

## Divisions Emerge During Opening UNHRC Debate on Prohibited and Nuclear Weapons



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United Nations Human Rights Council delegates opened a debate on civilian protection, with early discussions focusing on the use of prohibited and nuclear weapons.

In terms of prohibited weapons, several states, including Belgium, France, the Netherlands and Japan, called for stronger enforcement mechanisms, disarmament efforts and international cooperation to prevent the use and transport of banned weapons. Proposals included strengthening existing treaties, improving accountability measures, and increasing humanitarian access for affected civilians.

Germany and Switzerland emphasized the need for legally binding resolutions and stronger adherence to international conventions, while Kenya reaffirmed the importance of the Geneva Conventions and holding violators accountable. Ethiopia shares belief in the Geneva Conventions, but has expressed opposition to sanctions, in that they drain national independence. They further claim that victim rehabilitation should

take priority over prevention enforcement. “We believe existing conventions and treaties to be enough,” stated the delegate of Ethiopia. Algeria similarly warned against overreliance on sanctions, though it acknowledged that states failing to control illegal weapons within their borders should face consequences.

Debate further intensified during a moderated caucus on the prohibition of nuclear weapons, where delegates, including Chile, Cuba, and Vietnam, advocated for absolute prohibition and universal treaty participation. Meanwhile, the Republic of Korea raised security concerns regarding missile testing by North Korea, questioning the effectiveness of existing sanctions regimes. Switzerland shares similar worries about the legitimacy of nuclear norms and needs proof of action. While Ethiopia disagreed with sanctions on prohibited weapons, it supports the absolute abolishment of nuclear weapons, arguing that they are a threat to humanity.

Even further, Cuba argued that states holding nuclear weapons should not be permitted to sign treaties without eliminating their arsenals. In contrast, Belgium argues that extreme bans will create counterproductive binary division blocs and lead to dangerous security dilemmas. In interviewing Cuba about Belgium’s opposition, they provide an unclear and contradictory response: “Belgium can deal with that, I mean, we have nuclear weapons anyway.”

At the same time, China faces accusations from a multitude of countries over trespass of various signed treaties. To this, China denies the accusations and claims to support a balanced, multilateral approach within the United Nations rather than a unilateral order.

As the second unmoderated caucus comes to a close, delegates remain engaged in negotiations and further significant discussion is expected before any resolutions arise.