



General Assembly

Distr.: General
16 July 2021

Original: English

Seventy-sixth session

Item 103 of the provisional agenda*

Review of the implementation of the recommendations and decisions adopted by the General Assembly at its tenth special session

United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General hereby transmits to the General Assembly the report of the Director of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) on the activities of the Institute for the period from January to December 2020, the Institute's approved programme of work and financial plan for 2021 and the Institute's proposed programme of work and financial plan for 2022.

The Board of Trustees of UNIDIR reviewed the report and approved the programme of work and financial plans at the seventy-sixth session of the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters, held on 17 June 2021 in a virtual session.

The Board welcomed the report of the Director, which provided a thorough account of the Institute's activity in 2020. The Board commended UNIDIR for its performance in 2020, the year that marked the Institute's fortieth anniversary. In particular, the Board noted that despite the significant disruptions caused by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, UNIDIR had issued a record-breaking number of publications and events, with some 7,600 participants taking part in the Institute's activities. The Board also noted the continued improvement in the Institute's financial situation.

The Board welcomed General Assembly resolution [75/82](#) on UNIDIR, notably the Assembly's invitation to the Secretary-General to submit, in the context of the 2022 programme budget, a proposal for an increase in the subvention to the Institute. The Board reiterated its long-standing recommendation that the Institute's subvention be increased in proportion to its contemporary requirements and in line with the recommendations of the Secretary-General in his report of July 2018 ([A/73/284](#)).

Moving forward, Board members reiterated their appreciation of the Institute's efforts to engage broader and more diverse audiences globally, including the public and youth. These efforts should continue, and should include strengthened communication and education, training and capacity-building initiatives. In addition, Board members encouraged the Institute to consider developing foresight capacities, as well as research on the nexus between arms control and development issues.

* [A/76/150](#).



Finally, Board members reiterated the need for the Institute to strengthen its resource mobilization efforts in order to equip itself with the funding basis necessary to maintain and further expand its scope and impact.

Report of the Director of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research on the activities of the Institute for the period from January to December 2020, the approved programme of work and financial plan for 2021 and the proposed programme of work and financial plan for 2022

Summary

The present report covers the activities and financial status of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) for the period from January to December 2020, the Institute's approved programme of work and financial plan for 2021 and the Institute's proposed programme of work and financial plan for 2022. It was prepared in accordance with General Assembly resolution [39/148 H](#), in which the Assembly invited the Director of UNIDIR to report annually to it.

UNIDIR is an autonomous institution within the framework of the United Nations, established by the General Assembly for the purpose of undertaking independent research on disarmament, arms control and international security issues. For over 40 years, the Institute has provided evidence-based research and policy options to support Member States, United Nations entities, and expert, industry and civil society stakeholders in advancing practical measures that contribute to a more stable, secure and sustainable world. It is a key implementing partner of the initiative of the Secretary-General, *Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament*.

During 2020, the world witnessed heightened tensions between several nuclear-armed States, the further weaponization of outer space and new types of digital arms races, as well as violence and human suffering caused by poorly regulated or illicit small arms. At the same time, in a year that saw further increases in global military spending, multilateral action on key disarmament issues remained stymied, illustrating the gap between the promise and the practice of multilateral disarmament today. In such a year of growing global mistrust, arms control and disarmament remained urgent priorities on the international peace and security agenda.

UNIDIR plays a unique and vital role in multilateral disarmament. The Institute's current research agenda, endorsed by its Board of Trustees, is aimed at identifying pathways to reinvigorate multilateral arms control and disarmament in the face of a challenging international political and security environment. In 2020, the General Assembly, in its resolution [75/82](#) on UNIDIR, considered the continuing need for the international community to have access to independent and in-depth research on security issues and prospects for disarmament and non-proliferation, and recognized the importance, the timeliness and the high quality of the work of the Institute.

Demonstrating its resilience, in 2020, UNIDIR swiftly adapted to the global coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and made further enhancements to its operating model. As a result, UNIDIR publications increased from 42 in 2019 to an all-time high of 52 in 2020. The Institute also convened a record-breaking 48 events with over 7,500 participants, which represented a 50 per cent increase compared with the number of events held in 2019 and a nearly 400 per cent increase in participants. The Institute's innovative digital formats, as well as the fact that more than 25 of its reports were translated into other languages, helped the Institute further enhance the accessibility and impact of its research outputs worldwide.

UNIDIR undertook research on a broad range of disarmament issues. Its core programmes of work remained conventional arms, weapons of mass destruction and other strategic weapons, security and technology, and gender and disarmament, together with a special project on the process for a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction. New areas studied in 2020 included emerging biological threats and the risks and benefits of new technologies, as well as the interlinkages among security, arms control, conflict prevention and peacebuilding. This work is enabled by the voluntary support of a diverse group of partners. That support, together with the continued strengthening of the Institute's structure and its operating and financial models in recent years, allowed UNIDIR to further expand its policy-oriented research and outreach activities.

At the same time, given that UNIDIR depends almost entirely on voluntary contributions, the pandemic's lasting economic impact and its drastic effects on the voluntary funding environment present a challenge to the Institute. In an era of rapid transformation and global volatility, where there is a growing need for the international community to have access to independent, in-depth and forward-looking research on disarmament and global security issues, significant steps remain to establish a more stable and sustainable financial foundation for the Institute in order to support its mission of working towards a stable and more secure world.

I. Introduction

1. In 2020, the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) marked its fortieth anniversary amid an unprecedented global health crisis and in a time of great disruption. The year witnessed heightened tensions between several nuclear-armed States and new types of digital arms races across scientific, economic and military sectors, as well as violence and human suffering caused by poorly regulated or illicit small arms. All of this was exacerbated by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. In such a year of growing global mistrust, disarmament and arms control remained key priorities of the international peace and security agenda.

2. At the same time, multilateral action on key disarmament issues remained stymied, illustrating the gap between the promise and the practice of multilateral disarmament today. As the established arms control and disarmament architecture comes under increasing pressure, new arms races are filling the void. Unpredictability and uncertainty prevail in today's volatile global security environment, increasing the risk of escalatory dynamics and conflict. If anything, 2020 has shown that the need for a new vision for disarmament, such as that laid out in 2018 in the initiative of the Secretary-General, *Securing our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament*, has only grown in urgency and importance.

3. UNIDIR plays a unique and vital role in multilateral disarmament. The Institute's research, analysis and convening activities aim at supporting the international community in identifying pathways to reinvigorate multilateral arms control and disarmament in the face of a challenging international political and security environment. All of these activities are enabled by voluntary funding from Member States and other actors. Over the past three years, based on a multi-year research agenda and new interdisciplinary work programmes, UNIDIR has continuously expanded the scope, impact and scale of its research, outreach and capacity-building activities. It has built in-depth expertise and ensured sustained multi-stakeholder engagement on a diverse range of disarmament and security issues. What is more, UNIDIR traditionally provides sustained, often discreet, technical support to States and multilateral bodies while facilitating the inclusive, transparent dialogue among disarmament stakeholders, both State and non-State, that is essential to progress in formal settings. On the occasion of its fortieth anniversary, the General Assembly, in its resolution [75/82](#), recognized the importance, the timeliness and the high quality of the work of the Institute. At the same time, the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters, acting in its capacity as the Institute's Board of Trustees, "welcomed the efforts UNIDIR had made in 2019 to diversify its research and ensure its operational and financial sustainability". The Board also commended UNIDIR for its efforts over the previous 18 months to enhance its functions, noting that "the Institute was making a tangible contribution and bringing added value to Member States" ([A/75/283](#), para. 53).

4. If anything, the COVID-19 pandemic has further underscored the international community's growing need and demand for independent, evidence-based research, collaborative multi-stakeholder dialogues and innovative thinking that can support multilateral efforts in addressing some of world's most pressing global security challenges.

II. Programme of work

A. Performance and status of implementation of activities in 2020

1. Research agenda and programmes

5. In 2020, UNIDIR continued to implement the multi-year strategic research agenda endorsed by its Board of Trustees (see [A/74/247](#)), expanding the scope of its

activity across a range of diverse disarmament and global security issues. The agenda is aimed at providing proactive and responsive policy research on diverse disarmament issues to support Member States, United Nations entities, regional organizations and research and industry stakeholders in taking practical action to strengthen international peace and security and the governance of weapons of all types. It reflects the priorities set out in the Secretary-General's *Agenda for Disarmament*, in which UNIDIR is a key implementing partner. A core objective of the strategic research agenda is to contribute to efforts to integrate disarmament across the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to ensure that knowledge, ideas and dialogue on disarmament are accessible to a global audience, including young people and policymakers.

6. UNIDIR pursues four core programmes of work: (a) conventional arms; (b) weapons of mass destruction and other strategic weapons; (c) security and technology; and (d) gender and disarmament. As part of a special regional project, the Institute also explores past efforts and prospects for a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction. The Institute's programmes are designed as dynamic, multi-year scalable work streams that enable it to reflect the disarmament priorities of a diverse international community. They allow UNIDIR to deliver cutting-edge research in a dynamically evolving global security environment. Moreover, given their interdisciplinary and cross-cutting set-up, they allow exploration of the ramifications and broader linkages among disarmament, security, crisis prevention and sustainable development.

7. Throughout the year, the COVID-19 pandemic had an impact on the Institute's ability to implement its planned activities. In the words of the Board of Trustees, the Institute's "continued and, in some cases, enhanced service delivery during the period of lockdown demonstrated the Institute's increased capacity and resilience" (A/75/283, para. 59) as it responded and adapted to the new realities. For example, at the outset of the pandemic, UNIDIR swiftly shifted to online modes of working, established a risk assessment framework to guide its activities, and reached out to donors to mitigate implementation and financial challenges. In the face of restrictions on travel and events, UNIDIR scaled up its online offerings and virtual modes of multi-stakeholder engagement, and it continued and in some instances enhanced service delivery and boosted its research outputs. As a result, the number of publications increased from 42 in 2019 to an all-time high of 52 in 2020 (see annex I). Innovative digital formats, as well as the fact that more than 25 of its reports were translated into other languages, helped UNIDIR further enhance the accessibility and impact of its research outputs worldwide. Key research activities and policy impacts in 2020 are set out in detail below for each of the five main programmatic areas.

Conventional arms

8. Patterns of armed violence and conflict are evolving, as are the methods of illicit proliferation and misuse of conventional arms. The Institute's conventional arms programme engages with States, the United Nations and the international security expert community to prevent the uncontrolled proliferation and misuse of conventional weapons. It does this by analysing the links between conventional arms control on the one hand and conflict prevention, peace and development on the other. In 2020, the programme pursued three research priorities which aimed at: (a) strengthening policy and practice on weapon and ammunition management; (b) integrating conventional arms control into conflict prevention and peacemaking; and (c) exploring how arms control tools can help prevent and mitigate the impact of the urbanization of violence. A continuous feature of the programme is its applied field and country-level research, which contributes to national, regional and United

Nations operations and initiatives, as well as its provision of advisory support to the work of multilateral disarmament bodies.

9. Weapons and ammunition management plays a key role in conflict prevention, security transition and counter-terrorism strategies. In 2020, the programme continued its in-country advisory support to the Federal Government of Somalia in its efforts to develop a national strategy for weapons and ammunition management. The Institute's improvised explosive device self-assessment tool, which was developed in response to a request by the General Assembly in its resolution 73/67, is designed to help States evaluate their capabilities to prevent and mitigate improvised explosive devices. It was used by national and international experts to review counter-improvised explosive device strategies in Somalia, Spain and Yemen. The programme also produced a handbook to support the capacity of national authorities in documenting and profiling illicit ammunition.

10. As part of a strategic research partnership with the Stimson Center, Conflict Armament Research and the Small Arms Survey, two key UNIDIR publications promoted knowledge of ways in which States can better identify, monitor and mitigate diversion risks within the framework of the Arms Trade Treaty. In 2021, the research partnership will conduct a series of case studies to identify ways to strengthen shared understanding among States parties to the Treaty of the impact of the Arms Trade Treaty in addressing risks of diversion in arms transfers.

11. UNIDIR provides enhanced knowledge and expertise on practical ways in which conventional arms control can be better integrated into conflict prevention and peacemaking. In 2020, the programme produced a featured article in support of the Secretary-General's appeal for a global ceasefire. It also convened a series of virtual community-of-practice workshops on ways to enhance the integration of conventional arms control across the United Nations system. In 2021, the programme will produce a series of thematic papers focusing on practical ways to better integrate arms-related risks into the conflict analysis frameworks of the United Nations.

12. Exploring ways to adapt arms control to new environments, focusing specifically on mitigating and preventing civilian harm in urban settings, is another core area of research pursued by the Institute. In 2020, this work took on new urgency in the light of the combined humanitarian impact of armed conflicts and the COVID-19 pandemic. Key activities in 2020 included a regional military-to-military dialogue on explosive weapons in populated areas in the context of multilateral and regional operations in East Africa. This generated a series of recommendations to reduce civilian harm, which were captured in a research brief released in the margins of the Security Council debate on the protection of civilians. In 2021, the programme will continue its work on ways and methods to better identify and measure the reverberating effects of explosive weapons in populated areas.

13. Following the devastating explosion in Beirut in August 2020, UNIDIR, in consultation with safety and security experts, produced a dedicated study on ways to better reduce the safety and security risks of explosive precursors. This underlined the Institute's ability to adapt to changing circumstances and provide expertise on sudden events.

Weapons of mass destruction and other strategic weapons

14. The Institute's weapons of mass destruction and other strategic weapons programme pursues research across five work streams: (a) identifying nuclear risk-reduction measures; (b) exploring new approaches to verification in nuclear disarmament; (c) strengthening compliance and enforcement of existing regimes; (d) improving space security; and (e) recrafting nuclear disarmament and strategic arms control. In the current climate of growing geopolitical tension, interest in the

programme's work was high throughout the year, with more than 8,600 downloads of relevant UNIDIR reports from over 70 countries.

15. Identifying ways to reduce the risk of the use of nuclear weapons is a core area of research at UNIDIR. In 2020, amid uncertainty about the fate of the 2010 Treaty between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (New START Treaty) and the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, the programme focused on concrete contextual analysis and targeted policy recommendations to reduce nuclear risks. The results were published in the Institute's major multi-author study, *Nuclear Risk Reduction: Closing Pathways to Use*, which received significant interest and positive feedback from Member States. The Institute's risk-reduction work was presented in diverse policy and academic settings, including at the Conference on Disarmament, the Working Party on Non-Proliferation of the Council of the European Union, the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Moreover, organizations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the Regional Forum of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations used the Institute's typology of nuclear risk.

16. Verifying nuclear disarmament is a key challenge for any future nuclear disarmament process. UNIDIR, building on its long-standing expertise in this area, has shifted its conceptual focus towards new approaches to overcoming practical challenges in complex verification settings. In 2020, the Institute's research culminated in an important study proposing an arrangement for a verified freeze on fissile material production on the Korean Peninsula. Concepts developed under this work stream have been taken up in a variety of multilateral settings, as well as by expert preparatory groups, and have resulted in follow-up policy briefs, presentations and citations in expert media.

17. Strengthening compliance with and enforcement of weapons of mass destruction-related regimes is another focus area of this programme. Between its initiation in mid-2019 and the end of 2020, this cross-cutting work stream had produced a series of nine reports covering compliance and enforcement in the nuclear, chemical and biological weapon regimes as well as on arms control arrangements between the Russian Federation and the United States. The reports were downloaded more than 1,800 times and received positive feedback from State representatives, including members of the First Committee of the General Assembly.

18. Amid the COVID-19 pandemic and in the run-up to the ninth Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction, UNIDIR scaled up its work on the biological weapons regime. It briefed States parties on issues related to advances in science and technology and the prospects for institutional strengthening of the Convention. In 2021, UNIDIR will produce and promote new thinking on forward-looking tools and approaches to enhance compliance and enforcement in the weapons of mass destruction regimes and related areas, such as the Secretary-General's Mechanism for Investigation of Alleged Use of Chemical and Biological Weapons.

19. Space security is another core area of inquiry and one where UNIDIR has long-standing expertise. As outer space is becoming increasingly congested, contested and competitive, research in this field is increasingly in demand. In 2020, the Institute's work and engagement made a significant contribution to the emergent discourse in the First Committee on ways to enhance space security. The Institute's event on space situational awareness and verification, co-organized with the Secure World Foundation, was attended by 280 participants. In 2021, UNIDIR will build awareness

and understanding of options for enhancing space security and further explore the interplay between the counter-space and missile technological domains.

20. As part of its work on the future of nuclear disarmament and strategic arms control, UNIDIR has initiated a dialogue on nuclear disarmament, nuclear deterrence and strategic arms control with a group of 40 senior experts from around the world. Over the course of 2020, the group identified means to overcome the current political polarization in nuclear diplomacy and refocus attention on shared incentives to revitalize efforts to reduce reliance on nuclear weapons in spite of the difficult strategic environment. In 2021, this group will develop practical recommendations for strategic arms control and nuclear disarmament in the lead-up to important upcoming events, including the Tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

Security and technology

21. The Institute's security and technology programme is designed to dynamically respond to the accelerating pace and scale of technological change, exploring its implications for international peace, security and development. In 2020, the programme pursued three work streams focusing on: (a) cyberstability; (b) the implications of artificial intelligence and autonomy in weapon systems and other military applications; and (c) the security implications, positive and negative, of recent and over-the-horizon innovations in science and technology. The Institute's support for the development and implementation of multilateral norms on responsible and safe policy and practice is a distinct feature of this programme.

22. Escalating cyberincidents in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic have once again brought digital vulnerabilities to the fore, underscoring the relevance and urgency of the Institute's work in the area of cyberstability. In 2020, the Institute updated its Cyber Policy Portal, a global confidence- and capacity-building tool aimed at improving the management of cybercrises. The Portal was visited by users from 206 States and territories and was extensively referenced and endorsed by several Member States in the context of the Open-ended Working Group on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security. UNIDIR also published a substantive report, *Supply Chain Security in the Cyber Age*, together with a supplementary technical compendium focusing on sector trends, current threats and multi-stakeholder responses. In addition, it organized a series of webinars and multi-stakeholder dialogues focusing on vulnerability disclosure, critical infrastructure protection and public-private cooperation in norm implementation. In 2021, UNIDIR will continue to support the operationalization of cybernorms through a combination of multi-stakeholder dialogues and research reports and will devote a series of research activities to the issue of the prevention and management of cyberconflicts.

23. Another major line of inquiry is on the implications of artificial intelligence and autonomy in weapon systems, other military applications and decision-making processes. In 2020, the Institute launched a new series of virtual regional tabletop exercises exploring the role of human control in decisions regarding the use of force. It published three major reports on the black box conundrum, swarm robotics (also available in French and Spanish) and modernizing arms control in relation to applications beyond artificial intelligence-enabled weapon systems. As in previous years, the Institute's work in the area of lethal autonomous weapon systems was widely referenced in Member States' statements during sessions of the Group of Governmental Experts on Emerging Technologies in the Area of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems. In 2021, UNIDIR will continue to support multilateral discussion on the security implications of artificial intelligence and autonomy through a series

of reports and events exploring the technical, military and legal or governance aspects of this technology.

24. The programme's third, future-oriented work stream explores the security dimensions, risks and benefits of innovations in sciences and technology. In 2020, all of the activities under this work stream focused on the theme of innovations in the life sciences and their implications for international security. Starting with a technology breakfast event that focused on nanomaterials, the theme was further explored through a research report on the most relevant technological advancements in the field of life sciences. In addition, this theme was the subject of one of the Institute's annual flagship events, the Innovations Dialogue, which gathered, in a virtual format, more than 20 speakers and 600 participants from around the world. In 2021, this work stream will focus on a selection of digital technologies under the theme of "digital instability".

Gender and disarmament

25. The Institute's programme on gender and disarmament seeks to assist policymakers and researchers in bridging gender and disarmament frameworks. Its two goals are to: (a) achieve gender equality in multilateral disarmament forums, in line with the goals set out in the *Agenda for Disarmament* (actions 36 and 37); and (b) support the incorporation of gender perspectives and analyses into arms control and disarmament processes. An important vehicle for the pursuit of those policy objectives is the International Gender Champions Disarmament Impact Group, co-chaired by Canada, Ireland, Namibia, the Philippines and UNIDIR, which promotes dialogue, shares knowledge and advances gender-responsive action in multilateral disarmament forums.

26. To promote gender equality and support women's participation in arms control and disarmament, the programme organized a regional workshop in Africa on gender perspectives in arms control and disarmament. National officials and experts from 15 African States attended the meeting in Uganda. The programme also engaged in similar activities carried out by relevant institutions in the disarmament field, such as the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, which in 2020 stepped up its efforts to advance gender equality by conducting a gender and diversity audit and by organizing a series of internal meetings as well as public discussions.

27. Marking the twentieth anniversary of Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) on women and peace and security, the programme launched the report *Connecting the Dots: Arms Control, Disarmament and the Women, Peace and Security Agenda*, which proposed an original approach to gender-responsive arms control and disarmament measures. In collaboration with several Member States, civil society organizations, the International Gender Champions Disarmament Impact Group and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the Institute also co-hosted a high-level side event ahead of the Security Council open debate on women and peace and security. In addition, the programme produced a series of short videos with subtitles in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish, highlighting best practices in gender-responsive arms control, which were viewed 5,800 times.

28. In 2020, the programme launched a pioneering research project to propose elements of possible gender approaches to cybersecurity. Findings were presented in a research report and discussed during a side event at the Informal Multi-stakeholder Cyber Dialogue series #LetsTalkCyber, co-organized by UNIDIR, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Canada and Chile. The programme also analysed the gendered impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and developed guidance

for gender-responsive public health policies that was disseminated and discussed during a webinar on gender, biological weapons and COVID-19.

29. In 2021, the programme will continue to advance women's participation and agency in arms control and disarmament by conducting new research about gender patterns in professions related to weapons and ammunition management. In addition, the programme will explore the applicability of gender analysis to security technology, such as cybersecurity and military systems supported by artificial intelligence. Together with the International Gender Champions Disarmament Impact Group, the programme will continue to organize gender briefing meetings tailored to address multilateral arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament processes.

Project on a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East

30. The Institute's project on a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East was formally launched at a side event at the First Committee in October 2019, with the support of the European Union. The project examines the historical chronology as well as perspectives and prospects for such a zone. Long-standing divisions on the issue, as well as rivalries and deep mistrust among States of the region, have further diminished policy research and attention on cooperation initiatives to reduce proliferation challenges. However, without such initiatives, the prospects for conflict and instability within the region and beyond will only grow.

31. The project pursues four overarching goals: (a) to produce a chronological narrative of efforts to establish a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East and identify lessons for future efforts; (b) to build analytical capacity to support new thinking on regional security issues and a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East; (c) to collate ideas and develop new proposals on how to move forward on the issue; and (d) to foster inclusive dialogue and solicit regional perspectives, including through engaging relevant officials and experts in a series of workshops and fact-finding dialogues in States of the Middle East.

32. In 2020, the project launched an online document depository containing more than 400 key documents, several of which were published for the first time. The repository serves as a publicly accessible knowledge hub for the development to date of the process for a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. In 2021, these documents will be linked to an interactive online timeline mapping key milestones in the history of the zone initiative. The timeline will be available in Arabic, English, Hebrew and Persian.

33. Regional dialogue is a central component of this project. In 2020, the project held four events, which attracted more than 500 participants, indicating a high level of interest from within the region and beyond. Project staff participated in and contributed to more than 11 events and regularly briefed and consulted with States of the region and relevant entities of the United Nations system entities, including the Biological Weapons Convention Implementation Support Unit and the International Atomic Energy Agency. To consider the way the zone issue can be addressed during the Tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the project published in April 2020 a conference report on the pathways forward for a process to achieve a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. A project paper on the ways and means by which nuclear-weapon-free zones contribute to regional peace, stability and other political objectives was presented at a workshop organized by the Office for Disarmament Affairs that included more than 80 participants from the Middle East. Throughout the year the project conducted interviews with more than 50 officials and experts from the region, the three depositary States of the Treaty, the United Nations and the European Union to outline the themes, issues and debates underlying discussions of a zone free of

weapons of mass destruction in the region. In 2021, the project will work to identify key issues, opportunities, obstacles and ideas of relevance to the consideration of the establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East and in support of efforts to enhance regional security cooperation. The project will publish a policy paper on nuclear verification in a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction, an essay collection on lessons learned from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action for the Middle East zone process and an edited collection of essays on regional perspectives, drivers and objectives for the zone.

2. Knowledge and advisory support

34. Knowledge and advisory support lie at the heart of the Institute's mission. Throughout 2020, demand for the Institute's technical analysis, expertise and knowledge support continued to grow. The Institute actively supported the United Nations disarmament machinery and regularly engaged multiple United Nations partners and regional organizations. UNIDIR staff continued to provide expertise and support to the Conference on Disarmament at the request of the respective presidents. Under the presidency of Argentina, UNIDIR delivered a presentation on women's participation and gender perspectives in disarmament. On that occasion, the Argentine Presidency issued a "non-paper" with ideas to improve gender balance in the Conference on Disarmament. UNIDIR organized 11 side events at the seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly. These provided insights and ideas on issues on the agenda of the First Committee, including on nuclear risk reduction and technological opportunities to enhance compliance with weapons of mass destruction treaties. Together with the International Gender Champions Disarmament Impact Group, UNIDIR worked to promote gender perspectives in the First Committee.

35. In 2020, UNIDIR provided substantive input and support to the newly established Group of Governmental Experts on problems arising from the accumulation of conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus. It also continued to support the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. UNIDIR continued to provide technical support to the parallel processes established by the General Assembly: the Open-Ended Working Group on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security (see resolution [73/27](#)) and the Group of Governmental Experts on Advancing Responsible State Behaviour in Cyberspace in the Context of International Security (see resolution [73/266](#)). UNIDIR, in close cooperation with the Office for Disarmament Affairs, advised the two Chairs, produced background papers, offered briefings, synthesized inputs from national delegations and produced multiple iterations of the draft negotiation texts. In the case of autonomous weapon systems, 2020 was characterized by limited opportunities for formal discussions in the context of the Group of Governmental Experts on Emerging Technologies in the Area of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems. The work of the Institute on these issues was of key importance to maintaining momentum and interest in the topics. The provision of United Nations regular budget resources for groups of governmental experts consultancies is the only source of dedicated financial support for such knowledge and advisory services.

36. The Institute provided expert briefings, technical assistance and substantive background knowledge and research on a diverse range of disarmament, arms control and security issues, including on the threats and benefits of digital technologies and transformations; women and peace and security; weapons of mass destruction; outer space; the mitigation of civilian harm caused by explosive weapons; and the various linkages between arms control and wider United Nations initiatives in the areas of peace, security, human rights and sustainable development. In doing so, the Institute

continued to expand its network and to explore collaborative initiatives and opportunities with United Nations partners such as the Department of Peace Operations, the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the United Nations Development Programme, UN-Women, the Biological Weapons Convention Implementation Support Unit, the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate and the World Health Organization.

37. In partnership with the African Union, UNIDIR convened a lessons-learned seminar on ways to strengthen the policy and practice of weapons and ammunition management in Africa in the context of the African Union initiative “Silencing the Guns by 2020”. This event led to the publication of 10 country insight reports on African States and led the Commission of the Economic Community of West African States and the African Union to utilize national weapons and ammunition management baseline assessments as a practical tool in support of their efforts to address illicit small arms and light weapons. Furthermore, at the request of the Chairperson of the Forum for Security Cooperation of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), UNIDIR briefed the second Biennial Meeting to Assess the Implementation of the OSCE Documents on Small Arms and Light Weapons and Stockpiles of Conventional Ammunition.

38. In 2020, the General Assembly underlined “the contribution that the Institute makes and should continue to make in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation education in all regions of the world” (see resolution 75/82). The Institute’s annual disarmament orientation course for newly arrived diplomats in Geneva, designed and jointly presented by UNIDIR and the Geneva branch of the Office for Disarmament Affairs, was delivered to 41 delegates from around the world in an innovative virtual format as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The course consisted of six thematic online modules, each combining introductory videos and 90-minute interactive online videoconferences that involved a diverse range of experts and representatives from various backgrounds. As in previous years, the course received positive feedback from participating diplomats and permanent missions. It will be repeated annually, subject to funding. UNIDIR staff continued to lecture at and participate in a wide range of training events around the world and provided regular briefings to visiting scholars, government officials and student groups in Geneva. The virtual nature of these events enhanced the Institute’s global impact. For example, UNIDIR staff contributed to lectures of the online courses of the Geneva Centre for Security Policy on leadership in international security and on building capacities for effective implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty; they participated in a senior leaders tabletop exercise on catastrophic biological risks organized by the Nuclear Threat Initiative at the Munich Security Conference; and they joined a virtual conversation hosted by the Matías Romero Institute in Mexico City.

3. Dialogue activities

39. The Institute’s status as an autonomous institution within the United Nations framework allows it to exercise a unique convening function. The Institute serves as a platform for inclusive multi-stakeholder dialogues and as a hub for the exchange of knowledge and ideas. Its events bring together State representatives, civil society and industry representatives, as well as experts and researchers from various disciplinary and geographical backgrounds, to discuss a wide and diverse range of disarmament and global security issues.

40. In 2020, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Institute successfully piloted innovative approaches to the organization and delivery of online multi-stakeholder events and stepped up its repertoire of virtual interactive and practice-

oriented formats. As a result, in 2020 the Institute convened a record-breaking 48 events with more than 7,500 participants; this was a 50 per cent increase over the number of events held in 2019 and a nearly 400 per cent increase in participants. The Institute's events and activities included a new series of virtual regional tabletop exercises to explore the role of the human element in autonomous weapon systems; a side event to a meeting of the Group of Governmental Experts on Emerging Technologies in the Area of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems; the technology breakfast series; a future-oriented multi-stakeholder dialogue focusing on emerging technologies; a workshop on pathways forward for the process on a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East and the Tenth Review Conference of the Non-Proliferation Treaty; a round table on the relevance of lessons learned from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action in relation to the process of establishing a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction; and a regional workshop in Uganda on gender perspectives in arms control and disarmament, with participants from 15 African States. UNIDIR also convened a high-level bilateral arms control event on the New START Treaty and beyond, a webinar on nuclear risk scenarios and an orientation workshop on the Biological Weapons Convention. In 2021, subject to COVID-19-related travel and meeting restrictions, UNIDIR plans to gradually resume in-person activities and to continue the expansion of regional events and activities.

41. UNIDIR convenes three annual flagship events: the space security and cyberstability conferences and the Innovations Dialogue. The 2020 cyberstability conference explored the future of regular institutional dialogue. It was held for the first time in a hybrid format, bringing together more than 60 participants in person and over 250 participants online from around the world. The COVID-19 pandemic forced an indefinite postponement of a face-to-face space security conference. However, the Institute organized a successful series of four "Launch Pad" virtual seminars on topics related to space security and missiles. The Innovations Dialogue was inaugurated in 2019 following a request from the General Assembly (see resolution [73/32](#)). The 2020 Innovations Dialogue explored the risks and challenges of innovations in the life sciences in the context of international security and disarmament. It was held in a virtual format, with 600 participants from around the world.

42. To address the future of nuclear arms control and disarmament, in 2020, UNIDIR began work in a new format and launched the Disarmament, Deterrence and Strategic Arms Control Dialogue. Three interactive, online round tables were held as part of this innovative dialogue, bringing together 40 senior experts with diverse views from around the world in a cooperative dialogue to identify and pursue shared interests in transcending today's strategic confrontations. The dialogue aims at helping to recraft bilateral, multiparty and multilateral arms control processes, instruments and approaches.

4. The Institute

43. UNIDIR further improved and consolidated its funding structure and operating model, in line with the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General on the Institute ([A/73/284](#)). The General Assembly, in its resolution [75/82](#), welcomed the increased level of research and activity of the Institute and the increase in the number and range of research publications and their relevance for multilateral disarmament discussions, while reiterating its preoccupation over the unsustainable financing situation of the institutional operations budget of the Institute.

Staffing and operations

44. As a research institute, the ability of UNIDIR to attract and retain high-quality and diverse research expertise from around the world is key to its mission. In 2020,

UNIDIR continued to attract a diverse pool of high-quality researchers. Over the course of the year, the number of full-time personnel grew from 28 to 32, an increase of 14 per cent. UNIDIR must also be sufficiently agile to respond to evolving research needs in a dynamic global security environment. To this end, as previously reported (see [A/74/180](#) and [A/75/134](#)), in 2019, UNIDIR engaged the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) as a service provider with a view to offering more attractive and flexible consultant modalities through individual contractor agreements.

45. UNIDIR intends to re-establish the position of Deputy Director in 2021, given the Institute's current size and the increased scale of activities. This will be financed through savings arising from the abolishment of two posts at the P-5 level.

46. The Institute's newly initiated visiting researcher programme focuses on mid-career experts from around the world and aims at further expanding the Institute's diverse pool of researcher expertise. In 2020, the programme was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and visits had to be postponed until 2021. During the year, UNIDIR enhanced its non-resident fellowship programme to include eight experts, with experience on cybersecurity; space security; conventional arms; chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear weapons; violence reduction; gender and disarmament; and international disarmament law.

47. In 2020, UNIDIR launched a graduate professional programme that provides a modest stipend to enable young scholars to gain short-term, practical experience in a multilateral policy environment. During the year, UNIDIR benefited from the invaluable contributions of 17 graduate students.

48. In 2020, the Institute strengthened its budget, finance and grant-management processes, including through the establishment of a new Finance, Budget and Administration Team consisting of one Finance and Budget Officer (Team Lead) at the P-4 level, one Finance and Budget Officer at the P-3 level and one Associate Administrative Officer at the P-2 level. The Institute also strengthened its annual budget-planning processes, quarterly budget reviews, monthly financial monitoring practices and income-projection methodology. In addition, the Institute streamlined its grant structure and enhanced its donor reporting.

49. The Institute's location at the Palais des Nations in Geneva enables it to interact regularly with disarmament processes and stakeholders and to maintain its active convening role. Under the Institute's new memorandum of understanding on costed administrative support services with the United Nations Office at Geneva, service provision costs, including rental expenses, totalled \$295,451. Moreover, following the recent request of the General Assembly on the matter of the Institute's rental expenses at the Palais des Nations (see resolution [75/82](#)), the United Nations Office at Geneva is now providing accommodation for the Institute at a reduced rate established to cover operational expenses only.

50. The agreement between UNIDIR and UNOPS provides for the timely issuance of contracts by UNOPS to UNIDIR through the recruitment processes of UNOPS, or following preselection by UNIDIR, and the administration of the issued contracts by UNOPS. As at 31 December 2020, the total expenditure under the arrangement, including personnel costs, was \$3,163,290, of which \$964,657 was delivered in 2019 and \$2,198,633 in 2020.

51. UNIDIR measures the efficiency and effectiveness of its arrangement with UNOPS on the basis of agreed timelines for the issuance of contracts and tickets for travel, while also considering the accuracy and responsiveness of contract administration. As at 31 December 2020, UNOPS had processed a total of 54

contracts and extensions and had supported 117 personnel with travel within agreed timelines.

Communications and outreach

52. The Institute's efforts to increase its visibility and engagement with global audiences through a redesigned website, innovative multimedia formats and a refined social media strategy further enhanced the Institute's global outreach and ensured continued global interaction throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020, website visits increased by 125 per cent to a total of 660,000 site views from people based in all Member States. With a 135 per cent increase in followers on Instagram and a 45 per cent increase on Twitter, the Institute further expanded its social media presence and engagement. Investments in online communications have enabled UNIDIR to better monitor the impact of its work, including by tracking engagement, site views, publication downloads and academic citations. That information complements the participant feedback and evaluations that the Institute now employs for events and which inform its donor reports.

53. In 2020, the 7,500 participants in the 48 events hosted by the Institute was nearly four times as many as in 2019. This increase reflects expanded audience reach owing to the transition to virtual events as a result of the pandemic. UNIDIR also released 75 videos, a 97 per cent increase from 2019. These included longer-form documentaries on such topics as swarm robotics, integrating arms control into the women and peace and security agenda, and weapon and ammunition management; shorter analysis pieces on autonomous weapon systems, cyberspace and outer space; substantive "warm-up" videos for the Institute's flagship conferences; and tailored films on the Institute's fortieth anniversary.

54. Easy access to the Institute's increasingly multilingual research outputs and expert analyses remains a priority for the Institute. Over 25 translations were issued in 2020, including in Arabic, French, Hebrew, Persian and Spanish. The Institute's 52 publications delved into subjects as varied as nuclear risk reduction, chemical and biological weapons, autonomous weapon systems, swarm robotics, the establishment of a weapons of mass destruction-free zone in the Middle East, explosive weapons in urban conflicts and gender issues related to cyberdiplomacy. With a continued focus on practical tools, the Institute published a counter-improvised explosive device self-assessment tool for Member States, a handbook to profile small arms ammunition in armed violence settings and a searchable document depository that collects and organizes the main documents related to the evolution of the initiative for a weapons of mass destruction-free zone in the Middle East, as well as short "explainers" on nanomaterials and on gender and chemical weapons.

55. In 2021, the Institute will continue to significantly boost engagement on its website and social media platforms. It will produce innovative publications, interactive tools and multimedia content, with a focus on more accessible content and translations. Outreach to media will be prioritized and the Institute's digital presence will aim at generating conversations with new audiences while identifying new supporters and partners for the Institute's research-oriented work.

Partnerships

56. In spite of the pandemic, UNIDIR continued to expand and strengthen its partnerships, including within the United Nations, with regional and national organizations and with the private sector. The Institute also continued to brief its donors on its work and financial situation through biannual donor forums, and it adopted guiding principles for its engagement with private sector and philanthropic partners. In addition, the Institute continued to collaborate with a wide range of

research institutes and scholars around the world on specific activities. For example, it held a workshop in Cairo in cooperation with the Egyptian Council for Foreign Affairs and signed a memorandum of understanding with the Secure World Foundation to formalize their long-standing partnership.

57. The Institute's strategic partnership with the Office for Disarmament Affairs was further enhanced and UNIDIR participated in United Nations inter-agency processes on mine action, improvised explosive devices, biological risks and biological weapons, small arms and light weapons, cyberissues, gender equality and good practices, and lessons learned from existing nuclear-weapon-free zones.

58. In 2021, UNIDIR intends to deepen its collaboration within the United Nations and with other multilateral partners while expanding its engagement with private sector and philanthropic organizations. In part, this will be facilitated by the small liaison presence to be established in New York. The Institute will also strengthen its communication with the general public.

Resource mobilization

59. The number and diversity of Member State and private donors that contributed generous financial support to UNIDIR in 2020 is shown in annex III, table 2. Effective from the present report, UNIDIR is presenting donor contributions according to the year in which they were made, rather than the year in which the agreements were signed. This permits multi-year pledges signed in prior years to be reported in the year of implementation, thereby better aligning contributions with the Institute's multi-year research programmes. It also makes the comparison of the total resources available for the year with the total expenditure incurred for the implementation of planned activities more transparent and meaningful.

60. UNIDIR depends almost entirely on voluntary funding and continues to take proactive measures to secure the requisite funding to implement its programme of work, including through significant resource mobilization efforts at both the Institute and programme level. In 2020, although there was a slight reduction in the diversity of donors, UNIDIR received sizeable contributions from new donors. While UNIDIR has signed a number of multi-year funding agreements to cover operations until the end of 2021, in 2020 it did not sign any new multi-year agreements for programmatic activities. Multi-year funding is critical to the Institute's continued performance, as it enables investment in a sustained area of work and increases the potential for policy impact and attracting and retaining staff and expertise. It also enables UNIDIR to respond flexibly to developments in the international security environment and to explore new or emerging trends and themes in a timely manner.

61. UNIDIR continues to face challenges stemming from the large share of its contributions that are earmarked for specific purposes. In 2020, only 16 per cent of donor funds were unearmarked, allowing for their flexible use in institutional activities or other emerging research areas. In this respect, and understanding that UNIDIR relies almost entirely on voluntary funds, in 2020 the General Assembly appealed to all Member States to continue to make financial contributions to the Institute, if possible on a multi-annual basis, and strongly encouraged them to unearmark these contributions so as to contribute to the Institute's viability, independence and impartiality and the quality of its work over the long term (see resolution [75/82](#)).

62. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) recently recognized the Institute's support towards the economic development and welfare of developing countries. This made the Institute eligible for official development assistance, which will allow UNIDIR to mobilize development-related funding.

5. Resources and expenditures

63. As a trust fund of the United Nations, UNIDIR is financed through voluntary contributions and a small subvention from the regular budget of the United Nations towards the cost of the Director and staff.

64. With the generous support of 25 donors, total revenue for 2020 amounted to \$6,851,217. Actual revenue for the first quarter of 2021 is also shown in annex III, table 1. The difference between projected (A/75/134, annex IV) and actual voluntary contributions reflects the small number of higher-than-expected contributions and new donors. Approximately 84 per cent of total voluntary contributions received in 2020 were earmarked for specific programmes or activities. The subvention received from the United Nations regular budget was \$276,200 (see annex III, table 2). This constituted only 4 per cent of the Institute's total income in 2020.

65. In 2020, the General Assembly invited the Secretary-General to submit, in the context of the 2022 programme budget, a proposal for an increase in the subvention to the Institute (see resolution 75/82). The Institute's Board of Trustees also reiterated (A/75/283, para. 62) its long-standing recommendation that the Institute's subvention be increased in proportion to its contemporary requirements and in line with the recommendations of the Secretary-General in his report of July 2018 (see A/73/284).

66. The proposed regular budget resources for 2022 for the subvention for UNIDIR amount to \$645,600, an increase of \$364,900, as called for by General Assembly resolution 75/82. This increase will provide for one additional P-5 level position to assist the Director in all management and administrative functions; quarterly briefings to all regional groupings on research ideas on relevant disarmament topics; and three events in countries that are not members of OECD to promote knowledge, ideas and dialogue on disarmament and non-proliferation to a broader and more diverse community.

67. The Institute's total expenditure in 2020 was \$6,089,205 (see annex III, table 1). Actual expenses for the first quarter of 2021 are also shown. Total expenditure in 2020 was \$441,000 higher than the Institute's projections (A/75/134, annex IV). While travel and operating costs were lower than projected, total expenses were higher given new research initiatives, including publications and events. This included a related increase in personnel costs. Total expenditure in 2020 was, however, lower than total revenues.

68. Throughout the year, UNIDIR continued to closely monitor its financial situation, not least to ensure that expenditure did not outpace revenue but also in the light of the ongoing pandemic. This included a strengthened annual budgeting process, provision of an annual cost plan to the United Nations Office at Geneva, biannual financial briefings to its Board of Trustees and donor forum, quarterly executive budget reviews with the Director of UNIDIR, monthly programme budget reports to UNIDIR programme leads, weekly management meetings and strengthened systems of internal control, financial processes and capacities.

III. Programme of work and financial plan for 2021

69. The programme of work for 2021 was approved by the Board of Trustees at its meeting in June in 2020 (see A/75/283). It reflects the workplans of the Institute's research programmes, guided by three cross-cutting priorities: (a) strengthening multilateral disarmament processes, including with a view to addressing the implications of new technologies; (b) continued implementation of the Secretary-General's *Agenda for Disarmament*, with a focus on efforts to reduce the impact of arms-related violence on civilians; and (c) expanding the Institute's engagement in

different regions of the world, including through inclusive and interactive online formats. In support of these objectives, in 2021, UNIDIR will establish a small liaison presence at United Nations Headquarters in New York, consisting of one officer in the Professional and higher category. The new capacity will support Member States and other partners with knowledge and ideas, and will help to facilitate inclusive dialogue on arms control, disarmament and international security issues. In so doing, it will facilitate engagement with and reinforce linkages between UNIDIR-led disarmament research, events and other activities in Geneva and New York.

70. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the Institute's operations, travel and events, and this will continue for at least the remainder of 2021. The Institute's ability to convene informal multi-stakeholder dialogues and conduct applied research has also been affected. However, at the onset of the pandemic, the Institute quickly activated business continuity arrangements and initiated a quarterly risk assessment framework to enable the maintenance of research, publications, communications and administrative activities. The Institute has also remained in close contact with donor partners regarding the implementation and extension of agreements. In addition, it has successfully adopted new online approaches, including for research, events and outreach, facilitated by its strengthened communications capacity. UNIDIR has also taken steps to ensure the well-being of its personnel, including through effort to mitigate physical risks, increased attention and support to mental health and well-being, the application of flexible working arrangements and strengthened multilayered communication throughout the Institute. As noted by its Board of Trustees, the Institute's "continued and, in some cases, enhanced service delivery during the period of lockdown demonstrated the Institute's increased capacity and resilience" (A/75/283, para. 59).

71. Moving forward, some of the Institute's 2021 activities might require modification, postponement or cancellation should pandemic-related restrictions continue and should there be changes in the international disarmament calendar. To ensure sustained high-quality research outputs and results-oriented management, the Institute operates on the basis of a programme planning and review process that includes continuous programme development, proactive work planning and quarterly implementation reviews, as well as impact monitoring and reporting. New multi-year workplans will be formulated in 2021 in order to collaborate with potential donors for multi-year funding that covers the period from 2022 to 2025.

72. Revenue and expenses for 2021 and 2022 are based on an estimate of voluntary contributions and an assessment of the institutional costs required to implement the agreed work programme and planned activities in 2021 and 2022. The projections take into account established multi-year funding agreements for which disbursement is expected in 2021 and 2022, as well as discussions that were under way with donors in the first quarter of 2021. On that basis, the expenditure required to support the 2021 programme of work is projected to be \$6,819,104, as shown in annex IV.

73. While resource-mobilization efforts will continue over the course of 2021, including to broaden the Institute's donor base, the economic implications of the global COVID-19 pandemic for the financial resources of Member States and private foundations are already severe. As a result, UNIDIR anticipates a decline in revenue in 2021 and 2022. However, UNIDIR plans to draw on surpluses accumulated in prior years to sustain activities at the current level until the end of 2022, while also adjusting longer-term implementation in line with available resources. A request for an increase in the Institute's subvention from the regular budget, as noted above, is currently under review. The modest proposed increase is even more critical now, in the light of the pandemic's expected global economic and financial implications.

IV. Conclusion

74. COVID-19 has revealed major cracks and systemic fragilities in the world. It is a stark reminder of how closely interconnected today's global challenges and security dilemmas are. But responses to the pandemic have also shown that far-reaching transformations are possible when there are common goals, science-based targets and political will. The lessons of COVID-19 are clear and go far beyond the current pandemic: to deliver on the promise of a more secure world for people and the planet, a reinvigorated multilateral system, renewed commitments to international cooperation and strengthened bonds of trust is needed.

75. In few areas is this more evident than in the field of disarmament and arms control. In today's deteriorating security environment, tensions and mistrust are on the increase, which underscores the urgency of developing new means to restore confidence between States and achieve arms control and disarmament progress. These are the areas in which UNIDIR has concentrated its efforts. Historically, however, disarmament and arms control arrangements have often emerged from moments of crisis and great tension, and pathbreaking disarmament regimes have been achieved under conditions of strain.

76. The Institute's fortieth anniversary in 2020 presented an occasion to reflect on its achievements over four decades and to consider the various ways in which an autonomous research institute – through impartial, evidence-based ideas and inclusive, diverse and collaborative working methods – can make impactful contributions in support of States and the international community at large in working towards a stable and more secure world.

77. In 2020, the General Assembly, in its resolution on UNIDIR, considered the continuing need for the international community to have access to independent and in-depth research on security issues and prospects for disarmament and non-proliferation (see resolution [75/82](#)). If anything, this need and the appetite for new ideas has only grown in the wake of a global pandemic and unprecedented existential challenges. In recent years, UNIDIR has significantly scaled up its research activities and their impact, and the fact that research outputs were further increased during – and in spite of – the COVID-19 pandemic is testament to the Institute's increased resilience and performance. At the same time, the pandemic will drastically affect the environment for voluntary funding, on which UNIDIR depends almost entirely. Against this backdrop, significant steps remain to equip and enable UNIDIR to contribute sustainably to the renewal of a truly global system of collective security.

Annex I***Publications 2020****Conventional arms**

- Addressing Conventional Arms Risks and Impacts to Prevent Conflict and Build Peace: What More Should the United Nations Do?
- An Innovative Approach to United Nations Arms Embargoes
- Conventional Ammunition Management: Gap Analysis (*also available in French and Spanish*)
- Counter-IED Capability Maturity Model and Self-Assessment Tool (*also available in Arabic, French and Spanish*)
- Handbook to Profile Small Arms Ammunition in Armed Violence Settings
- Key Issues and Processes Pertinent to the Management of Conventional Ammunition: Report of the Second Thematic Seminar (*also available in French*)
- Key Issues and Processes Pertinent to the Management of Conventional Ammunition: Report of the Third Thematic Seminar (*also available in Spanish*)
- Opportunities to Improve Military Policy and Practice to Reduce Civilian Harm from Explosive Weapons in Urban Conflicts: An Options Paper (*also available in French*)
- Opportunities to Strengthen Military Policies and Practices to Reduce Civilian Harm from Explosive Weapons: Food-for-Thought Paper (*also available in French*)
- The Arms Trade Treaty: Measures to Prevent, Detect, Address and Eradicate the Diversion of Conventional Arms
- The Arms Trade Treaty: Obligations to Prevent the Diversion of Conventional Arms (*also available in Arabic and French*)
- The Beirut Port Explosion: Understanding Its Impact and How to Reduce Risks from Explosive Precursors
- Tracing Illicit Weapon Flows in Conflict and Security Transitions: A Case for Managing Recovered Weapons in Somalia
- Urban Conflict and Targeting: A Special Problem for Protection
- Weapons and Ammunition Management Country Insights Series, 10-paper series (*three papers also available in French*)
- Weapon and Ammunition Management in Africa: Online Meeting Summary (*also available in French*)

Gender and disarmament

- Connecting the Dots: Arms Control, Disarmament and the Women, Peace and Security Agenda (*also available in French and Spanish*)
- Factsheet: Gender and Chemical Weapons

* Annex I is being issued without formal editing and in the language of submission only. This list excludes commentary pieces and shorter analysis pieces available on the UNIDIR website at www.unidir.org.

- Gender and Disarmament Resource Pack (2020 edition)
- Gender Perspectives in Arms Control and Disarmament: Views from Africa (*also available in French*)

Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction

- Pathways Forward for the ME WMDFZ Process and 2020 NPT Review Conference: Conference Report (*also available in Arabic, Hebrew and Persian*)
- The Ways and Means in Which Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones Contribute to Regional Peace, Stability and Other Political Objectives

Security and technology

- Advances in Science and Technology in the Life Sciences
- Cyber Stability Conference: Exploring the Future of Institutional Dialogue, 2020 Conference Report
- Magnifying Nanomaterials
- Modernizing Arms Control: Exploring Responses to the Use of AI in Military Decision-Making
- Robotic Swarms: Technical and Operational Overview of the Next Generation of Autonomous Systems
- Supply Chain Security in the Cyber Age: Sector Trends, Current Threats and Multi-Stakeholder Responses
- Swarm Robotics: Technical and Operational Overview of the Next Generation of Autonomous Systems (*also available in French and Spanish*)
- The 2020 Innovations Dialogue: Life Sciences, International Security and Dialogue, Conference Report
- The Black Box, Unlocked: Predictability and Understandability in Military AI
- The Human Element in Decisions about the Use of Force (*also available in French and Spanish*)

UNIDIR at 40

- UNIDIR at 40 Anniversary Report
- UNIDIR at 40 Anniversary Timeline

Weapons of mass destruction and other strategic weapons

- A World Without the NPT Redux
- Alternative Approaches and Indicators for the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space (Space Dossier No. 5)
- Ballistic Missile Defence and Outer Space Security: A Strategic Interdependence (Space Dossier No. 6)
- Exploring the Future of WMD Compliance and Enforcement: Workshop Report
- Freeze and Verify: Ending Fissile Material Production on the Korean Peninsula
- IAEA Mechanisms to Ensure Compliance with NPT Safeguards (WMD Compliance & Enforcement Series No. 2)
- Is Past Prologue? Examining NPT Review Conference Commitments

- Nuclear Risk Reduction: Closing Pathways to Use
- On “Great Power Competition” (Nuclear Risk Reduction Policy Brief No. 1)
- Perceptions in the Euro-Atlantic (Nuclear Risk Reduction Policy Brief No. 3)
- Science and Technology for WMD Compliance Monitoring and Investigations (WMD Compliance & Enforcement Series No. 8)
- Strategic Technologies (Nuclear Risk Reduction Policy Brief No. 2)
- The 2020 NPT Review Conference: Prepare for Plan B
- The DPRK Nuclear Programme (Nuclear Risk Reduction Policy Brief No. 4)
- The Logic of Nuclear Deterrence: Assessments, Assumptions, Uncertainties and Failure Modes (UNIDIR Nuclear Dialogue Series No. 3)
- The Logic of Nuclear Disarmament (UNIDIR Nuclear Dialogue Series No. 2)
- The Role of International Organizations in WMD Compliance and Enforcement: Autonomy, Agency and Influence (WMD Compliance & Enforcement Series No. 9)
- The Strategic Context for Nuclear Disarmament, Deterrence and Strategic Arms Control Dialogue (UNIDIR Nuclear Dialogue Series No. 1)

Annex II

Explanatory note to financial annexes

All figures shown in annex III, with the exception of those for voluntary contributions, are based on the statement of financial performance of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) for the year 2020. The United Nations prepares financial statements in accordance with the International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS).

Under IPSAS, a voluntary contribution is recognized as revenue at the time its supporting legal agreement becomes binding. In most cases, this is upon signature by both parties. Starting from the present report, in the case of multi-year voluntary contributions that are receivable in multiple instalments, UNIDIR will show each instalment in the year in which it becomes available. The presentation by UNIDIR of voluntary contributions is fully reconciled with voluntary contributions as recorded under IPSAS; the differences are explained in table 2 of annex III.

Details regarding terms used in the financial statement are provided below and are drawn from information circular [ST/IC/2013/36](#). Text in italics indicates additional items used by UNIDIR.

Revenue

Voluntary contributions	Voluntary contributions, in cash and goods in kind Contributions from non-Member States <i>Refunds to donors</i>
Other transfers and allocations	Allocations from other funds <i>Subvention from the United Nations regular budget</i> <i>Allocations from United Nations common system entities</i>
Investment revenue	Investment revenue Coupons and gains Bank balance interest Realized market gain (loss) Unrealized market gain (loss) Net of investment expenses
Other/miscellaneous revenue	Revenue from rental of premises Foreign exchange gains Other miscellaneous income Gain on sale of property, plant and equipment, intangible assets Internal transfers of property, plant and equipment, intangible assets Tax equalization – staff assessment income

Expenses

Employee salaries, allowances and benefits	<p><i>Staff contracts administered by the United Nations Secretariat</i></p> <p>Staff salaries and wages, allowances, including taxes and education grant home leave, family visit, rest and recuperation and education grant travel</p> <p>Expenses for long-term and post-employment employee benefit liabilities, termination benefits, net actuarial gains (losses), contribution to the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund</p> <p>Actuarial pension contribution corrections (e.g. owing to changes in demographic factors)</p> <p>General temporary assistance compensation and allowances</p> <p>Travel on appointment</p>
<i>Other expert contracts and fees</i>	<p><i>Individual contractors and individual consultants administered by the United Nations Secretariat, and the United Nations Office for Project Services</i></p> <p><i>Travel for this category of expert personnel</i></p> <p><i>Non-military personnel compensation and allowances</i></p> <p><i>United Nations Volunteers</i></p> <p><i>Interpreters and translators (non-staff)</i></p> <p><i>Ad hoc experts</i></p>
Grants and other transfers	<p>Outright grants and other transfers to implementing agencies and partners and other entities (<i>United Nations Office for Project Services, United Nations Fund for International Partnerships, Central Emergency Response Fund, etc.</i>)</p> <p>Quick-impact projects</p>
Supplies and consumables	<p>Cost of inventory used</p> <p>Expenses for supplies</p>
Travel	<p>Travel of staff</p> <p>Travel of representatives (Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, meeting participants, delegates, etc.)</p>
Other operating expenses	<p>Rent, utilities</p> <p>Contracted services</p> <p>Doubtful debt expenses</p> <p>Net foreign exchange losses</p> <p>Maintenance expenses</p> <p>Insurance, etc.</p> <p>Recruitment expenses</p> <p>Training, travel on training and travel on transfer</p> <p>Expenses related to financing activities</p>

Bank charges

Credits to Member States for staff assessments

Loss on sale of property, plant and equipment, intangible assets

Foreign exchange losses

Annex III

Table 1
Actual revenue and expenses for 2020 and first quarter of 2021

(Thousands of United States dollars)

<i>Description</i>	<i>2020</i>	<i>First quarter 2021</i>
Revenue		
Voluntary contributions ^a	6 311	3 145
Other transfers and allocations	383	281
Investment revenue	108	(33)
Other revenue	49	0
Total revenue	6 851	3 393
Expenses		
Employee salaries, allowances and benefits ^b	2 028	441
Other expert contracts and fees ^c	2 673	342
Grants and other transfers	632	0
Supplies and consumables	1	0
Travel	117	(3)
Other operating expenses	185	26
Programme support expenses ^b	453	215
Total expenses	6 089	1 021
Surplus/(deficit) for the year^c	762	2 372

^a These figures include contributions pledged in prior years that were receivable during the period. They exclude contributions that were pledged in the period for future years.

^b Programme support costs generated from the use of extrabudgetary resources were used in part to cover operating services provided by the United Nations Office at Geneva.

Table 2
Voluntary contributions and other transfers and allocations for 2020

(United States dollars)

<i>Description</i>	<i>Amount</i>
A. Voluntary contributions	
Australia	33 201
China	20 000
European Union ^a	1 016 557
Finland ^b	223 710
France	195 842
Germany ^c	1 285 013
Ireland	391 937
Italy	85 185
Kazakhstan	5 000
Luxembourg	11 737
Mexico	10 000

<i>Description</i>	<i>Amount</i>
Netherlands ^d	517 647
New Zealand	82 009
Norway ^e	1 053 741
Republic of Korea	20 000
Russian Federation	100 000
Spain	71 100
Sweden	379 898
Switzerland ^f	206 500
Turkey	1 000
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	328 895
Microsoft Corporation	250 000
Fondation pour la recherche stratégique	21 716
Subtotal voluntary contributions	6 310 689
B. Other transfers and allocations	
Subvention from the United Nations regular budget	276 200
Office for Disarmament Affairs ^g	106 940
Subtotal other transfers and allocations	383 140
Total	6 693 829

^a Part of a conditional multi-year contribution from the European Union of \$3.2 million. Revenue is recognized during the course of the project as specific goods or services are provided in accordance with the terms of the agreement.

^b Includes \$110,011 pledged by Finland in 2019 for 2020.

^c Includes \$111,483 pledged by Germany in 2019 for 2020.

^d Comprises contributions of \$117,647 and \$400,000 pledged by the Netherlands in 2019 for 2020.

^e Includes part of a multi-year pledge made by Norway in 2018. It does not include a further \$226,321 pledged in 2020 for 2021 and 2022.

^f Includes \$100,000 pledged by Switzerland in 2019 for 2020. It does not include a further \$80,000 pledged in 2020 for 2021.

^g Earmarked funding for, inter alia, advisory services to support groups of governmental experts.

Annex IV

Projected revenue and expenses for 2021

(Thousands of United States dollars)

<i>Description</i>	<i>2021</i>
Revenue	
Voluntary contributions	5 659
Other transfers and allocations	381
Investment income	107
Other revenue	34
Total revenue	6 181
Expenses	
Direct expenditure	
Employee salaries, allowances and benefits	2 226
Other expert contracts and fees	2 505
Grants and other transfers	1 009
Supplies and consumables	1
Travel	208
Other operating expenses	139
Programme support costs	731
Total expenses	6 819
Surplus/(deficit) for the year	(638)

Annex V**Projected revenue and expenses for 2022**

(Thousands of United States dollars)

<i>Description</i>	<i>2022</i>
Revenue	
Voluntary contributions	5 393
Other transfers and allocations	381
Investment income	90
Other revenue	22
Total revenue	5 886
Expenses	
Direct expenditure	
Employee salaries, allowances and benefits	2 326
Other expert contracts and fees	2 352
Grants and other transfers	931
Supplies and consumables	1
Travel	300
Other operating expenses	141
Programme support costs	726
Total expenses	6 777
Surplus/(deficit) for the year	(891)