

EDITOR'S NOTE

This issue of *Disarmament Forum* explores options for a new arms control dialogue in the Middle East. Authors analyse the current security dilemma facing the region, including the nuclear question—while some states are advocating the creation of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction throughout the Middle East, others seem intent on nuclearization. Would, for example, a regional approach to the nuclear fuel cycle lessen non-proliferation fears while permitting greater reliance on nuclear energy? Also in this issue, lessons are drawn from the last official dialogue on arms control—the Arms Control and Regional Security Working Group—which stalled in 1995, and ongoing diplomatic efforts in the region are examined, with a view to potential future arms control activities.

Issue 3, 2008 of *Disarmament Forum* will focus on the "hot topic" of uranium weapons. Between calls for a moratorium on uranium weapon use and assurances from national and international sources that these weapons are safe and have valuable military utility, there is both uncertainty and confusion amongst decision makers and the wider public on the scientific and legal debates at hand. What exactly are these weapons and what is their perceived utility? What legal regimes are applicable to their use? What are the known and suspected health and environmental effects? What sort of research needs to be undertaken to have a more complete view of the issues?

UNIDIR was extremely active during the Second Session of the Preparatory Committee (PrepCom) for the 2010 Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), held in Geneva from 28 April to 9 May. On 30 April, with the support of the Government of Japan, UNIDIR held a seminar on "Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Education", which featured the testimony of two *hibakusha*, as well as educators who focus on this issue. We invite you to listen to the moving and inspiring presentations from this seminar, which are available in streaming audio or download from our web site.

On 2 May, UNIDIR held two seminars: "A Fissile Material (Cutoff) Treaty and Its Verification: Progress Report from the International Panel on Fissile Materials", with the International Panel on Fissile Materials; and "Working toward a World Free of Nuclear Weapons", with the Government of Norway and the Nuclear Threat Initiative. On 7 May, the seminar "The Entry into Force of the CTBT: New Opportunities?" offered the opportunity to discuss the renewed prospects for entry into force, and to present the initial results of a UNIDIR research project on the history of the CTBT negotiations and the future of the treaty.

The bloggers at Disarmament Insight (www.disarmamentinsight.blogspot.com) have been very active during the NPT PrepCom and the Oslo negotiations to ban cluster munitions. Check out their informative posts and links to valuable related resources—and come back often!

After over ten years as Director of UNIDIR, Dr Patricia Lewis will be leaving the Institute in August. A humanitarian and scientist, Patricia has focused UNIDIR's activities on building a more secure world for all of its inhabitants. Her conviction in the power and importance of dialogue, as well as her ability to listen, has enabled her to bring individuals holding a range of perspectives together to work toward this goal. Patricia's passion, strength and warmth have characterized all aspects of these endeavours. She was an integral part of the conception and launch of *Disarmament Forum* in 1999 and has offered constant support to the *Disarmament Forum* team. On a personal level, I feel honoured to have had the opportunity to have worked alongside her and learned from her, and to be able to call her both a mentor and a friend. All of us at UNIDIR look forward to continuing to collaborate with her in her new capacity of Deputy Director and Scientist in Residence at the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies at the Monterey Institute of International Studies.

Kerstin Vignard