



Inter-Parliamentary Union
For democracy. For everyone.



150th IPU Assembly

Tashkent, Uzbekistan (5–9 April 2025)

Workshop

Tackling weapons of mass destruction: A humanitarian perspective

Monday, 7 April 2025, 15:00–16:30

Concept note

Background

Weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) are a broad category that includes not only nuclear arms but also chemical, biological, radiological and explosive weapons. They pose an existential threat to global security, human life and the environment. Their catastrophic potential extends far beyond immediate destruction, causing long-term health crises, environmental devastation, economic instability and intergenerational harm. Addressing the challenges posed by WMDs is not only a matter of national and global security but also a moral and ethical imperative to protect civilians and uphold international humanitarian law (IHL).

Recognizing these risks, the United Nations and the international community have established a vast framework of treaties and conventions to prevent the proliferation and use of WMDs. In addition, since its adoption in 2004, United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540 has complemented these treaties and conventions by requiring all States, regardless of their treaty status, to approve and enforce measures to prevent non-State actors from acquiring WMDs and their means of delivery. However, these frameworks can only be effective if both national governments and parliaments actively engage in their implementation. Parliamentarians play a pivotal role in strengthening WMD prevention and disarmament, and in implementing IHL rules, by promoting and ratifying international legal instruments, enacting legislation and overseeing government compliance. The implementation of international treaties also implies parliaments allocating resources for the provision of structural and logistical means such as the equipment, trained personnel and verification tools necessary to control and prevent the proliferation of WMDs.

This workshop will take a humanitarian approach to WMDs, highlighting their devastating impact and exploring how parliaments can contribute to IHL implementation, non-proliferation, risk reduction and global security. As representatives of the people, parliamentarians have a responsibility to champion non-proliferation policies, ensure transparency in national security measures, and foster international trust through parliamentary diplomacy and civic engagement.

Given that gender equality is the Inter-Parliamentary Union's overarching theme for 2025, women's leadership in non-proliferation will also be one of the core themes of this discussion. Women have played an essential role in shaping global disarmament efforts, from negotiating international treaties to leading grassroots movements advocating for peace and security. Ensuring their active participation in decision-making spaces will enhance the effectiveness and inclusivity of WMD prevention efforts.

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Objectives and expected outcomes

The workshop will provide a platform for exchanging ideas, developing actionable strategies and reinforcing the critical role of parliaments in ensuring a safer and more secure world. Through interactive discussions and case studies, participants will gain insights into the following topics:

- The moral and ethical dimensions of WMD disarmament and non-proliferation
- Key IHL, disarmament and non-proliferation instruments and their national implementation
- Examples of effective parliamentary engagement in disarmament and oversight
- Strategies for public outreach, inter-parliamentary collaboration and advocacy

Participants will leave this workshop with greater understanding and awareness of the following:

- What risks and humanitarian consequences are associated with WMDs
- How parliaments can engage more effectively in WMD non-proliferation and disarmament initiatives
- How stakeholders can better collaborate to prevent the spread and use of WMDs