FACT SHEET

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL’S AGENDA FOR DISARMAMENT

“We are living in dangerous times. Cold War tensions are back, global military spending is at its highest and protracted conflicts are causing unspeakable human suffering. This is why I launched my disarmament agenda.” – United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres

On 24 May 2018, the Secretary-General launched “Securing our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament” at the University of Geneva.

His agenda responds to the deteriorating international security environment, the growing human and economic costs of the consequent insecurity and the fact that, since the end of the Cold War, many disarmament commitments have gone unfulfilled, including practical steps to reduce dangers and ease international tensions. His agenda is therefore aimed at reviving serious multilateral dialogue and bringing disarmament and non-proliferation back to the centre of the work of the United Nations.

The Agenda outlines practical measures across the range of disarmament issues, including weapons of mass destruction, conventional arms and new weapon technologies. It seeks to generate fresh perspectives, create new momentum and explore areas where serious dialogue is required to bring disarmament back to the heart of common efforts for peace and security. To accomplish these goals, the Agenda integrates disarmament into the priorities of the entire United Nations system, laying the foundations for new partnerships and greater collaboration among different parts of the Organization and Governments, civil society, the private sector and others.

The Agenda is divided into four pillars:

Disarmament to save humanity: The existence of nuclear weapons poses a continuing threat to the world. Their total elimination can only be achieved through reinvigorated dialogue and serious negotiations. The States that possess nuclear weapons must take steps to reduce all types of nuclear weapons, ensure their non-use, reduce their role in security doctrines, reduce their operational readiness, constrain the development of advanced new types, increase transparency of their programmes and build mutual trust and confidence. All States must work together to achieve concrete and irreversible steps to prepare for a world free of nuclear weapons. With respect to other weapons of mass destruction, the Security Council must act to ensure the respect for norms against chemical weapons. We must continue to strengthen our institutions to prevent any use of biological weapons. We must also prevent the emergence of new and destabilizing strategic weapons, including in outer space, for the sake of international stability.
Disarmament that saves lives: As armed conflicts grow more deadly, destructive and complex, we need a new focus on mitigating the humanitarian impact of conventional arms and providing for more effective regulation. This includes new efforts to reign in the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, better coordination within the United Nations to deal with the scourge of improvised explosive devices, and work to prevent new technologies, such as armed drones, from prompting a reinterpretation of international law. International approaches to regulate arms need to be brought in line with the magnitude of these problems and integrated into broader work for prevention and sustainable development. This includes action at the country-level to end the illicit trade in small arms and their ammunition. It also includes building a deeper institutional understanding on the impact of arms on conflict management, ensuring the security and physical protection of excessive and poorly maintained stockpiles and fostering regional dialogue to reduce military spending to build confidence.

Disarmament for future generations: As advances in science and technology continue to revolutionize human life, we must remain vigilant in our understanding of new and emerging weapon technologies. Such technologies could pose challenges to existing legal, humanitarian and ethical norms and threaten international peace and security. New measures are necessary to ensure that humans always maintain control over the use of force. We must foster a culture of accountability and adherence to norms, rules and principles for responsible behaviour in cyberspace. We must also take steps to encourage responsible innovation by industry, engineers and scientists.

Strengthening partnerships for disarmament: The existing multilateral disarmament institutions need to be reinvigorated and better utilized, through increased political will and by improving coordination and integration of expertise into their work. The United Nations and regional organizations should work together to strengthen existing platforms for regional dialogue on security and arms control. Greater efforts are needed to achieve equal, full and effective participation of women in all decision-making processes related to disarmament. More education and training opportunities should be established, in order to empower young people to be a force for change and disarmament. Finally, there must be better engagement and integration of experts, industry and civil society representatives into United Nations efforts for disarmament.

Implementation

“Securing our common future” is an agenda for the entire United Nations system. The implementation plan for the Secretary-General agenda, initially published in October 2018, details the activities of entities that United Nations will undertake to carry out each of the 40 actions contained in the Agenda. It also includes information on the links between disarmament and the Sustainable Development Goals. The implementation plan is a living document. As work progresses, new steps and activities are being added as needed. The status of activities is updated on a regular basis, and links to specific outputs are being uploaded on the page for each action.

States and regional organizations that have stepped forward as Champions and Supporters of specific actions are listed in the implementation plan. These Champions and Supporters have agreed to play an active leadership role in any of the activities in support of a given action, including through specific political or financial commitments, or through active engagement.

For more information: www.un.org/disarmament/sg-agenda/