

## EDITOR'S NOTE

This issue of *Disarmament Forum* focuses on the recently established Peacebuilding Commission. A robust and effective Peacebuilding Commission is in all of our interests. What can be done now, in its early stages, to support it and assist in its success? Contributors to this issue consider how the PBC can be strengthened by the whole of the international system, address maximizing the effectiveness of civil society engagement with the PBC, examine the challenges of peacebuilding coordination as well as identify possible challenges and opportunities in both the shorter and longer term. In this issue, we have placed particular emphasis on the valuable contribution that Geneva-based actors could make to the PBC. As Mr Sergei Ordzhonikidze, Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva and Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, has noted, "The rich presence here of United Nations entities, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, research and academic institutions—many of them with direct experience 'on the ground'—is an important asset, with significant potential for feeding into the deliberations of the Peacebuilding Commission."

Information and communication technologies are embedded in every aspect of our lives—from national security and defence, to infrastructures such as power and telecommunications, to entertainment and leisure. The next issue of *Disarmament Forum* will examine security of information and communication technology (ICT). Experts will explore the implications of cyberwarfare, information security, cyberterrorism, critical information infrastructure protection, legal aspects of cyberspace and information warfare on national and international security.

On 2–3 April, UNIDIR held the conference "Celebrating the Space Age: 50 Years of Space Technology, 40 Years of the Outer Space Treaty". This was our sixth annual conference on the issue of space security and the prevention of an arms race in outer space. This year's conference examined the historical importance of the Outer Space Treaty and considered its future. The current space security situation and different measures that can be taken to improve that situation (for example confidence-building measures and debris issues) were also discussed. The conference was attended by representatives from numerous Conference on Disarmament delegations, UN agencies, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and research institutes. As in previous years, UNIDIR will produce an edited volume of conference proceedings later in the year.

The UNIDIR research project "Disarmament as Humanitarian Action: Making Multilateral Negotiations Work" (DHA) examines current difficulties for the international community in tackling disarmament and arms control challenges. The project seeks to show how, in practical terms, new thinking can benefit those tasked with developing collective security goals in multilateral processes, in order to improve the security of human beings.

An important emphasis of the DHA project's work in 2007 is to communicate its research findings to multilateral practitioners, including diplomats, researchers and representatives of relevant international

and non-governmental organizations. As one element of these efforts, the DHA project created the Disarmament Insight initiative with the Geneva Forum ([www.geneva-forum.org](http://www.geneva-forum.org))—a joint initiative of UNIDIR, the Quaker United Nations Office and the Programme for Strategic and International Security Studies of the Graduate Institute of International Studies. This initiative is prompting constructive and creative engagement in the multilateral disarmament community through a range of activities, including workshops and online resources building on the previous work of both DHA and the Geneva Forum, respectively. One of the innovative elements of this collaboration is the Disarmament Insight blog ([www.disarmamentinsight.blogspot.com](http://www.disarmamentinsight.blogspot.com)), which includes links to podcasts of Disarmament Insight events.

This year marks the tenth anniversary of the Provisional Technical Secretariat of the CTBTO Preparatory Commission. In honour of this event, the Geneva Forum hosted the seminar “Verifying Compliance with the Nuclear Test Ban: 10 Years of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization” on 19 March 2007. Mr Tibor Tóth, Executive Secretary of the CTBTO, Ambassador Sha Zukang of China and Dr Patricia Lewis, Director of UNIDIR, discussed both the technical and political roles of this global verification regime as well as its future potential. The Geneva Forum seminar coincided with the CTBTO exhibit “Verifying the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban”. The exhibition details the unique verification regime of the CTBTO, with explanations of the International Monitoring System and the International Data Centre.

There is growing momentum within the international community to confront the issue of cluster munitions. In addition to the recent issue of *Disarmament Forum* dedicated to this topic (no. 4, 2006), UNIDIR has also published two short case studies of cluster munition use and consequences, *Cluster Munitions in Albania and Lao PDR*. This work, supported by the UN Working Group on Cluster Munitions, explores the use and consequences of these weapons in Lao PDR and Albania. Both publications are available free from UNIDIR and are posted on our web site. In addition, UNIDIR’s ongoing project examining practitioners’ perspectives on cluster munition use has just finished its case studies on Cambodia and Lebanon. A publication on this topic will be produced later in the year.

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