The United Nations Role in Promoting Nuclear Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Education

By

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Seminar on Nuclear Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Education

Sponsored by the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies, Soka Gakkai International, Peace Boat, Hibakusha Stories, and IPPNW Costa Rica

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I am pleased to address this side event of the third session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2015 NPT Review Conference. The subject of this event, Disarmament and Non-proliferation Education, remains as timely and important as ever. I therefore wish to express my gratitude to the Government of Austria, Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies, Soka Gakkai International, Peace Boat, Hibakusha Stories, and Costa Rican affiliate of International Physicians to Prevent Nuclear War for their respective efforts in co-organizing this event.

My job today will be to lay out some facts about what the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs has been doing in this growing field of disarmament and non-proliferation education.

Twelve years have passed since the adoption of the United Nations study on disarmament and non-proliferation education in 2002, which contains 34 practical recommendations to promote education and training in disarmament and non-proliferation at all levels of formal and informal education. Later this year, the Secretary-General will submit his biennial report to the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session reviewing the results of the implementation of those recommendations and possible new opportunities for promoting disarmament and non-proliferation education. I would like to request all of you to provide inputs to the biennial report of the Secretary-General on this very important topic which is a compilation of work by Governments, UN offices, inter-governmental and regional organizations and non-governmental organizations in this field.

For several decades now, UNODA and its predecessors in the Secretariat have been promoting disarmament and non-proliferation education activities. This work is undertaken in cooperation with Member States, non-governmental organizations and the general public through the internet, print publications, conferences and workshops, media events and public speaking engagements.
At any of the locations where UNODA has offices—namely, New York, Geneva, Vienna, Lomé, Lima and Kathmandu—our staff regularly briefs groups of students on disarmament matters. Briefings are usually to college or graduate school students, but also include presentations to younger grades.

The Office’s official website\(^1\) is a primary resource for information on disarmament issues and all our publications and factsheets on a wide range of issues are available on-line.

We also maintain a “Disarmament Education: resources for learning” website\(^2\) in 6 official UN languages. Through this website, students can access publications, films and recorded podcast interviews in which experts talk about topical disarmament issues. There is also a link to the UN Cyberschoolbus disarmament portal\(^3\), which provides a wealth of classroom resources for teachers and students from late middle school to early college. Lesson plans at this portal cover nuclear weapons, small arms and light weapons, and landmines.

We are actually quite proud of our many publications on a wide variety of disarmament-related subjects. Our comprehensive United Nations Disarmament Yearbook\(^4\) has been published annually since 1976 and we have also published books tracing the evolution of disarmament at the UN since 1946\(^5\). Recent Yearbooks have appeared in two volumes to provide readers with convenient access to the full texts and voting breakdowns on resolutions adopted by the First Committee. We have also produced a series of Occasional Papers—these are monographs or collected essays on specific disarmament themes.\(^6\) You will also find on our website a series of convenient, up-to-date Fact Sheets on specific disarmament challenges.\(^7\)

\(^1\) www.un.org/disarmament.
\(^2\) www.un.org/disarmament/education.
\(^3\) http://cyberschoolbus.un.org/dnp/.
\(^7\) http://www.un.org/disarmament/factsheets/.
In January 2012, we published a booklet entitled “Disarmament — A Basic Guide” in collaboration with the NGO Committee on Disarmament, Peace and Security. It explains basic disarmament issues in terms that not only adults but also high school students can understand. It is available in 6 official UN languages. UNODA has been seeking partners to translate the guide into as many languages as possible for educational purposes.

Recently, UNODA launched a new book, Action for Disarmament: 10 Things You Can Do! It was written for high school and early-college students and draws the attention of young people around the world to the promotion of international peace and security through disarmament. It offers 10 practical steps to help young people mobilize, act and promote the UN’s disarmament ideals throughout their schools, their communities and beyond. This book is available through the U.N. Bookshop in a variety of formats including hardcopy, e-book and PDF. To date, the Hope to the Future Foundation and the University of Tokyo have agreed to translate the publication into Korean and Japanese.

We are constantly exploring new ways to reach out to young people on disarmament issues. In 2011, we launched a “Poetry for Peace” contest in collaboration with the Government of Japan and the UN Department of Public Information (DPI), and a year later we held an “Art for Peace” contest in collaboration with the Harmony for Peace Foundation and DPI. These contests were disarmament education programmes launched via the internet—they inspired children, teens and young adults worldwide to make them better acquainted with nuclear disarmament issues.

Social media tools including Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest were widely used to disseminate information and reach an ever-broader audience. This has been of particular interest to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. On 13 June 2009, he launched a multiplatform campaign under the slogan WMD – We Must Disarm to mark the 100-day countdown which led to the International Day of Peace on 21 September that year.8

As a follow-up to the Secretary-General’s historic visit to Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 2010, UNODA has been actively contributing to an international effort to preserve and disseminate translations of hibakusha testimonies to ensure that their stories are available for generations to come. This was an initiative the Secretary-General personally announced at Hiroshima. We have created a dedicated webpage focusing on those testimonies, which is likely the most comprehensive web-platform for hibakusha-related materials in languages other than Japanese. We have also just launched another multimedia website of hibakusha telling their stories, which is available in eleven languages including six official languages of the United Nations.

In addition, since May 2011 we have been collaborating with Hibakusha Stories, a New York-based non-governmental organization which brings atomic bomb survivors to New York City high schools to tell their stories, has organized bi-annual briefings by hibakusha for UN tour guides, staff and permanent mission interns. I am pleased that Hibakusha Stories is a co-sponsor of this event today.

Because of the large number of visitors who come to the UN each year, we also recognize the value of exhibits. In 2012, UNODA commissioned a new permanent exhibit at UN headquarters entitled “The World is Over-Armed and Peace is Under-Funded”. The exhibit highlights the disparity between the world-wide funding for military expenditures (at over $1.6 trillion dollars per year) on the one hand, and expenditures for development assistance, peace and security, and disarmament efforts, on the other hand.


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9 [www.un.org/disarmament/content/slideshow/hibakusha](http://www.un.org/disarmament/content/slideshow/hibakusha).
governments and civil society organizations are doing to realize a nuclear-weapon-free world. The Government of Japan donated artifacts from Urakami Catholic Cathedral near the epicenter of the atomic bomb explosion in Nagasaki.

In the training field, UNODA also implements the United Nations Programme of Fellowships on Disarmament launched by the General Assembly at its first special session devoted to disarmament in 1978.\textsuperscript{12} The Programme is focused on training junior national officials of Member States and to enable them to participate more effectively in international deliberating and negotiating fora. The Programme has trained over 800 public officials from about 160 Member States, a large number of whom are now in positions of responsibility in the field of disarmament within their own Governments. Our New York and Geneva Offices also train over graduate students every year through the UN internship programme.

And we are also working to train the trainers. Since 2012, Hibakusha Stories in collaboration with Peace Boat and UNODA has organized a workshop at United Nations Headquarters on nuclear disarmament for teachers at New York City Public Schools as part of their continuing education activities.

This is where I will conclude my remarks today, having offered an overview with specific examples of what we are doing to advance disarmament and non-proliferation education. We have an open door for ideas on what more we could do, including thoughts on what we could be doing better. And of course we always welcome praise for what we have done well. But we will never be satisfied until disarmament education becomes a branch of history—when we can reflect back on how humanity finally rose to outlaw these most inhumane of weapons.

Thank you.

\textsuperscript{12} http://www.un.org/disarmament/fellowship/.