

UNIDIR FOCUS

NEW PUBLICATION

Celebrating the Space Age: 50 Years of Space Technology, 40 Years of the Outer Space Treaty

This year marks not only the fortieth anniversary of the Outer Space Treaty but also the fiftieth anniversary of the launch by the Soviet Union on 4 October 1957 of the world's first artificial satellite. Sputnik I ushered in the space age and paved the way for technological and scientific progress.

Today, there are hundreds of satellites in various orbits and space-based assets have rapidly become a crucial element in our daily lives. This growing and ever more diverse use of outer space has brought with it legitimate concerns about the security of space-based assets and generated much-needed debate—including in the Conference on Disarmament—about the nature of space security.

Outer space is most certainly wealth of enormous potential—almost the entire world depends on communications via satellite, the poorest of people now have their local and regional economies empowered by wireless technology, farmers in developing and developed countries alike check weather conditions and market prices daily online, and health care and education reaches people who otherwise would be unreachable. Space debris from accidental or deliberate collisions and the weaponization of space would halt all such important developments.

The challenge today is to preserve both the security of outer space objects and the unrestricted access to outer space by all nations. The 2007 conference "Celebrating the Space Age: 50 Years of Space Technology, 40 Years of the Outer Space Treaty" is the sixth conference held by UNIDIR on the issue of space security, the peaceful uses of outer space and the prevention of an arms race in outer space. This volume features the conference report as well as presentations from the conference.

Participants at the conference reflected on the anniversaries celebrated in 2007 and how the Space Age has shaped, and continues to shape, the world of today. The necessity of making human use of outer space sustainable was a common theme, and there were discussions of the challenges and threats faced by all states in this regard. Various understandings of and approaches to space security were put forward, as well as concrete proposals on how to guarantee that outer space is preserved as an environment to be used peacefully by humankind, for the good of humankind.

In each issue of *Disarmament Forum*, UNIDIR Focus highlights one activity of the Institute, outlining the project's methodology, recent research developments or its outcomes. UNIDIR Focus also describes a new UNIDIR publication. You can find summaries and contact information for all of the Institute's present and past activities, as well as sample chapters of publications and ordering information, online at <www.unidir.org>.

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ACTIVITY

Analysis of States' Views on an Arms Trade Treaty

At the Sixty-first General Assembly in 2006, a resolution was adopted that called on the Secretary-General to seek Member States' views on the development of an Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) and to establish a group of governmental experts to commence work on such a treaty in 2008.

Following adoption of the resolution, the Secretary-General invited Member States to submit their views on the feasibility, scope and draft parameters of a legally binding instrument establishing common international standards for the import, export and transfer of conventional weapons. More than 80 states have provided submissions. The Secretary-General delivered a report on the results of this consultation process to the General Assembly at its Sixty-second session.

With the assistance of the Governments of Finland and the United Kingdom, UNIDIR is undertaking a two-part study involving an in-depth analysis of states' views on an ATT. The first part of the study provided a statistical overview of states' views, identifying the central ideas and dominant themes. The analysis was presented at a side-event of the First Committee of the Sixty-second General Assembly.

The second part of the study will identify divergent approaches to an ATT, discuss the implications of specific proposals, and explore regulatory alternatives in the development of an ATT. This analysis will be presented at a meeting of practitioners and experts in December 2007.

UNIDIR's two-part study will allow Member States and experts to compare the information and proposals contained in states' views on an ATT across themes, countries and regions, as well as through statistical clustering. UNIDIR's analysis will advance discussions on an ATT through identification of areas of consensus and divergence, as well as neglected areas. The study's examination of the possible scope of a future treaty will serve as a useful input to the group of governmental experts tasked to meet in 2008.

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