

EDITOR'S NOTE

The first Review Conference of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) offers an important opportunity for both reflection on the first five years of the convention's implementation and planning for the future. The world is not the same as it was at the entry into force of the CWC in 1997. We have seen radical changes in science and technology, which might lead to the development of new weapons or raise concerns about how well novel chemicals are incorporated by the CWC. Threat perceptions have also altered—to many people, a terrorist attack using chemical weapons seems much more likely today than it did only a few years ago. The Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) has also undergone a period of change. Over these early years numerous organizational issues, concerning budgeting, decision-making, long-term planning, and the involvement of Member States in the OPCW's work, have arisen. How the CWC and the OPCW adapt or respond to these changes will determine how well the strategic intent of the convention is met in the longer term and the health of the chemical weapons disarmament and non-proliferation regime in general.

In this issue of *Disarmament Forum*, experts weigh in with proposals and recommendations for the Review Conference and the post-conference period, discussing specific concerns such as universality, verification, transparency, the general purpose criterion, developments in non-lethal weapons, and institutional issues. A short reference section includes a variety of additional reading on this topic.

Against the background of unresolved missile defence and missile non-proliferation issues, increasingly intensive use of space technologies, and lack of progress on PAROS in the Conference on Disarmament, the first issue of *Disarmament Forum* in 2003 will focus on the prevention of the weaponization of outer space. The Institute, in cooperation with Project Ploughshares and the Simons Centre for Peace and Disarmament Studies, recently hosted the seminar *Outer Space and Global Security*. Over 150 participants discussed the current and future uses of outer space, as well as measures to preserve space for peaceful purposes. A meeting report will be published by UNIDIR. With these activities and publications, UNIDIR hopes to encourage the renewed interest in outer space issues.

In cooperation with the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue and the United Nations Department for Disarmament Affairs, UNIDIR hosted the meeting *Disarmament, Health and Humanitarian Action: Putting People First*, on 7 November. The meeting offered an opportunity for disarmament experts and the humanitarian action community to discuss where disarmament and health issues intersect and how they contribute to overall human security. This was the third meeting in the annual Disarmament as Humanitarian Action series.

In response to widespread concerns about how to respond to the threat of nuclear terrorism, radiological weapons and 'dirty bombs', UNIDIR hosted the conference *International Cooperation in the Combat against Nuclear Terrorism and the Role of Nuclear Arms Control* on 17–18 December 2002. Jointly organized by UNIDIR, Peace Research Institute Frankfurt, and Germany's Federal Foreign

Office in Berlin, the meeting analysed the potential threat and technical capacities of terrorists, and how arms control, verification and transparency can combat these threats. A forthcoming issue of *Disarmament Forum* will also address this topic.

UNIDIR has several new publications. *Project Coast: Apartheid's Chemical and Biological Warfare Programme* by Chandré Gould and Peter Folb, offers a meticulous account of South Africa's clandestine chemical and biological warfare programme under apartheid and serves as a reminder of the perennial dangers of proliferation in the absence of adequate international controls.

Also recently published are *Le Conseil de sécurité à l'aube du XXIème siècle : quelle volonté et quelle capacité a-t-il de maintenir la paix et la sécurité internationales?* by Pascal Teixeira and *The Costs of Disarmament—Rethinking the Price Tag: A Methodological Inquiry into the Costs and Benefits of Arms Control* by Susan Willett. Book excerpts are available on our website (www.unidir.org).

You'll find a new feature in this issue of *Disarmament Forum*: UNIDIR Focus. In each issue, one activity will be highlighted, outlining the project's methodology, recent developments in the research or project outcomes. UNIDIR Focus will also present a detailed description of a new publication of the Institute. Of course, you can find descriptions and contact information for all of the Institute's present and past activities online, as well as sample chapters of publications and ordering information.

We would like to thank all of our readers who have taken the time to comment on our new web site. Your feedback and suggestions have been both helpful and encouraging. We invite you to explore our site, read or download articles from *Disarmament Forum*, search our publication and activities databases, comment on our 'roundtable' papers, and subscribe to UNIDIR Highlights so you will be notified by email when the latest issue of *Disarmament Forum* is online!

We share with you our hopes for a more peaceful and secure 2003.

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