

## EDITOR'S NOTE

Since 11 September 2001, the concept of nuclear terrorism no longer seems far-fetched. Scenarios such as a suicide attack on a nuclear power plant or a 'dirty bomb' detonated in an urban area have been played out in the media, by government officials and experts—sometimes in an alarmist fashion and often generating more questions than answers. Are dirty bombs nuclear weapons? Are terrorists capable of building a nuclear weapon? Could they buy one? There seems to be widespread uncertainty concerning the capabilities of terrorists and the threat posed by them. In this issue of *Disarmament Forum*, experts examine terrorist capabilities and means, distinguish hype from real concerns, and propose arms control responses.

Arms control can make vital contributions to reducing the opportunities for nuclear terrorism. Initiatives ranging from verification and transparency measures to new treaties could promote more secure materials and facilities, as well as increased confidence in that protection. Greater awareness of the possibility of terrorists developing or using nuclear weapons or radiological devices has resulted in renewed attention on activities to develop and strengthen countermeasures to protect nuclear weapons, materials and facilities.

The next issue of *Disarmament Forum* will consider the linkages between disarmament and development through the lens of a specific weapon: landmines. Landmines pose significant challenges to post-conflict reconstruction and economic development in numerous countries around the world. This issue will explore the synergistic relationship between disarmament and development, and contribute to our understanding of how these dual objectives can be implemented in tandem on the ground.

As part of its commitment to disarmament and non-proliferation education UNIDIR is sponsoring an exhibition entitled 'Linus Pauling and the Twentieth Century' at the Palais des Nations. Held to coincide with the NPT Preparatory Commission, the exhibition examines the life of one of the world's best-known scientists and peace activists. In his lifetime, Linus Pauling received both the Nobel Prize in chemistry (1954) for his work on chemical bonds and the Nobel Peace Prize (1962) for his courageous fight against nuclear-weapons testing. In the context of changing security perceptions throughout the world, Pauling's fight against the inhumanity of nuclear weapons has never been more relevant.

This remarkable exhibition explores some of the most significant issues of our time: nuclear weapons, science and peace. Created through cooperation among Pauling's family, Oregon State University and Soka Gakkai International (SGI), its Geneva sponsors are UNIDIR, the University of Geneva and CERN.

Following its role as consultant to the 2001–2002 United Nations Panel of Governmental Experts on Missiles, UNIDIR, jointly with the Institut français des relations internationales (IFRI), held the seminar 'What Prospects for Missile Controls?' in Paris on 20–21 March 2003. The meeting provided an

opportunity for informal, off-the-record discussion of the challenges posed by the spread of missiles and the qualitative improvement of missile capabilities. For more information about the conference, see UNIDIR Focus on page 71.

UNIDIR, in cooperation with the governments of Japan and Australia, convened the meeting 'Promoting Verification in Multilateral Arms Control Treaties' on 28 March 2003 to examine the lessons learned from existing multilateral verification regimes and to explore how these lessons can be applied to the creation of a fissile materials treaty. The meeting, held at the Palais des Nations, was addressed by verification experts from international organizations, research institutes and government agencies with the aim of generating new ideas and identifying common ground among Conference on Disarmament delegations.

The Roundtable feature of UNIDIR's website ([www.unidir.org](http://www.unidir.org)) offers you an opportunity to participate in the work of the Institute in two different ways. E-di@logue is an electronic discussion, allowing users from around the world to explore disarmament, security and arms control issues interactively. Recently, e-di@logue participants have been discussing the conflict in Iraq and its ramifications for arms control and disarmament. 'For comment' papers are draft research papers posted online to stimulate discussion and feedback. You are welcome to send your thoughts, comments and critiques by e-mail (the contact information is noted in the 'for comment' paper). Your input will help us further refine or broaden our work. Feel free to circulate 'for comment' papers on an informal basis, but as they are drafts, they are not for citation.

While you are on the site, don't forget to sign up for UNIDIR Highlights. This feature will automatically send you a message to announce new UNIDIR publications, papers, meetings and conferences, as well as job opportunities.

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