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Global catastrophic risks mitigated	Risk multipliers managed	Implementation timeframe
Weapons of Mass Destruction	Conflict or political violence	Short
The threat from new and emerging technology	Institutions that lack inclusivity or accountability	
	Poverty and inequality	

Reviving disarmament: Creating an International Panel on Weapons Governance

To establish an International Panel on Weapons Governance to provide independent data and scientific assessment on weapons governance issues, including both those on emerging technologies and those on existing weapons, and to communicate on their relevance to a global audience.

DETAILS

Geneva Disarmament Platform website: www.disarmament.ch

2019 New Shape Forum on Weapons Governance webpage: <https://globalchallenges.org/events/2019-new-shape-forum-weapons-governance/>

WIDER IMPLICATIONS

Alleviating poverty and inequality

By contributing to more effective and integrated global efforts on disarmament, arms control, non-proliferation and international humanitarian law, the proposal will – over time – reduce both the frequency and intensity of armed conflict, as well as reduce the diversion of economic resources to arms production and military forces. These will both have significant effects on alleviating poverty and inequality.

Enhancing inclusivity and accountability in national and global governance

This proposal could enhance inclusivity and accountability in global governance by:

- Bringing technical, scientific and other cross-cutting issues affecting multiple treaties and regimes into a single forum, where they could be addressed in an integrated, holistic way.
- Facilitating interaction among stakeholders with diverse knowledge and expertise.
- Solving the problem of access to disarmament forums by civil society, scientific bodies, academia and the private sector by establishing a collaborative, multistakeholder process separate from, but feeding into, the existing forums

and treaty bodies.

- Improving awareness and understanding of the links between disarmament and other global issues, such as the environment, public health, and development; undertaking public awareness-raising on weapons risks; and championing the importance of disarmament and arms control.

Reducing conflict and political violence

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THEORY OF CHANGE

Implementation strategy

The Geneva Disarmament Platform and the Global Challenges Foundation hosted the 2019 New Shape Forum: Weapons Governance in Geneva on 30 Sept–1 Oct 2019. The event introduced the concept of weapons governance as means of considering disarmament, arms control, non-proliferation and international humanitarian law in an integrated way, as a subset of global governance, and considered approaches from other areas of global governance to see how they might be applied in the sphere of disarmament and international security.

Among the challenges discussed were the lack of public and political recognition of the gravity of the global risks associated with existing and emerging weapons systems (compared to, for example, climate change and pandemic disease); problems with the effective integration of stakeholders other than governments into weapons governance forums; and the relative lack of comprehensive, authoritative and independent data and analysis on weapons issues.

It was proposed to address these challenges by establishing an Intergovernmental Panel on Weapons Governance (IPWG), modelled on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). This IPWG, which would involve a wide range of stakeholders, would perform the role of a global and impartial holder of knowledge and scientific expertise, would bring all the technical aspects of the weapons governance conversation together in a single forum, and would also undertake public advocacy and awareness-raising.

While there was recognition of arguments against creating yet another international institution, participants nevertheless found the case for an IPWG compelling. The vital and effective role the IPCC had played in advancing global climate policy in the face of bitter political differences, by providing comprehensive and authoritative assessment and analysis of climate data through a genuinely collaborative, global multistakeholder process, was seen to have direct applicability to current challenges in disarmament and international security. Like the IPCC, an IPWG would not undertake its own research (thus, it would not duplicate the role of other research institutes). Rather, it would compile, assess and analyse existing published sources, perhaps producing periodic consensus reports

similar to the IPCC's "summary for policymakers".

There are clearly many questions to be resolved before an IPWG could be created. Would it be a United Nations body like the IPCC? What are the elements of the IPCC to capture, and the pitfalls to avoid? How would it be structured, governed and funded? What would be the respective incentives for governments and other stakeholders to support the concept? How would it be linked with the existing disarmament machinery and individual treaties? By what process should the idea be developed, and who should be involved?

These questions will be addressed during an initial "testing/incubating process". A pilot study will be carried out to test the concept of an IPWG, explore its practicability, and identify potential roadblocks. The result of the study will serve as a basis to decide whether an IPWG would be appropriate or need to be revised, and to identify next steps or recommendations towards implementation

Political will exists to realise this proposal

The proposal to establish an IPWG was one of the ideas put forward during the 2019 New Shape Forum co-organized in late 2019 by the GDP and the Global Challenges Foundation. As such and to date, the proposal is at a preliminary stage, meaning political will around that concept does not yet exist. It is worth noting, however, that the proposal has received positive reactions and was considered as one of the most compelling idea when discussed during an e-consultation process held in November-December 2019 with interested stakeholders as well as during public events.

Overall, leadership and commitment to implement concrete/ structural changes in order to overcome roadblocks that are obstructing progress in multilateral disarmament and arms control sector remain low. There is also a climate of "mutual distrust/suspicion" among policy makers regarding new initiatives, as well as the well-established tendency to work in silos. Nevertheless, the need for and benefits of better data, bridge building initiatives and enhanced partnerships across all stakeholders in disarmament and arms control processes/ discussions remain globally widely acknowledged. This suggest that political will could be built over time through communication, consultations and involvement from all stakeholders.

What if political will does not exist yet

In order to create political will to realize the proposal, special efforts will be made to:

1. Raise awareness of and interest in the weapons governance concept and how a technical body – the IPWG – could address the current challenges. This must be paired with efforts to build public and political recognition of the gravity and causes of the global risks associated with existing and emerging weapons.

This can be done during public events presenting/discussing the concept; small groups meetings with potential partners/stakeholders/donors; one-on-one briefings and/or consultations.

2. Identify and build relationships with new partners – both government and non-government – in order to build a solid and diversified core/network of supporters.

3. Ensure that trust and inclusion are inherent within the process of elaboration and implementation of a IPWG. It will be key to demonstrate the benefits and relevance of the involvement of different stakeholders as well as to clearly

identify and articulate the overall objective/vision/agenda of such a panel to get as much support as possible and be seen as a legitimate initiative.

It is difficult to provide an accurate estimate to create political will to realize the proposal as this will take some time and resources, and will need to be sustained over the long term.

MITIGATING RISKS

Mitigating weapons of mass destruction

The proposal plans to mitigate the risks caused by weapons of mass destruction by:

- Facilitating collaborative work and increasing transparency – through data collection, analysis and assessment – on politically divisive issues (e.g. nuclear weapons).
- Increasing citizens' engagement on this issue through the provision/availability of "open data" on weapons of mass destruction, thus generating greater awareness among the public, resulting to greater public pressure on governments to comply with international standards and/or take new measures to address current/new threats caused by WMDs.
- Reconnecting weapons of mass destruction non-proliferation and disarmament efforts with other major global concerns.

Mitigating the threat from new and emerging technology

The proposal plans to mitigate the threat from new and emerging technology by:

- Providing thorough and independent analysis and assessment of the implications of emerging weapons technologies such as autonomous weapons, cyberweapons, artificial intelligence and biotechnology.
- Developing partnerships with the private sector corporations/industries which constitute the domain for many of the future risks associated with emerging technologies.