Side Event on Disarmament and Non-proliferation Education

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United Nations

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Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I wish to extend a warm welcome to all of you to this side event. A special welcome goes to Mr. Kawabata from Rissho Kosei-kai for his personal participation in this side event as well as to the distinguished panelists who will share with us their insights and expertise on the important topic of disarmament and non-proliferation education.

At the outset, I wish to express my gratitude on behalf of the Office for Disarmament Affairs to Rissho Kosei-kai. UN ODA’s engagement with Rissho Kosei-kai dates back to 1983 and we are grateful for its commitment and support throughout these years. Today, at this event, I wish to recognize their generous contribution of one million dollars to support the work and activities undertaken by the Office for Disarmament Affairs to advance disarmament and non-proliferation education over the next ten years particularly in the Asia Pacific region. It is my honour and pleasure to formalize this agreement at today’s side event.

Education has a tremendously important role to play in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation and constitutes an indispensable investment in our common future. As Nelson Mandela said “Education is the most powerful weapon we can use to change the world”. Education serves to strengthen international peace and security by helping to inspire a new generation of leaders to advance the global disarmament agenda.

In 2002, the UN study on disarmament and non-proliferation education noted that “Education and training remain important but underutilized tools for promoting peace, disarmament and non-proliferation.” While that remains true today, we at the Office for Disarmament Affairs have undertaken and sustained initiatives to promote disarmament and non-
proliferation education with Member States, non-governmental organizations and the general public.

I would like to take this opportunity to say a few words about some of these initiatives.

A baseline study carried out by the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific (**UNRCPD**) has shown that overall violence had declined following a political settlement in post-conflict Nepal. However, latent tensions continued to prevail in school premises, fueling youth violence and various forms of discrimination. In order to advance tolerance and mutual respect and strengthen a culture of peace among youths, the Regional Centre in cooperation with the Ministry of Education of Nepal, successfully implemented several projects on peace and disarmament education, promoting non-violent values and behaviours to prevent and manage conflict. The project reached more than 25,000 teachers and about 400,000 students.

Disarmament education goes beyond what one might call traditional teacher-led activities in school settings. In support of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean (**UNLIREC**), in collaboration with the United Nations Volunteer Programme, launched a project in four countries (Colombia, Honduras, Peru and Trinidad and Tobago) to enhance their knowledge of SDG Goal 16.4 (“By 2030, significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets and combat all forms of organized crime”) and engage in meaningful dialogue on peace, security and civic participation in Latin America
and the Caribbean. Over 250 youth representatives have been introduced to the basic human security, disarmament and UN peace agenda and they have developed the first set of community-based indicators for SDG 16.4.

Extending its reach to other groups, beyond youth and students, the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa (UNREC), in cooperation with the International Organization of the Francophonie, developed a practical guide on disarmament in French for diplomats and experts from African States to strengthen the capacity of francophone countries on issues relating to peace and security, disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation. It includes detailed information on international, regional and sub-regional instruments. Subject to availability of funds by interested donors, the guide would be translated into other major languages spoken in Africa, including English, Arabic and Portuguese.

Turning to ODA’s Vienna Office, it has carried out a project on “Disarmament and Non-Proliferation (DNP) Education” in cooperation with 30 partners including United Nations entities, international organizations, academic research institutions and non-governmental organizations. Supported by the Government of Germany, the Vienna Office developed the Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Education Dashboard, an online platform that can be used for tailor-made courses on disarmament, arms control non-proliferation. So far, more than 150 educational modules have been developed in close cooperation with our partners. Additionally, the Vienna Office launched the first round of courses focused on promoting the participation of women from the Global South. The project aims to promote the full and equal
participation of women in disarmament and non-proliferation, including at decision-making levels.

We believe in the transformative role of education. We are constantly exploring new and creative ways of using internet and social media to reach out to young people. We saw how ICAN – a network organization led by young people - influenced the international policy agenda of nuclear disarmament. They can change the world, if we collectively empower them with knowledge and education. I wish to again thank our partners at Rissho Kosei-kai for almost 35 years of partnership, and I look forward to hearing from our panel of disarmament education practitioners who will share their hands-on experiences with us today.

Thank you.