DNP Education.

On 15 October, an event was held by the Office for Disarmament Affairs (ODA) and the Department of Public Information to launch the new Disarmament and Non-Proliferation portal on the UN’s award-winning Cyberschoolbus, a website designed to help young people and their teachers understand global issues. The event, chaired by Michael Cassandra of ODA, included remarks by Duarte and an interactive presentation by Dr. Kathleen Sullivan, the curriculum specialist for the website. Dr. Sullivan stated, “the power of disarmament education can not be underestimated and with this new web-portal we’ll be able to effect education in many areas of the world.” The website will initially focus on the issues of nuclear disarmament, small arms and light weapons, landmines, and child soldiers. The site will contain a toolkit for educators and suggestions for activities such as Ask an Hibakusha, which will allow a new generation of students and teachers to make contact directly with survivors of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings. The launch of this site is a significant step forward for DNP education within the UN system.

On 22 October, at another unique event held by the Global Security Institute and the Secure World Foundation in cooperation with the ODA, a documentary by two 15 year-old filmmakers was screened. The young directors, Steven Sotor and Trace Gaynor, became well known after their film addressing nuclear weapons issues, Genie in a Bottle: Unleashed, was shown during the 2005 NPT Review Conference. This year at First Committee their latest film, The Final Frontier: Explorers or Warriors? addressing the issue of weapons in space, was screened. The film was made to educate and to provoke discussion on this serious disarmament issue. The event emphasized the potential of youth as agents of change in the field of DNP education, and showed how these excellent films can be used as tools to engage a young audience in DNP issues.

On 16 October, Duarte mentioned the ODA’s increased activity with intergovernmental and non-governmental activities and stated that this involvement was in sync with the General Assembly’s “emphasis on the importance of DNP education efforts.” Civil society applauds ODA’s great strides in DNP education. However, there seems to be a lack of awareness among member states of the importance of DNP education, as a disappointing number of them mentioned education at all in their statements to the First Committee this year. Member states and civil society should increasingly take ownership of this integral aspect of peacebuilding and disarmament, and follow the SG’s recommendation of greater implementation and action. Until DNP education becomes an aspect of every member state’s agenda, it will not be integrated into organizations and communities at the local level, which is key to achieving global sustainable peace.

See www.disarmament.un.org/education/study.html for a full list of recommendations.

- Allison Boehm, Peace Boat US (www.peaceboat.org)