FACT SHEET

DISARMAMENT AND YOUTH

The Role of Youth in Disarmament

Today’s world is home to the largest generation in history: 1.8 billion young people, 90 percent of whom reside in developing countries. It is imperative to hear the voices of this generation and engage its members in discussions on disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control issues. Young people around the world have a critical role to play in raising awareness and developing new strategies to reduce threats from weapons of mass destruction and conventional arms, including their proliferation.

Since taking up his office, Secretary-General Guterres has made a major push to empower youth, noting their role as the leaders of tomorrow and insisting that the next generation must have a say in how their future will be shaped. The Secretary-General clearly articulates in his Agenda for Disarmament: Securing Our Common Future, how young people have been a tremendous force for change in the world, noting how they have “proved their power time and again in support of the cause of disarmament. Young campaigners have worked at the forefront of successful international campaigns to ban landmines, cluster munitions and nuclear weapons.”

Recent media reports confirm that young anti-nuclear weapons campaigners and young victims of small arms gunfire demonstrate that determined and passionate individuals have the ability to significantly influence policies and change the conversation at national and global levels. Every member of the staff of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons was under the age of 35 when it was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2017.

Member States have recognized the importance of educating young professionals to take forward disarmament and non-proliferation. The most notable and enduring activity in this regard has been the establishment by the General Assembly of the Programme of Fellowships on Disarmament (1978). This intensive training programme has been continuously endorsed by the General Assembly. Since its inception, it has successfully promoted and strengthened the capacity of young professionals to effectively engage in multilateral disarmament diplomacy.
In 2002, the United Nations Study on Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Education\textsuperscript{1} highlighted the need for Member States, United Nations system organizations and others to do more to promote education as a means of addressing disarmament and non-proliferation. From the very beginning, disarmament education has promoted the critical role of young people in fostering a culture of peace.

**The Role of the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs**

Recognizing the importance of young people to bring about change, the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) has placed youth engagement at the core of its disarmament education efforts. The ultimate goal will be to increase youth participation and create space for young people to make meaningful substantive contributions to facilitating progress on disarmament. More education and training opportunities are being established, providing a platform for young people from all parts of the world to engage in the area of disarmament. Imparting knowledge and skills to young people empowers them to make their contribution, as national and world citizens.

UNODA, in close collaboration with Member States, regional organizations, civil society and academic institutions is:

- Working to develop and disseminate a model curriculum for undergraduate and graduate students on responsible innovation;
- Developing a programme to create a cadre of youth fellows from around the world, who will work assiduously to promote disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control in their communities;
- Engaging with youth groups and community organizations in support of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals with synergistic linkages to youth, disarmament and non-proliferation education and conflict prevention;
- Developing disarmament and non-proliferation training modules hosted on the online dashboard of the Office for Disarmament Affairs (Vienna Office) targeting young diplomats and other youth leaders for knowledge enhancement and capacity-building.

**Useful disarmament-related websites for Youth**

- [Disarmament Education Website](#)
- [UNODA’s First eLearning Module providing an Introduction to Disarmament](#)
- [Factsheets on Disarmament Issues](#)
- [Disarmament: A Basic Guide](#)
- [Action for Disarmament: 10 Things You Can Do!](#)
- [World is Over-Armed and Peace is Underfunded infographic](#)
- [History of Disarmament as Written by Nobel Peace Laureates](#)

\textsuperscript{1} A/57/124.

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