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Background

The United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1980 and based in Geneva, Switzerland, is an autonomous institute within the United Nations whose mandate is to conduct research on disarmament and security for the benefit of States working on these issues. It reports directly to the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). Its mandate stems from the United Nations Charter Article 26, which calls for “establishment and maintenance of international peace and security with the least diversion for armaments of the world’s human and economic resources.”

UNIDIR specifically aims to find ways to prevent flare ups in areas prone to violence and political instability, since these conditions compromise UN and non-governmental investments in security, food and water distribution, medical aid, political reconciliation and other reconstruction efforts. The organization, both in active and reactive ways, proposes new ideas for security thinking by tying together disarmament and reconstruction to solidify national, regional and global security.

UNIDIR responsibilities

UNIDIR serves as a focal point for intergovernmental organizations, the diplomatic disarmament community, governmental ministries, academic and research institutes, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), civil society and students from around the world by:

- ◆ assisting diplomatic negotiations and disarmament efforts,
- ◆ engaging the arms control and disarmament community on a variety of current topics, and by
- ◆ leading the debate on emerging security issues

The organization carries out these responsibilities by supporting research projects, conducting meetings and conferences, sponsoring a fellowship program, and co-hosting the Geneva Forum. For example, since 2002 UNIDIR has hosted a conference on space security issues.

UNIDIR focus areas

UNIDIR concentrates its efforts along three integrated efforts: Global security and disarmament, regional security and disarmament and human security and disarmament. UNIDIR has a particular interest in working with the delegations to the Conference on Disarmament (CD) across all three focus areas, and provides CD delegates with relevant information to assist them in their disarmament negotiations and initiatives.

Global security and disarmament

This focus area covers international arms control agreements and their implementation as well as researching questions on international security, space security, missiles and weapons of mass destruction.

Regional security and disarmament

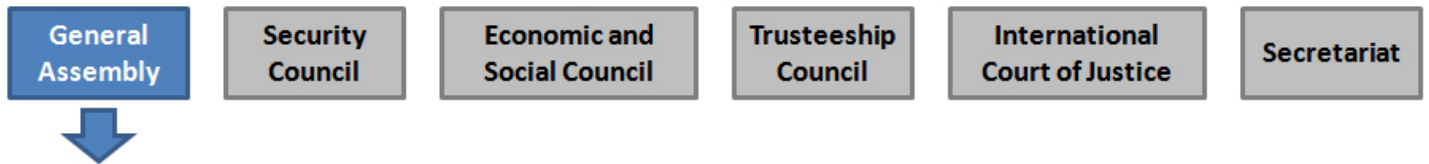
This focus area develops themes linked to conflict concentrated in specific areas of the globe, such as promoting civil society participation in disarmament dialogues and advocating nuclear weapons-free zones in Africa, South Asia, the Middle East and Latin America.

Human security and disarmament

Finally, this focus area explores the complex interrelations between disarmament, human rights and development. Examples of work conducted in this area include anti-personnel mines, proliferation of small arms, the role of gender in conflicts and problems of law enforcement.

The general structure of the UN and how UNIDIR and its responsibilities fit in

The six organs of the United Nations



United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research

Goals: Assisting diplomatic negotiations and disarmament efforts, engage the arms control and disarmament community on a variety of current topics, and lead debate on emerging security issues. Activities are grouped according to three focus areas:

Global Security and Disarmament

Research Projects

Currently five on-going research projects related to global security (Aug 08).

Meetings and Conferences

Conference on Disarmament



Geneva Forum

Regional Security and Disarmament

Research Projects

Currently two on-going research projects related to regional security (Aug 08).

Meetings and Conferences

Conference on Disarmament



Fellowship Program

Each year a regional focus is selected and four researchers are invited to Geneva for a period of up to six months. The fellows work collectively on a single research paper, focusing on a particular question of regional security.

Geneva Forum

Human Security and Disarmament

Research Projects

Currently three on-going research projects related to human security (Aug 08).

Meetings and Conferences

Conference on Disarmament



Geneva Forum

UNIDIR's activities include research projects, meetings and conferences, a Fellowship Program (Regional Security and disarmament only) and the Geneva Forum. Please note that the diagram above is not an organizational chart; it only helps describe UNIDIR's responsibilities and activities.

Research projects examine arms control and disarmament issues in innovative and creative ways to provide decision-makers with specific policy recommendations. Meetings and conferences focus on various topics related to disarmament, security and non-proliferation, and the CD is invited to participate. The Fellowship Program helps generate regional cooperation and builds confidence by bringing together researchers who might not have the opportunity to work collaboratively in other circumstances.

Finally, the Geneva Forum is an opportunity to bring together disarmament experts, government representatives, UN staff, NGOs, international media and academics to discuss common interests in security and disarmament issues and to explore possibilities for coordination and collaboration. The Geneva Forum is a joint initiative of UNIDIR, the Quaker United Nations Office in Geneva (QUNO), and the Program for Strategic and International Security Studies (PSIS) of the Graduate Institute of International Studies. The Geneva Forum follows three tracks:

- ◆ Building agendas around new and emerging issues in arms control and disarmament,
- ◆ Supporting ongoing arms control and disarmament negotiations, and
- ◆ Promoting the implementation of arms control and disarmament agreements.