International Gender Champions Disarmament Impact Group

The Impact Group seeks to promote dialogue, shared knowledge and the pursuit of concrete opportunities to advance gender-responsive action within disarmament processes.

The Impact Group is co-chaired by the Ambassadors of Canada, Ireland, Namibia and the Philippines, and the Director of UNIDIR.

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Gender & Disarmament Resource Pack

To contribute to the goal of achieving gender equality in multilateral disarmament fora, the International Gender Champions Disarmament Impact Group developed this resource pack. It includes basic information on gender equality and its relevance to arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament, as well as practical ideas that can support diplomats in applying a gender lens to their work.

The document is structured in **four parts:**

**PART 1**

**Why Gender and Disarmament?**

Part 1 presents key concepts and main approaches for integrating gender perspectives into arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament.

**PART 2**

**Progress to Date**

Part 2 highlights how gender perspectives have been applied to relevant arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament agreements and United Nations General Assembly resolutions.

**PART 3**

**Areas for Action**

Part 3 offers practical guidance on how to make multilateral meetings more inclusive and gender-responsive.

**PART 4**

**Further Resources**

Part 4 provides a non-exhaustive list of statements, working papers and studies addressing gender perspectives in arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament.
1. Why Gender & Disarmament?
The term gender refers to the roles, behaviors, activities, and attributes that a given society at a given time considers appropriate or as a ‘norm’ for men and women. Gender norms determine the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female, the relationships between women and men and girls and boys, and the relationships among women and among men. These attributes, opportunities and relationships are socially constructed and are learned through socialization, the process by which gender norms are developed, refined and learned through interaction with family, peers and other social agents. Gender norms are context- and time-specific, and changeable.

Gender norms determine what is expected, allowed and valued in a woman or a man in a given context. In most societies, gender norms have resulted in differences and thus, inequalities between women and men in terms of their socially assigned responsibilities, roles, access to and control over resources, and decision-making opportunities.

In arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament, there are a number of ways gender perspectives can be addressed. One of them involves applying a gender analysis (or ‘gender lens’); that is, to consider how the attributes, opportunities and relationships associated with being a women or man affect issues such as: exposure to risk; the likelihood of becoming a victim/survivor of violence; the ability to access medical attention in the aftermath of conflict; and the long-lasting biological and physiological impacts of weapons on individuals.

Gender perspectives have already informed multilateral arms control and disarmament frameworks to varying degrees, including under the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) and the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), and different United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) resolutions. The inclusion of gender-responsive provisions has shed light on the differential impacts of weapons on women, men, girls and boys, and enhanced the ability of the international community to redress gender inequality. Gender-sensitive disarmament measures are further addressed in Part 2.

Another approach focuses on promoting gender equality and improving women’s meaningful participation and agency in arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament fora. Women are underrepresented in international forums concerned with peace and security, and targeted actions to improve women’s participation are required.1 Practical suggestions to make multilateral meetings more inclusive and gender-responsive are presented in Part 3.

From a rights-based perspective, women have the right to participate in international security decision-making. The UN Secretary General has repeatedly expressed his commitment to ensure equal participation of women and men in all decision-making processes related to disarmament and international security, as well as in all panels, boards and expert groups relevant to the field of disarmament. These goals are stated in the UN Secretary General’s Agenda for Disarmament, launched in 2018. Moreover, this view is complementary to other processes supported by the United Nations such as the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, which seeks, inter alia, to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

From a rights-based perspective, women have the right to participate in international security decision making.
These two approaches are interrelated as greater participation alone is inefficient in reducing gender inequality unless women can meaningfully influence decision-making, and unless there is a general appreciation among multilateral practitioners for the ways in which the substantive issues they deal with are often gendered. This point is made in the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda, which underlines the essential role of women in conflict prevention, management and resolution, and highlights the roles that women can assume in those situations, recognizing women not only as recipients of aid or justice but also as agents, integral to peace, stability, and security.

ABOUT UNSCR 1325 AND THE WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY AGENDA

On 31 October 2000, the UN Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. UNSCR 1325 was a landmark resolution, as it was the first time that the Security Council explicitly acknowledged the different needs, experiences and vulnerabilities of women and girls in conflict-affected situations. Subsequently, the Security Council adopted other resolutions addressing and building upon those topics: 1820 (2008); 1888 (2009); 1889 (2009); 1960 (2010); 2106 (2013); 2122 (2013); 2242 (2015); 2467 (2019); 2493 (2019).

Together with the 9 subsequent WPS resolutions, UNSCR 1325 (2000) forms the basis for what is known as the WPS agenda. These resolutions seek to ensure women’s meaningful participation in all aspects of conflict resolution and peacebuilding processes; the prevention of and protection from all forms of violence against women and girls and any abrogation of their rights; and the consideration of the needs of women and girls in relief and recovery.

Arms control and disarmament are essential to achieving the over-arching goals of the WPS agenda. As such, further integration between arms control and disarmament on the one hand and the WPS agenda on the other should be pursued. Practical ways of doing so include: incorporation of arms control and disarmament measures into WPS National Action Plans; inclusion of gender considerations in national arms control strategies; sponsorship programmes to improve women’s participation in international negotiations; and provision of gender-sensitive assistance to victims/survivors of armed violence and conflict; among others. At the same time, in the field of disarmament and arms control, a sustained effort is required to ensure the meaningful participation of women in all its processes, and that the differentiated impacts of weapons are assessed and understood.

A sustained effort is required in disarmament and arms control to ensure the meaningful participation of women in all its processes.
2. Progress to Date
Efforts to incorporate gender perspectives in multilateral arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament frameworks are increasing. The Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) contains an obligation for States Parties to provide age- and gender-sensitive victim assistance, including medical care, rehabilitation and psychological support, and to ensure the social and economic inclusion of victims (Article 5).

Additionally, measures to strengthen the collection of sex- and age-disaggregated data were discussed by States Parties and included in the Draft Lausanne Action Plan by the President of the Second Review Conference.

While the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) does not include a gender-related clause in its text, the Oslo Action Plan, adopted by States Parties in 2019 to ensure implementation of the Convention, requires countries to mainstream gender considerations in mine action programming, including mine risk education and victim assistance. When reporting on these programmes, States Parties have to present data disaggregated by gender and age.

During the Fourth Review Conference of the APMBC, in 2019, States Parties decided to amend the working methods of the Convention’s Committees. Each of the five Committees will appoint a focal point to provide advice on gender mainstreaming and ensure that the diverse needs and experiences of people in affected communities are taken into account in the implementation of the Oslo Action Plan (2020-2024).

The gender clauses in the CCM and the Maputo Action Plan are critical for people affected by those weapons because they stipulate equal access to services and resources for men and women. The call to collect and report gender-disaggregated data can allow States to monitor progress towards gender equality.

The Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) contains a specific provision on gender-based violence (GBV) in its legal framework (Article 7). Under the ATT it is illegal to transfer weapons if there is a risk that the weapons will be used to commit or facilitate serious acts of GBV. In practice, this means that States Parties conducting risk assessment processes for the export and import of weapons have to take into account the legislative and normative factors around GBV in the recipient countries. This ATT provision has raised awareness about the link between GBV and the availability and the misuse of small arms.

In 2019, the Fifth Conference of States Parties to the ATT focused on the Treaty’s gender provisions and adopted a decision encouraging States Parties to take actions on gender and GBV in the ATT context. To increase understanding on the gendered impacts of armed violence, it was agreed that States Parties are encouraged to collect gender disaggregated data on victims of armed violence and conflict, and make this data publicly available. States Parties also decided that the ATT Secretariat should report on overall progress among delegations in achieving gender balance.

The UN Programme of Action to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects (UN POA SALW) recognizes the negative impact of the illicit trade in SALW on women. The Outcome Document of the 2018 Third Review Conference of the UN POA acknowledged that eradicating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons is critical in combating
gender-based violence. The document made strides in encouraging the full participation of women in decision-making and implementation of all processes related to the POA; in taking into account the differing impacts of the illicit trade of SALW on women, men, boys and girls; in encouraging gender mainstreaming in policies and programmes designed to combat the illicit trade in SALW; and in encouraging the collection of data disaggregated by gender.

Over the past five years, a discussion on the gendered impact of nuclear weapons has emerged during the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) review process. Different studies have underlined that ionizing radiation does not affect men and women equally. While the detonation of one or more nuclear weapons would cause massive death and injury to all, scientific studies show that women are more likely to experience the harmful health effects of ionizing radiation than men. Over the longer term, of those who are exposed to a nuclear explosion, women and girls have a far higher risk of developing cancer than men or boys.

The research has been highlighted by some States Parties and the gendered effects of nuclear weapons have been a topic of some national statements and working papers. The Chair’s factual summary from the 2018 Preparatory Committee (PrepCom) for the 2020 NPT Review Conference observed that States Parties noted the disproportionate impact of ionizing radiation on women, and that this issue should be factored into the discussions in the current review cycle.

In addition to gendered impacts, discussions have also highlighted the need to improve women’s participation in this forum. In 2018, the Chair’s factual summary also observed that “States parties endorsed the fundamental importance of promoting the equal, full and effective participation and leadership of both women and men in nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful use of nuclear energy.”

- Integrating gender perspectives in the implementation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT/CONF.2020/PC.III/WP.27)
- Improving gender equality in the Non-Proliferation Treaty review process (NPT/CONF.2020/PC.III/WP.25)
- Gender in the Non-Proliferation Treaty: recommendations for the 2020 Review Conference (NPT/CONF.2020/PC.III/WP.48)

Among the recommendations made by the 2019 Chair of the Preparatory Committee was that the 10th Review Conference should “endorse the fundamental importance of promoting the equal, full and effective participation and leadership of both women and men” in the nuclear field, as well as “recognize the disproportionate impact of ionizing radiation on women and girls.”

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) which entered into force on 22 January 2021 includes a clause mandating States Parties to provide age- and gender-sensitive assistance to individuals under its jurisdiction who are affected by the use or testing of nuclear weapons, including medical care, rehabilitation and psychological support, as well as provide for their social and economic inclusion (Article 6). In addition, the Treaty preamble notes that nuclear weapons have a disproportionate impact on women and girls, including as a result of ionizing radiation. It also recognizes the need for the “equal, full and effective participation of both women and men” in promoting peace and security, and the engagement of women in nuclear disarmament.
In 2019 and 2020, discussions on biological and chemical weapons featured gender considerations, as new research was published on potential sex-specific effects and gendered impacts of those weapons.\(^\text{10}\) Since then, there have been side events exploring the relevance of gender perspectives in the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), as well as in the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). These are welcome developments, given that sex-and gender-disaggregated data, as well as knowledge of gender perspectives, could improve preparedness in the event of a chemical or biological weapons attack and enhance the effectiveness of international assistance.

Recent discussions on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems, conducted under the auspices of a Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), have brought an important topic to the attention of the disarmament community; that of the potential for bias in algorithms. A number of States and civil society representatives have expressed concern that the delegation of decision-making to machines, facilitated by algorithms designed by humans, has the potential to perpetuate or amplify existing social biases, including gender bias. As States move forward with these debates, it will be important to take into account ethical considerations and to learn from current research on ensuring fairness in algorithms.

During the 2019 and 2020 meetings of the Open-ended Working Group (OEWG) on Developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security, a large number of delegations called attention to potential gendered impacts of ICT-incidents, as well as the global gender gap in access to and use of the internet. Papers submitted to the OEWG proposed that gender equality and the meaningful participation of women should be at the centre of international peace and security in cyberspace.\(^\text{11}\) New research exploring how gender norms shape specific activities related to cybersecurity was presented in side events and multiple civil society organizations highlighted the importance of gender mainstreaming in cyber policies.\(^\text{12}\)
UNGA First Committee resolutions have offered another means to acknowledge and address the gender equality and international security nexus. In 2020 for instance, the First Committee adopted important resolutions on arms control and disarmament that featured gender-related provisions: out of 72 First Committee resolutions or decisions adopted, 18 included gender perspectives.

To date, the emphasis in many First Committee resolutions has been on women’s equal participation, but a growing number of resolutions also consider the gendered impacts of specific weapons.

Many gender references take the form of preambular language rather than operational commitments in the resolutions. Selected examples of operational commitments are reproduced below:

**Ethical imperatives for a nuclear-weapon-free world (A/RES/75/73)**

OP3 (c): “Declares that greater attention must be given to the impact of a nuclear weapon detonation on women and the importance of their participation in discussions, decisions and actions on nuclear weapons;”

**The Arms Trade Treaty (A/RES/75/64)**

OP13: “Recalls the adoption of action-oriented decisions on gender and gender-based violence by the Fifth Conference of States Parties and the fact that States parties agreed to review progress on these two aspects on an ongoing basis, and in that respect encourages States parties and signatory States to ensure the full and equal participation of women and men in pursuing the object and purpose of the Treaty;”

**Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects (A/RES/75/85)**

OP14: “Underlines the vital role of the full and equal participation of women in decision-making and implementation of the Convention;”

It should be noted that every two years the General Assembly adopts a resolution specifically focused on promoting “equal opportunities for the representation of women in all decision-making processes with regard to matters related to disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control, in particular as it relates to the prevention and reduction of armed violence and armed conflict”. Known as Women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control, the resolution is led by Trinidad and Tobago and was first introduced in 2010.

Examples of resolutions containing gender language in the preamble are as follows:

- The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects (A/RES/75/241)
- Implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction (A/RES/75/52)
- Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction (A/RES/75/88)
- Reducing space threats through norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours (A/RES/75/36)
3. Areas for Action
Multilateral fora chairs and practitioners have different options available to them for addressing the gender dimensions of international security affairs. For example, they can:

- Adopt agenda item(s) that examine gender perspectives;
- Approve mandates for integrating gender perspectives into the substance of the delegates’ work;
- Include gender-responsive language in resolutions;
- Organize gender briefings related to the substance of their work; Participate in the activities of the International Gender Champions Disarmament Impact Group;
- Engage with the focal points of the Network of Women, Peace and Security; and Support side-events or hold informal meetings on gender on the margins of multilateral meetings.

FOSTERING AN INCLUSIVE INSTITUTIONAL CULTURE

The International Gender Champions launched the Gender-Responsive Assembly Toolkit in 2018, a comprehensive document with practical recommendations for all actors taking part in international meetings. The following points have been drawn from the Toolkit as suggestions for the presidencies and chairs of multilateral meetings, and for heads of delegations.

Before multilateral meetings

- Provide financial and capacity-building support to women delegates, where feasible.
- Include gender criteria in the sponsorship programme for delegations.
- During the review cycle of a given convention, ensure a gender-balanced bureau, featuring both women and men at the highest level.
- Ensure that women and men working with the presidency are equally represented in support functions, such as note-taking.
- Design a communication strategy that is gender-responsive, featuring gender issues in newsletters and other outreach communication documents.

During multilateral meetings

- Tone matters: demonstrate strong political will from the top by setting the tone early, raising the subject of gender, encouraging increased participation of women, as well as substantive gender analyses.
- Engage in dialogue with delegations that have no or few women to support them in redressing the situation.
- Institute gender-responsive, family-friendly arrangements, avoiding the ‘crowding out’ of women in informal discussions, and avoiding negotiations running over time. If this is not possible, as is sometimes the case in endgame diplomacy, adequate warning should be given of the likelihood ahead of time.
- Promote gender-expert speakers in interviews and media.
- Collect, track and publish sex-disaggregated data and statistics on gender balance in delegations, bodies and panels.
- Track participation of women speakers and make the data available. UNODA has begun to do this for the debates taking place at UNGA First Committee. A more systematic effort by the secretariats of different conventions would be welcome.
During multilateral meetings (continued)

- Institutionalize gender balance on panels and among participants by the setting of guidelines including a checklist for staff on how to achieve gender balance on panels (plan early and focus on expertise).

- Adopt resolutions that encourage higher participation of women. One good example is the biennial resolution on “Women, disarmament, nonproliferation, and arms control”, led by Trinidad and Tobago at the UNGA First Committee.

ENCOURAGING GENDER-RESPONSIVE COMMUNICATION

Whether chairing meetings, writing reports or speaking to the media, it is important to be aware of the ways in which language can either enforce or subvert gender inequalities. Below are some of the gender-responsive actions one can adopt in everyday communications.\textsuperscript{14}

Avoiding gender stereotypes

Profession has no gender. Therefore, avoid portraying certain jobs or roles as being more appropriate for one gender. Instead, portray men and women in diverse roles that challenge gender stereotypes.

For example, while it may seem like a compliment to say women are more cooperative and men are more competitive, these are still stereotypes and can have harmful results.

Ensuring fair visibility for men and women

Fair visibility means that communication does not perpetuate gender stereotypes and allows men and women to be on an equal footing. For example, a photo that presents men as scientists, doctors, engineers and policemen, and women as teachers, or nurses caring for victims, does not qualify as fair visibility. To ensure fair visibility, it is important to present a diversity of roles for both women and men.

Using gender responsive language

Language should be adapted to reflect inclusion. It is important to avoid using the terms ‘male’ and ‘female’ as they reduce people to their reproductive roles. A good practice to correct this is to use ‘man’ and ‘woman’, ‘boy’ and ‘girl,’ even when you need an adjective.

Generic nouns such as ‘mankind’, ‘forefathers’, and ‘motherly’ can be replaced with gender-neutral terms like ‘humankind’, ‘ancestors’, and ‘nurturing’.

‘Chairman’ or ‘Chairwoman’ can be replaced with ‘Chairperson’; instead of ‘Unmanned Aerial Vehicles’ use ‘Uncrewed Aerial Vehicles’.

Use singular ‘they’ instead of masculine pronouns to express neutrality.

Avoiding victimization

Avoid the ways in which women are often portrayed:

- as victims (rather than survivors) of gender-based violence;
- grouped with children, falsely portraying their needs and abilities;
- as unable to escape poverty and conflict, reducing their perceived agency; as passive beneficiaries, etc.
- A good practice would be to show men and women as active participants to development instead of merely passive beneficiaries.
Avoiding patronizing statements

Be mindful of cultural and socio-economic differences that can lead to patronizing statements. Some ways in which women are patronized are:

- ‘Women are less interested in issues of international security’ or
- ‘Women need to improve their self-esteem and decide to take on leadership positions’.

A corrective practice for this would be to portray women as agents for change, despite structural gender inequalities and in spite of their gender.
4. Further Resources
EXPERT RESOURCES

Connecting the Dots: Arms Control, Disarmament and the Women Peace and Security Agenda
Study by Henri Myrttinen, UNIDIR 2020.
https://unidir.org/publication/connecting-dots

First Committee Briefing Book 2020

Gender Approaches to Cybersecurity: Design, Defence and Response
Study by Katharine Millar, James Shires and Tatiana Tropina, UNIDIR 2021.
https://unidir.org/publication/gender-approaches-cybersecurity

Gender, Development, and Nuclear Weapons
Study by John Borrie et. al., UNIDIR, ILPI, 2016.

Gender and Chemical Weapons

Gender in Cyber Diplomacy
Factsheet by UNIDIR, December, 2019.
https://unidir.org/publication/fact-sheet-gender-cyber-diplomacy

Gender in the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention

Gender in the Arms Trade Treaty
Factsheet by the IGC Disarmament Impact Group and Control Arms, January 2019.
https://unidir.org/publication/fact-sheet-gender-att

How to use the Arms Trade Treaty to Address Gender-Based Violence: A Practical Guide for Risk Assessment
Control Arms, 2018.

Making Room for Improvement: Gender Dimensions of the Life-cycle Management of Ammunition
Study by Emile LeBrun, UNODA, and the Small Arms Survey (2020)
Missing Links: Understanding Sex- and Gender-Related Impacts of Chemical and Biological Weapons


Operational Guidance on Victim Assistance Responsive to Gender and Other Diversity Aspects


Preventing Gender-based Violence through Effective Arms Trade Treaty Implementation


Sex and Drone Strikes: Gender and identity in targeting and casualty analysis


Still Behind the Curve: gender balance in arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament diplomacy


The Value of Diversity in Multilateral Disarmament Work


Why Gender Matters in International Cyber Security

Integrating gender perspectives in the implementation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

Improving gender equality in the Non-Proliferation Treaty review process

Gender in the Non-Proliferation Treaty: recommendations for the 2020 Review Conference

Joint statement by civil society on gender and disarmament (2020)

Joint statement by civil society on gender and disarmament (2019)

Statement on gender and the disarmament machinery (2019)

Statement on gender and the disarmament machinery (2018)

Statement on gender and the disarmament machinery (2017)
References

1. R.H. Dalaqua et al. 2019. “Still Behind the Curve: Gender Balance in Arms Control, Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Diplomacy”, UNIDIR. Available at: https://www.unidir.org/publication/still-behind-the-curve


8. Idem.


14. These guidelines were proposed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in its 2018 publication “Let’s speak gender”.
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for multilateral practitioners