

Strategic Concept for the Removal of Arms & Proliferation
Centre for International Studies & Diplomacy, SOAS, London
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Report of the UN Panel Discussion Disarmament Education: Best Practice for the Future



Hosted by the Permanent Mission of Sweden
Wednesday 11th February 2015
Room V in the Palais des Nations, Geneva



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“Disarmament education inside and outside of schools is urgently needed”

H.E. Ambassador Toshio Sano, Permanent Representative of Japan to the Conference on Disarmament



Disarmament Education: Past Best Practice for the Future Strategic Concept for the Removal of Arms & Proliferation [SCRAP]

Chair:

Mr. Ulf Lindell, Minister-Counsellor at the Permanent Mission of Sweden in Geneva

Opening speaker:

Mr. Michael Møller, Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and Personal Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General to the Conference

Panel:

- H.E. Ambassador Toshio Sano, Permanent Representative of Japan to the Conference on Disarmament
- H.E. Ambassador Jorge Lomonaco, Permanent Representative of Mexico to the UN in Geneva
- Ms. Mia Gandenberger, Programme Associate at Reaching Critical Will

- Mr. Marc Finaud, UNIDIR Resident Senior Fellow and GCSP Senior Programme Advisor
- Dr. Dan Plesch, Director of the Centre for International Studies & Diplomacy, SOAS, University of London
- Miss Carolina Sarmiento, SCRAP student ambassador
- Miss Chloe Mimault-Talagrand, SCRAP student ambassador

Discussion Agenda

The event served as a focus on the efforts made by the United Nations and the broader international community in regards to the implementation, relevance and impact of disarmament education. An endeavour that stands to be a tremendous force for peace, contributing to the reduction, control, and destroying of weapons of all kinds in order to diffuse tensions among states and build a safer world.

Panel Presentation and Discussion

Education, holistic approach and political will

The prospect of disarmament, much like the binding draft resolution on general and complete disarmament SCRAP is campaigning for, is greatly criticised as being impossible. However, in light of the increasing tensions in Eurasia, South East Asia and the Middle East; not to mention the development, proliferation and lower transaction cost of armaments, disarmament is of critical importance. To quote Toshio Sano, Japan's ambassador to the United Nations of Geneva [UNOG], "disarmament education inside and outside of schools is urgently needed".

SCRAP's third annual panel discussion entitled "Disarmament Education: Best Practice for the Future", was attended by UN Member State representatives, like minded Geneva based NGOs and SOAS University students and staff.

The Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, Mr. Møller, made introductions and emphasized the need to teach future generations about the importance of disarmament as an essential building block of peace and security for all of us. His ending words urging for a more holistic approach to disarmament.

Ambassador Sano next addressed the panel, giving an insightful account of Japan's long term plan on tackling disarmament, through education. 'Disarmament and Nuclear Disarmament Education', is compulsory national curriculum for government Secondary schools, instilling "clear understanding of the tragic consequences from the use of nuclear weapons". The government of Japan also extends their education programme outside of Japan. Through their UN Fellowship programme that sends young diplomats to Japan, where a key aim is to impart more knowledge about the atrocities of nuclear weapons.

Ambassador Lomonaco presented a very interesting point and discussion topic: political will among Member State governments towards disarmament. Or the lack of it, is the challenge that we must address today, as will future generations tomorrow. Activism and continuous pressure on governments and organisations to make disarmament a respected international norm on the international agenda is as needed and as important as ever.

Ms Gandenberger emphasized Mr. Møller's point, for a more holistic approach to disarmament, which was also echoed by Mr. Finaud and Dr. Plesch. Ms. Gandenberger also addressed the criticalness disarmament plays in conflict resolution, and the holistic approach is not only in context to arms but the initiative, not just men, but women and the younger generation too. Both Mr.Finaud and Dr. Plesch remarked on the importance of education, but that the urgency for [nuclear] disarmament is high. Dr. Plesch adding that a resolution was not implausible, as current SCRAP research into the Conference on Disarmament Informal Plenary Sessions have shown Member States, both nuclear and non nuclear, expressing their political concerns towards the stalemate in disarmament processes.

Conclusion

The three main points to take from the panel discussion were, [education](#), [holistic approach](#) and [political will](#). Collecting student feedback after the discussion, many remain skeptical, out right certain that the holistic approach that SCRAP received much praise for from the panel, would never be possible. It is understandable, still belonging to the generations where nuclear stalemate is seen to be our global security, perhaps if we had disarmament education as part of our national curriculum like Japan has introduced in theirs. Or as Ambassador Sano suggested, more in our pop culture, perhaps we would start to see an increased and united initiative that would put pressure on governments and help the endeavour towards general and complete disarmament.

We would like to again thank the Permanent Mission of Sweden for hosting SCRAPs third annual event at the United Nations in Geneva.

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