

PACDAC Meeting Minutes

11.00 – 3.30, Friday 10 June 2022 (Hybrid)

Members in attendance

Hon Phil Twyford (Chair) – in person
Mary Wareham (Deputy Chair) – in person
Jamila Homayun – in person
Andrew Chen – in person
Edwina Hughes – virtual
Martin Donoghue - virtual
Lucy Stewart – virtual

Officials in attendance

Katy Donnelly (MFAT) – in person
Mike Shaw (Minister's office) – in person

1. Welcome from Minister for Disarmament and Arms Control

The Minister welcomed the Committee members to the meeting, noting that it was good to be able to have some members present in person.

2. Apologies and update on membership

The Minister noted apologies from Kevin Clements, who was travelling offshore.

The Minister confirmed that Dylan Maynard had resigned from the Committee, in light of the conflict of interest arising from his new role with the Ministry of Defence. He updated the Committee on efforts to find a replacement member, and took note of the Committee's interest in preserving, and if possible building on, the diversity of the Committee. Members discussed possible sources of new membership, noting a particular interest in ensuring representation of Pasifika voices on the Committee. The Minister undertook to provide a further update on the membership question in due course.

3. Adoption of agenda

The Committee adopted the agenda. At the request of the Committee, two items were included for discussion under Any Other Business – an update on public consultation on New Zealand's space policy settings, and on the clearance of explosive remnants of war in Ukraine and the Pacific. A specific discussion on DEUNIF was also requested under agenda item 9.

4. Adoption of minutes

The Committee adopted the minutes of the inaugural meeting of PACDAC on 18 February, the informal session on Ukraine on 14 March, and the funding meeting on 17 May. The Committee agreed that all confirmed minutes should be posted on the PACDAC section of the MFAT website.

Action: MFAT to load confirmed minutes of the three meetings onto its website.

5. Consideration of any Official Information Act requests relating to the Committee.

The Minister confirmed that no new OIA requests relating to the Committee had been received.

6. Update from the Minister for Disarmament and Arms Control on recent and forthcoming disarmament activities and events

The Minister noted that this was a very busy period in the disarmament calendar, with a number of significant international meetings taking place over the coming months. He provided an update on preparations for the first Meeting of States Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, to which he would lead the New Zealand delegation. He also updated the Committee on work relating to the Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, Pacific nuclear legacy issues, autonomous weapons systems and the draft Political Declaration on Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas.

The Minister updated the Committee on some of the bilateral meetings he had had with partners, including with the UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Izumi Nakamitsu, Canada's Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs Robert Oliphant, Australian Ambassador for Arms Control and Counter-Proliferation Ian Biggs, Austrian Ambassador Alexander Kmentt (as President-Designate of the first Meeting of States Parties to the TPNW), and the Republic of Korea's Ambassador to New Zealand Lee Sang-Jin. The Minister also noted his conversations with Zia Mian and his team from Princeton University, Alyn Ware, Michael Hamel-Green and Rhea Moss-Christian.

The Committee noted the importance of having the Minister lead New Zealand's delegation to MSP1, and discussed a number of issues relating to the TPNW and Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas.

Members of the Committee expressed their discomfort with the New Zealand Government's decision to send military support to Ukraine, noting their preference for greater emphasis on humanitarian assistance. The long-term consequences of the massive flows of arms into Ukraine was also of concern to the Committee. The Committee requested more information on the training that the New Zealand Defence Force was providing to Ukrainian soldiers (in using the 105mm L119 Light Gun, as announced on 31 May 2022), in particular whether it would cover off issues relating to explosive weapons in populated areas.

Action: MFAT to seek information from the NZDF for the Committee on whether its training for Ukrainian soldiers would feature training on compliance with international humanitarian law (including on explosive weapons in populated areas).

7. Review and adoption of the updated PACDAC Handbook

Subject to some minor editorial amendments, which would be communicated to the Deputy Chair, the Committee approved the revised PACDAC Handbook.

Action: Deputy Chair to update the Handbook with the editorial changes sought at the meeting, and circulate the final approved Handbook to Committee members and the Secretariat.

8. Presentation and adoption of potential programme of work by Deputy Chair

The Deputy Chair presented the draft programme of work to the Committee, which had been closely consulted throughout its development. The Committee thanked Mary for her leadership of this work. Subject to some minor editorial amendments and updates, the Committee adopted the programme of work. The Committee also agreed that a brief summary of the cross-cutting issues that it would be focusing on should be uploaded onto the MFAT website.

Action: Deputy Chair to update the programme of work with the editorial changes sought by the Committee and circulate the final version to the Committee and Secretariat. Deputy Chair to summarise the three cross-cutting workstreams, and share text with MFAT for uploading on its website.

9. Discussion of disarmament education and public awareness of disarmament and arms control issues in New Zealand

Lucy Stewart presented to the Committee on a report she co-authored regarding the current state of tertiary disarmament education in New Zealand. The Committee discussed the findings of the report, and their own related experiences, and agreed on the importance of moving forward to improve disarmament education in New Zealand. A number of ideas were raised on how this could be achieved.

The Committee paused its discussion on disarmament education to consider a proposal submitted by Martin on the clearance of explosive remnants of war.

12. Any other business

Martin introduced a proposal he had circulated to Committee members that morning, relating to possible New Zealand support for the clearance of explosive remnants of war in Ukraine. He also shared an existing report on ERW clearance activities in the Pacific, noting the absence of a coherent plan to move forward with addressing this important issue.

The Chair suggested the Committee consider Martin's proposals (on Ukraine and Pacific) and, in keeping with its statutory mandate, provide advice to the Minister of Foreign Affairs on what the Government could do in this space. The Chair noted that any such advice would need to be submitted by the appointed members of the Committee, with the Minister for Disarmament and Arms Control standing aside.

The Committee agreed to submit the recommendations in Martin's report on Ukraine to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, noting that this should be progressed with some urgency.

Action: Deputy Chair to draft a letter to the Minister of Foreign Affairs on behalf of the appointed members of the Committee, laying out the Committee's recommendations relating to explosive remnants of war in Ukraine. Once the Committee has agreed the letter, the Deputy Chair will submit it to the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Martin left the meeting.

9. Discussion of disarmament education and public awareness of disarmament and arms control issues in New Zealand (resumed)

The Chair requested Lucy to lead an inter-sessional work-stream to identify the most viable opportunities to strengthen disarmament education in New Zealand. This could include consideration of the convening role that PACDAC could play in building a dedicated cohort of disarmament educators and practitioners, and the prospect of a future workshop between PACDAC and key stakeholders. The work-stream could also consider the funding of work in this area. It was noted that the previous PACDAC had also discussed this issue.

Action: Lucy to lead inter-sessional work on this issue and report back at the next PACDAC meeting. Edwina to share with current Committee members the paper prepared by the previous Committee on this issue. MFAT to take note of the Chair's interest in offering a consolidated debrief for interested academics after the first Meeting of States Parties to the TPNW and the NPT Review Conference.

10. Discussion on constituency-building in New Zealand

The Deputy Chair provided an update on her work on this issue inter-sessionally, including a mapping exercise she is undertaking of domestic stakeholders in New Zealand. The Chair also provided an update on his work to activate two constituencies in particular – youth and the science community – and acknowledged the importance of reaching out to Māori and Pasifika, and to the humanitarian, human rights and refugee sectors in New Zealand.

The Committee acknowledged the significant contribution that existing coordinators of domestic constituencies had played in promoting disarmament and peace in New Zealand, and some agreed with the Deputy Chair's overall conclusion that constituencies were fragmented, institutionally fragile and lacking in diversity.

The Chair proposed that PACDAC reach out to key constituencies in New Zealand, with the objective of building an understanding of the relevance of disarmament and peace work to them, and encouraging their engagement in and stewardship of this work moving forward. Subject to progress in this area, the Committee could work towards an inclusive hui on the future of disarmament and peace advocacy in New Zealand.

There was broad support for the idea of a hui as a longer-term goal for the Committee, with the Deputy Chair noting the importance of breaking down this work to target each constituency. The Deputy Chair undertook to write a concept note for the Committee's work on this issue, including the prospect of a hui (perhaps focused on the relevance of work on Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas for a number of stakeholders and constituencies in New Zealand).

Action: Deputy Chair to draft a concept note for intersessional agreement by the Committee on taking this workstream forward. MFAT to add to the agenda of the next meeting a specific item on outreach to the scientific community.

11. Identify action points from meeting

MFAT summarised the action points as laid out in the minutes, which were confirmed by the Committee.

12. Any other business

The Chair shared with the Committee a brief update on public consultation on New Zealand's space policy settings, which had been provided by the office of the Minister for Economic Development.

The Committee agreed that its next policy meeting should take place in early September (after the NPT Review Conference).

Action: MFAT to liaise with the Chair and Deputy Chair on the timing of the next Committee meeting.