

## EDITOR'S NOTE

After a period of being overlooked by many in the international community, Central Asia is once again at the centre of many security and development issues. While some refer to a renaissance of the Great Game, others stress the very contemporary security challenges faced by the region. A region rich in resources, it is also a region of fragile states, disputed borders, resource conflicts and trans-regional threats.

"Central Asia at the Crossroads" explores regional security interests, border and natural resource issues, small arms stockpiles, and sources of internal instability and conflict. It looks at how external influences are affecting the conflicting drives among Central Asian states to compete, or to cooperate, to resolve their security challenges.

The next issue of *Disarmament Forum* will consider the contribution of arms control measures to Middle Eastern peace and security. The issue will revisit ACRS to see what lessons from this groundbreaking process could have relevance today. The issue will also consider development of a regional cooperative security framework, as well as proposals for a WMD-free zone. The non-proliferation implications of the resurgence of interest in civilian nuclear power will also be discussed.

Once again, UNIDIR had a very active presence in New York for the annual First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly. UNIDIR Director Dr Patricia Lewis spoke twice during the thematic debate (on nuclear weapons and on UN disarmament structures and forums). UNIDIR held side events on space security (co-sponsored with the Global Security Institute and the Governments of the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation), information security (sponsored with the Government of the Russian Federation) and the views of Member States on an Arms Trade Treaty. For a thorough overview of the issues discussed in the First Committee and their outcomes, it is worth reading Reaching Critical Will's *First Committee Monitor* at <[www.reachingcriticalwill.org](http://www.reachingcriticalwill.org)>.

This year's First Committee was also the occasion to launch the Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Education portal on the UN Cyberschoolbus web site. The site, developed by the UN Department of Public Information, in cooperation with the Office for Disarmament Affairs, includes age-appropriate educational resources for intermediate and secondary school students and their teachers on nuclear disarmament, small arms and light weapons, and landmines. Visit <[www.cyberschoolbus.un.org/dnp](http://www.cyberschoolbus.un.org/dnp)>.

A collaboration between UNIDIR's Disarmament as Humanitarian Action project and the Geneva Forum, known as Disarmament Insight, encourages "outside the box thinking" on multilateral disarmament and arms control issues. Disarmament Insight has held several events this year to which specialists from a range of disciplines have been invited to speak on topics of relevance to arms control practitioners. We are delighted that podcasts of several of the presentations are now available.

Dr Philip Ball, author of the best-selling book *Critical Mass: How One Thing Leads to Another*, talks about the physics of social behaviour. Professor Paul Seabright, author of *The Company of Strangers: a Natural History of Economic Life*, discusses what is known about levels of violence since prehistoric times as part of a presentation entitled "How Have Human Beings Tamed Our Warring Instincts?". And Professor Frans de Waal, one of the world's foremost primatologists, explores what multilateral practitioners can learn from our closest relatives in the animal kingdom about negotiating, the nature of conflict and reconciliation in his talk "War and Peace and Primates". You can listen to these podcasts and others by connecting to <[www.disarmamentinsight.blogspot.com](http://www.disarmamentinsight.blogspot.com)>—and don't forget to read the latest post on the Disarmament Insight blog while you're there!

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