International Women’s Conference on Preventing the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction to non-State Actors

Co-hosted by the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)

Plenary Session Summary

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Plenary Session 1
Non-State Actors and WMD: Current Threats and Challenges

1. Background

The United Nations Security Council resolution 1540 requires all Member States to enact and enforce effective measures to prevent non-state actors (NSAs) from acquiring nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction (WMD), relevant materials and delivery systems. As such, a discussion on current threats and challenges in preventing non-state actor acquisition is a fundamental aspect of the conference and an important initial discussion with the participants.

2. Objectives of the session:

- Provide the participants with the background on the role of UNSCR 1540 in preventing the access to WMD by NSAs
- Provide participants with an understanding of what are the current challenges in preventing the spread of weapons of mass destruction by NSAs
- Provide participants with an understanding of the role international organizations play in preventing the spread of WMD by NSAs
- Provide participants with an understanding of the role of entities outside government in preventing the spread of WMDs by NSAs

- Key questions for Panelists:
  - What role do you/your organization play in the preventing the spread of WMDs by NSAs?
  - What do you see are the challenges in preventing the spread of WMDs by NSAs?
  - Tell us some of the ways the international community can improve its efforts to prevent the spread of WMDs by NSAs?
  - In your view, are there lessons learned from the role of UNSC R 1540 in preventing the spread of WMDs by NSAs?

Moderator


Speakers:

- Mary Soliman, Chief, Regional Disarmament and Information and Outreach Branch (RDIOB), UNODA
- Robin Mossinkoff, Head, Forum for Security Cooperation Support Section, OSCE
- Ambassador Dian Triansyah Djani, Chairperson of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004) – video message
**Introduction to UNSCR 1540: Successes, Lessons Learned, and its Relevance to the Global South**

1. **Background**

The United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540 was adopted in response to the rise of mass casualty terrorism and the illicit acquisition and trade in WMD knowledge and technology by non-state actors (NSAs), including by illegal networks spanning many countries and continents. The Resolution filled an important gap in preventing access to these technologies by NSAs by requiring all Member States to enact and enforce effective measures to prevent their acquisition by NSAs. This session will focus on specific accomplishments and lessons learned from the implementation of UNSCR 1540 since its adoption.

2. **Objectives of the session:**
   - Review key mechanisms and modalities developed by the UN, 1540 Committee, and Member States to facilitate the implementation of UNSCR 1540 (1540 Committee, GOE, Awareness, Training, Reporting Mechanism, etc.)
   - Discuss the accomplishments/successes of UNSCR 1540 implementation, including as derived from various assessments.
   - Discuss lessons learned from the implementation.
   - Discuss and provide specific features, successes and challenges relevant to the implementation of UNSCR 1540 in the Global South.

3. **Key questions for Panelists:**
   - What key mechanisms, modalities and activities were developed and are being used to facilitate the implementation of UNSCR 1540?
   - What are main accomplishments and successes of the implementation?
   - What lessons were learned during the implementation as well as during outreach, training, and reporting?
   - Why UNSCR 1540 is relevant for the Global South? What was achieved? Are there any specific challenges or opportunities relevant to the Global South?
   - In your view, what are next steps in achieving full and comprehensive implementation of UNSCR 1540 and preventing NSAs from acquiring WMD and relevant technologies?

**Moderator:**
Elena Sokova, Executive Director, Vienna Center for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation

**Panelists:**
- Kiwako Tanaka, Member of 1540 Committee’s Group of Experts
- Soledad Urruela, Regional 1540 Coordinator, Organization of American States
- Yasemin Balci, Senior Legal Officer, VERTIC
1. Background

Addressing the increasingly complex challenges within the international security environment, especially those related to weapons of mass destruction, will require the international community to pull from the full breadth of human capital. Yet, women, who are powerful agents for change and progress, continue to be underrepresented in the WMD non-proliferation and disarmament field. Presently, at any given international meeting of governments on these issues, only one in four delegates are women. Among heads of delegations, the gender gap is even more stark. For example, at the 2018 session of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) Preparatory Committee session, only 20 percent of delegation leaders were women. This low level of representation is replicated in every meeting and session of the NPT Review Cycle, as well as other disarmament fora such as the Conference on Disarmament and the General Assembly’s First Committee. Challenges to participation are persistent and varied, including cultural and socioeconomic barriers to women’s political participation, lack of funding or protection for women, and conscious and unconscious bias.

If the international community is to make progress in preventing the proliferation of WMD to non-state actors, we must ensure that women are equal participants in the discussions and decision-making. Including women can help challenge established patterns of power, defy associations of weapons with men, and offer diverse and critical contributions to the debate, leading to more comprehensive and sustainable results. Efforts to bring women in need to go beyond merely increasing their number and should consider how to involve women with greater impact.

2. Objective

The session will be a moderated conversation featuring successful women in WMD nonproliferation and disarmament, ideally at various stages in their careers, who can reflect on their experiences and the importance on ensuring gender balance in the field of disarmament, nonproliferation and arms control. The discussion should provide the audience with ideas on what meaningful participation looks like and concrete recommendations on how to improve women’s roles.

3. Key Questions for Panelists:

- Why is it important to create gender parity in WMD disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control?
- How do you define “meaningful participation” and what does it look like in practice?
- What are some of the biggest impediments to women’s participation that you have seen or encountered? Why is meaningful participation particularly problematic in this field?
- Where has progress been made and what are the principal drivers of such progress?
- Does progress cover all women? What other aspects beyond gender must be considered when ensuring women’s meaningful participation?
• What actions will be needed to ensure more meaningful participation of women in the future? How can we promote broader ownership over these activities to ensure change?
• What lessons have you learned that may be helpful for early career women?

Moderator
• Mary Soliman, Chief, Regional Disarmament Branch, UNODA

Possible Panelists:
• Elena Sokova, Executive Director, Vienna Centre for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation
• Deepti Choubey, Head, Public Affairs and OPCW Spokesperson, OPCW
• Soledad Urruela, Programme Officer, Organization of American States
• Representative of Thailand
Plenary Session 4
The role of Civil Society in empowering women in preventing the proliferation of WMDs to non-State actors

1. Background
Civil society plays a critical role in operationalizing disarmament on the ground, in building consensus, in building the capacity of stakeholders, and in ensuring the meaningful participation and leadership of women in decision making on disarmament and non-proliferation. This session seeks to survey the role of civil society specifically in enabling and empowering women in preventing the proliferation of WMD to non-state actors, in multilateral policy, international and local advocacy, and national and local action, including in conflict situations.

2. Objective of the session:
• Discuss the role of civil society in non-proliferation of WMD to non-state actors.
• Discuss existing opportunities for women in WMD non-proliferation and highlight the ongoing achievements of women in this space.
• Discuss the ways in which civil society can create platforms, networks, capacity and knowledge for women to effectively lead non-proliferation efforts.
• Discuss initiatives/programs that can be co-created to further strengthen the role of women in non-proliferation at global, national, and local levels.

3. Key questions to be asked to the Speakers prior to the session:
• What role have women played in strengthening non-proliferation in the context of non-state actors in terms of local action, national and multilateral policy, and advocacy?
• How can civil society create opportunities and networks to enable women to play that role more effectively?
• How can women take effective non-proliferation action through civil society?

Moderator
• Ambassador Bonnie Jenkins, Executive Director, Women of Color Advancing Peace, Security and Conflict Transformation

Speakers:
• Yasemin Balci, Senior Legal Officer, VERTIC
• Haneen Khalid, University of Chicago
• Beatrice Maneshi, Catlystas Consulting
Plenary Session 5
The role of education and training in empowering women in preventing the proliferation of WMDs to non-State actors

1. Background
   Education and training are key elements in building and sustaining capacity in nuclear non-proliferation and security. They constitute also the best tool to empower women to contribute in preventing the proliferation of WMD to non-State actors as a part of this international engagement.

2. Objective of the session:
   - Discuss the role education and training in empowering women to contribute to peace and security.
   - Discuss existing opportunities for women in WMD non-proliferation and how they contribute to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.
   - Discuss the challenges that face women in WMD non-proliferation.
   - Discuss initiatives/programs to be recommended to reduce the gender gap.

3. Key questions to be asked to the Speakers prior to the session:
   - How women in WMD non-proliferation can contribute to disarmament, peace and security in conflict zones?
   - What kind of educational and/or training programs in WMD non-proliferation and security your organization/institution has developed and implemented for the benefits of women?
   - What would you recommend for organizations to do to reduce the gender gap?
   - What is the role of NGOs?

Moderator
- Oum Keltoum Hakam, University of Ibn Tofail, Morocco

Speakers:
- Elena Sokova, Executive Director, Vienna Center for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation
- Amira Elabd, Nuclear and Radiological Regulatory Authority, Egypt
- Meena Singelee, Head, Geneva Office, IAEA
- Deepti Choubey, Head of Public Affairs and Spokesperson, OPCW
3. Background

The United Nations Security Council resolution 1540 requires all Member States to take effective measures to establish domestic controls to prevent the proliferation of nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons and means of delivery, including by establishing appropriate controls over materials, develop and maintain effective measures to account for and secure such items in production, use, storage or transport; and develop and maintain appropriate effective physical protection measures. It also calls for effective action against non-State actors manufacturing, developing, or using nuclear, chemical or biological weapons and their means of delivery. Given the emerging landscape of frontier technologies, and complex issues like lethal autonomy, cyber warfare, new delivery systems, and synthetic biology, it is imperative that effective arms control policy and action should engage actively with the future of CBRN trends. How do you promote foresight in international institutions when faced with technologies that display exponential growth?

4. Objectives of the session:

- Provide the participants with the background on the role of UNSCR 1540 and other disarmament regimes and treaties on CBRN security approaches
- Provide participants with an understanding of current geopolitical, institutional, and infrastructural challenges in CBRN security
- Provide participants with an understanding of emerging technologies in the WMD space and the implications of technological innovation for WMD proliferation
- Provide participants with an understanding of innovative approaches of engaging emerging technologies and evolving threats

5. Key questions to be asked to the Speakers prior to the session:

- What are the key challenges in CBRN security you have encountered in your specific field and how has your organization engaged security issues?
- How can the CBRN security architecture be strengthened and who are the key stakeholders?
- Which emerging technologies and trends do you think will shape the future of WMD proliferation?
- How can readiness be enhanced in existing weapons governance institutions to better equip them for addressing unknown risks in the future?

Moderator
- Nabila Jamshed, United Nations Resident Coordinator’s Office, India

Speakers:
- Deepti Choubey, Head of Public Relations and Spokesperson, OPCW
- Meena Singelee, Head, Geneva Office, IAEA
- Alma Pintol, UN Office on Counter-Terrorism
Plenary Session 7
Women in Leadership Positions

1. Background

2020 marks the 20th anniversary of the UN Security Council resolution 1325, which placed women’s meaningful participation at the heart of international peace and security efforts. This Conference and panel discussion therefore provide a timely opportunity to take stock on the progress and gaps that remain in ensuring women’s meaningful participation, and to identify concrete practices and partners to reduce their marginalization in these spaces.

If the international community is to make progress in preventing the proliferation of WMD to non-state actors, we must ensure that women are equal participants in the discussions and decision-making. Including women can help challenge established patterns of power, defy associations of weapons with men, and offer diverse and critical contributions to the debate, leading to more comprehensive and sustainable results. Efforts to bring women in need to go beyond merely increasing their number and should consider how to involve women with greater impact.

2. Objective

- Provide an opportunity for participants to meet women leaders in the field
- Provide an opportunity for women leaders to share their experience and advice for early-career professional women in the field
- Provide an opportunity for further networking for participants and speakers

3. Format

- This session will be held in a simplified TED-X style format, where each speakers will be given maximum of 15 minutes to present their experience and advice for early-career professional women in the field of WMD disarmament and non-proliferation.
- Q&A will be limited and will only be allowed if there is time after all the speakers have had a chance to talk.

Moderator:
- Aaron Junhoung Yoo, Political Affairs Officer, UNODA

Speakers:
- Mary Soliman, Chief, RDIOB, UNODA
- Bonnie Jenkins, Executive Director, WCAPS
- Deepti Choubey, Head of Public Relations and Spokesperson, OPCW
- Elena Sokova, Executive Director, VCDNP
- Oum Keltoum Hakam, University of Ibn Tofail, Morocco
- Kiwako Tanaka, 1540 Committee’s Group of Experts