Disarmament Education:
Civil Society Statement for the 71st Session of the General Assembly First Committee, 12 October 2016

FULL WRITTEN STATEMENT DELIVERED BY: Rachel Salcedo, Civil Society Youth Representative

For shortened verbal version, see page 4 below.

I am a Peace and Justice Studies student at Pace University delivering this statement on behalf of civil society organizations committed to supporting disarmament and nonproliferation education.

The UN Secretary-General’s report on Disarmament and Nonproliferation Education this year profiles many initiatives by Member States, international organizations, civil society and academia. However, it is disappointing that so few governments actually submitted reports to the Secretary-General for inclusion in the report. While disarmament education today is seen as a politically nonthreatening, consensus-building activity and the General Assembly Resolutions on Disarmament and Nonproliferation Education pass without opposition, they do not generate much interest from Member States. There is little substance in terms of programming and few sources of funds. Even though the 2014 resolution (A/RES/69/65) frames disarmament and non-proliferation education in terms of “enhancing sustainable economic and social development”, there is nothing in the conclusions of this year’s report on integrating disarmament education with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Nor does the report mention the groundbreaking Security Council Resolution 2250, which calls for “inclusive representation of youth in decision-making...for the prevention and resolution of conflict” and “quality education for peace.”

There is a danger that disarmament and non-proliferation education will be used by powerful Member States to distract from the lack of progress on disarmament. This anemic vision of disarmament education is at threat of becoming a political figleaf. The lack of attention to political dimensions means that there is little recognition of the unequal access to disarmament and non-proliferation education and the role that this plays in marginalizing some people from multilateral deliberations. If targeted well, disarmament education can help empower the greater participation of youth, women, survivors of violence and people from the Global South in peace and security policymaking.

As a result, there is a need for a more coherent approach to disarmament education that is relevant to global policymaking priorities and revives the ambition of the 1980 UNESCO World Congress on Disarmament Education. That conference resulted in a declaration that to be “effective,” disarmament education must “be related to the lives and concerns of the learners” and analyze “the political realities within which disarmament is sought.”
Therefore, during First Committee, we call on delegations to:

- Welcome the Secretary-General’s 2016 report in their interventions and express the ongoing relevance of the 2002 Study, as well as the contributions of civil society and educational institutions in providing disarmament and non-proliferation education;
- Report in their interventions on their government’s disarmament and non-proliferation education initiatives and call on Member States, international organizations, civil society, and educational institutions to make submissions to UNODA for the 2018 report;
- Vote in favor of a resolution calling for ongoing implementation of the 2002 study’s recommendations;
- Seek language in the resolution calling on Member States, international organizations, civil society, and educational institutions to increase funding and institutional support for disarmament education; and
- Seek language in the resolution that requests the Secretary-General to report on:
  - The contribution of disarmament and non-proliferation education to the Sustainable Development Goals (particularly Goal 4 on education and Goal 16 on peace and justice) and vice versa;
  - The contribution of disarmament and non-proliferation education to implementation of UNSCR 2250 and vice versa; and
  - Efforts to overcome differential access to disarmament and non-proliferation education and its relationship to inequality.

Beyond First Committee, we respectfully call on Member States to:

- Provide funding and institutional support to international organizations, civil society, and educational institutions providing disarmament and nonproliferation education.
- Seek synergies between disarmament and non-proliferation education and the implementation of the SDGs and UNSCR 2250;
- Make a submission to UNODA for the 2018 report on their support for disarmament and non-proliferation education;
- Implement disarmament and non-proliferation education in ways that is sensitive to marginalization and differential access, for example, mainstreaming promotion of gender equality across all programs and building and building the capacity of under-represented peoples and groups; and
- Avoid using “disarmament and nonproliferation education” as a figleaf for political inaction on pressing disarmament issues.
Delivered on behalf of the following organizations:

Article 36
Control Arms
Hibakusha Stories
International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA)
International Peace Research Association
Mines Action Canada
PAX
Peace Boat US
Project Ploughshares
Strategic Concept for Removal of Arms and Proliferation (SCRAP)
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)
World Council of Churches Commission on International Affairs
VERBAL VERSION

Shortened verbal version delivered by Rachel Salcedo, Civil Society Youth Representative

Thank you, Distinguished Chair,

I am a Peace and Justice Studies student at Pace University delivering this statement on behalf of civil society organizations committed to supporting disarmament and nonproliferation education.

The UN Secretary-General’s report on Disarmament and Nonproliferation Education this year profiles many initiatives by Member States, international organizations, civil society and academia. However, it is disappointing that so few governments actually submitted reports to the Secretary-General for inclusion in the report. While disarmament education today is seen as a politically nonthreatening, consensus-building activity and the General Assembly Resolutions on Disarmament and Nonproliferation Education pass without opposition, they do not generate much interest from Member States. There is little substance in terms of programming and few sources of funds. There is nothing in the conclusions of this year’s report on integrating disarmament education with the Sustainable Development Goals, nor does the report mention the groundbreaking Security Council Resolution 2250, which calls for “inclusive representation of youth in decision-making...for the prevention and resolution of conflict” and “quality education for peace.”

There is a danger that disarmament and non-proliferation education will be used by powerful States to distract from the lack of progress on disarmament. The lack of attention to political dimensions means that there is little recognition of the unequal access to disarmament and non-proliferation education and the role that this plays in marginalizing some people from multilateral deliberations. If targeted well, disarmament education can help empower the greater participation of youth, women, survivors of violence and people from the Global South in peace and security policymaking. Indeed, the declaration of 1980 UNESCO World Congress on Disarmament Education still rings true today: to be “effective,” disarmament education must “be related to the lives and concerns of the learners” and analyze “the political realities within which disarmament is sought.”

Therefore, Distinguished Chair, we call on delegations to:

- Welcome the Secretary-General’s 2016 report in their interventions, as well as the contributions of civil society and educational institutions in providing disarmament and non-proliferation education;
- Report in their interventions on their government’s disarmament and non-proliferation education initiatives and call on Member States to make submissions to UNODA for the 2018 report;
- Vote in favor of a resolution calling for ongoing implementation of the 2002 study’s recommendations;
- Seek language in the resolution calling for increased funding for disarmament education and requesting the Secretary-General to report on the contribution of disarmament and non-proliferation education to the Sustainable Development Goals, Security Council Resolution 2250 and efforts to overcome differential access to disarmament education; and
- Seek ways to mainstream promotion of gender equality and building capacity of under-represented peoples and groups in disarmament education programs.

Thank you.