

Third Meeting of States Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons

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Peace and Disarmament Education and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons: Ways Forward

Working paper submitted by Soka Gakkai International (SGI)

I. Introduction

1. This working paper, written by Soka Gakkai International (SGI in collaboration with Dr. Agnieszka Nimark, Reppy Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies (Cornell University)¹, examines the current landscape in peace and disarmament education, particularly in regard to education about the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) and related issues. It begins to envision how various stakeholders of the TPNW can strengthen peace and disarmament education to advance the Treaty and usher in a world without nuclear weapons.

2. This paper builds on the previous working papers on disarmament education by SGI submitted to the First and Second Meetings of States Parties to the TPNW in 2022 and 2023 respectively², which emphasized the role of peace and disarmament education in universalizing the TPNW and implementing the Vienna Action Plan, and stressed the importance of education and awareness raising about the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons.

3. The importance of peace and disarmament education is enshrined in the preamble of the TPNW, which states: “Recognizing also the importance of peace and disarmament education in all its aspects and of raising awareness of the risks and consequences of nuclear weapons for current and future generations, and committed to the dissemination of the principles and norms of this Treaty...”.

4. Despite positive developments in the field, there are gaps that need to be addressed, if the TPNW States Parties were to uphold their commitment to the dissemination of the principles and norms of the Treaty through education. First, in the overall landscape of peace and disarmament education, the TPNW is yet to be recognized widely as an important pillar of the disarmament architecture. Learners

¹ We thank *Senzatomica* for their inputs, and Dr. Matthew Bolton of Pace University for his comments.

² Soka Gakkai International and International Disarmament Institute, Pace University (2022). *Including Peace and Disarmament Education in Implementing Universalization Obligations under Article 12*. [TPNW/MSP/2022/NGO/32](#); Soka Gakkai International (2023). *The Role of Peace and Disarmament Education in Advancing the Vienna Action Plan*. [TPNW/MSP/2023/NGO/18](#).

are more likely to be introduced to topics such as nuclear deterrence and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), than the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons and the TPNW. Second, there is a lack of a comprehensive educational platform, which means that excellent resources and materials developed by various stakeholders are not currently reaching a wide range of audiences and educators. In addition, certain themes such as gender, colonialism, and connections with the climate crisis are not sufficiently explored.

5. An ongoing Youth Peace Awareness Survey conducted in five countries affected by nuclear weapons³ demonstrates that young people generally do not believe nuclear weapons are necessary for maintaining global peace and security. At the same time, only 39% of the survey participants so far responded they know about the TPNW, while 48% have just heard of the name, and 13% indicated they did not know.

6. With the worrying trends of the heightened threats of the use of nuclear weapons, potential for nuclear proliferation, and unquestioned reliance on nuclear deterrence among nuclear-weapon and nuclear-dependent states, it is critical that the States Parties and other stakeholders of the TPNW engage in intentional and coordinated efforts in advancing peace and disarmament education to solidify global norms for nuclear disarmament and abolition. Thus the aim of this paper is to identify opportunities for such educational efforts, in order to effectively use our collective knowledge and resources toward the shared goal.

II. Current Landscape of Peace and Disarmament Education

7. There are a plethora of disarmament education resources and opportunities being offered at various levels and in many different forms, ranging from formal school programs and curricula to online materials and non-formal education geared towards the public. In addition, there are ongoing efforts to identify and document such vast amounts of resources. For instance, in June 2024 the Reppy Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies convened and launched a Working Group on Nuclear Disarmament Education, where SGI participates.

8. The establishment of the working group was inspired by the idea that the history of nuclear technologies is a history of global inequality and injustice—including colonial dispossession and environmental contamination. However, these injustices are largely obscured in teaching and public discourse about nuclear weapons, which instead emphasize the role that super-powers play in deterring war through nuclear arsenals. This narrative has been institutionalized in the curricula of most international relations and strategic studies programs and helps to support the continuation of policies to maintain and even expand nuclear weapons programs today. The goal of the Working Group on Nuclear Disarmament Education is to lay the groundwork for advancing understanding of more diverse perspectives on nuclear weapons.

9. The United Nations continues to be a leading entity in advancing nuclear disarmament education. The United Nations Disarmament Education Strategy (2022)⁴ states that “the critical role of disarmament education has long been recognized as an

³ Co-created by members of the following organizations: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) Kazakhstan, International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW), Marshallese Educational Initiative (MEI), Qazaq Nuclear Frontline Coalition (QNFC), Soka Gakkai International (SGI), this survey examines the degree of knowledge and awareness of the survey participants about nuclear weapons and what kind of action they are taking or considering taking. The data collection started in January and will continue until mid-2025. As of 12 February 2025, 1,351 youth (ages 18-35) responded, including 906 from Japan, 284 from Kazakhstan, 106 from the United States, 45 from Australia, and 10 from the Marshall Islands.

⁴ United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (2022). “[Disarmament Education Strategy](#)”.

important means of promoting a culture of peace and non-violence and advancing the disarmament, non-proliferation, and arms control goals of the United Nations”. The launch of the Disarmament Education Strategy took place on 30 March 2023⁵, at a virtual event devoted to the centrality of partnerships in disarmament education efforts. The Strategy recognizes the need for developing a new disarmament education partnership. Alongside mainstreaming disarmament in broader educational efforts, UNODA is also committed to link up disarmament education experts at global and regional levels in a new form of disarmament education partnership. Such a network, according to the UNODA strategy, would allow for more systemic and cross-regional sharing of best practices and methodologies in disarmament education, help identify priorities for disarmament education activities and broaden the pool of available experts from diverse backgrounds available to contribute to the development and delivery of disarmament education tools and initiatives targeting different beneficiary groups. UNODA believes that a broad partnership of actors engaged in analyzing new trends in education could provide practical, viable recommendations for action.

10. Over the last few years, UNODA created new resources and fellowships and broadened the scope of its educational efforts. The new Disarmament Education Dashboard⁶ became a global online learning platform providing a variety of resources for learning. The platform provides some online self-paced courses⁷ on: Humanitarian Approaches to Nuclear Disarmament, New and Emerging Technologies and Nuclear Weapons, Youth and Nuclear Disarmament and NPT, to mention a few.

11. UNODA also began its Youth4Disarmament⁸ initiative in 2019, creating a diverse network of young people interested in disarmament through events, training opportunities, a dedicated website, and social media outreach, facilitated by the support from the Republic of Korea, Japan, Germany and Kazakhstan.

12. An innovative learning programme Youth Leader Fund for a World Without Nuclear Weapons⁹, coordinated by UNODA and funded by Japan, was launched in December 2023. The program aims to equip young participants with the knowledge, skills and the network essentials to join global efforts for the elimination of nuclear weapons. At the inaugural Youth Leader Conference¹⁰ hosted by UNODA and the government of Japan in Hiroshima young leaders presented and adopted a Declaration for a World without Nuclear Weapons (“DeclarACTION”)

III. Positive Trends and Good Work Being Done — At the UN and Beyond

13. As mentioned earlier, there are growing numbers of resources and opportunities to learn about the realities of nuclear weapons, as well as the roles of multilateral efforts and international treaties to mitigate the risks of such weapons. Some assess that the public interests in nuclear policies have also increased in recent years, due to a multitude of factors such as heightened geopolitical tensions and increased media

⁵ Ibid (2023). “UNODA celebrates its first-ever Disarmament Education Strategy with global event”.

⁶ Visit: <https://education.unoda.org>.

⁷ Visit: <https://www.disarmamenteducation.org/#/en/courses>.

⁸ Visit: <https://www.youth4disarmament.org>.

⁹ Visit: <https://www.disarmamenteducation.org/#/en/resources/thematic-areas/798?keyWord=Youth%20dimensions>.

¹⁰ United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (2024). “YLF Participants Organize the Youth Leader Conference”.

coverage on the issue.¹¹ There also has been an increase of activities among the UN member states in highlighting the importance of disarmament education at the multilateral fora.

14. The Vienna Action Plan, adopted at the First Meeting of States Parties to the TPNW, outlined specific ways in which States Parties could fulfill the treaty's recognition of "the importance of peace and disarmament education in all its aspects" through awareness-raising, learning, information sharing and other activities that include educational components.¹²

15. At the Second Meeting of States Parties to the TPNW, several documents referenced the role of disarmament education, including the Report of the informal facilitators to further explore and articulate the possible areas of tangible cooperation between the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, and other relevant nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation instruments¹³, and a working paper by the Holy See¹⁴.

16. A record number of submissions were made in 2024 to the UN Secretary-General reporting on implementation of the recommendations of the 2002 UN study on disarmament and non-proliferation education, four times the number of States submitted reports compared with 2022. It was also the first time in 20 years that a Permanent Member of the Security Council (the United States) made a submission.

17. The "Pact for the Future", adopted at the Summit of the Future in September 2024, included Action 25 focusing explicitly on achieving a world free of nuclear weapons and Action 26 expressing commitment to "uphold disarmament obligations and commitments." While the document does not specifically reference disarmament education, it includes actions that would be facilitated by educational efforts, such as its commitment to "strengthening the disarmament and non-proliferation architecture and work to prevent any erosion of existing international norms and take all possible steps to prevent nuclear war."

18. Affected communities play important roles in raising awareness of the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons and the need for disarmament. The 2024 Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to Nihon Hidankyo, the Japan Confederation of A- and H-Bomb Sufferers Organizations, "for demonstrating through witness testimony that nuclear weapons must never be used again."¹⁵ Filmmakers of new nuclear-age documentaries were among the 2024 Arms Control Person(s) of the Year Nominees, for their work in highlighting the devastating and long term human and environmental health effects of U.S. and Soviet Cold War-era nuclear weapons testing in areas such as New Mexico, United States, and Semey, Kazakhstan. Their participation and sharing of their lived experiences have been instrumental throughout the formation, negotiation and implementation of the TPNW, as well as raising the public awareness about the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons and urgency of nuclear disarmament. The voices of the survivors and those affected by nuclear weapons must be amplified in educational settings at all levels.

¹¹ Adrienne Lynett. (2024). "Arms Control Advocates Have Increased Voiceshare, Media Audit Finds." *ReThink Media*.

¹² Some of the points below were informed by Matthew Bolton (2024). "Youth and Disarmament Education." First Committee Briefing Book / 2024.

¹³ Ireland and Thailand (2023). *Report of the informal facilitators to further explore and articulate the possible areas of tangible cooperation between the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, and other relevant nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation instruments*. [TPNW/MSP/2023/5](#).

¹⁴ The Holy See (2023). *Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons: towards an ethic of disarmament*. [TPNW/MSP/2023/WP.1](#).

¹⁵ The Norwegian Nobel Institute (2024). "Press Release." *The Nobel Prize*.

19. Academic institutions such as Middlebury Institute of International Studies are providing programs for their students to learn about the TPNW, including opportunities to listen to diplomats who have engaged in the Treaty process. Pace University's International Disarmament Institute is another example of an academic institution that engages with the UN disarmament fora including the TPNW, bringing students to the negotiations and MSPs.

20. At grassroots levels, educational art projects provide a great vehicle for awareness raising and basic education of broader audiences. For example, the nationwide university tour of *the bomb*¹⁶ installation began in the fall of 2024, starting at Princeton University¹⁷. The tour will bring the bomb to academic institutions over the course of a year, provoking discussion about the nuclear threat.

21. In Italy, *Senzatomica*¹⁸—a youth-led campaign promoting nuclear disarmament, peace, and education within the Italian society—has carried out the exhibition “*Senzatomica, transforming the human spirit for a world free from nuclear weapons*”, reaching 80 cities and over 420,000 visitors (of whom 40% were students) over the past 10 years. The experience at the exhibition serves as an educational tool for all age ranges with particular attention to elementary, middle and high school students. In each city where the exhibition is hosted, hundreds of volunteers are trained to accompany visitors, making them aware, as common citizens, of their potential to act, dialogue and spread knowledge about nuclear disarmament. The TPNW plays the *fil rouge* of the whole experience of the experience, featuring its history and the leading role played by the civil society movement towards its realization.

22. The new version of the exhibition has already drawn more than 50,000 visitors since November 2023, including around 17,000 students, demonstrating strong public interest in the issue of nuclear abolition. In 2023 and 2024, *Senzatomica* also organized a gathering with 1,000 youth called *Senzatomica Revolution Talks: I disarm the future*. Featuring activists, journalists and artists, the goal of the event is to transmit campaign messages to young people and therefore inform them about nuclear disarmament and the TPNW as well as the education of peace, thus creating hope and courage. To spread the themes of peace education and nuclear disarmament in Italian schools, *Senzatomica* has developed a residential training course aimed at teachers of all school levels from various Italian regions. In 2023, the first teacher training course developed by *Senzatomica* on peace education and nuclear disarmament was recognized by the Italian Ministry of Education.

IV. Recommendations

TPNW States Parties

23. We recommend that the States Parties to the TPNW consider the following at the Third Meeting of the States Parties and beyond:

- (a) Articulate in statements and any outcome documents of the TPNW Meetings of States Parties that peace and disarmament education is a key element of fulfilling obligations under the Treaty;
- (b) Endeavor to integrate information on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons and the role of TPNW as a pillar of disarmament architecture in educational curriculums where possible;

¹⁶ Visit: <https://www.thebombnow.com/theinstallationtour>.

¹⁷ Princeton University Office of Communications (2024). “*SPIA exhibit and programming are directing attention to nuclear weapons as a scholarly and policy issue.*” Princeton University.

¹⁸ Visit: <https://senzatomica.it>.

(c) Provide funding and institutional support to international organizations, associations of survivors and affected communities, civil society, and educational institutions promoting peace and disarmament education, particularly regarding the TPNW and the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons;

(d) Contribute to the Secretary-General's report on Disarmament and Non-proliferation Education.

United Nations

24. We recommend that the UN should:

(a) Expand the platform and resources on peace and disarmament education, such as the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs' Disarmament Education Dashboard, as a comprehensive platform for information related to peace and disarmament education;

(b) Conduct a new UN study on disarmament and non-proliferation education (updating the study conducted in 2002)¹⁹.

Civil Society and Academic

25. We recommend that civil society organizations and academic institutions:

(a) Conduct mapping studies to assess current landscape of peace and disarmament education in key regions and countries;

(b) Improve coordination among civil society actors who engage in nuclear disarmament activities to create synergies and encourage information sharing, as well as collaboration with organizations working on related issues such as climate change to avoid siloing of the issue;

(c) Invest in creative efforts such as art and pop culture as a tool for reaching out to and educating broader audiences.

¹⁹ The General Assembly, in its [Resolution 55/33 E](#) of 20 November 2000, requested the UN Secretary General to prepare, with the assistance of a group of qualified governmental experts, a study on disarmament and non-proliferation education and training. The resulting study was presented as the [Report of the Secretary General A/57/124 of 30 August 2002](#). The report provided a first definition and the overall objectives of the education and training programs in this field, as well as some recommendations on various issues that needed to be addressed.