

ACADEMIC GUIDE



Defying the ordinary, building the extraordinary

Committee

Disarmament and
International Security
Committee

DISEC

MEDIUM

Topic A:

Preventing the acquisition of weapons by non state actors.

Topic B:

Review of the usage of forbidden weapons in warfare such as white phosphorus.

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Welcome letter

Dear Delegates,

We are joyous to be welcoming you to the DISEC committee of the fifteenth version of MMUN. Today you start a new experience where you will be able to take the reins of two of the most critical and urgently important current issues and navigate through them so as to formulate feasible and sustainable ways to solve them. We truly hope that during these three days you will be able to enhance and further develop your skills and knowledge; we are excited to be your chair and to have the possibility to be the ones that guide and accompany you through this journey.

We expect you to be well prepared to deal with any type of situation that might present itself in the committee, as well as to have a profound understanding of the topics and their respective causes and repercussions. Accordingly, we urge

you to intently read this guide and further expand your investigation and grasp of the topics. Know that you count with us in any and every circumstance.

Best regards,

Sofia Moreno and Valeria Romero

Introduction to the commission:

DISEC is the United Nations committee dedicated to disarmament, global security and peace and any other type of affairs related to international security and weapons. It stands for Disarmament and International Security Committee. As it is the first committee of the UN General Assembly, annual sessions are held during the annual UN General Assembly, and naturally all member states are allowed to participate. The actions they can take are quite limited, as they cannot enforce any kind of action. However, they can draft resolutions that are passed to the General Assembly.

This committee has the mission to promote peace by disarmament of every kind of weapon, from nuclear weapons to regular guns. During their sessions, they discuss ways to promote this disarmament in order to bring more security and peace on a global level.

Topic Summary

Topic A: Preventing the acquisition of weapons by non state actors.

The prevention of the acquisition of weapons by Non-State actors, also known as NSA's, is a crucial topic for international security. After the Cold War, most conflicts became highly involved with NSA's as the access to weapons became easier. It is crucial to develop strategies to prevent this because they are the cause for most, if not all, current international conflicts on today's panorama.

Topic B: Review of the usage of forbidden weapons in warfare such as white phosphorus.

The review of the use of forbidden weapons in warfare like white phosphorus focuses on reviewing the effectiveness of mechanisms such as international laws and treaties that restrict certain weapons. Throughout case studies, it emphasizes on how these weapons affect and create threatening environmental and humanitarian situations; it involves the need of a more effective international coordination to increase accountability and to formulate initiatives to entirely stop the use and production of these kinds of weapons, as well as for the creation of alternatives for them. Ultimately, it centers on ensuring compliance and responsibility through strengthening international mechanisms against banned weapons.

TOPIC A: Preventing the acquisition of weapons by non state actors.

Introduction to the topic

Any type of weapon will always be an open door to an infinite amount of possibilities, which in turn can pose a significant threat in more than one way. From a single gun, that can easily take multiple lives, to greater weapons like bombs, they all hold the power to undo the security world leaders try so hard to uphold. The state has the prime responsibility of protecting their people, therefore it must really understand the danger that allowing complete access to weapons to non-state actors is and act accordingly.

However, there has been an ongoing problem in the world that the governments and different organizations have yet to solve: the acquisition of weapons by Non-State actors. This is a vital problem that must be solved in our world, because as mentioned before, weapons nowadays give you an immense power and that poses an incredible danger when it is not able to be controlled.

Key Concepts

- **Non-State Actors (NSA)** → Non-State Actors are organized groups or even individuals who have no affiliation to the state, for example private corporations, Non-governmental organizations, or extremist groups.
- **Weapon** → an object or mean use for fighting or causing harm.
- **Illicit weapon trade** → the trade and business of illicitly marketing weapons, more often than not to criminal or extremist groups. The type of weapons marketed can vary from regular guns to explosives and almost any other kind.
- **Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW)** → a category of weapons that are intended for use by individual members of armed or security forces. These are often used by Non-State Actors.
- **Arms Embargo** → a sanction imposed usually to a country that prohibits the acquisition of weapons.

Historical Context

Weapons have always been a part of human history, ever since the first days of humanity. However, their use has also been changing throughout history, eventually reaching the point at which the world currently is. But how did it exactly get there?

WWII and the Cold War right after was a time period in which international conflicts among states were peaking. However, when this period came to an end after the Cold War, a new type of conflict started to rise up. Quickly, almost every conflict had a Non-State actor involved, and these conflicts quickly escalated to an international panorama. One could think that NSA's would not pose a significant threat to states, whatsoever. However, they were increasingly doing so, becoming quite the threat. These ANSAs include terrorist groups, insurgent factions, militias, and criminal organizations, operating beyond traditional state control and often exploiting fragile governance structures, furthermore their access to weapons is an ongoing problem ever since the end of the Cold War.



Taken from: Financial Times, (January 30, 2024) “Welcome to the era of the non-state actor”

There are some different factors that over time have helped these groups thrive. Despite the fact that they are extremely diverse conflicts, they all share a lot of aspects and most importantly share being the cause of immense conflicts. From ideologically motivated groups, organized crime or even paramilitary groups, they all come together as the threat they pose for international security when they have access to weapons. “In the realities of most armed conflicts, political insurgents, criminal syndicates and state-sponsored paramilitary often become undistinguishable.” (*The Changing Character of Conflict Platform*, n.d.)

	Change vs. Status Quo	Territorial vs. Non-Territorial	Physical vs. Psychological Use of Violence	Political/Ideological vs. Profit-Driven Motivation
Rebels, Guerrillas	Change	Territorial	Physical	Political
Militias	Status quo	Territorial Non-territorial	Physical Psychological	Political
Clan Chiefs, Big Men	Status quo	Territorial	Physical	Political
Warlords	Status quo	Territorial	Physical Psychological	Profit-driven

Taken from: [Ulrich Schneckener](#), (n.d.) “Types of Armed Non-State Actors”

This chart shows the many different types of non-state actors who are armed, and for a multitude of different reasons, as it can be observed in the chart. This shows how much of a danger it is for them to be armed as well, because of the broad spectrum of conflicts they cover, meaning their actions have an even greater impact.

Current Situation

The international community has been well aware of these ongoing issues, as they are truly the greatest causes for conflicts. They are all over the world, like Colombia's long lasting internal conflict or the Taliban group in Afghanistan. There have been efforts to combat the conflicts naturally. The one with the greater scale possibly being the war on terror, after 9/11. This had an incredible reach as the collective defense of NATO pushed many countries to be a part of it. It has possibly been the effort with the most reach to combat Non-State Actors, particularly extremist groups. Yet, this does not target the root of the problem, which is the acquisition of weapons. So, what has been done to prevent them from acquiring weapons and decrease these conflicts?

The most direct effort to date has been implementing arms embargoes as a sanction, but this lacks effectivity, as:

- a. These sanctions are much easily implemented on states
- b. These may cut legal routes to acquiring weapons, but the illicit ones are still open for NSA's

Taking this into account, the current situation is a lack of precise action to eradicate the problem from the root, rather than dealing with the damage when it's already done.

Relevant approaches:

Any point of view is of incredible value during the committee, however these are some approaches the chair considers relevant:

- Preventive actions → it is crucial to develop a strong strategy to prevent NSA's from acquiring weapons, both legally and illegally. What policies can be implemented to avoid the access of weapons to NSA's?
- Active actions → some damage has already been done, so it's also important to approach this topic from trying to fix what has already happened. How could the access that is already granted in some way to NSA's could be removed?
- Review current strategies and international laws → it is also crucial to review the strategies and international laws in place, as these were developed with conflicts among states in mind, rather than taking NSA's into account.

Bloc Positions:

Some bloc positions for countries might be the following, even though this is just a suggestion and delegates are free to explore alliances and blocs during the committee.

- Focusing on prevention → some countries might find it better to focus on preventing the access of weapons, to cut the problem straight from the root.
- Focusing on combating → some other countries might find it a better strategy to fight the NSA's that already have access to weapons as well as finding a way to take those away.
- Building a strategy with both → some countries might try to balance both focuses and try to build a strategy that includes them both, and even more.

QARMAS

- Is your delegation involved in any conflict related to NSA's?
- Does your delegation profit from the manufacturing of weapons?
- What are your delegation's laws referring to the access of weapons?
- Has your delegation participated in an international conflict involving NSA's?

- Is your delegation a country that struggles with inner conflict (*DISEC: Disarmament & International Security Committee*, n.d.)?
- How can past situations serve as a guideline for what courses of action to take?

Useful links:

- [Michael von der Schulenburg: The Era of Armed Non-State Actors - Void in International Law - article](#)
- [State and Non - State actors explanation - video](#)
- [Non-State Actors in Global Politics: Understanding Their Role and Challenges - video](#)

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11. **UN General Assembly - First Committee - Disarmament and International Security.** (n.d., n.d. n.d.). *The United Nations*. Retrieved July 30, 2024, from <https://www.un.org/en/ga/first/>

TOPIC B: Review of the usage of forbidden weapons in warfare such as white phosphorus.



Introduction to the topic

It is a known fact that ever since the very first belligerent conflict ever recorded, weapons have played a key role in the development and process of strifes. Nonetheless, as time passed by, the weapons used to combat have evolved and inevitably become much more powerful and destructive, hence highly dangerous and threatening. Accordingly, treaties and agreements had to be done in order to control and restrict the use of certain weapons during warfare which are ultimately considered unnecessary in a conflict as well as inhumane and barbaric; however, to this day and age, there are many who question the ban of various of the weapons that have been forbidden in the past and argue that in these modern times, the restriction of the arms shall be reviewed.

Key Concepts

International Humanitarian Law (IHL): “Also known as "the law of warfare" or "the law of armed conflict", the International Humanitarian Law is “a set of rules that seeks, for humanitarian reasons, to limit the effects of armed conflict. It protects persons who are not, or are no longer, directly or actively participating in hostilities, and imposes limits on the means and methods of warfare.” (International Committee of the Red Cross, 2022)

Weapon: “Any instrument or device for use in attack or defense in combat or fighting” (International Committee of the Red Cross, 2022)

Biological Weapon: “Biological Weapons (are those which) disseminate disease-causing organisms or toxins to harm humans, animals or plants.” (Office for Disarmament Affairs, 2020)

Chemical Weapon: “A Chemical Weapon is a chemical used to cause intentional death or harm through its toxic properties. Munitions, devices and other equipment specifically designed to weaponize toxic chemicals also fall under the definition of chemical weapons. (Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, 2024)

Biological Weapons Convention (BWC): “The Biological Weapons Convention effectively prohibits the development, production, acquisition, transfer, stockpiling and use of biological and toxin weapons.” (Office for Disarmament Affairs, 2020)

Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC): “The Chemical Weapons Convention aims to prohibit the development, production, acquisition, stockpiling, retention, transfer or use of chemical weapons.” (Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, 2024)

Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCCW): “The Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons prohibits the use of munitions that use fragments not detectable by X-ray and blinding laser weapons and limits the use

of incendiary weapons as well as mines, booby traps and "other devices".”
(International Committee of the Red Cross, 2022)

Historical Context

The prohibition of weapons in warfare dates back to 1868, before the United Nations was created, when the Saint Petersburg Declaration of 1868 banned the use of “exploding projectiles weighing less than 400 grams” (ICRC, 2011), followed by the prohibition of “bullets that flatten upon entering the human body” in 1899. Afterwards, in 1925, various countries started abiding by the Geneva Protocol, which “outlawed the use of poison gas and bacteriological methods of warfare”. (ICRC, 2011)



Banned exploding projectiles that weigh less than 400 grams

Ballistics, W. (2015). Equipment Data: Explosive Ordnance. Wound Ballistics. Retrieved July 23, 2014, from https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&url=https%3A%2F%2Fnationaldefensepac.org%2F%3F%3Dwhat-is-the-best-bullet-caliber-for-self-defense-ee-x41A58hJ&psig=AOvVaw1u0EWGQaUXpY1mFyRq52sL&ust=1721844493493000&source=images&cd=vfe&opi=89978449&ved=0CBEQjRxqFwoTCLDsy9_gvYcDFQAAAAAdAAAAABAJ

After the United Nations was created, three major conventions that regulate weapons in warfare were created: the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) in 1972, then the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCCW) in 1980 and lastly the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) in 1993. These conventions are the strongest weapon regulating mechanism ever implemented, for they strengthened the Geneva Protocol as well as the past treaties and declarations by forbidding not only the use of the artifacts but also their “development, production, acquisition, stockpiling, retention and transfer” (ICRC, 2011), as well as demanding their abolition.



Chemical Weapons Convention, 1993

Nations, U. (2023). Chemical Weapons Convention. United Nations. Retrieved July 23, 2024, from <https://legal.un.org/avl/ha/cpdpsucw/cpdpsucw.html>.

For starters, biological weapons started getting banned since they can not only be lethal, but incredibly contagious as well; the illnesses caused by such weapons would most certainly not remain confined to the region or country where they are being used, and as a result, the whole world would be exposed to the threat of a pandemic of a particularly infectious disease. Moreover, the repercussions that the bacteria and diseases that biological weapons carry are most certainly not limited to health or sanitation; due to the aforementioned threat that they posed, they were considered perilous for nations' economy, environment, and nourishment, hence their prohibition in 1972. Furthermore, chemical weapons essentially were prohibited due to the fact that over time the perception of them grew to be mainly unnecessary in combat and excessively

cruel, disavowing with the general concept of fair play and “civilized battle” (OPCW, 2024). Lastly, the CCCW bans “specific types of weapons that are considered to cause unnecessary or unjustifiable suffering to combatants or to affect civilians indiscriminately.” (UNODA, 2024). It is constituted by 5 protocols that were established in 1980; Protocol 1 (one) bans any weapon or fragment that cannot be detected once it enters the human body, Protocol 2 (two) bans the use of antipersonnel mines and booby traps that cannot be detected and that are not self-destructing and not self-deactivating. Protocol 3 (three) bans all kinds of incendiary weapons, Protocol 4 (four) bans laser weapons that can cause permanent blindness, and lastly Protocol 5 (five) is directed to the remnants of weapons that may be explosive, thus, its function in the Convention is to “minimize the humanitarian impact of unexploded ordnance and abandoned explosive weapons.” (UNODA, 2024)

Weapons such as white phosphorous fall under the jurisdiction of the CCCW since it violates Protocol 3 but only under particular circumstances, thus, ever since it was banned there have been divided opinions because its only “partly” prohibited, and judging its use under other instances differently would give rise to disputes.

The only “use” of white phosphorus that is banned is to cause a fire, other uses are not prohibited unless an extensive investigation of the intentions behind the use of the substance is held.

The following is an overview of weapons that are regulated by IHL treaties.

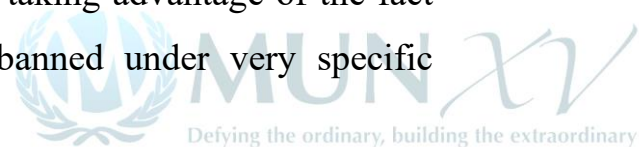
Weapon	Treaty
Explosive projectiles weighing less than 400 grams	Declaration of Saint Petersburg (1868)
Bullets that expand or flatten in the human body	Hague Declaration (1899)
Poison and poisoned weapons	Hague Regulations (1907)
Chemical weapons	Geneva Protocol (1925) Convention on the prohibition of chemical weapons (1993)
Biological weapons	Geneva Protocol (1925) Convention on the prohibition of biological weapons (1972)
Weapons that injure by fragments which, in the human body, escape detection by X-rays	Protocol I (1980) to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons
Incendiary weapons	Protocol III (1980) to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons
Blinding laser weapons	Protocol IV (1995) to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons
Mines, booby traps and "other devices"	Protocol II, as amended (1996), to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons
Anti-personnel mines	Convention on the Prohibition of Anti-Personnel Mines (Ottawa Treaty) (1997)
Explosive Remnants of War	Protocol V (2003) to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons
Cluster Munitions	Convention on Cluster Munitions (2008)

List of weapons that fall under the jurisdiction of treaties and/or conventions.

Red Cross, I. C. (2017, November 29). *Weapons*. International Committee of the Red Cross. <https://www.icrc.org/en/document/weapons>

Current Situation

To this day, the need to review the conventions and treaties has certainly grown a lot due to the major conflicts that have been taking place these past few years, the most critical being the Russia-Ukraine conflict and the Israel-Hamas conflict, specially because in many circumstances they have been making use of certain conventional weapons that are banned taking advantage of the fact that, as mentioned previously, they are only banned under very specific circumstances.



In December 2023, an Israeli official confirmed that the military of their country had been consciously using weapons that are not permitted during warfare; according to the United States Office of the Director of National Intelligence, “almost half of Israeli munitions used on Gaza have been dumb bombs” (United States Office of the Director of National Intelligence, 2024). This sort of munitions are strictly prohibited since they are completely unguided, meaning that they are pretty much sent out deliberately without a specific target and are free to plunge wherever, evidently, this threatens the region and its civilians greatly. Moreover, it was also reported that Israel had been making use of white phosphorous accompanied by “some kind of incendiary bomb” that is yet to be identified, making it highly explosive, expressly because instead of spreading the substance at a ground level in a determined area, they airburst it so as to make fire and smoke catch on quicker and through a much larger area. On top of that, experts are worried over the fact that since they have been airbursting the white phosphorus, there will be acid-contaminated rainfalls when the region approaches the rainy season.



Chehayeb, K. (2023, November 1). *Amnesty International says Israeli forces wounded Lebanese civilians with white phosphorus.* AP News. <https://apnews.com/article/israel-gaza-lebanon-white-phosphorus-war-5aebf0cc8d587951a718cefe329bc8b3>

On the other hand, there have also been violations to the conventions and treaties in the Russia-Ukraine conflict; allegedly, Russia had been making use of chemical weapons such as chloropicrin to attack Ukraine, which were banned. The use of this weapon was prohibited in combat due to the terrible effects that it caused on those who were attacked with it, according to experts it caused a “pulmonary edema with gurgling breathing sounds and foamy red sputum, which, in extreme cases, can result in death.” (Deutsche Welle, 2024)

The Russian Federation was known to have the world’s largest stockpile of chemical weapons, but the nation did sign the CWC, meaning that all chemical weapons that they had in store were to be destroyed by 2012.

Moreover, both Russia and Ukraine have ostensibly made use of cluster bombs, which were banned in 2008 as stated in the Convention on Cluster Munitions. In fact, one of the very first attacks that Russia made on Ukraine was with the aforementioned bombs, and until now, according to the Human Rights Watch, it has used more than 5 different types of this weapon.

However, Ukraine was not left behind, as it received cluster bombs provided by the United States of America and used them to counterattack Russia. Yet, it is crucial to note that none of these three nations signed the Convention on Cluster Munitions, which raises the dilemma of whether they should or shouldn't be able to make use of them.

This same situation has presented itself with other sorts of weapons such as antipersonnel mines, anti-tank and anti-vehicle mines, and phosphorus bombs, which are composed by white phosphorus, petroleum and caoutchouc, this latter weapon only being used by the Russian military. (Deutsche Welle, 2024)

Up until now, the situation of both conflicts just aggravates as time passes and there is little to no action taken against the use of these weapons due to the technicalities which vary whether they should or shouldn't be banned.

Relevant approaches

The committee's approach to the topic shall be thoroughly comprehensive taking into account both the historical and the current context of the matter.

Initially, we expect that the delegates carry out an all-encompassing examination of the actual international laws, treaties and conventions that ban certain types of weapons so as to ponder on how effective and necessary they are nowadays. However, it is expected that delegates will prioritize and consider both the health and environmental repercussions that the use of these weapons entail.

Furthermore, the committee should also contemplate technological advances and modern day weapons that could work as an alternative to the ones that are banned as they can significantly reduce the adverse effects associated with them.

Block Positions:

Reviewing the use of certain prohibited weapons in belligerent conflicts will surely upbring various divided opinions between the nations involved in the discussion, but there are two which we could consider as the most high-profile ones.

Western Block: Western countries tend to incline in favor of adhering to international mechanisms such as the conventions to strictly prohibit the use of certain weapons. They also are known to strongly support enhanced monitoring and supervision systems that help to boost accountability and the development of more sustainable alternatives to these weapons.

Eastern Block: Eastern countries on their side tend to have more discreet positions on topics as such. Even though they do recognize the implications and consequences that the use of certain weapons have at all levels, they also stress the importance of respecting each nations' sovereignty, so they might be more inclined to strengthening countries' security and military rather than international mechanisms.

QARMAS

Has your country been directly involved in the creation of a treaty or a convention that prohibits the use of weapons?

Has your country ever made use of one or more prohibited weapons? If so, were there any sort of repercussions?

How can international surveillance and monitoring systems be improved and strengthened to guarantee nations' compliance with the conventions and treaties?

What technical advances are available or in the works that can work as alternatives for weapons prohibited for use in warfare?

Which are the most substantial humanitarian and environmental repercussions that should be taken into account when examining the prohibition of certain weapons?

Does your country abide by any national or international additional law that bans a specific type of weapon? If so, which one and for how long has it been complying with it?

Has your country worked to raise awareness and educate its military personnel on the reasons why not to make use of certain weapons?

Which actions can be taken to ensure nations' accountability when it comes to the infringement of the laws that prohibit the use of particular weapons in warfare?

Do militias and outlawed groups have access to banned weapons in your country? What kind of threat would they represent in case of a belligerent conflict?

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