

UNITED NATIONS



FOREWORD

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Arms control and disarmament are essential for peace and security. This can help countries to focus more on socioeconomic development, human well-being and prosperity. Weapons, also called arms, bring a lot of pain and sorrow. Weapons can be a source of international tension between countries, mistrust and instability. Excessive stockpiling of arms can both cause and prolong war. Poorly regulated weapons in wars kill thousands of civilians annually, including many children.

The explosive remnants of these weapons continue to cause harm long after the armed conflict has ended. They can harm a country's post-conflict recovery and prevent return to a normal life. They may make roads and land inaccessible and their very presence is a source of dread for local populations.

For over a century the international community has worked to minimize the effects of war. For instance, efforts have been made to address the adverse impact of weapons by limiting or banning the use of some of them and by protecting vulnerable groups and civilians from the scourge of war. On several occasions this determination has brought results: some very dangerous weapons have been outlawed and the use of some others has been strictly regulated. But more needs to be done. The advancement of digital technologies holds great promise, but if not developed and applied in a responsible manner, also poses untenable risks and challenges to international security and stability.

Geneva continues to be an important centre for disarmament and arms control work. Thanks to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals we have a roadmap. Help us deliver on it.

Why should I care?

“ I hope you will use your power and your connections to advocate for a peaceful world free from nuclear weapons, in which weapons are controlled and regulated and resources are directed towards opportunity and prosperity for all. ”

– **Secretary-General António Guterres**

(Speech given at the University of Geneva announcing his new disarmament agenda “Securing our Common Future”, 24 May 2018).

The history of disarmament has taught us some interesting lessons. Sadly, much of the most successful work on disarmament has happened after tragedy: World War I led to the birth of multilateral disarmament; World War II brought about the establishment of the United Nations, the creation of the atomic agenda, and the nuclear disarmament movement; and as a result of the Cold War, a number of treaties and conventions were developed that are still in force today.

Repeating the horrors of the past can be prevented by working together to make progress in disarmament and to render weapons a “relic of the past”, instead of waiting for and responding to conflicts, which often involve an untold number of deaths and casualties, as well as destruction of property and livelihoods. Nuclear weapons, a type of weapon of mass destruction, continue to exist in numbers capable of endangering all human societies.

Disarmament efforts affect the lives of everyone on the planet. It all starts with the recognition that your own thoughts and actions can actually make a difference to shift the conversation in the right direction.

At the UN, countries continue to work to limit arms and regulate their use. All countries, including major military powers, take part in these negotiations to strengthen the security and the safety of their citizens and build confidence between countries.

The efforts on disarmament and arms control progress slowly and have to continuously adapt to the political environment and to meet the challenges of today and the future. Advances in science and technology occur at a rapid pace and bring many benefits to all our lives. However, these advances also bear the risk of being misused. New disruptive weapon technologies will increase the speed of the warfare, redefine how it is fought, where it will take place and who will be involved and affected. It is important that we all act and innovate responsibly to ensure sustainable development on our planet.



Scan the QR code to read the new disarmament agenda “Securing our Common Future”.

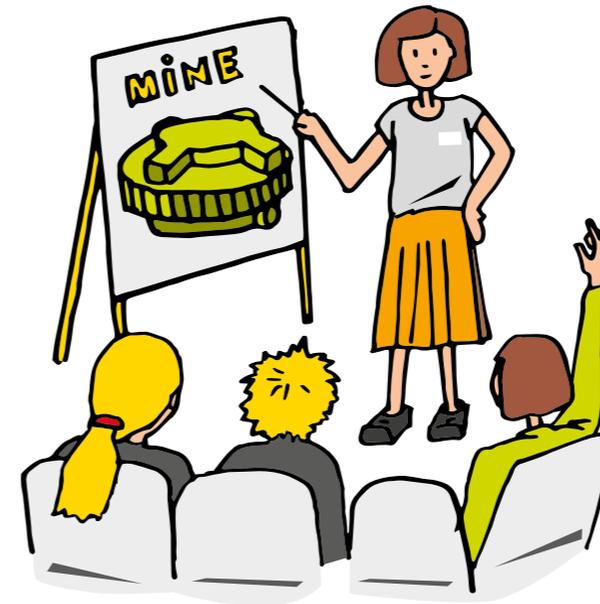
ACTIONS FOR DISARMAMENT

How can YOU help eliminate, control or reduce weapons?

You can bring about change in the world! Already we are seeing how young people are finding new ways to interact and find solutions, and be included in global conversations around disarmament. The youth movements continue to make a larger impact with the underrepresented voices – including victims and affected communities – in support of disarmament.

Global economic disparity and inequality, especially from the Global South, can prevent many young people from engaging on international disarmament issues. Even with these challenges, you can play a vital role in helping reduce the threats of all types of weapons and making the world safer and more secure for all.

Remember, working with others can make your voices louder and your impact stronger.



Discuss, share your knowledge and experience

Hold a student workshop, presentation, or webinar to discuss disarmament related topics.

Involve all participants in discussions and encourage everyone to contribute. Don't forget to keep a record of what was said in the event. Record and edit videos of public events you organize to reach a bigger audience. Be mindful of privacy, and always make people aware ahead of time that the event will be recorded and ask permission before publishing. It can also help to learn from a trained facilitator how to guide the discussion, how to involve and empower people to engage, share, ask questions and to keep it on track.

Stay informed

Stay updated on what happens around you in your life, in your community and around the world by reading the news including on disarmament efforts.

Improve your digital skills and capacity to critically assess the validity of information. This is particularly important to counter fabricated news and biased information. Social media platforms can be an incredible valuable source of information, but also an amplifier of misinformation.

Visit a library and encourage others to do the same. Public libraries play an important role in civic engagement. Ask your librarian for research assistance (books, journals and online resources on relevant issues).

Stay informed with what the United Nations, its Member States and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are doing to reduce arms trade and promote nuclear disarmament.

Follow disarmament issues on social media, attend public events and never be afraid to ask questions.



Express yourself

Make your voice heard especially on critical topics such as the proliferation of weapons. It is your right to speak out.

Engage in the pursuit of disarmament and spread the message using text, video, multimedia, web design, animation, podcast or other means.

Go viral by sharing your fresh and different perspectives. Social media posts can work well, but don't discount writing for newspapers and online publications.

Get creative with your messaging, print your own T-shirts, write a song, poetry or make some stickers. Whatever you do, focus on the message!



Be prepared

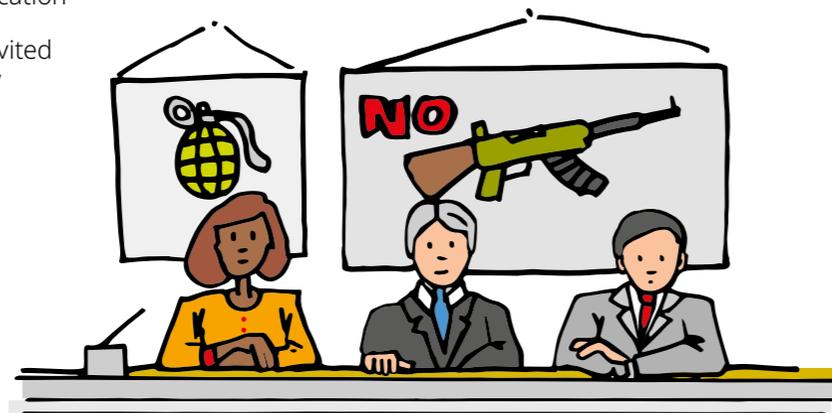
Do your homework. Understand how arms and arms treaties affect your country, your school and your hometown, and share your knowledge with others. The United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs website (www.un.org/disarmament and www.unog.ch/disarmament) has thousands of documents about disarmament and arms control and disarmament that can be used as resources to help you. The UN Library both in New York and Geneva offers comprehensive research guides on disarmament. Numerous research institutions around the world, such as UNIDIR and SIPRI, conduct research and collect statistics on disarmament-related issues.



Create a movement of changemakers

Create an event for awareness, engagement and action with participants. Events can inspire new and diverse communities of interest, educate and train people to become agents for dialogue, change and action. Here are a few ways you can engage your local community:

1. An information table/booth/stand at school or other public location
2. A teach-in at school with invited speaker/debate/workshop/discussion
3. Put on a vigil
4. Organize a march



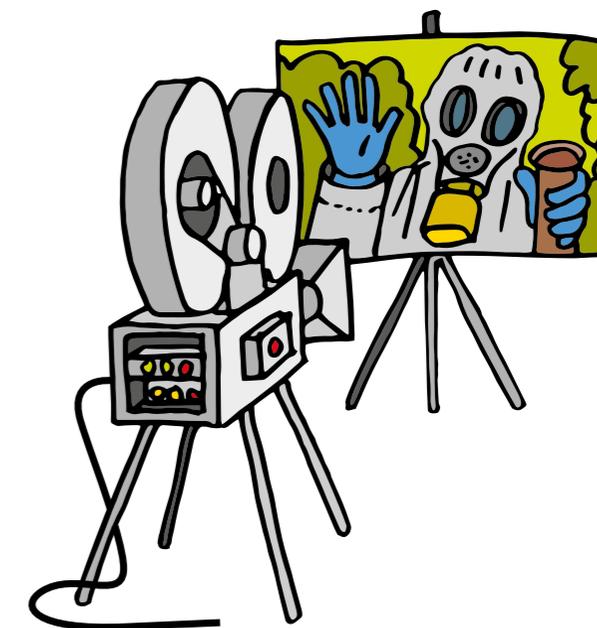
5. Hold a concert/performance
6. Leverage another event, for example an art event
7. Start a podcast, with interviews of people working on disarmament related matters
8. Hold an online social media event/discussion/campaign

Host a film screening

Organize a film screening to visualize issues, spark debate, and move people to action. Try to cover different dimensions of disarmament, arms control and nonproliferation-related matters whether in a single event or in a series of films.

Open up a discussion after the film, ask the audience to share how they will take action, after being informed.

Research about – and consider attending if possible – popular travelling festivals related to disarmament, arms control, human rights and social justice issues such as the Human Rights Watch Film Festival (<https://ff.hrw.org>) for high schools, the Media That Matters Film Festival (www.mediathatmattersfest.org), the Geneva International Film Festival, the Forum on Human Rights (<https://fifdh.org/en>) and the Global Migration Film Festival (www.iom.int/global-migration-film-festival), just to name a few.



Voice your concern

Express your concern for the violence, fear or instability that results from weapons and war to friends and family, as well as your local politicians. Hearing diverse views from citizens can inspire political officials to make more knowledgeable decisions and take action. You cannot change behaviour without changing fundamental beliefs.

1. Identify a tangible and achievable goal: what's is your message?
2. Identify your representatives who work on disarmament and arms control
3. Contact them via appropriate channels
4. Be brief
5. Be accurate
6. Be courteous
7. Follow-up



CONCLUSION

There are certainly more things you can do for disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation than those listed above.

The first step is always the most important: build a community of people that has a shared sense of purpose and make sure that there is a balance of girls and boys; be sure that you are well informed and have all the facts straight; allow for a diversity of opinions in the group and have a clear and meaningful message to deliver.

Use the creative skills you already have to spark engagement and discussion – in art, music, debate, writing, filmmaking, social media. Make your voice heard, become an agent for change and help others engage too.

**Most importantly, never stop asking questions!
Stay informed. Be the dialogue, be the action, be the change!**

Join the dialogue



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