

EU Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Next Generation Follow-Up Events 13 APRIL 2021

Comments from Networking Session

Question 1: What do you think are the most pressing challenges in non-proliferation, arms control, and disarmament?

- **Promotion of accountability, verification, transparency.** A growing number of rules should be modified to keep up with new trends and risks. Better implementation of existing legislation, conventions and treaties should be promoted, with adequate monitoring mechanisms for proper implementation, also ensuring transparency. International instruments – as CWC and BIO – should be updated and secured, as they are not addressing current developments.
- **Compliance.** A pressing challenge is posed by the fact that superpowers have the tendency to not comply with the established rules, even withdrawing from treaties. The NPT and its Article X are an example (the DPRK case and the danger of chain reaction).
- **Political tensions and crisis of multilateralism.** Interstate diplomacy setbacks while great powers tensions increase the risk of miscalculations and escalation. Geopolitical tensions are growing. Cooperation and multilateralism appear in contrast with the on-the-ground reality, marked by extreme arms races, competition and fragmentation – caused also by the increased number of actors. New and more effective international approaches need to be found in order to enhance the capability to work together. Emphasis should be put on the NPT Review Conference in August 2021 and the lack of progresses on nuclear disarmament (the decision of the UK was mentioned in this regard): the TPNW is a positive and welcomed development, but challenges could be raised at the NPT Review Conference (not least in terms of finding an agreement on the outcome document and a way to refer to the TPNW).
- **Civil society.** There is a lack of involvement of the civil society, together with a lack of public discussion around WMD risks which could push governments to change their policy. Creating spaces where policymakers can provide feedback/reality checks on civil society ideas might be a positive solution.
- **Private actors.** How to deal with the increasing role of private actors is a pressing challenge. ISO standards are not fit for the purpose of non-proliferation.

- **Borders' arms control.** There is a need for proper license: different countries have different rules, that need to be overcome by more homogeneous regulations. The existing gaps should be understood and eradicated. One of the more striking examples is the African one (ex. ISIL shift from the Middle East to Africa).
- **AI and new techniques.** Innovation in this field poses increasing risks, emerging notably from the cyber domain. Advancements in various technological fields can have a negative impact on nuclear non-proliferation and arms control.
- **Intersectionality.** There is a need to focus more on the intersectionality among different fields, also addressing intersectional threats (e.g. former nuclear test site just covered with a layer of concrete – layer starting to break, dissolve and is filtering into the ocean).
- **Gender dimension.** A gender dimension is generally lacking when discussing conflicts – especially when looking at ethnic conflicts or the impact of sanctions. The glorification of masculinity has to be contrasted.
- **Silos in the field & disappearing natural barriers.** Silos in the field pose increasing risks and it should be discussed how to break them down. Moreover, due to climate change, natural barriers are dissolving facilitating dangerous phenomena as the spread of pandemics. These biothreats should properly be addressed, bridging the divide among these issues and the ongoing discussion on export controls and controls of pathogens.
- **Misinformation.** Fake news, political propaganda, secrecy and scandals (white helmets) make it difficult to recognize sources of trustworthy information on non-proliferation issues. This is often exacerbated by a lack of engagement of scientists.
- **Education.** All over the world, WMD courses at University are lacking, even among elective courses.
- **An attractive environment?** Unpaid internships, no entry level positions, little opportunities: the non-proliferation field should be more attractive for young scholars and professionals.

Question 2: How could the EU Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Consortium better engage the next generation?

- **Dialogue and interaction** are necessary. In particular, young people are passionate about climate change and disarmament: new opportunities should be offered at these intersections. It is moreover important to provide a holistic picture; not just focusing on risks and threats, but on benefits too.

- **Challenges for students and young professionals.** It can be difficult for interested students to find their feet in this field. Most of them struggle to find a starting point or to get to know available development opportunities – persistently perceived to be scarce. Create (well!) paid internships, facilitate entrance in entry/medium level positions would be important.
- **Involvement of the younger generation in negotiations.** Young people should be engaged in the decision-making process, they should have the chance to sit at the negotiation table in order to bring fresh thoughts and emerging voices. A positive example: in Finland, young people are in power. More efforts could moreover be made to create spaces where young experts and the policy community could meet as well as to create opportunities/channels for young experts to plug in new ideas (on how to address challenges in the field of NPD).
- **Mentorship and educational programs.** Such programmes should encourage interest in the government process as well as give young people the opportunity to spend time studying these issues in depth. Promoting capacity building is crucial, as well as the ability to address controversial questions openly, fostering diversity. To do so, “beginners’ sessions” (i.e., sessions where a researcher explains the basics and more recent issues) should be scheduled: this would help people to learn the basics issues, in particular if they are not enrolled in a specialist degree programme. E-learning modules might also be interesting in that regard, as travel can often be difficult: workshops could be organised on a regular base, possibly covering a broad range of themes in NPD to provide an overview to emerging scholars. The Proliferation Awareness Training Courses Call can be useful and important to promote the engagement also of individuals from non-policy backgrounds. It is moreover important to emphasize the role of education and finding the right moment to inspire and capture the imagination. The approach of such programmes should be as interactive as possible. YWNPD Mentorship Programme and YWNGI have been considered positive and successful programmes, to expand in order to reach as many people as possible.
- **Networking opportunities.** Workshops should be organised to facilitate cross-sector collaboration and training between STEM and policy students/young professionals. The Consortium has done a good job at keeping in touch participants to different programmes – once you participated in one program, continue to be invited to other programs, making it easy to stay engaged. It would moreover be good to connect with other similar efforts (e.g. the Nuclear Fusion Project was mentioned, a Slack channel where a lot of job opportunities in the field are shared and where virtual networking happy hours are regularly organized). Generate cohorts to encourage group feeling and a cohesive network could also help.

- **Young publishers.** Opportunities should be created for young people to publish and to work together on specific policy projects. Essay competitions and awards, conference papers and other opportunities to present and publish would be welcomed.
- **Boosting your career.** The creation of a publicly available depository website (“career prospectus”) would be interesting. It should collect:
 - available short courses, BA/MA/PhD programmes, mentoring programmes in the field;
 - Introductory literature (articles explaining the basics; articles discussing recent issues; Top 5 background materials on a topic one should read to get the basics);
 - Guidance on available career paths in the field (with separate sections for policy and STEM students);
 - Lists of experts in Europe;
 - Guidance on the key organizations in the field;
 - Guidance on how young people can contribute to the public debate on the issues and to the field more generally.
- **Contrast disinformation.** Disinformation can lead young people to join radical organizations. There is a need to eradicate disinformation, educating young people in non-proliferation, disarmament, and other fields.
- **Engage with industry and practitioners.** It could be useful to invite industry to events: it is motivating to attend events when you know a future employer values the project. Also promoting events featuring practitioners in the field – diplomats or representatives from Agencies or International Organizations – would be a unique opportunity to meet them and ask them questions. It is indeed crucial to create opportunities for early career researchers to connect, engage and exchange with policymakers, also building lines of communication between governments, experts and civil society.
- **Promote engagement at the University.** There is a lack of societies/groups/organizations focused on non-proliferation and disarmament at Universities. People are less exposed to the topic during their studies, it might be important to reach out especially to bachelor students. Practical strategies to contact and connect with universities – depending on the specificity of the targeted context – might be to reach out to student associations/organizations (when existing) or to contact a professor, possibly proposing the organisation of a lecture on these topics. The selection of student ambassadors could also help champion the work of the EUNPDC and share information about different events and activities. They could be selected from the mentorship programme or other longer duration programmes. Engagement with universities would moreover be useful to allow to better advertise the initiative promoted by the Consortium.

- **Work with advocacy groups.** Students are often engaged with advocacy groups like ICAN: it could be interesting to promote joint events or outreach. The Consortium could also engage with WILPF – German – Disarmament section.
- **Gender perspective.** Events on the gender aspect and gender roles of women in resolving conflict would be appreciated.
- **Promoting the EUNPDC Newsletter.** A better promotion of the EUNPDC Newsletter would be positive: many in the group did not know of the Newsletter. A possibility might be to send around information to our YWNGI list on the newsletter.
- **Social Media.** Youth seems to use Twitter (notably science people) and LinkedIn (notably policy folks) the most to get their information.
- **Responsible science.** It is important to promote the dialogue on responsible science, not only on what scientists should do.
- **Diversity.** It is crucial not to involve only European people or Europeans views: they are only a small part of world views. The EU should include alliances with third countries that are leading in the research area in NPD.

Additional feedback from a former NextGen participant:

“The Next-Gen Workshop is a truly relevant space and a talent hotbed in the Non-proliferation scene. I keep encountering familiar faces that have taken part in the editions of the Next-Gen Workshops talking about international security, non-proliferation, arms control, disarmament, etc. The fact that the participants are chosen from all around the world and can present diverse perspectives and have different backgrounds, from my perspective, is what makes the NGW stand out from other initiatives”.



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