



DISEC

STUDY GUIDE

AGENDA

**PROTECTING THE RIGHTS OF REFUGEES AND THE
EROSION OF NUCLEAR TRANSPARENCY AND NON-
PROLIFERATION**

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INTRODUCTION TO THE UN

The United Nations is an international organization founded in 1945. Currently made up of 193 Member States, the UN and its work are guided by the purposes and principles contained in its founding Charter. The UN has evolved over the years to keep pace with a rapidly changing world. But one thing has stayed the same: it remains the one place on Earth where all the world's nations can gather together, discuss common problems, and find shared solutions that benefit all of humanity.

The main purpose of the United Nations is to maintain international peace and security, develop friendly relations among nations, promote human rights, and encourage international cooperation in addressing global challenges. The organization serves as a global platform where countries can collaborate to address common challenges such as conflict, poverty, inequality, climate change, and humanitarian crises. It operates under the principle of sovereign equality, where every member state has equal representation in the General Assembly, regardless of its economic or political stature. Through its various organs, agencies, and offices located in New York, Geneva, Vienna, and Nairobi, the UN continues to play a central role in promoting peace, security, development, and human rights worldwide.

COMMITTEE OVERVIEW

The Disarmament and International Security Committee (DISEC) is the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly. It serves as the primary forum for discussing international peace, security, disarmament, and arms control. It examines threats posed by nuclear weapons, conventional arms, terrorism, and emerging military technologies while encouraging international cooperation and confidence-building measures.

The mandate of this committee states that it is responsible for discussing issues related to disarmament, non-proliferation, arms control, and international security. As a General Assembly committee, DISEC does not have legally binding resolutions, cannot impose sanctions or authorize military action. Instead, it adopts recommendations that guide future UN initiatives, other UN bodies, and encourage Member States to strengthen international peace and security.

INTRODUCTION TO THE AGENDA

Nuclear transparency is the exchange of information, inspections, and verification measures that allow states to build confidence in one another's nuclear activities. It is a key component of the global non-proliferation regime, helping reduce misunderstandings and prevent the spread of nuclear weapons.

In recent years, growing geopolitical tensions, declining trust, and challenges to existing arms control agreements have raised concerns that nuclear transparency is weakening. While many states continue to modernise their nuclear capabilities, emerging technologies have created new challenges for verification and monitoring.

The erosion of transparency depreciates relations between nuclear-armed states, while weakening confidence in international agreements and increasing uncertainty within the global security environment. Delegates must therefore consider how transparency can be strengthened while respecting national sovereignty, maintaining strategic stability, and supporting the peaceful use of nuclear technology.

KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Nuclear Weapon

An explosive device that derives its devastating power from nuclear reactions, either fission or fusion.

Non- Proliferation

The international effort to stop the spread of dangerous weapons, especially weapons of mass destruction (WMD).

Safeguards

Inspection and monitoring measures used by the IAEA to verify compliance.

Nuclear Transparency

The sharing of information and verification measures that build confidence in nuclear activities.

Deterrence

The use of military capability to discourage potential aggression by other states.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The modern nuclear era began in 1945 with the first use of nuclear weapons during the Second World War. During the Cold War, the United States and the Soviet Union developed large nuclear arsenals, leading to an arms race and increasing concerns over global security. To prevent the spread of nuclear weapons, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) established the foundation of global non-proliferation. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) was tasked with verifying whether civilian nuclear programmes remained peaceful through inspections and safeguards.

Later agreements, including the START treaties, strengthened transparency by introducing inspections and information-sharing measures. However, nuclear tests by India and Pakistan, North Korea's withdrawal from the NPT, concerns surrounding Iran's nuclear programme, and the weakening of several arms control agreements have demonstrated the continuing challenges facing the international community.

Today, maintaining transparency, strengthening verification, and rebuilding trust remain essential to preserving the effectiveness of the global non-proliferation regime.

CAUSES

1. Geopolitical Tensions

Growing competition (security dilemmas) between major powers has reduced trust and made cooperation on nuclear issues more difficult. This has limited dialogue and transparency between states.

2. Weakening of Arms Control Agreements

The suspension, expiration, or reduced implementation of several arms control agreements has weakened verification measures and information sharing, increasing uncertainty. Further, most agreements are non-binding, making them voluntary pledges.

3. Nuclear Modernisation

Many nuclear-armed states are upgrading their nuclear weapons and delivery systems, intended to strengthen national security; these programmes have raised concerns over a renewed arms race.

4. Regional Security Challenges

Ongoing regional conflicts and security concerns encourage some states to rely on nuclear deterrence to secure safety and security at the expense of international law.

5. Differing National Priorities

States have different security interests and views on disarmament, making it difficult to reach agreement on strengthening transparency and the global non-proliferation regime. For instance, Iran cannot reach a nuclear agreement with the USA as it feels entitled to a nuclear regime, while the USA strongly opposes proliferation.

STAKEHOLDERS

Nuclear-Armed States

Reduced visibility into adversaries' arsenals forces states to plan for worst-case scenarios, driving competitive modernization and stockpile expansion. The breakdown of communication channels, routine disclosures, and bilateral treaties increases the probability of accidental escalation during crisis events.

Non-Nuclear-Weapon States

Lacking reliable security guarantees, losing trust in the NPT and facing an unpredictable global environment, non-nuclear states face growing internal pressures to develop their own nuclear deterrents.

IAEA

Denied physical access, limited satellite/sensor monitoring, and restricted inspections severely weaken the IAEA's ability to verify non-diversion of nuclear materials. Moreover, political obstruction by key member states diminishes its authority and reduces its effectiveness.

Civilian Populations

Warmer nuclear rhetoric and higher risk of conflict endanger civilian populations globally, while state budgets divert critical public funds into nuclear expansion. Secondly, decreased regulatory transparency heightens the risk of unmonitored radiological leaks, industrial accidents, and long-term nuclear fallout.

Nuclear Weapons

Cryptic threats shorten decision-making windows, forcing military forces to place weapons systems on higher launch-on-warning alert statuses. Secrecy incentivizes the development of lower-yield "usable" tactical nuclear weapons and novel delivery systems (e.g., hypersonic devices, autonomous underwater drones).



IMPACTS

1. Increased Risk of Conflict

Lacking clear visibility into an adversary's capabilities and force postures, states plan for worst-case scenarios—mistaking defensive moves for offensive preparation. Moreover, the breakdown of routine intelligence-sharing and hotlines leaves leaders with shorter decision-making windows during crises, drastically elevating the risk of accidental nuclear launch.

2. Collapse of Arms Control

Concealing stockpile counts, missile tests, and strategic doctrines destroys diplomatic trust, making new arms limitation treaties virtually impossible to negotiate. The expiration or suspension of key bilateral frameworks (e.g., New START, INF Treaty) removes legally binding data exchanges and on-site inspections, creating a total monitoring blackout.

3. Weakening of Non-Proliferation Architecture

When recognized Nuclear-Weapon States (NWS) abandon transparency and disarmament obligations (Article VI), Non-Nuclear-Weapon States (NNWS) lose faith in the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Denying physical and technical access to the IAEA hinders verification that civil nuclear materials are not being diverted for weapons development.

4. Regional Instability & Cascade Proliferation

In high-friction zones (e.g., South Asia, East Asia, the Middle East), nuclear ambiguity forces neighboring states to expand their own conventional and nuclear arsenals, triggering localized arms races. Opaque environments incentivize non-nuclear states to build "breakout capabilities"—mastering the nuclear fuel cycle to rapidly assemble a warhead if threatened.

5. Humanitarian, Environmental, and Economic Costs

Expanding nuclear warhead production and delivery systems requires billions of dollars, diverting critical public funds away from economic development, infrastructure, and climate resilience. Obscure policies increase the likelihood of nuclear detonation, which would cause irreversible environmental fallout, mass civilian casualties, and global agricultural collapse.

CASE STUDIES

1. North Korea's Nuclear Programme

North Korea withdrew from the NPT in 2003 and has since conducted several nuclear tests and missile launches. Limited access for international inspectors has made verification difficult, making North Korea one of the most significant challenges to the global non-proliferation regime.

2. Iran's Nuclear Programme

International concerns regarding Iran's nuclear programme led to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in 2015. The agreement introduced extensive monitoring by the IAEA in exchange for sanctions relief. Following the USA's withdrawal in 2018, concerns arose regarding implementation. The JCPOA terminated in 2025, leaving no nuclear check on Iran.

3. New START Treaty

The New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) between the USA and Russia limits deployed strategic nuclear weapons while promoting inspections and information sharing. Recent political tensions and the Russia-Ukraine war have affected implementation, with both sides refusing to cooperate.

PAST FRAMEWORKS AND ACTIONS

Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)

The NPT is the foundation of the global non-proliferation regime. It aims to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons, promote the peaceful use of nuclear energy, and encourage nuclear disarmament.

IAEA Safeguards System

The IAEA safeguards system allows inspectors to verify that civilian nuclear materials are not diverted for military purposes, strengthening international confidence and transparency.

Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT)

The CTBT prohibits nuclear test explosions and supports international efforts to limit the development of nuclear weapons through a global monitoring network.

New START Treaty

The New START Treaty introduced limits on deployed strategic nuclear weapons while promoting inspections and data sharing between the USA and Russia.

Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)

The JCPOA demonstrated how diplomacy and international verification could improve transparency regarding nuclear programmes through negotiated agreements and regular monitoring.

UN BODIES AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION

United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)

Through DISEC, the General Assembly provides a platform for Member States to discuss disarmament and international security issues. It adopts resolutions that encourage cooperation and strengthen the global non-proliferation regime.

United Nations Security Council (UNSC)

The Security Council addresses situations where nuclear proliferation threatens international peace and security. It may adopt legally binding resolutions, impose sanctions, or support diplomatic efforts to resolve nuclear disputes.

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

The IAEA is responsible for verifying that nuclear materials and technology are used for peaceful purposes. Through inspections, safeguards, and technical assistance, it plays a central role in promoting nuclear transparency.

Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO)

The CTBTO supports the implementation of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (1996) by operating a global monitoring system capable of detecting nuclear test explosions.

Conference on Disarmament (CD)

The Conference on Disarmament is the UN's primary multilateral negotiating forum for disarmament agreements. It provides Member States with an opportunity to negotiate future arms control and non-proliferation measures.

QUESTIONS A RESOLUTION MUST ANSWER

How can nuclear transparency be strengthened while respecting state sovereignty and national security?

How can existing verification mechanisms be improved to ensure greater compliance?

What steps can be taken to strengthen existing non-proliferation agreements?

How should the international community respond to states that fail to meet their non-proliferation obligations?

How can emerging technologies be incorporated into future verification and arms control efforts?

What confidence-building measures can reduce mistrust between states?

What should DISEC recommend for the United Nations and the IAEA in strengthening nuclear transparency?

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