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Review of the implementation of the recommendations and decisions adopted by the General Assembly at its tenth special session

Work of the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

At its seventy-first and seventy-second sessions, the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters dealt with the following substantive items: measures to mitigate civilian harm resulting from contemporary armed conflict; and the role of the disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation regime in managing strategic competition and building trust in a deteriorating international security environment.

In its deliberations on ways and means to mitigate civilian harm resulting from contemporary armed conflict, the Board proposed several measures for the Secretary-General to consider to systematically tackle the devastation caused to civilians by the growing occurrence of warfare in populated urban areas. That included, among a larger set of recommendations, producing a report on the use of explosive weapons in populated areas to catalyse debate in the General Assembly, strengthening inter-agency coordination on that topic, and increasing the Secretary-General's advocacy of the issue.

In its deliberations on the role of the disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation regime in managing strategic competition and building trust, the Board, focusing on nuclear weapons, proposed short-term steps to advance the agenda for disarmament of the Secretary-General, such as increased engagement to mitigate the risks posed by renewed strategic competition; holding a meeting at the ministerial level during the review of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons; encouraging strong and full participation at the conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, to be held in November 2019 and reaffirming the peace and security interests at stake in that region; and initiating new expert-level engagement, studies or seminars to identify actions that could be taken to reverse the current trends that impede renewed progress on disarmament, so as to rebuild confidence and contribute to risk reduction.

* [A/74/150](#).



In its capacity as Board of Trustees of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), the Board engaged in substantive discussions on three new UNIDIR workstreams: gender and disarmament; the role of conventional arms in preventing and mitigating urban conflict and violence, and strengthening compliance and enforcement of regimes on weapons of mass destruction. The Board also reviewed the plan drawn up by UNIDIR to implement the recommendations given by the Secretary-General in his report on the thirty-fifth anniversary of UNIDIR ([A/73/284](#)). Those included moving from a project-based approach to the establishment of multi-year programmes oriented towards key issues of the agenda for disarmament; the streamlining of business processes and the establishment of arrangements with United Nations service providers, and the strengthening of communication, partnership and resource mobilization efforts. Lastly, the Board highlighted that 2020 marked the fortieth anniversary of the Institute. It noted that the anniversary could provide an opportunity to highlight the unique role of the Institute within the disarmament machinery in facilitating dialogue with and among stakeholders, including the private sector, research and academic communities, civil society and technical experts.

I. Introduction

1. The Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters held its seventy-first session in Geneva from 30 January to 1 February 2019 and its seventy-second session in New York from 26 to 28 June 2019. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution [38/183 \(O\)](#). The report of the Director of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) was approved by the Advisory Board, in its capacity as the Institute's Board of Trustees, and has been submitted in document [A/74/180](#).
2. Steffen Kongstad (Norway) presided as Chair over both sessions of the Advisory Board in 2019.

II. Substantive discussions and recommendations

3. At its seventy-first and seventy-second sessions, the Advisory Board dealt with the following substantive items: measures to mitigate civilian harm resulting from contemporary armed conflict; and the role of the disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation regime in managing strategic competition and building trust.
4. At its seventy-first and seventy-second sessions, the Board was briefed by the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, which set the scene for its discussions about the two topics on its agenda. In her remarks, the High Representative called upon the Board to consider, in its deliberations on measures to mitigate civilian harm, what could be done to tackle this topic systematically and to explore how the United Nations system could come together to address it. With respect to the agenda item on managing strategic competition and building trust, the High Representative encouraged the Board to consider how the existing arms control regime could be augmented and reinforced, and she welcomed ideas from members for a new vision to guide efforts in that area. In addition, the High Representative briefed the Board on various initiatives being undertaken by Member States and United Nations entities in relation to the two agenda items.

A. Measures to mitigate civilian harm resulting from contemporary armed conflict

5. At its seventy-first session, during its deliberations about the agenda item on measures to mitigate civilian harm resulting from contemporary armed conflict, the Board took a broad approach and considered a myriad of factors, such as the urbanization of conflict and its disproportionate impact on women, children and minority groups; the shift from State to non-State actors as the main combatants; the fact that small arms and light weapons from both licit and illicit sources were becoming a major driver of harm done to civilians; the increasing impact of new technologies on armed conflict; and the protraction of armed conflict. The Board also engaged with a panel of experts from the civil society organization Article 36, with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR).
6. The panel of experts noted that humanitarian motives for regulating or prohibiting arms were already in evidence in the nineteenth century and that there were two major ones: prevention of superfluous injury and unnecessary suffering of combatants, and protection of civilians from harm. The Board also noted that, in the first half of the twentieth century, there were an estimated eight soldier fatalities for

each fatal civilian casualty. In today's conflicts, there are eight civilian fatalities for each soldier who is killed.

7. The panel underscored the trend that, since 2008, more than half of the world's population lived in urban environments. It further noted predictions that, by 2050, 64 per cent of the developing world and 86 per cent of the developed world would be urbanized. It judged that the implications were enormous, as the lethality of modern military forces continued to grow. The panel pointed out that protracted conflicts in urban environments had led to a staggering 128 million people worldwide who were in need of humanitarian assistance and protection, and that 65 million civilians were displaced within and across borders. These were the highest numbers since the Second World War.

8. These facts are relevant to disarmament and arms control in that protracted armed conflicts are being fuelled by a steady supply of arms and ammunition that are too easily available. The panel stated that disarmament and arms control were not just tools to maintain international peace and security and to prevent or end armed conflict, but that they were also a critical means to mitigate the impact of armed conflict when it occurs and, in doing so, support international humanitarian law.

9. The panel argued strongly that there needed to be rules to limit or prohibit the use of certain weapons because of the unacceptable harm they caused, harm that was easily witnessed first-hand at the frontlines of urbanized armed conflict.

10. During its seventy-second session, the Board was given a presentation by ICRC on weaponry and international humanitarian law. ICRC highlighted the challenges faced in pursuing the difficult and delicate balance between military necessity and the principle of humanity. ICRC noted that it operated through the prism of evidence both in how it addressed superfluous harm to civilians and how it dealt with the combatants, who must operate within international humanitarian law. Because various actors were involved in issues related to the use of weapons, ICRC engaged with both political and technical personnel.

11. The presenter noted that international humanitarian law did not require the impossible of States and that it was deeply pragmatic in nature. The presenter examined the period in the 1980s when ICRC began collecting data on anti-personnel landmines. This effort eventually led to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction as a key elaboration of international humanitarian law, and an instance in which the international community came together in an effort to reduce superfluous harm. With respect to mitigating civilian harm resulting from contemporary armed conflict, the presenter further spoke about accountability to affected populations, gender dimensions and the need to create a policy understanding about the wide-area effects of explosive weapons designed for the battlefield. The presenter also noted that there was a need to think about the potential implications that new and emerging technologies, including cybertechnologies, could have for the mitigation of civilian harm.

12. The Board noted that the need to protect civilian populations from indiscriminate attacks – due to the inappropriate selection of weapons, failure by warring parties to be vigilant in the application of international humanitarian law or even intentional targeting by belligerents – featured prominently in the agenda for disarmament of the Secretary-General,¹ and that it was the principal element of part III entitled “Disarmament that saves lives”.

¹ *Securing our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.18.IX.6).

13. The Board, in its deliberations, used the following categories to frame its review and recommendations: (a) avoiding the use of explosive weapons in populated areas; (b) sharing policy and practice to protect civilians; (c) strengthening inter-agency coordination on improvised explosive devices; (d) developing common standards for armed uncrewed aerial vehicles; (e) establishing a trust fund dedicated to small arms control to be known as the “Saving lives entity”; (f) addressing the gendered impact of arms; (g) and building understanding of the impact of arms on conflict management.

Key points and recommendations

(a) Avoiding the use of explosive weapons in populated areas

Recommendations

(i) The Board suggests exploring a legislative basis for the Secretary-General to produce a report on the use of explosive weapons (limitations, common standards, and operational policies) in populated areas to encourage further debate by the General Assembly. In that regard, the Board identifies the following options:

a. Holding, through engaged Members of the Security Council, a possible open meeting of the Council;

b. Submitting the issue as an item on the agenda of the First Committee, perhaps organized as a side event;

(ii) The Board proposes that one outcome of the report could be the tasking of relevant United Nations entities to further develop criteria, indicators and appropriate methodologies to measure the reverberating impacts of the use of explosive weapons in populated areas on civilian populations;

(b) Sharing policy and practice to protect civilians

Key points

To raise awareness about the issue and facilitate the sharing of good practices and policies, accurate reporting and collection of data is required. Multiple United Nations entities are separately collecting data on the effects on civilians of explosive weapons in populated areas, including the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the Office for Disarmament Affairs, the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the United Nations Children’s Fund, and the World Health Organization. A coherent and consistent way of integrating these data is currently lacking;

Recommendations

(i) The Board recommends developing a systematic, collective and comprehensive approach, with consistent methodologies, to pooling data collected by multiple United Nations organizations on the effects of the use of explosive weapons in populated areas on civilians;

(ii) The Board expresses its support for efforts to collect, in addition, data on the economic impact of explosive weapons in populated areas to demonstrate the multidimensional impact of explosives on people’s lives;

(iii) The Board suggests exploring ways to make those consolidated, comprehensive and robust data publicly accessible and communicating them actively using United Nations websites, reports and outreach events;

(iv) The Board believes that the effect of existing mitigation approaches, including the experiences of civilian harm mitigation cells by national and/or regional forces, should be examined so that Member States may take appropriate action to address, mitigate, and remedy harm to civilians;

(c) Strengthening inter-agency coordination on improvised explosive devices

Recommendation

The Board holds the view that accurate and comprehensive statistics about improvised explosive devices are required to support the establishment of a whole-of-system approach to that threat;

(d) Developing common standards for armed uncrewed aerial vehicles

Recommendation

The Board believes that, in the light of the current lack of interest among Member States to explore regulatory frameworks for armed uncrewed aerial vehicles, consideration could be given to exploring the scope of existing arms export control arrangements to incorporate information on the accountable transfer, holding and use of armed uncrewed aerial vehicles and associated technology, including through the Wassenaar Arrangement on Export Controls for Conventional Arms and Dual-Use Goods and Technologies, and the Arms Trade Treaty;

(e) Establishing a trust fund dedicated to small arms control to be known as the “Saving lives entity”

Recommendations

(i) The Board supports the idea of effecting change at the country level through the “Saving lives entity” fund and underscores the importance of supporting efforts to build national capacity for weapons and ammunition management. The Board therefore recommended that, in addition to the establishment of the “Saving lives entity”, criteria and guidance for country-level proposals be developed for use by national authorities and United Nations country teams;

(ii) The Board suggested that consideration could also be given to ensuring a sufficient United Nations pool of expertise that could support national authorities and United Nations country teams in the development and implementation of projects;

(f) Addressing the gendered impact of arms

Recommendations

(i) The Board recommends systematically integrating disarmament issues into the meetings held under the women and peace and security agenda and reporting on meetings about women, peace and security;

(ii) The Board recommends encouraging States to include detailed information in their reports under the Arms Trade Treaty on their experiences with responding to the Treaty’s criteria on gender;

(iii) The Board recommends mainstreaming gender in disarmament issues as part of the agenda of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women);

(iv) **The Board recommends continuing to include that gendered aspects of disarmament in the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization;**

(g) **Building understanding of the impact of arms on conflict management**

Recommendations

(i) **The Board considers that experiences and insights from the field were a requirement for better understanding the impact of arms that should be integrated into assessments, risk analyses and conflict prevention activities;**

(ii) **The Board emphasizes the adverse impact of arms on development, for which reason arms control can, in its judgment, make an important contribution to development; thus, it encourages the Secretary-General to ensure that arms and arms control issues are mainstreamed across all United Nations entities.**

B. The role of the disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation regime in managing strategic competition and building trust

14. Given the progressive erosion of major existing instruments of the arms control and non-proliferation architecture (including the impending end of the Treaty between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Elimination of Their Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles, as well as challenges to the sustainability of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, the extension of the Treaty between the Russian Federation and the United States of America on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms beyond 2021, to the norm against nuclear testing and the eventual entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty), the Board judged that it had an obligation to highlight the importance of preserving and bolstering the overall structure of bilateral, multilateral, and global arms control efforts of many decades. It also believed that there were possible opportunities and avenues for progress in implementing the agenda of the Secretary-General, be they unilateral, bilateral or plurilateral. In that respect, the Board highlighted that it was of special importance as well as necessary that the Secretary-General robustly continue to promote and defend the essential principles of disarmament and arms control.

15. The Board considered that, in the current environment, multilateral efforts to reduce the risk of use of nuclear weapons was urgently required and must be a priority for the Review Conference of the Parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty to be held in 2020. The Board was of the view that nuclear risk reduction could provide a basis for dialogue among the permanent members of the Security Council, with other nuclear possessor States, as well as between nuclear and non-nuclear weapons States. The Board recognized that there were many facets to nuclear risk reduction and possible related actions and that finding consensus on specific steps could be challenging. In that respect, it considered the framework for nuclear risk reduction recently offered by UNIDIR – which defined four areas of risk and possible pathways to address them – to be a helpful conceptual and practical tool to facilitate dialogue between Member States.

16. Members of the Board were of the view that the impact of new technologies, including in the domains of cyberspace, outer space and artificial intelligence, should be fully taken into consideration in pursuing effective disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control.

17. Reiterating the goals outlined by the Secretary-General in part II of his agenda for disarmament (“Disarmament to save humanity”), the Board expressed full support for the implementation plan crafted by the Office for Disarmament Affairs and urged the Secretary-General and the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs to continue their ongoing efforts to that end. Focusing on nuclear weapons, the working group of the Board that examined this issue expressed grave concern about the increasing competition among the major Powers and the ongoing deterioration of existing disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control arrangements. It also noted that emerging technologies would have important implications in this area.

18. Despite these challenges, the Board acknowledged four short-term opportunities of which the Secretary-General could avail himself to keep the implementation of part II of his agenda moving forward. Those were:

(a) The Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons to be held in April and May 2020. The Board believed that a meeting could be held at the ministerial level that could provide new opportunities for high-level engagement;

(b) The conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction to be held in November 2019 and the sustained exploration of a new instrument encompassing all types of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery;

(c) Continued high-level diplomatic engagement with the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea with a view to achieving the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula;

(d) In a polarized environment that was impacting disarmament, groups of governmental experts were an important means of facilitating discussion and allowing the identification of concrete ways to increase transparency and establish norms that could help to manage complex challenges, whether related to emerging technologies or not.

19. The Board agreed that there were major stakes for the major Powers and all Member States in preserving what remained of the arms control architecture and that the major Powers still had a common interest in avoiding the worst outcomes, which lay the foundation for potential cooperative security measures. Board members agreed on four principles that should serve as a guide to identifying measures aimed at reducing the risks posed by the renewed strategic competition between major Powers, namely:

(a) “Do no harm” – The first priority should be to preserve and reaffirm the value of the existing disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation instruments and norms;

(b) “Do not do unto others” – Member States should see to it that measures taken to ensure their security do not come at the expense of the security of others and, in designing responses to deal with those issues, provide a base for a wider audience to be engaged; and

(c) “Transparency is essential” – Major Powers and other Member States should reduce strategic and operational ambiguity surrounding capabilities and intentions, and refrain from behaviours and capability developments that add to uncertainty, in the hope of reducing the risk of war.

(d) “Pursue cooperation” – All Member States should cooperate to preserve the disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control regime, address risks to it and pursue opportunities to strengthen it.

20. Based on the aforementioned principles and opportunities, the Board identified the following recommendations to the Secretary-General.

Recommendations

(a) **Continued engagement by the Secretary-General with high-level officials of the five permanent members of the Security Council on the importance of cooperation among major Powers to sustain the Non-Proliferation Treaty. This should be aimed at underlining the potential of an erosion and an unravelling of the Treaty, the unique importance for the five permanent members of the Council of maintaining a stable non-proliferation regime, the need to work cooperatively among themselves to reduce strategic competition and nuclear risks; encouraging them to reaffirm their commitment to restraint by formal or informal means, to avoid further erosion of the existing instruments; and restoring a regular dialogue at multiple levels to find opportunities to move forward cooperatively;**

(b) **Encourage support for and participation in the conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction by all States in the region, the five permanent members of the Security Council and organizations by highlighting the interests at stake for the non-proliferation regime, the opportunity for dialogue among all States of the region and the potential value of creating a new innovative and ambitious instrument;**

(c) **Initiate new expert-level engagement, studies and seminars through the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs to identify actions to reverse current trends impeding progress on disarmament. Such United Nations activities could provide a means to facilitate informal military-to-military and defence dialogue among key countries (and represent a step toward bilateral exchanges), as well as reinforce nuclear doctrine discussions among the five permanent members of the Security Council. Such activities should be aimed at identifying confidence-building measures to decrease strategic tensions among the major Powers and reduce nuclear risks, thereby supporting a focus on nuclear risk reduction at the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty. In turn, those activities could be aimed at supporting and feeding debates within new and existing groups of governmental experts about critical and emerging technologies and their impact on strategic stability;**

(d) **Ensure that action point 32 of the agenda for disarmament, in which the Secretary-General calls for a study of ways to better coordinate and integrate the work and expertise among the various disarmament bodies, includes a comprehensive review of the existing disarmament machinery and the effect of their current paralysis.**

C. The role of the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters

21. In discussing the role of the Board, the members believed that the agenda for disarmament of the Secretary-General, published in 2018, should be a core area for its future work. The Board strongly believed that there were a number of actions covered by the agenda in which they could, individually or collectively, play important roles by providing substantive input and effective contributions to further the implementation of those actions.

22. Board members discussed making presentations, writing opinion pieces and engaging in communication and outreach. They explored the idea of furthering their work through intersessional processes. The Board believed that the fortieth

anniversary of UNIDIR and the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations provided two excellent opportunities to further the Board's work. In that context, members of the Board expressed interest in contributing to work on the future of multilateral cooperation.

III. Board of Trustees of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research

23. The Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters, acting in its role as the Board of Trustees of UNIDIR, met twice in 2019, on 29 January in Geneva and on 25 June in New York.

24. At those meetings, the Director briefed the Board on progress in the implementation of the three-year research agenda approved by the Board in June 2018. The Board noted that all four research programmes (weapons of mass destruction and other strategic weapons; conventional arms; security and technology; and gender and disarmament) were under way and producing innovative work that had policy relevance. The Board also welcomed the initiation of work to examine, with support from the European Union, efforts to establish Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction. The Board considered that that work could fill a research gap and identify ideas, options and opportunities for inclusive dialogue relating to regional security issues. The Board considered that such a workstream could contribute to ongoing efforts, including the United Nations conference to be convened on the issue in November 2019.

25. The Board expressed the view that, together with the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, UNIDIR was currently one of the most effective and influential actors to advance the agenda for disarmament. It welcomed UNIDIR leadership in the implementation of several agenda actions, including with regard to efforts to reduce the risk that nuclear weapons would be used. By its framing of the issue, UNIDIR is making a valuable contribution to international policy discussions on nuclear risk reduction in the critical run-up to the Review Conference of the Parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

26. The Board engaged in substantive discussions on three new UNIDIR workstreams: gender and disarmament; the role of conventional arms in preventing and mitigating urban conflict and violence; and strengthening compliance and enforcement of regimes on weapons of mass destruction. These timely and relevant topics address key themes of the agenda for disarmament and help to integrate disarmament in the priorities of the broader United Nations system, especially in the case of the first two topics. Rigorous and practical research with policy relevance on these topics offers an entry point for arms control and disarmament to reinforce and strengthen broader objectives such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the women and peace and security agenda. Identifying options to strengthen regimes on weapons of mass destruction and enable them to be used to respond effectively to contemporary threats and challenges can be an important contribution to broader efforts to reinforce multilateral rule-based order.

27. The Board reviewed the UNIDIR plan to implement the recommendations given by the Secretary-General in his report on the thirty-fifth anniversary of UNIDIR (A/73/284), which included moving from a project-based approach to the establishment of multi-year programmes oriented towards key issues of the agenda for disarmament; the streamlining of business processes and the establishment of arrangements with United Nations service providers, and the strengthening of communication, partnership and resource mobilization efforts.

28. The Board welcomed the investment made by UNIDIR in communications and outreach, noting the greater visibility of the Institute on a variety of social media platforms. The Board endorsed plans to update the UNIDIR website and encouraged the Institute, subject to the availability of resources, to consider translating key online content, such as programme descriptions and publication summaries into the official languages of the United Nations. It also welcomed online streaming of UNIDIR flagship conferences, such as the upcoming innovations dialogue, as a practical way to enable a wider audience to benefit from the high-quality dialogue and expert perspectives featured in those events. With a view to further enhancing the visibility of UNIDIR, the Board encouraged the Director to explore and report back on practical options to increase the profile and engagement of the Institute in New York. The Board also endorsed the Institute's commitment to increased activities outside Geneva and New York.

29. The Board welcomed the fact that the Institute focused on expanding partnerships to support outreach, diversity and impact. Members of the Board encouraged UNIDIR to build new partnerships or strengthen existing ones across the Organization and offered suggestions on potential entry points for new partnerships, such as with key regional organizations, in particular the African Union, and subregional organizations, research institutes and foundations. Members of the Board welcomed efforts to expand the range of activities undertaken with partners and voiced support for the initiation, together with the Office for Disarmament Affairs, of an induction course in Geneva for newly arrived diplomats. The Board felt that this could be a valuable contribution to broader disarmament education efforts and to supporting the full participation of all Member States in disarmament deliberations.

30. At its meeting held in June 2019, the Board considered and approved the report of the Director on the activities of the Institute for the period between June 2018 and April 2019 and the proposed programme of work and financial plan for 2019 and 2020 (A/74/180). In the view of the Board, the report of the Director captured the breadth of the Institute's work programme and the increased activity currently under way. The Board recommended that, going forward, the reporting period cover the calendar year, and encouraged the Director, in consultation with the Controller, to identify more accessible and user-friendly ways to present its financial accounts. The Board further recommended that the report of the Director include a section reflecting the added value of the Institute's contributions and the impact of its work over the course of the period under consideration, following, where appropriate, the Institute's monitoring and evaluation policy.

31. The Board welcomed the increase in 2018 of the Institute's annual income, which it considered to be a reflection of Member States' growing interest and belief in the relevance of the Institute's work to their efforts to address international security threats and challenges. The Board reiterated its firm conviction that the autonomy of the Institute and the independence of its research were essential to this confidence and formed the foundation under the Institute's ability to conduct credible and impactful policy research, produce knowledge and ideas, and provide technical advice and support to Member States, the expert community and other disarmament stakeholders.

32. While recognizing that UNIDIR would continue to be financed primarily with voluntary funding, the Board believed that near-total reliance on extrabudgetary funds challenged the Institute's autonomy and the independence of its research. Its reliance on extrabudgetary funding left the Institute open to the criticism that it was being driven by a very small number of donor States and limited its capacity to respond flexibly to critical arms control developments, support those States that did not have the resources to actively engage in multilateral processes, and engage with Africa, Asia and Latin America in a sustained way.

33. To provide those core services predictably and consistently, moreover, UNIDIR required a stable and sustainable operating environment and financial basis. The Board took note of the Institute's commitment to realizing the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General on the issue (A/73/284) and the progress that was being made. To ensure the sustainability of the reforms that that entailed, the Board believed that an increase in the annual subvention to UNIDIR from the regular budget was required. The Board has consistently recommended an increase in the subvention. In 2018, it considered the findings of the independent third-party assessment of UNIDIR requested by the General Assembly and it strongly endorses the recommendations made in that regard by the Secretary-General at the request of the States Members of the United Nations. With regard to the subvention from the regular budget, the Board welcomes the proposal made by the Secretary-General in his report that this grant should:

(a) Fully cover the salary and related costs of the Institute's Director so as to ensure the independence impartiality and accountability of UNIDIR leadership to the full membership;

(b) Cover the costs of at least one additional Professional post to represent the Institute, serve as certifying officer and report to the Board in the absence and/or incapacitation of the Director and to assist the Director in all management and administrative functions;

(c) Provide resources for the provision of quarterly briefings on research and ideas of relevant disarmament topics to all regional groupings and, as further requested by Member States, with a view to supporting the informed participation of all Member States in disarmament deliberations;

(d) Enable UNIDIR to organize at least three events in countries that are not members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development to promote disarmament and non-proliferation knowledge, ideas and dialogue to a broader and more diverse community.

34. Noting that it was the Board's responsibility to provide a recommendation for a subvention from the regular budget of the United Nations to the Secretary-General for his subsequent transmittal to the General Assembly for approval (see the statute of the Institute, art. VIII, para. 3), the Board requested the Secretariat to provide it with an estimate of the budgetary resources required to assume the four functions set out by the Secretary-General in his report. In reply, the Board was informed that, at present, the estimate amounted to \$649,019. The Board therefore recommends an annual subvention from the 2021 regular budget to UNIDIR of \$649,019.

35. While recognizing the multiple demands on the assessed contributions of Member States to the Organization, the recommended amount is a modest one, given the range of services that includes, apart from those listed, briefings, primers, knowledge transfer activities, training and research, and technical advice freely accessible for all Member States. The Board believes that the recommended amount is fully justified, given today's polarized international security environment, the fact that arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament have returned to the centre of international security debates, the urgent need for new thinking to advance practical progress in the governance of weapons technologies of long and more recent standing, and the Institute's potential to contribute to meeting those challenges. The Board encourages the General Assembly to approve this budgetary proposal and, thereby enable the predictable and consistent provision of services to multilateral disarmament efforts.

36. The Board highlighted that 2020 marked the fortieth anniversary of the Institute, a year in which many important institutional disarmament anniversaries would take

place. The Board encouraged UNIDIR to use that opportunity to take a forward-looking approach and, through carefully curated events, support dialogue and new thinking about the elements that could make up effective arms control in the future, including issues, actors and processes essential to advancing practical progress in old and new areas of arms control. The anniversary could prove to be an important opportunity to highlight the Institute's unique role within the disarmament machinery as a facilitator of dialogue with and among stakeholders, including those in the private sector, the research and academic communities, civil society and among technical experts. The Board recommends that UNIDIR seek to create synergies with the commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations, in particular with efforts to engage with young people and communities from around the world on their priorities and perspectives.

IV. Future work and other matters

37. The Board proposes the following topics for discussions during the meetings to be held in 2020:

- The application of the agenda for disarmament of the Secretary-General with respect to the Korean Peninsula, including issues related to resuming dialogue with key stakeholders, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, a Korean Peninsula zone free of nuclear weapons, and risk reduction;
- Possible norms, principles and measures relating to the advancement of stability and security in outer space;
- Biotechnological developments – what are the issues and is there scope for multilateral processes to address them?

38. It is recommended that representatives of the relevant United Nations committees and groups of experts be invited, as well as other (outside) experts, to brief the Board on the agenda topics.

Annex

Members of the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters 2019

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Lewis A. Dunn
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¹ Amandeep Gill is on interim leave as an official of the Government of India and is currently a temporary staff member of the United Nations Secretariat.

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