



Introduction

The Disarmament and International Security Committee, established in 1945, is known as the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly. It includes all UN Member States and it serves the purpose of addressing global peace and security challenges. The committee discusses matters such as armed conflicts, threats to international security, regulation of weapons, and strategy for international cooperation. The Committee also works closely with other parts of the UN disarmament system, including the United Nations Disarmament Commission and the Conference on Disarmament. DISEC discusses these issues and adopts recommendations for consideration by the General Assembly, rather than acting as a body that directly commands states. Currently, issues that have been included in DISEC's range of topics are outer space arms control, cyber warfare, and prevention of nuclear war.

The First Committee reports to two main bodies: The Disarmament Commission (UNDC), and the Conference on Disarmament (CD). The topics before DISEC this year focus on the changing nature of armed conflict and how the international community can prevent and respond to violence. Civil wars, political instability, militias, insurgencies, terrorist organizations, and other non-state armed groups are becoming more and more prevalent in modern conflicts alongside more traditional state militaries. These conflicts can be particularly challenging for the international community to manage, as they can spill across borders, involve attacks on civilians and employ tactics that were not designed to be tackled by traditional security institutions. At the same time, UN peacekeeping operations are increasingly expected to operate in unstable environments where active violence may continue even after a mission has been established.

Topic I: Strengthening international mechanisms for conflict prevention and early warning systems

Preventing armed conflict before it escalates into large-scale violence is an important component of maintaining international peace and security. Conflict escalation can lead to civilian casualties, displacement, economic destabilization, humanitarian crises, and regional insecurity. Early warning systems seek to identify signs that a conflict may be brewing, including political instability, spikes in human rights violations, displacement, intercommunal tensions, rising armed activity, or competition over resources. The United Nations and regional organizations can use this information to support preventive diplomacy, mediation, dialogue, and other peaceful responses before violence becomes widespread.



One of the major problems is that early warning does not necessarily result in early action. Governments can disagree about the seriousness of a threat, be reticent about sharing information or oppose outside involvement in their domestic affairs. Regional organizations, civil society groups and local communities may also possess valuable information not reaching international decision-makers in time. New technologies can help to collect and analyze information, but misinformation and unreliable information can also make it harder to know when a crisis is developing.

Delegates should reflect on how information can be better exchanged between the United Nations, Member States, regional organizations and local actors. They should also think about what should happen if an early warning signals a great risk. Better prevention may need better mediation, clearer procedures for responding to warnings, support for regional early warning systems and more participation from communities affected by conflict. But these mechanisms must also adhere to the sovereignty of states and not put the people who are giving information in danger.

Questions to Consider:

1. How can the United Nations, Member States, and regional organizations improve the collection and sharing of information about emerging conflicts?
2. What mechanisms could ensure that early warnings result in timely preventive action before violence escalates?
3. How can international early warning systems involve local communities and civil society while respecting state sovereignty?

Topic II: Recommendations for reforming UN peacekeeping mandates and operational effectiveness

Peacekeeping by the United Nations is an essential instrument for helping countries emerging from conflict to attain stability and good relations. Peacekeeping missions may monitor ceasefires, protect civilians, support political processes, assist humanitarian operations, promote human rights and help countries strengthen institutions after conflict depending on their mandates. But modern peacekeepers often work in complex environments where violence



continues, there are many armed groups working and there may be no complete peace agreement for them to maintain.

A major challenge is ensuring that peacekeeping mandates match the resources and conditions of individual missions. They get broad responsibilities but not enough personnel, equipment, funding, or intel to get it done. Peacekeepers face a lot of threats too, like attacks from armed groups, IEDs, and fake news. And civilians get targeted. This has sparked debates. Do missions need clearer mandates? Better training and gear? More tech? And should the UN, troop-contributing countries, host governments, and regional organizations work together more closely?

Peacekeeping reform needs to acknowledge that military and security measures can't bring lasting peace on its own. Missions are meant to back up political solutions, rather than be a permanent fix. So delegates should think about how missions can keep civilians safe, maintain security, and also support mediation and stronger national institutions. They're supposed to help with long-term peacebuilding, after all. Also, reform should deal with accountability and how peacekeepers interact with the communities they're supposed to protect.

Questions to Consider:

1. How can UN peacekeeping mandates be made clearer and more realistic while still allowing missions to respond effectively to threats against civilians?
2. What improvements in training, equipment, technology, funding, and cooperation could make peacekeeping operations more effective?
3. How can peacekeeping missions better support long-term political solutions and peacebuilding rather than becoming permanent responses to conflict?

Topic III: Addressing non-state armed groups and asymmetric warfare threats

Many contemporary conflicts involve non-state armed groups, including militias, insurgent movements, terrorist organizations, separatist groups, and other armed actors operating outside the official military forces of recognized states. They may vastly vary in their strategies, management, and relationships with civilians. Non-state armed groups, from large networks to decentralized cells, have proliferated globally, with 2023 seeing the highest number of armed



conflicts since WWII. Some also operate across national borders or receive weapons, financing, training, or other support from outside actors. The United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute explains that NSAGs range from insurgent movements to violent extremist groups, often blending political, criminal, and ideological ideas.

Asymmetric warfare involves these groups exploiting gaps in state capacity, using guerrilla tactics, improvised explosive devices, attacks against infrastructure, and transnational networks. Asymmetric warfare occurs when a weaker actor uses these unconventional strategies to challenge a much stronger opponent. Armed groups may operate within civilian populations or across borders, creating additional difficulties for governments, humanitarian organizations, and UN peacekeeping missions. Military responses can also place civilians at risk or contribute to further instability if they do not address the broader conditions contributing to a conflict. International responses therefore may require a combination of security measures and longer-term political approaches.

Questions to Consider:

1. How can Member States cooperate to reduce the movement of weapons, financing, and other resources to non-state armed groups?
2. How should peacekeeping operations and national governments adapt to asymmetric threats while protecting civilians and respecting international law?
3. What combination of security measures, disarmament programs, political negotiations, and long-term peacebuilding can reduce the influence of non-state armed groups?