



United Nations Office
for Disarmament Affairs

Disarmament week

24 – 30
October



2024 PHOTO EXHIBITION

PHOTO CATALOGUE

What do we celebrate during Disarmament Week?

Disarmament Week seeks to promote **awareness** and better **understanding** of **disarmament issues** and their cross-cutting importance. Its annual observance was first called for in the **Final Document of the General Assembly's 1978** special session on disarmament.

Why does disarmament matter?

Disarmament has been at the heart of the United Nations system of collective security since its foundation. The very **first General Assembly resolution** in 1946 called for the **elimination of atomic** and other **weapons of mass destruction**.

Measures for disarmament are pursued for many reasons, including to maintain **international peace and security**, uphold the principles of **humanity**, foster **confidence** and **trust** among **States**, and **prevent** and **end armed conflict**. Disarmament and arms control measures also contribute to the realization of broader agendas and frameworks, including the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**.



What threats do weapons pose?

Weapons of mass destruction, in particular **nuclear weapons**, continue to be of primary concern, due to the **existential threat** they pose to humanity. The **accumulation** and **illicit trafficking** in **conventional weapons** jeopardize international peace and security and sustainable development, while the use of **explosive weapons in populated areas** endangers civilian lives and infrastructure. New and **emerging weapon technologies**, such as lethal autonomous weapons, further risk imperiling global security.

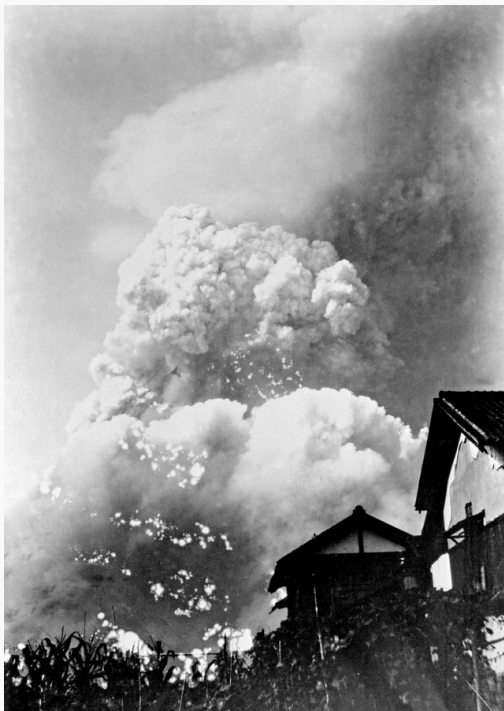
DISARMAMENT IS AT THE HEART OF THE UNITED NATIONS.

The United Nations General Assembly met for the first time in 1946, in Central Hall on Parliament Square in London. The image depicts UK Prime Minister Clement Attlee, addressing the opening session. Established in 1945 under the Charter of the United Nations, the General Assembly occupies a central position as the chief deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the United Nations. Its very first resolution established a commission of the UN Security Council to ensure (1) the 'control of atomic energy to ensure its use only for peaceful purposes,' and (2) 'the elimination from national armaments of atomic weapons and all other major weapons adaptable to mass destruction.' As such, disarmament is at the heart of the United Nations.

© UN Photo/AP



During the Cold War, more than 60,000 nuclear weapons threatened the world.



In 1945, two nuclear bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, causing these famous nuclear clouds above the cities. Since then, the world has worked towards the elimination of these weapons of mass destruction.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) was signed in the midst of the Cold War. It is a landmark international treaty whose objective is to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and weapons technology, as well as to promote the peaceful uses of nuclear technology and to advance nuclear disarmament.

Though modernization of such weapons has continued, and their destructive power has increased, the world has significantly reduced its nuclear arsenals since the Cold War.

Nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control is made up of a web of multilateral, regional, and bilateral treaties and agreements.

© UN Photo/Mitsuo Matsushige

NUMEROUS ARMS CONTROL AGREEMENTS WERE REACHED AMONG THE BIGGEST NUCLEAR POWERS DURING THE COLD WAR.

"Good Defeats Evil" is a bronze sculpture by Soviet/Russian painter and sculptor Zurab Tsereteli (1934 –) who is well-known for large structures. It depicts an allegorical St. George, astride a rearing horse, driving his lance through a dragon. The dragon is not the mythological beast of early Christian tradition, but rather represents the vanquishing of nuclear war through a historic treaty between the Soviet Union and the United States. Created as a monument to peace, the sculpture is composed of parts of actual United States and Soviet missiles. Accordingly, the dragon is shown lying amid actual fragments of these weapons, the broken pieces of Soviet SS-20 and U.S. Pershing missiles. The sculpture was unveiled on the 5th of October 1990 on the occasion of the 45th anniversary of the United Nations. It commemorates the 1987 signing of the Treaty on the Elimination of Intermediate-Range and Short-Range Nuclear Missiles (INF Treaty) and stands outside the UN Headquarters as a vivid symbol of nuclear arms control and disarmament.

© UN Photo/Evan Schneider





More than 12,000 nuclear weapons remain an existential threat.

The photo depicts survivors of the Hiroshima bomb who have received medical care. A few weeks after the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and other organizations began documenting the effects of the nuclear explosions on human health, the environment, and medical infrastructure. Since then, the various humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons have been well-established. For example, physicians project that some 2.4 million people worldwide will eventually die from cancers due to atmospheric nuclear tests conducted between 1945 and 1980.

For example, physicians project that some 2.4 million people worldwide will eventually die from cancers due to atmospheric nuclear tests conducted between 1945 and 1980. On the environmental front, nuclear war would mean a climate disruption with devastating consequences. The world would fall under a nuclear winter and be subject to a deadly global famine, as well as exacerbated effects of global warming. These remain potential scenarios as long as nuclear weapons are in existence. The latest estimate by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) warns of 12,100 nuclear weapons.



Nuclear weapons are prohibited in outer space.

This photo dates from 1968, when delegates, both scientists and non-scientists, from 79 nations gathered at the United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space in the Hofburg Palace in Vienna. In the midst of the Cold War, there was a growing concern in the international community that space might become yet another field for intense rivalries between the superpowers. In 1958, shortly after the launching of the first artificial satellite, the General Assembly established an ad hoc Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS), which was later established as a permanent body.

Since then, COPUOS has been serving as a focal point for international cooperation in the peaceful exploration and use of outer space. The Committee was instrumental in the creation of the five treaties and five principles of outer space. Arms control is one of the issues covered by the treaties. Various treaties, most notably the Outer Space Treaty of 1967, have prohibited the placement of nuclear weapons in outer space.

© UN Photo

IN 2023, THE LAST DECLARED CHEMICAL WEAPONS STOCKPILES WERE DESTROYED.

The modern use of chemical weapons began with World War I, when poisonous gas was used to inflict agonizing suffering and to cause significant battlefield casualties. The results were indiscriminate and caused nearly 100,000 deaths. The first large-scale use of chemical weapons occurred in Ieper, Belgium, in 1915. Since then, disarmament efforts have worked to ban such weapons from the world. In 1997, the Chemical Weapons Convention entered into force. It prohibits the development, production, stockpiling and use of chemical weapons. It also requires destruction of its production facilities, along with the weapons themselves. In this photo, dated on the occasion of the Centennial Commemoration of the First Large-Scale Use of Chemical Weapons at Ieper in 2015, the OPCW Member States issued the Ieper Declaration restating their commitment to combat chemical weapons. The United States of America completed the destruction of its declared chemical weapons stockpile in 2023, resulting in 100% of declared global stockpiles being destroyed.

© OPCW





The Biological Weapons Convention was the first multilateral disarmament treaty banning an entire category of WMD

Biological weapons disseminate disease-causing organisms or toxins to harm or kill humans, animals, or plants. They can be deadly and highly contagious. Diseases caused by such weapons would not confine themselves to national borders and could spread rapidly around the world. In the 20th century, use of biological weapons was seen by individuals and groups committing criminal acts or targeted assassinations, biological warfare by States, and the accidental release of pathogens from laboratories. In 1975, the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) entered into force. It effectively prohibits the development, production, acquisition, transfer, stockpiling and use of biological and toxin weapons. As such, the BWC is a key element in the international community's efforts to address WMD proliferation and has established a strong norm against biological weapons. This photo shows Youth4Biosecurity Fellows visiting the Spiez Laboratory in 2024. This Swiss institute works for the protection of the population against nuclear, biological and chemical threats and dangers.

© UNODA/BWC

Weapons and armed conflict have gendered impacts.

People are differently involved in and impacted by weapons, armed conflict and security based on their gender and other factors. For example, weapons are often used to facilitate sexual and gender-based violence and to reinforce violent, gendered social norms. Additionally, whereas men make up the majority of landmine victims, whereas women are more likely to be affected by explosive weapons in residential areas. Health effects experienced by victims of weapons may also differ based on their sex. Growing complexity requires diversity. By translating gender awareness into policy action, we help ensure that arms control and disarmament measures deliver for everyone. Strengthening the role of women and diversity of voices in disarmament will advance our collective goals in disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. In 2006, the UN General Assembly First Committee, concerned with disarmament and related international security questions, had its very first female Chairperson. Mona Juul of Norway and was elected to Chair by acclamation. 2024 marked only the second time that a female Chairperson of the First Committee, Ambassador Maritza Chan from Costa Rica, has taken up this role.

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Weapons-free-zones help to reduce violence.

These students are photographed at the opening ceremony for the Queen's Nursery and Primary School located inside the Weapons Free Zone to the east of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS). A 200 metre-wide weapons-free zone was set up outside the perimeter of the UN protection site for civilians in Juba, where tensions had risen over scarce resources, with violent incidents occurring regularly.

© UN Photo/Amanda Voisard

A safe environment now prevails, which should enable teaching to resume smoothly, thanks to the nimble and proactive creation of a weapons-free zone. The zone reduces the risk of violence and improves UNMISS' ability to patrol and provide security. Several villagers have worked in collaboration with the UN mission to maintain this zone by cutting the long grass where weapons were sometimes hidden, giving them a stake in the project and securing their own safety while also contributing to their incomes. After the establishment of the weapon-free-zone, a 90% drop in crime was recorded.

Small arms and light weapons claim more victims worldwide than any other type of weapon.

An art exhibition entitled ""Crush the Illicit Trade in Small Arms"" was held at UN Headquarters in New York in 2006, coinciding with the UN Small Arms Review Conference. Almaparlantes, a musical group from Colombia, performed at the opening of the exhibition. One of their musicians played the "escopetarra", a guitar made from an AK-47. Small arms, a weapon category that encompasses firearms, are particularly harmful because they are easy to acquire, transport, and use, making them a significant factor in armed violence worldwide. The illicit trade in small arms fuels conflict, organized crime, terrorism, and human rights abuses, and it poses challenges to sustainable development.

In 2001, States adopted the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat, and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (PoA). Under the PoA, governments agreed to improve national small arms laws, import/export controls, and stockpile management, and to engage in cooperation and assistance. Additionally, in 2014 the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) entered into force, establishing international standards governing arms transfers to prevent and eradicate illicit trade and diversion of conventional arms.

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On average, 90 per cent of victims of attacks using explosive weapons in populated areas are civilians.



An unexploded bomb sits ominously on the floor of a kitchen in Ajdabiya, Libya. Armed conflicts are increasingly fought in population centres. This urbanization of armed conflict has resulted in devastating and well-documented impacts on civilians. This is often due to the use of weapons systems that are designed for traditional open battlefields.

A leading concern is the use in populated areas of explosive weapons with wide-area impacts. These include weapon systems, munitions and tactics used by States and non-State actors, which can be expected to result in a high proportion of incidental civilian harm if employed in areas where there is a concentration of civilians.

In November 2022, more than 80 States endorsed the Political Declaration on the Protection of Civilians from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas. The Declaration is the product of nearly seven years of discussions and negotiations, led by Austria and Ireland with the support of non-governmental organizations. The United Nations Secretary-General has supported those efforts since 2009, and notably through his Agenda for Disarmament.

@ UNMAS/Max Dyck



Children are more likely to die from a blast injury than adults.

Dated 2012, the photo depicts 12-year-old Abdurrahim Ahmed Mohamed. He lost his right hand and the sight in his left eye when he and his friends played with unexploded ordnance (UXO) as small children in their village. UXOs are explosive weapons (bombs, shells, grenades, land mines, naval mines, etc.) that did not explode when they were used. They still pose a risk of detonation, potentially many decades after they were used or discarded.

In 2003, States Parties to the Convention on Conventional Weapons adopted a Protocol V on Explosive Remnants of War. It recognizes the serious post-conflict humanitarian problems caused by explosive remnants of war and addresses post-conflict remedial measures to minimize their occurrence, effects, and risk. The Protocol forms an important element in the efforts to end the post-conflict death, injury, and suffering that is a regular feature of modern warfare.

In 1981, Kornelius Johann Sigmundsson, Iceland's Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN, signed a new convention against inhumane conventional weapons as the Chief of the UN Treaty Section looks on.

The Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons aims to ban or restrict the use of specific types of weapons that are considered to cause unnecessary or unjustifiable suffering to combatants or to affect civilians indiscriminately. Its protocols contain the substantive prohibitions and restrictions on various types of weapons.

Its Protocol IV, adopted in 1995, prohibits Blinding Laser Weapons before they were ever used. It is an example of pre-emptively banning weapons systems to prevent harm.

© UN Photo/Yutaka Nagata

**BLINDING LASER WEAPONS
WERE PRE-EMPTIVELY BANNED
BEFORE THEY WERE USED.**





"Autonomous targeting of humans by machines is a moral line that we must not cross." - UN Secretary General António Guterres

Technological advancements are often a double-edged sword, but the benefits of science and technology should not come at the expense of global and human security. UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Izumi Nakamitsu, has often underscored the urgent need for new global governance regimes to effectively respond to the challenges posed by emerging technologies. One such technology are lethal autonomous weapons systems, which pose humanitarian, legal, strategic, and ethical concerns. UN Secretary-General António Guterres has underscored that the autonomous targeting of humans by machines is a moral line that we must not cross. Together with the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, he has called on world leaders to conclude, by 2026, a new legally binding instrument to set clear prohibitions and restrictions on lethal autonomous weapon systems. This robot was taking part in a press briefing held by the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots. The Campaign was formed in October 2012 and is a coalition of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that is working to ban fully autonomous weapons and thereby retain meaningful human control over the use of force.

© UN Photo/Evan Schneider

The UN Security Council held its first meeting on AI in July 2023.

The UN Security Council held its first meeting on Artificial Intelligence in July 2023, discussing the duality of risks and rewards inherent in the technology.

Secretary-General António Guterres addressed the Council, urging it "to exercise leadership on Artificial Intelligence and show the way towards common measures for the transparency, accountability, and oversight of AI systems".

As an enabling technology, AI offers a wide variety of opportunities and risks in the military domain. A particular concern is its integration into autonomous weapons systems, which pose humanitarian, legal, strategic, and ethical concerns.

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MISPLACED FAITH

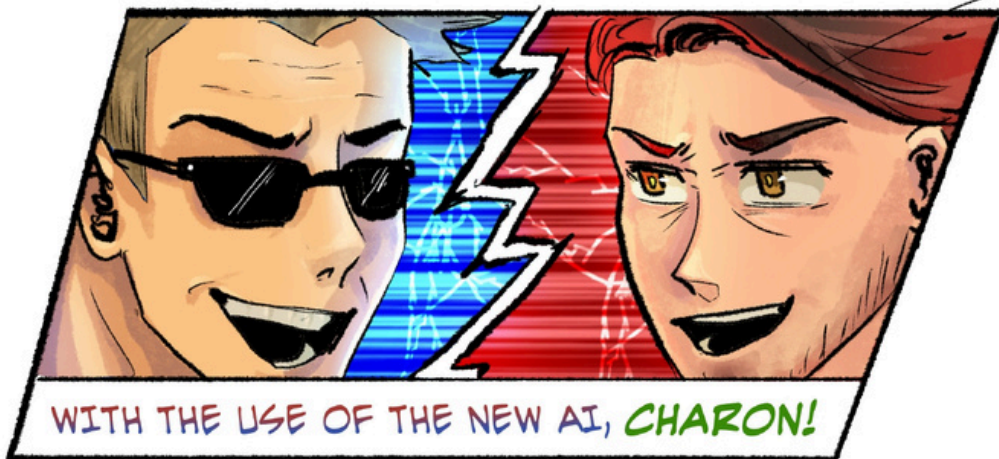
A webtoon by Melody
Qian for the Sci-fAI
Futures Youth Challenge

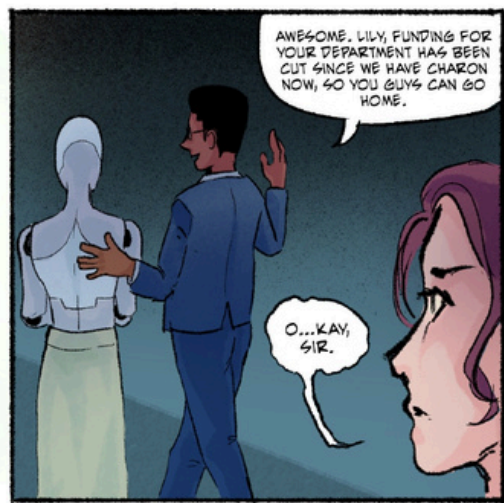
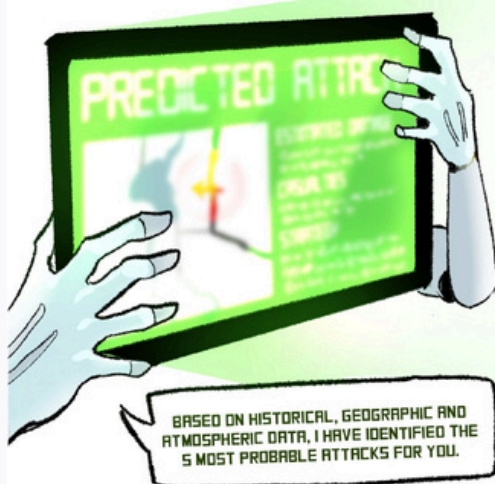
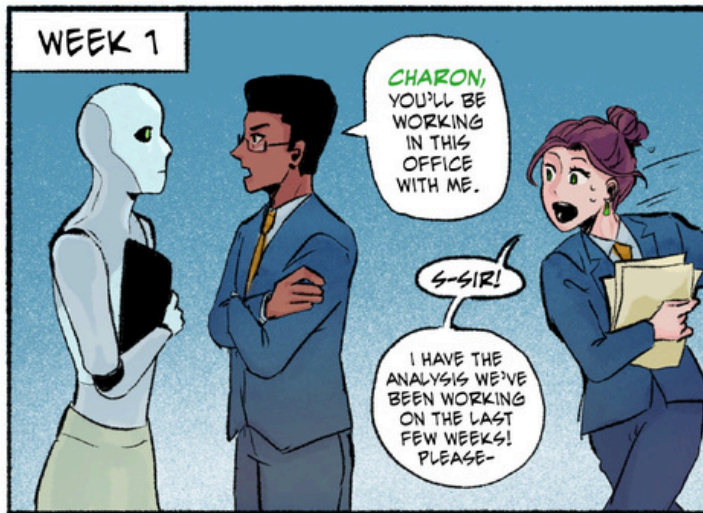
This webtoon is part of the UN-ROK Sci-fAI Futures Youth Challenge on the occasion of 2024 Responsible AI in the Military Domain Summit (REAIM 2024) in Seoul. The "Sci-fAI Futures" Youth Challenge was organised by UNODA's Youth4Disarmament Initiative to spark young people's interest and imagination on how AI can affect international peace and security, particularly in the military domain. Sci-fAI Futures invited young people to explore possible futures around the opportunities to leverage AI for good and the risks of integrating AI in the military domain. Their story will take place in the year 2145, two hundred years after the United Nations came into existence.

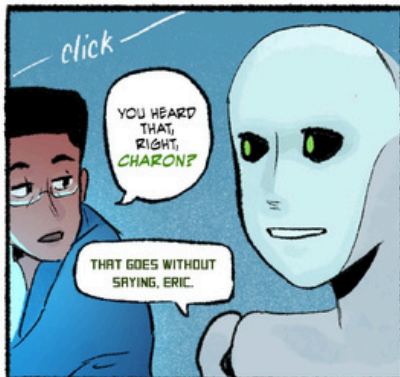
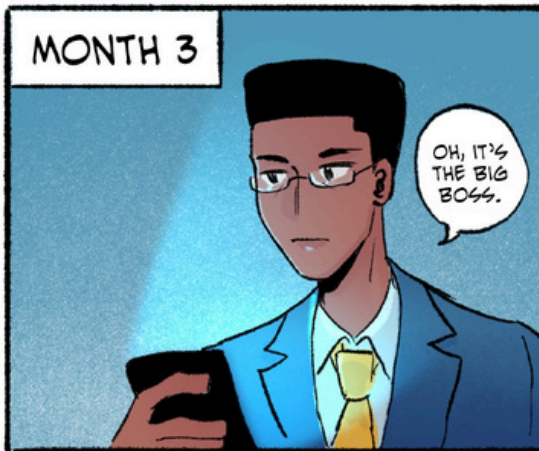
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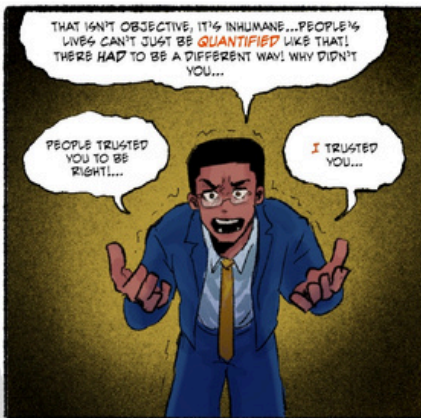
The characters of this comic do not stand in for the actions of any particular country. They symbolize a more universal set of misconceptions about AI—one of which is the overly enthusiastic view of it as "superior" to our own intelligence, capable of overcoming human folly, while the other demonizes it as humanity's eventual replacement. While on opposite ends of the spectrum, they make the same assumption about the absence of meaningful human decision-making.

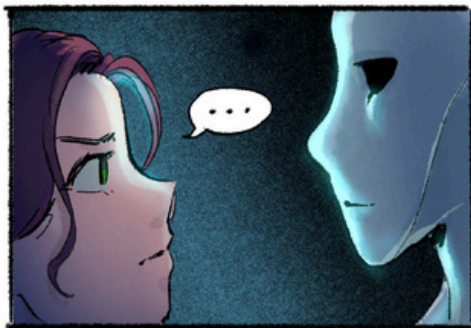
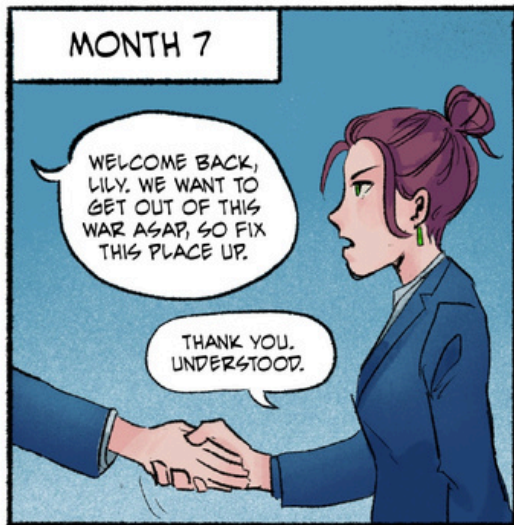
I acknowledge the departure from reality in this comic. There's a simple conflict between two warring countries and a plot that wraps up with a happy ending. In reality, geopolitical conflicts are neither simple nor resolved cleanly. Autonomous weapons systems and new software look nothing like the humanoid Charon who can speak, move, and meet complex human demands. But hopefully, by portraying these 3 ideas as characters—Eric for over-dependence on AI, Lily for paranoia, and Charon for AI itself—readers can better understand the problematic relationship between developing technology and warfare. The idea that it will "take over." Only upon realizing this can we pause our escalating arms race to involve more human oversight, and think about AI's power of processing for recovery and peacemaking instead of destruction.



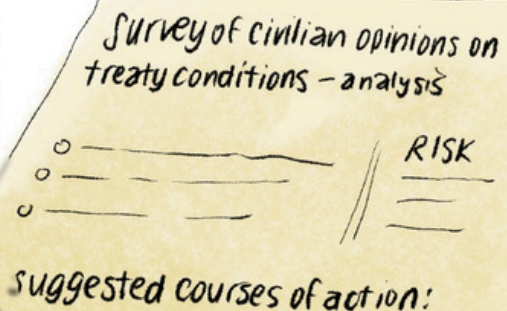
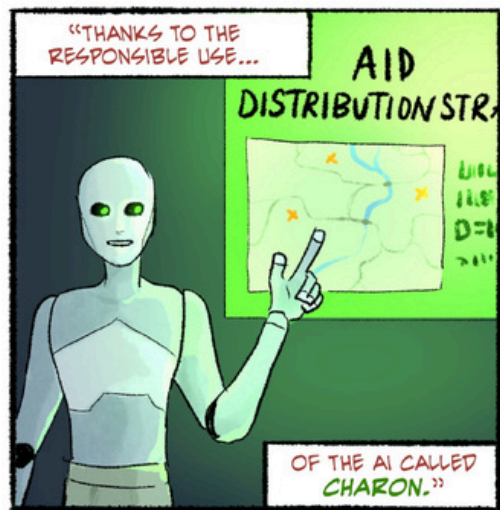








THAT'S WHAT I'M HERE FOR. HERE, I'VE ALREADY COMPILED DATA FROM SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS AND MILITARY REPORTS...



...WE HAVE HARNESSSED ITS ABILITY TO CONDUCT ANALYSES AND PROCESS MASSIVE AMOUNTS OF INFORMATION..."





Youth are the driving force for peace and development.

In 2009, Mexican youth built a sculpture for disarmament at the Museo de Arte Popular in Mexico City during an international conference. The tree is growing out of an exploded grenade.

There are 1.9 billion young people today. Young people around the world have a significant role to play in approaches for disarmament. They have great value in raising awareness and finding new ways to reduce threats from weapons of mass destruction and conventional weapons. In the recently adopted Pact for the Future, States recognized "that the full, effective, safe and meaningful participation of youth is critical to maintain and promote international peace and security".

In the framework of its disarmament education programme, UNODA aims to impart knowledge and skills to young people and empower them to make their contribution to disarmament and sustaining peace, as national and world citizens. The Office's Youth4Disarmament Initiative organises projects and events, some focusing on expressive mediums, to connect geographically diverse young people with experts.

© UN Photo/Evan Schneider

Peace is more than the absence of conflict.

This photo from 2010 was taken at the Vienna International Centre. Children of the World Peace Choir are ringing the Peace Bell at the VIC Memorial Plaza in celebration of the International Day of Peace.

The sacred right to peace, as established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1984, does not only mean the absence of violence or war. Sustainable peace is possible only as part of an inclusive process that pays attention to human rights and justice. In 2023, global military spending reached \$2.44 trillion. Military spending by states limits the availability of funding for investment in sustainable development including health, education, and the environment.

Since the birth of the United Nations, disarmament has been central to the organization's efforts to maintain international peace and security. In 1998, the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) was established to support multilateral efforts aimed at achieving disarmament. The Office promotes norm-setting and multilateral agreements, facilitates dialogue, and advocates for concrete and effective solutions to support sustainable peace.

© UNIS Vienna





In 2024, nuclear-weapon survivors were recognized with the Nobel Peace Prize.

The "hibakusha" are the surviving victims of the atomic bombs which fell on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. While these individuals survived the immediate effects of the blasts, the hibakusha have suffered from the effects of radiation sickness, loss of family and friends, and discrimination.

In spite of their difficulties, many hibakusha have been shining examples of turning their personal tragedies into a struggle to promote peace and to create a world free of nuclear weapons. This image is but one example of hibakusha engaging with people of all ages to remind us of their long legacy of suffering and resilience. Their stories inspire action for disarmament among younger generations by helping them more fully understand the firsthand experiences of nuclear weapons.

On 11 October 2024, the Norwegian Nobel Committee announced the Nobel Peace Prize award to be given to Nihon Hidankyo, a grassroots movement of atomic bomb survivors from Hiroshima and Nagasaki, "for its efforts to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons and for demonstrating through witness testimony that nuclear weapons must never be used again".

