

# **CIVIL SOCIETY STATEMENT ON HUMANITARIAN DISARMAMENT**

**UN First Committee**

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Thank you.

For several years, civil society has delivered a joint statement on humanitarian disarmament, an approach to governing weapons that seeks to reduce the human suffering and environmental damage inflicted by arms. The pandemic has made 2020 an unusual year, but humanitarian disarmament is as relevant, and perhaps even more relevant, than before.

Since June, more than 250 civil society organizations have signed an open letter arguing that humanitarian disarmament can help lead the way to an improved post-pandemic normal. The breadth of support, from around the world and across humanitarian disarmament campaigns, reflects how seriously the community views the letter's call. On behalf of those organizations and others that may join, I want to highlight a few lessons humanitarian disarmament can teach.

Humanitarian disarmament's twin pillars of prevention and remediation should guide the allocation of resources to advance human security. To prevent arms-inflicted harm, governments and industry should stop investing in unacceptable weapons and strengthen civilian protection. To remediate harm, governments should support programs that assist victims, restore infrastructure, clear explosive ordnance, and clean up conflict-related pollution.

The principles of inclusion and non-discrimination, which are fundamental to humanitarian disarmament, should inform measures to address the inequalities that COVID-19 has exposed and exacerbated. The pandemic has increased the challenges faced by conflict survivors and other persons with disabilities. A humanitarian disarmament response would ensure that such inequality and marginalization do not become entrenched. It would also promote more sensitive programs than existed before.

Inclusivity and accessibility should underpin diplomacy. Whether meeting in person or digitally, the international community could promote meaningful participation by permitting online contributions, including from survivors and other persons with disabilities unable to attend.

Finally, international cooperation should become a standard way to address global issues, as it is in humanitarian disarmament. A cooperative mindset, reinforced by the pandemic experience, should inform efforts to address human and environmental harm and to develop international norms.

The more than 250 signatories to the open letter, therefore, call on states, international organizations, and civil society to follow humanitarian disarmament's lead. The international

community should prioritize human security, reallocate military spending to humanitarian causes, work to eliminate inequalities, ensure multilateral fora incorporate diverse voices, and bring a cooperative mindset to problems of practice and policy. Together we can reshape the security landscape for the future and help create a new—and improved—“normal.”

Thank you.