



Inter-Parliamentary Union
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Workshop

Parliamentary Leadership in Disarmament: Preventing and alleviating human suffering caused by weapon proliferation

*Monday, 14 October 2024, 14:30 – 16:00
Salle Genève (CCV, annex to the CICG)*

Background

The central concern of disarmament efforts is and should always be humans, either those impacted or those likely to be impacted by the use of weapons of any kind. Disarmament is fundamentally about people – protecting and increasing the well-being of the individuals and communities affected by the proliferation and use of weapons. The United Nations provides a global framework for arms control, trade regulation, the criminalization of illicit arms trade, stockpile management, destruction, and disarmament efforts related to weapons designed to kill. By adhering to these international instruments, States become part of a broader global effort to address the challenges posed by arms proliferation, not only within their own borders but around the world. The goal of universalizing any disarmament treaty hinges on the actions, support, and engagement of parliamentarians. They play a crucial role at every stage of a treaty's life cycle, including signature, ratification or accession, and implementation.

International humanitarian law (IHL) constitutes an essential part of disarmament efforts, as it sets rules that limit the effects of armed conflict. Notably, IHL governs the choice of the means and methods of warfare and prohibits or restricts the use of certain weapons. For instance, anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions have been prohibited by the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) and the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM), respectively, due to their indiscriminate effects on civilians. Similarly, small arms and light weapons (SALW) pose significant threats to human security, and international efforts such as the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) and the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons (UNPoA) are crucial in regulating their proliferation. The International Community has consistently called on parties to armed conflicts to avoid using explosive weapons in populated areas (EWIPA) – particularly those with wide-area effects like artillery, rockets, and large air-dropped bombs – as they pose severe humanitarian concerns due to their indiscriminate effects on civilians and essential services critical to their survival. Most recently, multilateral efforts to regulate the use of new technologies of warfare, such as autonomous weapon systems, cyber military capabilities and outer space weapons, have also been put forward in view of their potential and foreseeable humanitarian impact.

Parliamentarians have the power to implement these treaties and thus safeguard their constituents from the harm caused by the spread of weapons. This shifts the focus of the international disarmament framework from stockpiles to people. This approach is known as humanitarian disarmament – a people-centered strategy that prioritizes the prevention and alleviation of human suffering. Over the past two decades, humanitarian disarmament has emerged as a highly effective and well-established means of addressing the adverse impacts of arms. It tackles the direct suffering caused by weapons and the indirect consequences, such as the diversion of national budgets from essential services to military expenditures.

The concepts of human security and common security are integral to this approach. Human security focuses on protecting individuals from threats by addressing the root causes of insecurity; and common security emphasizes cooperation, reciprocity and multilateralism, stressing that no nation can achieve security alone, at the expense of another. These frameworks complement the more traditional concept of national security and provide parliamentarians with practical tools to prevent conflict by improving people's lives. By embracing these principles, disarmament efforts can promote a cooperative and comprehensive approach to global peace and stability.

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Objectives

In recognition of the pivotal role parliamentarians play in disarmament efforts, this workshop aims to:

- **Empower** participants with knowledge about the humanitarian disarmament framework and its significance, including the UN disarmament architecture and relevant IHL instruments
- **Equip** parliamentarians with the tools and information to support the universalization and implementation of disarmament instruments
- **Explore** strategies to make disarmament efforts people-centered, focusing on preventing human suffering and promoting regional and global peace, in line with the principles of Common Security and Human Security
- **Engage** parliamentarians in an active discussion with experts and other MPs

Format

The workshop will feature expert presentations combined with interactive audience participation to maximize engagement and facilitate open dialogue. The event will include concise presentations from a series of experts covering key topics such as the impact on civilians of anti-personnel mines, cluster munitions, small arms and light weapons. To enhance engagement, the workshop will incorporate real-time interactive sessions using live polling and feedback platforms accessible from participants' mobile devices. Throughout the event, MPs will be invited to:

- **Respond to live polls** that gauge opinions, test knowledge on disarmament topics, and highlight areas of consensus or divergence
- **Submit questions** to be addressed by the panelists during the Q&A session
- **Provide open-ended feedback**, allowing for the collection of a wide range of views and suggestions on humanitarian disarmament strategies

The use of interactive technologies will provide an inclusive platform for all participants to contribute, promoting transparency and facilitating immediate discussion based on the inputs received.

Expected Outcomes

The conclusions drawn from the workshop will:

- Serve as a foundational position for advocating for humanitarian disarmament initiatives within national parliaments and on international platforms
- Inform the development of a comprehensive strategy by the parliamentary community to enhance the role of parliamentarians in global disarmament efforts, particularly concerning small arms and light weapons, anti-personnel mines, cluster munitions, and adherence to IHL treaties
- Foster commitment for parliamentarians dedicated to advancing humanitarian disarmament and safeguarding human well-being
- Promote and disseminate key IPU publications such as the [International Humanitarian Law Handbook for Parliamentarians](#), [Assuring Our Common Future](#) and [Human Security and Common Security to Build Peace](#), to encourage parliamentarians to engage with approaches relating to humanitarian disarmament