



UN Disarmament and Security Committee

Chairs:  
Kenneth Cox  
Edward Jin

## Letter from the Chairs

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the 2020 [virtual] MIT Model United Nations Conference! We are excited to invite you to the Disarmament and International Security Committee (aka the First Committee), where we'll be discussing the key issues of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction.

Kenny is a junior majoring in Mathematics with a minor in Biology. He is interested in the applications of technical studies to policy and socioeconomic development. Edward is a sophomore majoring in Chemistry and Computer Science. He is primarily interested in foreign policy and international relations. We are extremely excited to see the amazing ideas you all come up with!

We hope you will use this guide to begin your research on the two topics we will examine in session. The guide has been written to provide you with a basic understanding of the current circumstances and their historical determinants, but we strongly encourage you to continue your research beyond reading this guide, especially as the issues relate to your own countries' policies. To this end, all delegates will submit a **single page position paper** on each topic. Please submit your position paper through the following Google Form - <https://forms.gle/Fm88CbgutZgac2By9>. Additionally, we encourage you to take the time to read up on parliamentary procedures - however, in the interest of time and fruitful debate, we will go over how virtualization affects everything at the start of the conference.

Above all, we want you to have fun and learn something during the conference. There will be plenty of opportunities for each delegate to present and justify their proposals, so we are looking forward to seeing what you design! If this is your first Model UN conference, we are glad you will spend it with us. If you're a returning delegate, we hope you can leverage your prior experience to make this conference even better for everyone. If any questions arise, feel free to reach out to us in advance of the conference at [mitmunc-disec@mit.edu](mailto:mitmunc-disec@mit.edu).

Sincerely,

Kenneth Cox and Edward Jin

Chairs, DISEC

# Topic 1: Achieving a settlement between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the Nagorno-Karabakh region

## Introduction

The Nagorno-Karabakh region (hereafter NKR) is a territory of approximately 4400 km<sup>2</sup> located within the borders of the country of Azerbaijan<sup>1</sup>. Although internationally recognized as a territory of Azerbaijan, it is governed by the internationally unrecognized Republic of Artsakh (hereafter RA).<sup>2</sup> The region has been a significant source of conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan for over a century. Almost entirely ethnically Armenian, RA maintains close ties with Armenia, and, as such, Armenia supports RA claims to NKR (but Armenia, like every other UN member state, does not officially recognize the independence of RA)<sup>1</sup>.

The origins of the conflict can be traced back to the early 20th century, when Joseph Stalin exploited historical tensions between Azeris (Azerbaijani people) and Armenians for political gain. When setting the borders of the Soviet Republic of Azerbaijan, Stalin deliberately placed NKR, an ethnically Armenian region even then, fully within the borders of Azerbaijan. In doing so, Stalin fomented a conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, making both Soviet puppet states easier to control.

In 1988, as the power of the Soviet Union diminished, the majority Armenian population in NKR grew bolder, and appealed to join Armenia, as a stepping stone to self-rule. Their request was

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<sup>1</sup> [www.usip.org/publications/1998/12/nagorno-karabakh-searching-solution-0](http://www.usip.org/publications/1998/12/nagorno-karabakh-searching-solution-0)

<sup>2</sup> [www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-18270325](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-18270325)

immediately rejected by Azerbaijan. Tensions finally reached a breaking point, and the subsequent ethnic violence created a population of refugees numbering in the hundreds of thousands. Armenia declared hegemony over the region, and a referendum resulted in 82% of the population voting for independence, again reiterating the wish of the Armenian majority to be freed of Azerbaijani rule. These declarations only resulted in more intense fighting, and casualties continued to increase; eventually all-out war broke out. Armenia gained the upper hand in the war, and occupied a significant fraction of Azerbaijani territory. The conflict, known as the First Nagorno-Karabakh War, finally ended in a ceasefire in 1994, but no determination was reached on the status of RA. No peace treaty formally concluding the First Nagorno-Karabakh War has since been signed<sup>3</sup>.

Following the end of open conflict, a steady peace was maintained, interrupted occasionally by shootings and skirmishes along the border. On the diplomatic level, mending the relationship between Azerbaijan and Armenia proved unrealistic, although the United Nations tried several times. In addition, the fallout from the war, including the humanitarian crisis, was left unresolved. Most importantly, Armenia continued to occupy territory in NKR<sup>4</sup>.

Increasingly frustrated with Armenia's continued occupation of NKR, internationally recognized as sovereign territory of Azerbaijan, action by the Azerbaijani military seemed more and more likely with time. On September 27th, 2020, conflict once more broke out on the border. Both sides accused each other of escalating the tensions, with Azerbaijan claiming it was a necessity out of self-defense, and Armenia claiming it needed to protect the majority Armenian population of NKR.

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<sup>3</sup> [www.usip.org/publications/1998/12/nagorno-karabakh-searching-solution-0](http://www.usip.org/publications/1998/12/nagorno-karabakh-searching-solution-0)

<sup>4</sup> <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3702793>

Turkey gave financial and potentially military support to Azerbaijan, while Armenia was supported by Russia<sup>5</sup>.

The renewed conflict drew nearly universal international condemnation, especially for the high civilian casualties reported. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights also believes war crimes were committed in the violence<sup>6</sup>. After several failed attempts, a Russian-mediated ceasefire was brokered. Facing a military defeat, Armenia was forced to undo decades of its previous territorial gains, including a full withdrawal from NKR<sup>7</sup>.

Yet the attainment of a lasting peace remains an elusive goal even in light of the ceasefire. The interests of Azerbaijan, Armenia, and the Republic of Artsakh remain unbalanced, and the consequences of the most recent conflict remain to be seen. It is very likely that the region will destabilize further, highlighting the need for all parties to continue to discuss a just and lasting resolution.

## **Key Terms**

### **Nagorno-Karabakh region**

A disputed territory between Azerbaijan, which claims it as sovereign territory (the internationally recognized position), the Republic of Artsakh, which claims it as sovereign territory, and Armenia, which supports the Republic's claim.

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<sup>5</sup>[blogs.lse.ac.uk/europpblog/2020/10/08/why-peace-looks-a-long-way-off-in-the-nagorno-karabakh-conflict/](https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/europpblog/2020/10/08/why-peace-looks-a-long-way-off-in-the-nagorno-karabakh-conflict/)

<sup>6</sup> [news.un.org/en/story/2020/11/1076672](https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/11/1076672)

<sup>7</sup> [www.dailysabah.com/opinion/op-ed/nagorno-karabakh-clashes-and-russias-position](https://www.dailysabah.com/opinion/op-ed/nagorno-karabakh-clashes-and-russias-position)

## **Republic of Artsakh**

An internationally unrecognized state that claims sovereignty over the Nagorno-Karabakh region. Although located within Azerbaijan, it historically relied on Armenia for financial and military support. The Republic's relationship with Azerbaijan and Armenia is unclear following the 2020 conflict.

## **2020 Nagorno Karabakh War**

An armed conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the Nagorno-Karabakh region and other disputed territories between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Regional powers Turkey and Russia joined on the sides of Azerbaijan and Armenia, respectively.

## **Key Issues**

### **Independence of the Republic of Artsakh**

The ethnic Armenian majority within the Nagorno-Karabakh region, unofficially governed by the Republic of Artsakh, has longed to be a sovereign state, or at the very least, more closely affiliated with Armenia as a stepping stone to self-governance. With the Armenian military presence to be removed following the ceasefire, the possibility of Azeris resettling Nagorno-Karabakh requires careful assessment.

### **Diplomatic relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan**

For over a century, Armenia and Azerbaijan have been unable to reconcile. The recent war sets their relationship back even further, and without secure ties between the countries, the southern Caucasus region will remain unstable.

## **The possibility of greater international conflict**

Turkey and Russia, already at odds over a number of separate issues, are also on opposite sides of the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute. A lack of peace over the region will result in further tension between these two regional powers, leading to the possibility of conflict between them.

## **Potential Positions**

### **United States of America**

The U.S.A. has a vested interest in maintaining positive relations with both Azerbaijan and Armenia. The Caucasus, a volatile region, harbors a significant terror threat that will only grow with further conflict. Therefore, the United States is committed to working with both nations to combat terror threats, and prevent any additional violence between them. Yet the United States must carefully balance the level of favor it gives to each, because both are economic partners.

### **Azerbaijan**

Azerbaijan is committed to retaining NKR, and strongly condemns any resolution seeking independence of the Republic of Artsakh. To curb any more aggression from Armenia, Azerbaijan will press for military limitations on border security. Azerbaijan is also committed to the return of other disputed territories<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> [www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-17043424](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-17043424)

## **Armenia**

Armenia desires closer relations with, and the independence of, RA, and recognizes the Republic's claims to NKR. Armenia seeks a swift return to normalcy, as protesters, in the wake of the country's defeat, have called for the resignation of the prime minister<sup>9</sup>.

## **Russia**

Russia does not necessarily wish to see the return of peace, unless it is involved in the negotiations of those terms. The present instability enables the Kremlin to wield greater influence in the region. For example, Russia maintains a force of about 2,000 peacekeepers in the region, and that sizable military presence gives Russia greater bargaining power. At the same time, an all-out war would result in a serious humanitarian crisis and potentially military intervention, which is not in Russia's best interest. Russia must also carefully consider how its actions will be viewed by the other regional power, Turkey<sup>10</sup>.

## **Turkey**

Turkey will stand by its ally Azerbaijan, whom it supplied with arms and military training, contributing to the Azerbaijan victory in the recent war. Turkey also wishes to grow its influence in the Caucasus region, but was sidetracked from that goal when it was not allowed to participate in negotiations for the current ceasefire. Turkey will strongly advocate to be a party in any future peace deal, and will attempt to use that peace deal to increase its power over Azerbaijan, Armenia, and especially Russia<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> [www.usip.org/publications/1998/12/nagorno-karabakh-searching-solution-0](http://www.usip.org/publications/1998/12/nagorno-karabakh-searching-solution-0)

<sup>10</sup> Gabuev, Alexander. "Viewpoint: Russia and Turkey - Unlikely Victors of Karabakh Conflict." *BBC News*, BBC, 12 Nov. 2020.



## **Other Countries**

Nations not directly involved in the present conflict are troubled by the humanitarian crisis produced by the war, and condemn the lack of civilian protections. Other countries are also worried about a power vacuum developing in the Caucasus, which is already an area dense with terrorists. The portion of the international community dedicated to democracy will advocate for reforms in the corrupt Azerbaijani government, although the international community recognizes Azerbaijan's claim to the NKR (and does not recognize the RA's claims to the region).

## **Conclusion**

This meeting of the DISEC committee hopes to answer many questions relating to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, including, but not limited to:

- What peace settlement can be reached that balances the interests of Azerbaijan, Armenia, and the people in the Nagorno-Karabakh region?
- How can international partners work together to prevent further destabilization of this already volatile area?
- Should the Republic of Artsakh be internationally recognized? Do its people have a right to self-determination?
- How can all countries involved work to undo some of the most disastrous consequences of the war, like compensate families of civilian casualty victims and resettle displaced civilians?

For over a century, ethnic and geographical tensions have produced conflict, and those conflicts have produced bitter relations between Azerbaijan and Armenia that perpetuate further violence. Trapped in the midst of the dispute are the embattled civilians of the Nagorno-Karabakh region,

who had to endure the worst of the fighting in the recent war. Without a lasting peace settlement, there will be more suffering and less hope of achieving stability. The international community has tried time and time again to reach an agreement, through various bodies including the UN, the Minsk Group (a coalition of international partners tasked with finding a peace solution), and individual countries serving as mediators. The most recent ceasefire has humiliated Armenia and emboldened Azerbaijan, while strengthening the positions of Russia and Turkey. But the central issues remain unresolved. This committee is tasked with reaching a fair settlement on the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia, as well as considering the international status of the Republic of Artsakh.

## **Citations**

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2. UN News. "UN Rights Chief Warns of Possible War Crimes in Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict | UN News." *United Nations*, United Nations, 2 Nov. 2020, [news.un.org/en/story/2020/11/1076672](https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/11/1076672).
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4. BBC News. "Azerbaijan Country Profile." *BBC News*, BBC, 18 Nov. 2020, [www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-17043424](https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-17043424).

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<https://ssrn.com/abstract=3702793> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3702793>
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7. Aliyev, Bayram. “Nagorno-Karabakh Clashes and Russia's Position.” *Daily Sabah*, Daily Sabah, 20 Oct. 2020,  
[www.dailysabah.com/opinion/op-ed/nagorno-karabakh-clashes-and-russias-position](http://www.dailysabah.com/opinion/op-ed/nagorno-karabakh-clashes-and-russias-position).
8. Gabuev, Alexander. “Viewpoint: Russia and Turkey - Unlikely Victors of Karabakh Conflict.” *BBC News*, BBC, 12 Nov. 2020.

### **Recommended Reading**

Russian and Turkish viewpoints on the ceasefire:

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-54903869>

Assessment of the ceasefire agreement:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/09/world/middleeast/armenia-settlement-nagorno-karabakh-azerbaijan.html>

Profile of the Nagorno-Karabakh region: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Nagorno-Karabakh>

Full ceasefire agreement: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/64384>

## **Topic 2: Weapons of Mass Destruction and their Proliferation**

### **Introduction and Committee Goals**

Currently, there is no internationally accepted definition for the term weapons of mass destruction (WMD). Traditionally, the term includes all biological, chemical, and nuclear weapons. For the purposes of the committee, we will define a WMD as any weapon which has the potential to cause a disproportionate amount of casualties or physical destruction relative to its own size. (Note that this definition includes the aforementioned weapons). This guide itself will focus on the traditional definition as those are the most commonly used types of WMDs; however, the committee's attention should not be solely limited to these three classes of weapons.

With the advent of a new understanding in science, modern WMDs emerged in the 20th century. The atomic bomb was the primary new introduction into the military realm, but significant advances in chemistry and biology also allowed for further weaponization. International treaties in the late 20th century have regulated these WMDs; however, there are still various issues surrounding them, especially with regard to illegal use and non-compliance with said treaties.

The committee will primarily focus on the multi-layered complexities regarding WMDs. The goal of the committee is to create a long-lasting agreement that will limit proliferation of all classes of WMDs, while at the same time be mutually acceptable to all nations, and further make significant progress towards the multitude of issues that they bring. However, be aware that each class of

weapons has drastic differences - do not fall into the trap of a one-size-fits-all solution to regulate everything.

## **Background and Key Treaties**

### **Nuclear Weapons**

The destructive power of the atom was first showcased to the world with the atomic bombings of Japan in 1945. Each of the bombs killed around 40,000 people, many of them civilians. In addition, the bombs' radioactive fallout also led to long-lasting consequences on the health of people.<sup>11</sup> In the following years, a nuclear arms race began between the United States and the Soviet Union, where each country built stronger bombs and eventually built enough to destroy the entire world many times over. The destructive power of the weapons was recognized and in an attempt to limit their proliferation, various treaties were signed between the two superpowers. Since then, no other nuclear weapons have been used during combat, though thousands of tests have been conducted.

Internationally, the main document governing Nuclear Proliferation is the *Treaty of Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons* (NPT), which aimed to “prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and weapons technology, to promote cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and to further the goal of achieving nuclear disarmament and general and complete disarmament.”<sup>12</sup> The treaty entered into force in 1970, had an indefinite extension in 1995, and today 190 countries have signed the treaty. However, some countries, such as Pakistan and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, have not ratified or signed the treaty and therefore are still assembling nuclear weapons, while others,

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<sup>11</sup> <https://k1project.columbia.edu/news/hiroshima-and-nagasaki>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.un.org/disarmament/WMD/Nuclear/NPT.shtml>

such as the state of Israel, do not state their status on nuclear weapons and are suspected of having them.

## **Biological Weapons**

Biological warfare has a much longer history than nuclear weapons, with the first recorded attempt being in 1155, when human bodies were thrown into wells in an attempt to poison the water supply. However, it was not until the 20th century that biological warfare truly developed. It was largely pioneered by Japan during the Second World War, which used human experimentation and infected millions in its conquest of China. Afterwards, research on biological warfare was accelerated and both the United States and the Soviet Union invested millions into such programs. The results were quite terrifying - with anthrax and smallpox being militarized and even proposed for use in intercontinental ballistic missiles.<sup>13</sup>

The main document governing biological warfare is the *Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on their Destruction*, which went into force in 1975. However, the agreement lacks a verification mechanism and the Soviet Union was reported to have violated the agreement entirely, expanding its program greatly after signing the treaty.<sup>14</sup> In addition, our understanding of biological systems since then has increased tremendously, and thus modern agents have potential to lead to uncontrolled destruction.

Additionally, these weapons have also been appropriated by non-state actors, most infamously in the 2001 anthrax attacks in the United States.<sup>15</sup>

## **Chemical Weapons**

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<sup>13</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1326439/>

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

Chemical warfare first came into prominence during World War I, where gases were commonly used across the battlefield by Germany and France. A short-lived attempt at regulation was attempted in 1925, but was largely ineffective and chemical weapons saw use in World War II as well. Following this, chemical weapons were used in many of the major conflicts of the 20th century, including the Vietnam War and the Iran-Iraq War.<sup>16</sup> The superpowers of the 20th century likewise spearheaded research efforts during this time, though this research was partially stopped through a bilateral agreement between the two countries in 1990.

The main document governing chemical warfare is the *Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction*, which went into force in 1997. In addition, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons acts as a regulatory body for overseeing the treaty obligations, and all weapon destruction takes place under its watch. While the organization has already destroyed 98% of the world's declared stockpiles, there may be further unreported reserves in use.<sup>17</sup> Like biological weapons, chemical weapons are relatively easy to obtain by non-state actors and were used in the 1995 Tokyo Subway attacks. Further, unlawful use of chemical weapons by state actors have also been reported, most notably in the Syrian Civil War, in the Novichok attacks on Navalny and the Skripals, and in the assassination of Kim Jong-nam.

## **Factors to Consider and Issues to Address**

### **A Consistent Set of Definitions**

Unfortunately, not all countries use the same definitions regarding WMDs, and one country may consider a weapon a WMD that another may not. There are a few weapons that are considered

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<sup>16</sup> <https://www.sciencehistory.org/distillations/a-brief-history-of-chemical-war>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.opcw.org/media-centre/opcw-numbers>

WMDs by nearly every country [for example, nuclear bombs], as well as a few that are not considered WMDs by almost any country, but there are also many weapons in between which are ambiguous. This lack of standardization makes it hard to agree on international restrictions. This also makes other treaties which specifically refer to WMDs ambiguous, which causes differences in understanding what exactly the treaty applies to.

## **Nations Which Have Not Signed/Ratified Treaties and Their Own Sovereignty**

Under the principles of the UN Charter, no country is required to sign or ratify any treaty, and as a result there are some countries which legally are not required to follow the relevant international agreements regulating them. When just a few countries do not agree to such treaties, it may result in a power imbalance, which could further threaten stability in volatile regions of the globe. Further, it may be hard to forcibly impose these treaties without infringing upon those countries' own sovereignties.

## **Detecting and Acting on Violations of the Treaties**

There are reports of various countries which have ratified and signed, but are contravening, the international regulations. Most notably, such a report about Iraq was used as justification for the 2003 invasion. This was later shown to be false, showing that such drastic action should not be considered lightly. More recently, Iran was also accused of starting a nuclear weapons program, which was halted with the Iran Nuclear Deal (though its future is quite uncertain now). In addition, there have been reports of the usage of chemical weapons in various modern wars, including the Syrian Civil War.

## **Nuclear Supremacy and Perceived Unfairness**



The current international regulations only allow the five permanent members of the Security Council to own nuclear weapons, though other countries have also developed nuclear weapons of their own. These countries insist that they are forced to procure such means in order to protect themselves from either their neighbors or other countries with nuclear weapons, most notably by Pakistan, India, and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. This increases tensions and can also lead to their neighbors adopting a nuclear weapons program as well, further inducing destabilization.

## **Usage of WMDs by Non-State Entities**

While Nuclear Weapons are currently considered impossible for non-state actors to build, it is entirely possible that such groups can build other WMDs such as dirty bombs or chemical weapons. These non-state entities often do not respect international treaties and have the potential to cause great destruction, especially if they are able to easily obtain precursors to WMDs.

## **Denuclearization and Safe Disposal of Weapons**

Before the treaties were ratified, some countries built up stockpiles of all types of WMDs. Denuclearization, largely between the United States and the former Soviet Union, have resulted in a significant reduction of nuclear warheads. There have been efforts to dispose of already-existing chemical and biological weapons as well, with many of the treaty signatories pledging to destroy their stockpiles by a specified date. However, the weapons cannot just be simply thrown away, as there are numerous additional complexities with their safe disposal.

## **Country Positions**

### **The P5 Nations**

Broadly speaking, the P5 nations want to maintain the current status quo with nuclear weapons. This gives them a significant advantage in military conflicts, while at the same time keeping worldwide peace by using them as a deterrent. Many of these states have a no-first-strike policy, and as a result no major nuclear war has ever been launched. With regard to other types of WMDs; these nations are generally in favor of the treaties involved, and are generally supportive of international compliance agreements.

## **Non-signatories to the Treaties and Other Nuclear Weapon States**

In general, these countries want to either develop WMDs for use, or want increased flexibility of their military arsenal, without the purview of the international community. They may have a variety of reasons to not accede to current treaties, and each will want to protect their own interests. Note that some of these countries may be signatories to some of the major treaties, but not all. These states will want to maintain their sovereignty and at the same time participate in meaningful dialogues that reduce tensions with neighboring countries.

## **Other Nations**

The other nations are a large majority of the body and do not possess any declared WMDs, in addition to ratifying all relevant treaties. These nations will largely be focused on finding solutions to the issues described above, that would prevent other nations or non-state actors from using such WMDs.

## **Recommended Reading**

The OPCW Website and the Chemical Weapons Convention: <https://www.opcw.org/>  
<https://www.opcw.org/chemical-weapons-convention>

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty: <https://www.un.org/disarmament/wmd/nuclear/npt/>

An Introduction to Some Specific Types of WMDs and Terrorism:

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK493217/>

Biological Weapons and their Annual Review Conferences:

<https://www.un.org/disarmament/wmd/bio/>

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13. "Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) – UNODA." United Nations, United Nations, [www.un.org/disarmament/wmd/Nuclear/NPT.shtml](http://www.un.org/disarmament/wmd/Nuclear/NPT.shtml).
14. "Chemical Weapons Convention." OPCW, [www.opcw.org/chemical-weapons-convention](http://www.opcw.org/chemical-weapons-convention).
15. "Biological Weapons – UNODA." *United Nations*, United Nations, [www.un.org/disarmament/wmd/bio/](http://www.un.org/disarmament/wmd/bio/).