

## EDITOR'S NOTE

The revolution in the life sciences is driving new discoveries and applications in medicine, psychology and health. Our developing understanding of how the body and its components work at the most basic levels allows us to envision treatments and cures hitherto unimaginable. However, the possibilities for malign use of these breakthroughs are both terrifying and vast. The ability to influence life processes at the molecular level means the ability to turn the body into a weapon against itself. This is particularly disturbing as international discussion and the relevant legal prohibitions appear to lag far behind the pace of scientific progress.

This issue of *Disarmament Forum* focuses on advances in science and technology and their implications for the chemical and biological weapons regimes. After an overview of scientific and technological developments and their relation to the regimes, authors explore a few worrying applications made possible by developments in neuroscience and immunology, current research on “non-lethal” weapons, and the possible utility of a code of conduct for those working in the life sciences.

The next issue of *Disarmament Forum* will examine the dynamic and complex region of North-East Asia, which is at the heart of several security and defence concerns. Proliferation concerns, unresolved conflicts and grievances, and the future of the Korean Peninsula affect the stability of the region as a whole—and have global repercussions. Articles in this issue will focus on efforts to stabilize the Korean Peninsula, initiatives to reduce tensions and build confidence region-wide, the issue of missile proliferation and defences, the role of external actors, and regional security policies.

Two new projects have recently started at the Institute. The first, the *European Action on Small Arms, Light Weapons and Explosive Remnants of War*, will examine the European Commission’s responses to these weapons, with the objective of formulating recommendations to enhance coordination, harmonize policies and address gaps (see UNIDIR Focus, page 69, for details).

The second project is entitled *Disarmament as Humanitarian Action: Making Multilateral Negotiations Work*. This project adopts a problem-solving approach involving practitioners in the multilateral negotiating field and emphasizes practical means grounded in the humanitarian dimensions of disarmament. On 3 November 2004, UNIDIR convened an initial half-day gathering of practitioners in the disarmament, arms control and humanitarian fields to introduce the project, outline some of the basic concepts behind it and present examples of alternative perspectives and approaches to disarmament and arms control negotiations.

UNIDIR, United Nations Development Programme and United Nations Department for Disarmament Affairs (with the Small Arms Survey as a technical consultant) have completed their analysis of the national reports submitted to the 2003 Biennial Meeting of States. This evaluation has been published as *Implementing the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons: Analysis of the Reports Submitted by States in 2003* by E. Kytömäki and V. Yankey-Wayne

(see UNIDIR Focus, page 69, for details). An executive summary will be published in all official UN languages in advance of the 2005 Biennial Meeting. The project partners are exploring the possibility of continuing and further expanding the assistance project.

On 24 November, the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva, Mr. Sergei Ordzhonikidze, and UNIDIR Director Dr Patricia Lewis hosted a high-level discussion with Mrs. Suzanne Mubarak, First Lady of the Arab Republic of Egypt and President of the NGO Women's International Peace Movement. This meeting followed a three-day conference hosted by the Women's International Peace Movement entitled "Women Defending Peace". Mrs. Mubarak presented an overview of that conference, and invited discussion on the contributions that UN agencies and research institutes could make towards supporting the role of women in peace-making and security building.

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