

DISARMAMENT EDUCATION

“The overall objective of disarmament and non-proliferation education and training is to impart knowledge and skills to individuals to empower them to make their contribution, as national and world citizens, to the achievement of concrete disarmament and non-proliferation measures and the ultimate goal of general and complete disarmament under effective international control.”¹⁹⁴

United Nations Study on Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Education,
August 2002

Disarmament education examines the benefits of, and processes to, reduce, prohibit and eliminate armaments, with the aim of reducing recourse to weapons, and thus both the likelihood and severity of armed conflict.

The United Nations has played a key role in promoting disarmament education. In 1988, in its first special session on disarmament, the UN General Assembly urged governments, NGOs and international institutions “to take steps to develop programmes of education for disarmament and peace studies at all levels”.¹⁹⁵ In 1980, the UNESCO World Congress on Disarmament Education made numerous recommendations on measures to promote research and education on disarmament.¹⁹⁶ In 1982, the UN World Disarmament Campaign was launched to inform and educate, and to generate public understanding and support for arms limitation and disarmament.

In early 2000, the UN Secretary-General’s Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters recommended that a study be conducted of disarmament and non-proliferation education. Later that year, UN General Assembly resolution 55/33 E requested the Secretary-General to prepare such a study. Almost two years later, with the assistance of a group of governmental experts from 10 countries (Egypt, Hungary, India, Japan, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Poland, Senegal and Sweden) and after extensive consultation with NGOs and civil society, the study

was completed and presented to the First Committee of the General Assembly at its 57th session on 9 October 2002.

The study found that education is a vital but underutilized tool for peace and disarmament and identifies “a pressing need to expand and improve disarmament and non-proliferation education and training in order to promote disarmament and non-proliferation and to strengthen international security and enhance sustainable economic and social development”.¹⁹⁷ The study further concluded that the need for education on non-proliferation and disarmament education had never been greater, especially in the field of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems.

Importantly, in making its recommendations, the study recognized the need to “promote education and training in disarmament and non-proliferation at all levels of formal and informal education, in particular the training of educators, parliamentarians, municipal leaders, military officers and government officials”.¹⁹⁸ It understands such education and training to be “a lifelong and multifaceted process, in which the family, schools, universities, the media, the community, NGOs, Governments, parliaments and international organizations all participate”.¹⁹⁹

The study encourages UN Member States “to accord importance to disarmament and non-proliferation education and training in their programmes and policies, consistent with their national legislation and practices, taking into account present and future trends. They are also encouraged to use, designate or establish public advisory bodies, where appropriate, whose responsibilities include advising on disarmament and non-proliferation education and training practices.”²⁰⁰ In addition, Member States are encouraged “to include parliamentarians and/or non-governmental advisers in delegations to United Nations disarmament-related meetings, taking into account national legislation and practices”.²⁰¹

Disarmament education thus has a dual meaning for parliaments and their members. On the one hand, as legislators, parliamentarians are uniquely positioned to promote and develop policies aimed at furthering disarmament education and training and establish institutions accordingly; on the other hand, there is a need to impart knowledge and skills to parliamentarians themselves to empower them to make an effective contribution to the achievement of concrete disarmament and non-proliferation goals.

Good Practice**ALL STATES****Examples****A. New Zealand Disarmament Education United Nations Implementation Fund**

Facilitating implementation of disarmament education programmes

B. Film screenings in parliament

Using the power of visual media

C. International Day against Nuclear Tests events in parliaments

An effective way to raise awareness of nuclear testing

A	New Zealand Disarmament Education United Nations Implementation Fund
	Facilitating implementation of disarmament education programmes

The Disarmament Education United Nations Implementation Fund (DEUNIF) was established in 2004 by the New Zealand Government to help New Zealand NGOs implement the 2002 *United Nations Study on Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Education*.²⁰² Its purpose is to promote greater understanding of disarmament education and issues raised in the study. DEUNIF provides funding to NGOs in New Zealand to implement disarmament education programmes.

The Public Advisory Committee on Disarmament and Arms Control (PACDAC) is also responsible for making decisions on the grants from the Peace and Disarmament Education Trust (PADET) established in 1988 to promote peace and disarmament. PADET's capital was established from compensation money received by the New Zealand Government from France as a result of the French attack on the Greenpeace ship *Rainbow Warrior* in Auckland Harbour on 10 July 1985.

B**Film screenings in parliament****Using the power of visual media**

Over the years, some excellent films have been made about nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament and the risks of nuclear weapons. Besides being the topic of several powerful documentaries, such as *Countdown to Zero*²⁰³ (2010) and *In My Lifetime*²⁰⁴ (2011), the nuclear threat has been a recurring theme in many fictional films, including *On the Beach* (1959), *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (1964), and *The Day After* (1983). Parliamentary screenings can be a useful way to educate and engage other legislators.

In 2002, for example, *Thirteen Days*, a film about the 1962 Cuban missile crisis, was shown in a number of parliaments, including the US Congress, the Russian Duma and the New Zealand Parliament.

Countdown to Zero was screened for the first time before a parliamentary audience in July 2010, on the occasion of the Third World Conference of Speakers of Parliament, held at the Palais des Nations in Geneva. It was subsequently screened in a number of national parliaments.

C**International Day against Nuclear Tests events in parliaments****An effective way to raise awareness of nuclear testing**

On 2 December 2009, the 64th Session of the United Nations General Assembly declared August 29 the International Day against Nuclear Tests by unanimously adopting resolution 64/35.²⁰⁵

The Day, which occurs on the anniversary of the closing of the Soviet nuclear test site in Semipalatinsk, Kazakhstan, is devoted to enhancing public awareness and education about the effects of nuclear weapon test explosions or any other nuclear explosions and the need for their cessation as one of the means of achieving the goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

In 2010, the Day was observed in New Zealand's Parliament by an event opened by the Minister for Disarmament and Arms Control featuring a demonstration of the CTBT global monitoring system live from Vienna and the presentation of awards to the New Zealand Nuclear Test

Veterans Association and Greenpeace for their dedicated efforts to end nuclear testing and achieve compensation for victims. Ambassadors from non-ratifying countries were invited to attend in an effort to encourage their countries to ratify the CTBT.

“As we mark the first International Day against Nuclear Tests, I look forward to working with all partners in a growing global movement to rid the world of the nuclear threat, rein in rising spending on nuclear weapons and bring the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty into force. We must stop passing this problem to succeeding generations; we must each do our part to build a safer, more secure world today.”

*Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon,
Message for International Day against Nuclear Tests, 2010*



Recommendations for Parliamentarians

- Review and follow up recommendations made in the UN *Study on Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Education*.
- Ask your government whether it has informed the United Nations of steps taken to implement the recommendations of the Study.
- Pursue programmes and policies aimed at promoting research and education on disarmament.
- Organize screenings of films on disarmament and non-proliferation in your parliament.
- Hold commemorative events in your parliament on relevant International Days, especially 29 August (International Day against Nuclear Tests), 21 September (International Day of Peace), 2 October (International Day of Non-Violence), 24 October (United Nations Day) and 6 November (International Day for Preventing the Exploitation of the Environment in War and Armed Conflict). See www.un.org/en/events/observances/days.