



**United Nations Office
for Disarmament Affairs**

**Remarks at the United Nations Youth4Disarmament Forum: High-level
Opening Session**

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As delivered



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Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

Esteemed Colleagues,

Dear young participants, good morning,

It is a greatest pleasure and honor for me to welcome you to this **first ever UN Youth4Disarmament Forum** - a landmark gathering that brings us together to explore the critical intersection between nuclear weapons and emerging technologies.

Just one year ago, at the General Assembly's First Committee, I always make a speech there, I shared a vision of a dedicated space for youth in disarmament, and that was a Disarmament Forum where they can connect, lead and inspire meaningful action. Today, just a year after, I'm happy to see that this vision has become a reality.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Government of the Republic of Korea for their generous support in making this Forum a real possibility.

This Forum comes at a pivotal moment. We are seeing technological change accelerate at a rapid pace, often outpacing our collective efforts to manage it. Global military spending also has reached **unprecedented levels, I hope you read Secretary General's recent report – the level of expenditure last year, 2024, was 2.7 trillion dollars, marking the tenth consecutive year of increase** as highlighted in the report together with some concrete recommendations on how to counter it.

These are **alarming** figures. This is a worrying situation. And behind each dollar spent on weapons lies a missed opportunity: funds taken away from

education, climate action, human rights, health and other pillars of lasting peace and sustainable development.

Yet, with every challenge comes an **opportunity** to rethink, to rebuild, and to renew our shared commitment to peace and security. Young people are already embracing this opportunity as they shape solutions to the risks posed by emerging technologies and nuclear weapons. Their vital contributions to **advancing peace and security** are increasingly **recognized and appreciated** at the global policy level. This is reflected in multiple UN General Assembly resolutions on Youth, Disarmament and Non-Proliferation, as well as in Security Council resolutions 2250, 2419, and 2535 on Youth, Peace and Security.

Building on this normative foundation, the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs launched the Youth4Disarmament initiative in 2019 to **connect, educate, and empower young people** to lead efforts toward a world **free** from fear, armed violence, and nuclear threats. Today's Forum makes **a key milestone in this journey**, demonstrating the initiative's growing impact. Through the programme, we have reached **member States** and engaged over **500 young people** around the world- amplifying their voices in disarmament efforts.

Today, we are bringing together UNODA Youth4Disarmament alumni and young leaders from civil society, academia, and other organizations engaged in disarmament. Our goal is to **foster collaboration** and build lasting networks across these communities. That's what makes this Forum truly unique – it is creating a **global platform** where young people can connect, communicate, and contribute to shaping disarmament policy.

To all of the young participants here today, you are the **driving force** behind the Youth4Disarmament Forum. From virtual webinars and the creation of a youth-led Forum think tank to your contributions across three dynamic Forum Crews,

including the development of a fully **youth-driven outcome document**, your ideas and leadership have shaped every step of this journey.

I especially look forward to the Forum's Outcome Document, which will reflect your insights and recommendations on addressing the complex linkages between nuclear weapons and emerging technologies. Your discussions this week will also chart practical ways forward, transforming innovation into solutions for peace and ensuring that young people remain central to shaping global security solutions.

In closing, allow me to leave you with one reflection: meaningful youth participation in multilateral discussions **must become the norm**, not the exception.

We must ensure that young people, such as yourselves, are not just invited to the table but are empowered to shape the agenda - across disarmament dialogues, expert groups, and policy processes at every level. To support you to that end, we must expand mentorship and fellowship opportunities under the UNODA Youth4Disarmament programme, enabling young leaders to work side by side with diplomats, scientists, and civil society to co-create solutions that are bold, inclusive, and future-oriented.

I believe that the UN Youth4Disarmament Forum **should convene regularly**, ideally every other year, as a dynamic space where young people can come together with Member States, the United Nations, civil society, and other partners. It offers a vital opportunity to take stock of progress in the disarmament field, shape policy, and spark fresh thinking and innovation to drive meaningful change. And, as you know, the themes you will be discussing are also the themes that are being discussed by the Member States in the First Committee, so there are already natural, direct linkages between what you are discussing and that should be fed into the Member States discussions as well.

We also have, as you know, many programmes to help you acquire the substantive knowledge and also the skills, for example, the Youth Leader Fund for a World without Nuclear Weapons, so we need to make sure that you will be able to tap into and take advantage of various opportunities that we are beginning to offer to young people.

This Forum is more than an event – it is a **powerful testimony** of what is possible where young people lead with courage, creativity, conviction, and passion.

You are already protecting communities, challenging the status quo, and building the foundations of a more peaceful, secure, and just world.

Let this Forum become a launchpad for your ideas, your actions and your leadership. Because the future we all aspire to—a future free from fear and armed violence—will be shaped by your vision, your voice, and your unwavering commitment to peace in your everyday actions.

I thank you very much for your attention and wish you a successful Forum!