

CHAPTER 3

DECONSTRUCTING DISARMAMENT: THE CHALLENGE OF MAKING THE DISARMAMENT AND ARMS CONTROL MACHINERY RESPONSIVE TO THE HUMANITARIAN IMPERATIVE

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INTRODUCTION²

This paper outlines how existing disarmament and arms control structures and procedures enable and constrain the international community in its efforts to meet common security challenges. It points to how these security challenges are beginning to be defined in a different way—with a much stronger focus on what this paper will call the “humanitarian imperative”—and the problems that this poses for the standard operating procedures of disarmament and arms control inherited from the Cold War era. The paper takes as its starting point a revolutionary and very controversial idea from philosophy—Derrida’s concept of deconstructionism—and applies it to a preliminary examination of the practice of disarmament and arms control. It argues that the structures, procedures and institutions that the international community employs to address common security challenges matter for two reasons. First, they influence whether or not multilateral agreements are reached. Secondly, they influence the effectiveness of these agreements.

DERRIDA AND DECONSTRUCTIONISM

The Algerian-born French philosopher, Jacques Derrida, died on 9 October 2004 at the age of 74. He was one of the most celebrated, controversial and difficult philosophers of the late twentieth century. He founded the school of thought known as “deconstructionism”, whose core

argument is essentially that it is impossible for the human will to be expressed accurately because of the constraints imposed upon us by the means we have of expressing it—language, of course, being one of the principal means. In other words, using the analogy of a film projector, it is impossible for human beings to project their will accurately because a distortion occurs when it is passed through the lens of language. If this idea is true, then it follows that the human will cannot be known with any certainty because we simply do not have adequate means to make it known.

Derrida spent his life examining—or “deconstructing”—written texts in a search for hidden, alternative meanings.³ But his approach also spread to other areas of the arts and social sciences, including linguistics, anthropology and political science. The deconstructionist idea even led some architects to abandon the straight-edge, right-angle strictures of traditional architecture in order to express themselves through more amorphously shaped spaces. A striking example of the deconstructionist idea applied to architecture is the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, designed by Frank Gehry.

While deconstructionist thought has been applied to the study of political science and international relations theory through the development of “post-structuralist” (or “critical”) schools of thought, it has not, at least to my knowledge, been applied directly to the realm of disarmament and arms control practice. So, in the spirit of an explorer gingerly stepping into uncharted territory this paper attempts, in a very preliminary manner, to offer some thoughts on why Derrida’s idea may be relevant to thinking about problems in multilateral disarmament diplomacy.

APPLYING DERRIDA TO DISARMAMENT

A simple translation of Derrida’s idea into the language of disarmament and arms control could read as follows:

It can be difficult for states to arrive at cooperative solutions to new security challenges because of the constraints imposed upon them by the structure of traditional disarmament diplomacy.

Before pursuing this idea further, it is first necessary to make some general observations about the role of “political will” and of the individual negotiator in disarmament diplomacy today.

THE ROLE OF POLITICAL WILL

Derrida’s idea assumes that a person possesses a “will” that they would like to express. While this assumption may work at the level of the individual, it certainly does not work at the level of the international community, where it is not always the case that the “political will” exists to deal cooperatively with common security challenges.⁴

This is an important distinction. But it does not necessarily lead to the commonly-reached conclusion that if the political will to deal with a specific threat to international peace and security does not exist, then it does not really matter what kind of machinery is in place for dealing with it. This conclusion is misleading because it only takes into consideration the role that the disarmament machinery plays in allowing an existing political will to express itself. It ignores the potential role that this machinery could play, if properly designed and maintained, in actually helping to generate political will.

Political will does not just either “exist” or “not exist”. It is created; usually in a painstaking manner and over a long period of time, and usually as a result of the interaction among an array of actors including governments, international organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the mass media, and global public opinion. What the international community needs, in essence, is a well-tuned and oiled multilateral disarmament machine that is not only capable of expressing the will of the international community—through treaties or other agreements—where such a will exists, but is also capable of generating political will on specific issues where it does not yet exist. The international community needs this for the same reason that human beings need a well-developed and nuanced language not only to express—through writing or speaking—ideas that we already have, but also to help us formulate ideas at which we have not yet arrived.

THE ROLE OF THE INDIVIDUAL DISARMAMENT NEGOTIATOR

A second general observation concerns the role played in multilateral disarmament diplomacy by individual disarmament negotiators. It is often assumed that these individuals are passive agents of the states they represent, unthinkingly implementing policy flowing from their capitals, through them, into the negotiating process. In fact, disarmament negotiators play a significantly greater role than this (or, at least, have the potential to do so).

Governments differ a great deal with regard to the degree of leeway they allow their disarmament diplomats, with those from larger and more powerful countries (and, therefore, bureaucracies) usually enjoying less room for manoeuvre than those from smaller states. Nevertheless, there are a number of examples in the practice of disarmament and arms control, as well as in other areas of multilateral negotiation, of individual diplomats taking initiatives during a negotiating process that feed back to modify the policy coming out of their capitals.⁵ Recent advances in mobile telecommunications also allow for more immediate and regular contact between negotiators and capitals, thereby increasing the volume of information shared and, with it, the possibility of influencing policy.

Far from being passive messengers of national policy, then, individual disarmament diplomats have the potential to be active agents in the national policy-making process and thereby can also be active agents in defining the “will” of the international community.

“TRADITIONAL” VERSUS “NEW” APPROACHES TO DISARMAMENT AND ARMS CONTROL

The central argument of deconstructionism is that existing structures—be they in linguistics, archaeology or other areas—may allow us to achieve certain things while also constraining us in other important ways. This is certainly the case when it comes to states cooperating with one another to address challenges to international peace and security through disarmament and arms control. The existing disarmament machinery has certainly produced some very important treaties. The Conference on Disarmament (CD) and its precursors⁶ alone, for example, have generated the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (1968), the Bacteriological (Biological)

and Toxin Weapons Convention (1972), the Chemical Weapons Convention (1993), and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (1996).⁷ But while allowing us to achieve certain things, existing structures such as the CD may also be a constraining factor in addressing some of the peace and security challenges at the top of today's international agenda.

This is the case because the ways in which the international community defines and addresses common security challenges today differs in some important respects from the ways in which such challenges were defined and addressed during the Cold War era. This paper makes a distinction between these by calling one "traditional" and the other "new" approaches to multilateral security and disarmament. The following three differences between these approaches stand out in particular:⁸

STATE SECURITY VERSUS HUMAN SECURITY

The state is still the fundamental building block of the international political system in which we live. However, the authority of the state is being undermined more and more by an ever-increasing array of factors—including globalization, the mobility of capital, the ceding of sovereignty to supranational bodies, and the emergence of non-state actors as major players on the international stage.

The very concept of state "sovereignty" is also being redefined in a way reminiscent of how the seventeenth century philosopher, Thomas Hobbes, argued that the absolute power of the "sovereign" (the King) did not derive from God, but rather from the people.⁹ The echoes of this argument today assert that the sovereignty of the state is not absolute, but rather kept in existence by a state's ability to provide for the general welfare of its citizens. While the purpose of Hobbes' argument was to make the King more accountable to his subjects (while not discounting the need for a King), the argument today seeks to make the state more accountable to the international community for the way in which it treats its citizens (while not discounting the need for the state).

The continuing debate around the theory and practice of "humanitarian intervention" is just one manifestation of the way in which the concept of state sovereignty is being redefined. Another is the conclusion of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty that states have a "responsibility to protect" their citizens that,

if ignored, is transferred to the broader community of states.¹⁰ This idea has been endorsed by the United Nations Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges, and Change¹¹ and is likely to be further consolidated in the near future.

Similarly, while traditional approaches to arms control and disarmament tend to frame the issues in terms of threats to states, new approaches tend to be more concerned with the security and well-being of people living within states. This signals a shift in emphasis from state and military security to human and economic security. The result is a disarmament and arms control agenda that is more attuned to addressing the problem of arms and conflict in the developing world and less dominated by concerns about conventional or nuclear military confrontation in the developed world. In sum, new approaches put a stronger emphasis on the "humanitarian imperative" of disarmament and arms control.

Proof of this can be seen in recent efforts at multilateral arms control where governments are taking action to ban, regulate or clear up weapons that kill hundreds of thousands of civilians each year, predominantly in the developing world. Such weapons include anti-personnel and anti-vehicle mines, small arms and light weapons, and munitions that have been abandoned or which failed to function as intended (cumulatively referred to as explosive remnants of war).

EXCLUSIVE VERSUS INCLUSIVE NEGOTIATING PROCESSES

There are also marked differences between traditional and new approaches when it comes to the extent to which civil society groups are allowed to participate in disarmament and arms control processes. On the one hand, traditional approaches—characterized, for example, by the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty negotiations—have tended to be monopolized by states, with negotiations dominated by diplomats, military experts, and select groups of scientific and technical experts. Traditional approaches have also tended to lack transparency. Those participating in them have often held a virtual monopoly of both technical knowledge and the details of the negotiations themselves. Civil society groups, to the extent that they were involved at all, were typically viewed with suspicion and considered to be outsiders whose activities were to be monitored and, when necessary, curtailed.

New approaches, on the other hand, and especially those dealing with disarmament issues of particular humanitarian concern, tend to be more inclusive and more open to viewing civil society groups as the possessors and purveyors of expertise, field experience and energy potentially beneficial to multilateral negotiating processes. NGOs are now much more involved than before in the identification of problem issues, in setting the international agenda for addressing them and, in some cases at least, in helping the process along by providing expert input to multilateral negotiations. One well-known example of this is the prominent role played by NGOs during the 1990s in putting the issue of anti-personnel landmines on the international agenda and in helping negotiate a multilateral treaty to ban them. A less well-known example is the impressive leadership role played by NGOs from the late 1990s in pressuring governments to agree on a mechanism to curb the trade in so-called “conflict diamonds” that perpetuates violent conflict and fuels the demand for weapons in many parts of Africa.¹²

BUREAUCRATIC VERSUS FLEXIBLE APPROACHES

Traditional approaches to disarmament and arms control have tended to be bureaucratic, cumbersome and time-consuming. Negotiations on Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions in Europe during the Cold War era, for example, dragged on for over 15 years (1973-1989) without agreement. Initial negotiations to end nuclear testing began in 1958 but the ensuing Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty has not yet entered into force. Although it continues to meet regularly, the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva has been inactive for eight years.

New approaches, on the other hand, tend to put more emphasis on speed, innovation and flexibility. The successful conclusion of the 1997 Antipersonnel Mine Ban Convention, for example, was a quick and innovative response to disappointing progress on this issue within the framework of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. The United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects—although not a legally binding instrument—was agreed within six years of the first United Nations General Assembly resolution on the proliferation and misuse of these weapons.¹³ Likewise, the Kimberly Process—a global scheme to prevent the trade in conflict diamonds (and thus reduce conflict and the demand for weapons)—was agreed just four years after the issue

first appeared on the international agenda. Significantly, multilateral action on all of these issues—anti-personnel landmines, small arms and light weapons, and conflict diamonds—was spurred and supported by intensive awareness-raising and advocacy campaigns carried out by NGOs.

PRINCIPAL CONSTRAINTS ON EXISTING MULTILATERAL DISARMAMENT MACHINERY

On the one hand, therefore, the way in which the international community identifies and addresses security challenges is changing in quite a fundamental way, reflecting a greater emphasis on human security and humanitarian concerns. On the other hand, however, the machinery and standard operating procedures that the international community has at its disposal for dealing with these challenges date, to a large extent, from the more traditional Cold War era of arms control and disarmament. This disconnection between the issues being addressed and the means available to address them imposes some important constraints on multilateral efforts to respond to today's common security challenges. The following principal constraints of the existing disarmament machinery stand out in particular:

IDENTIFYING NEW AND EMERGING SECURITY CHALLENGES

Existing multilateral disarmament machinery does not include adequate means for states, civil society and experts from specialized international organizations together to identify new and emerging threats to international peace and security in its broadest sense. Such a mechanism could facilitate the early identification of emerging threats and the formulation of multilateral responses to them.

The United Nations Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters does fulfil this role to some degree, since it is composed of representatives of both governments and non-governmental bodies and interacts with civil society organizations in carrying out its work. The United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) also plays an important role by conducting research on new and emerging issues in security, disarmament and arms control. But more needs to be done to develop an inclusive mechanism for identifying common future challenges. The appointment by the United Nations Secretary-General in 2003 of a

High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change is evidence that such a need exists.

SEEING DISARMAMENT AS HUMANITARIAN ACTION

Although civil society participation in multilateral disarmament and arms control processes has increased in general terms over the last few decades, it has done so quite unevenly across different issue areas. Moreover, newer processes have tended to be more open to civil society participation than older ones, which have tended to stick to established rules of procedure that exclude, or at least severely limit, non-governmental influences.

The newer arms control processes in which civil society has become integrated—such as those on anti-personnel landmines, small arms and explosive remnants of war—also tend to put a stronger emphasis on the humanitarian dimension of the issue, and try to balance this against the military and state security concerns of many of the countries involved. Older approaches—such as the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty or the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention—only permit very limited roles for non-governmental input, and tend to avoid or underplay discussion of the humanitarian catastrophe that could be caused by the weapons systems with which they are dealing.

One reason for this difference, of course, is that the humanitarian consequences of landmines, small arms and explosive remnants of war are immediately apparent. The humanitarian consequences of nuclear or biological weapons, on the other hand—while clear to anyone who takes the time to think about it—do not appear daily on our television screens. Another important reason for this difference, however, is that civil society organizations tend to put the strongest emphasis on the humanitarian imperative, and where these organizations are not present in negotiating contexts, the humanitarian imperative tends to become overwhelmed by concerns about state and military security.

It is important, therefore, to continue to emphasize the humanitarian dimension of all aspects of disarmament and arms control. Organizations such as UNIDIR¹⁴ and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC),¹⁵ among others, are making important contributions to this effort but more needs to be done. In particular, opening up more traditional

disarmament and arms control processes to the humanitarian concerns of non-governmental bodies would be a step forward.

INFREQUENCY OF INTERACTION

Apart from the Conference on Disarmament—which is in session for more than 20 weeks each year (but which is currently deadlocked)—multilateral disarmament diplomacy on issues such as nuclear or biological weapons, for example, is characterized by brief bouts of intensive negotiation separated by long periods during which the multilateral process does not advance. This has a number of drawbacks. It means that the multilateral disarmament process proceeds in fits and starts—if it proceeds at all—and that negotiators have little opportunity in the long periods between formal negotiations to advance the process, even informally. It also means that negotiators have less opportunity to understand each other's negotiating positions, making it more difficult for them to find compromises and reach agreement.

This is not an argument for further increasing the workload of disarmament negotiators or asking them to engage in more negotiations than they already do. The multilateral disarmament calendar is already full to bursting and most diplomats in the Geneva context—especially those from smaller and developing countries—are also expected to cover a range of other issues outside the remit of disarmament and arms control. In many cases, asking them to do more work than they already do is simply not realistic. However it should be possible to provide disarmament diplomats with an informal yet structured multilateral space that they can use in the periods between formal negotiations in order to understand better one another's positions, to advance discussions and to test potential compromises. The work carried out by the Geneva Forum to support a range of disarmament and arms control processes is a good example of this approach.¹⁶

THE STIFLING INFLUENCE OF “PRECEDENT”

In multilateral diplomacy, the concept of precedent—relying on past practice to shape the structures for solving current problems—was designed to create stable operating procedures that would facilitate the negotiating process, allowing for steady progress to be made without the risk of negotiations coming off the rails because of some rash, untested innovation.

In the area of disarmament and arms control, precedent is especially important since states tend to be risk averse when it comes to their national security and, therefore, are wary of negotiation procedures that are radically different from those that have been employed in the past. The concept of precedent, therefore, is as indispensable a component of the disarmament and arms control machinery as it is of all legal systems.

However, the concept of precedent comprises both a conservative and a creative element. Like a ratchet, it has two functions; to allow forward movement (innovation) while preventing backsliding. Unfortunately, much of today's disarmament diplomacy overemphasizes the conservative element while underutilizing the creative element of precedent. As a result, the concept of precedent tends to constrain more than it enables multilateral disarmament negotiations and, on the whole, actually serves to stifle innovation. Although, thankfully, there are some notable exceptions, many disarmament diplomats have become too used to the idea that, "if it hasn't been done before, then we can't do it".

INADEQUATE PUBLIC AWARENESS

The International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) demonstrated the extent of the influence that can be brought to bear on multilateral disarmament processes by global public opinion. NGO coalitions that have more recently sprung up around the proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons, biological weapons and the use of cluster munitions are attempting to emulate the ICBL example of global awareness-raising in order to influence multilateral negotiating processes on these issues.

More generally, however, there has been a marked failure to sensitize global public opinion to the importance of some of the issues being dealt with in ongoing disarmament and arms control processes. There are of course other issues competing for the attention of the public. But when one considers some of the disarmament issues being dealt with today—the potential misuse of the ongoing revolution in biology and the lax storage conditions of significant amounts of fissile material, to take just two examples—then it is clear that new initiatives need to be undertaken to mobilize public interest.

There can be little doubt that a certain lack of transparency and weak civil society participation in some important areas of multilateral

disarmament, especially concerning weapons of mass destruction, contribute to public apathy on these issues. Whatever the full range of reasons may be, however, the result of this overall failure to sensitize global public opinion has been that disarmament and arms control negotiations have tended to take place in a vacuum, immune from the productivity-enhancing influence that watching eyes can exert.

INABILITY TO “GENERATE” POLITICAL WILL

All of the above constraints make it more difficult for the existing disarmament machinery to implement effectively the will of the international community where such a will exists. They also impede the generation of political will necessary to make progress on numerous difficult issues of disarmament and arms control.

CURRENT DISARMAMENT AND ARMS CONTROL PROCESSES

All of these constraints are visible to differing degrees in different areas of multilateral disarmament and arms control. The Conference on Disarmament is an example of a “traditional” disarmament mechanism with its origins in the Cold War era. Although the Conference (along with its predecessor institutions) has an impressive list of achievements to its name—including the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Chemical and Biological Weapons Conventions and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty—it has been deadlocked since 1996, unable to agree a programme of future work, except for a brief period at the end of 1998.

NGOs are excluded from the work of the CD, except for one presentation each year on International Women’s Day by the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, and the possibility for NGOs to observe plenary sessions. It is a promising sign, however, that the Conference decided in 2004 that, once it was able to get back to work on substantive issues, civil society would have more access to its deliberations.¹⁷ While this access will still be minimal compared with other disarmament processes, it does represent progress nonetheless. And it augurs well for a possible further opening up of the work of the CD in the future.

The negotiating processes surrounding the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, while being more open than the CD, are also somewhat insulated from civil society influences and thus are cast more in the mould of traditional disarmament processes. With the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and the United Nations Programme of Action on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons, however, a move towards a newer approach to arms control is detectable, in which NGOs and international organizations are considered more as useful partners rather than sometimes problematic outsiders.

Finally, there is the Antipersonnel Mine Ban Convention, which is to arms control what the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao is to architecture—an approach that transcends the constraints of traditional disarmament to create something new and never seen before. Moreover, like the Guggenheim in Bilbao, the Convention is an innovation that many people find very disconcerting to look at.

CONCLUSION

Derrida's insight into the difficulty of expressing the human will, owing to the constraints imposed on us by the means we have of expressing it, has relevance for disarmament and arms control. The structures, procedures and institutions that the international community uses to address common security challenges matter not only in determining whether or not multilateral agreements are reached, but also in determining the effectiveness of these agreements.

This paper has argued that the disarmament machinery does not just have to be a passive instrument that relies on the existence of political will to move forward. If optimized to overcome the constraints outlined above, this machinery could conceivably also contribute in a meaningful way to generating at least some of the political will necessary for addressing common security challenges.

Overall, the way in which threats to international peace and security are being defined is changing in a way that puts the humanitarian imperative closer to the centre of disarmament and arms control, where it belongs. This is largely a result of the ever more prominent role being played

by civil society. The existing disarmament and arms control machinery has demonstrated on a number of occasions that it is capable of adapting to and profiting from this change. Adaptation to date has, however, been rather slow and uneven. A good deal more needs to change in order for the international community to have at its disposal effective tools to identify and respond to the collective security threats of today and tomorrow.

Notes

- 1 Patrick McCarthy coordinates the Geneva Forum, a joint initiative of the Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO), UNIDIR, and the Programme for Strategic and International Security Studies (PSIS) of the Graduate Institute of International Studies in Geneva. The Forum works in support of a range of disarmament and arms control processes taking place in Geneva. This is a personal contribution and does not necessarily reflect the views of the Geneva Forum partner organizations.
- 2 This paper is based on a presentation to a UNIDIR seminar entitled "Some Alternative Approaches in Multilateral Decision-making: Disarmament as Humanitarian Action" that took place on 3 November 2004 at the Palais des Nations in Geneva. The author is grateful to participants in this seminar for having provided useful insights and criticisms on the ideas presented, and to John Borrie and Vanessa Martin Randin for providing detailed comments on a first draft of this paper. Any remaining errors or inconsistencies are the responsibility of the author.
- 3 Jacques Derrida wrote over a hundred books in his lifetime. For good insights into his thinking and his conceptualization of deconstruction, the following books by Derrida are recommended: J. Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974; *Writing and Difference*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978; *The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987. For an overview of his idea of deconstruction, see also J. D. Caputo, *Deconstruction in a Nutshell: A Conversation with Jacques Derrida*, New York: Fordham University Press, 1996.
- 4 By "political will", I mean the willingness of states to deal with a given problem in cooperation with other states and international actors. For an issue to be ripe for multilateral attention, a "critical mass of political

will” has first to be built up. For more on the concept of political will in connection with nuclear disarmament, see the “Reaching Critical Will” project website www.reachingcriticalwill.org.

- 5 Legal commentaries on negotiating processes offer detailed insights into the role played by individual diplomats on the negotiating floor. See, for example, B. Simma (ed.), *The Charter of the United Nations: A Commentary*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002; and S. Maslen, *Commentaries on Arms Control Treaties Volume I—The Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- 6 The Conference on Disarmament is the successor to the Ten-Nation Committee on Disarmament (1959-1960), the Eighteen-Nation Committee on Disarmament (1962-1969), the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament (1969-1978), and the Committee on Disarmament (1979-83). For an excellent overview of the history and achievements of the CD, see J. Goldblat, *Arms Control: The New Guide to Negotiations and Agreements*, 2nd edition), London: Sage Publications, 2002, pp. 14-17.
- 7 The dates given are when these instruments were opened for signature.
- 8 The author is indebted to Professor Neil Cooper of the University of Plymouth, United Kingdom, for sharing with him an as yet unpublished paper entitled “Arms Control, Disarmament and Asymmetrical Arms Limitation”, from which a number of ideas in this section are drawn.
- 9 T. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.
- 10 *The Responsibility to Protect, Report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty*, International Development Research Centre, Canada, 2001.
- 11 United Nations, *A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility*, 2004. See, in particular, Part I(II)C on “Sovereignty and Responsibility”.
- 12 The NGO Global Witness produced a seminal report on conflict diamonds in 1998—*A Rough Trade: The Role of Diamond Companies and Governments in the Angolan Conflict*. As a response to this and other civil society activity on the issue, the first meeting of Southern African diamond-producing states took place in Kimberly, South Africa, in 2000. In 2002, the Kimberly Process Certification Scheme was agreed. This is a joint government, international diamond industry and civil society initiative to stem the flow of conflict diamonds.

- ¹³ United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/RES/50/70(B).
- ¹⁴ See, for example, *Disarmament as Humanitarian Action*, Geneva: UNIDIR, 2001. On the occasion of its twentieth anniversary, UNIDIR published this short pamphlet to refocus attention on the importance of viewing all efforts at disarmament—be they in the areas of conventional weapons or weapons of mass destruction—as essentially being humanitarian in nature. In her foreword, UNIDIR Director, Patricia Lewis, points out that “one explanation put forward [for the lack of progress in disarmament] is that governments and civil society have lost sight of the disastrous humanitarian impact of the use of weapons”.
- ¹⁵ See, for example, *Biotechnology, Weapons and Humanity*, Geneva: ICRC, 2003 (www.scienceforhumanity.org). This ICRC initiative seeks to overcome the current inability of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention regime to keep pace with the revolution in the life sciences by appealing to governments and scientists to recognize and take action to prevent the potentially disastrous humanitarian consequences of the misuse of modern biotechnology.
- ¹⁶ For example, the Geneva Forum initiative entitled “The Geneva Process on Small Arms” contributes to the implementation of the 2001 United Nations *Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects* by engaging states, international organizations and NGOs in regular consultations to share information on how they are implementing the agreement and to identify cooperative implementation arrangements. See www.geneva-forum.org.
- ¹⁷ CD/WP.535 (24 August 2004), p. 6. This decision was taken by the CD during its 946th plenary meeting on 12 February 2004. It allows NGOs to (a) continue to observe formal plenary meetings of the CD, (b) receive official documents of plenary meetings upon request, (c) make written material available outside the CD chamber twice per year, and (d) address one informal plenary meeting per year once the CD has succeeded in adopting a programme of work.