Disarmament Week: 24 to 30 October

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News

The UN 'Disarmament Week' is observed every year from 24 to 30 October. It begins on 24 October, the anniversary of the founding of the UN. It was called for in the Final Document (resolution S-10/2) of the UN General Assembly's first Special Session devoted to Disarmament (SSOD-I) in 1978. The aim is to raise awareness of the dangers of the arms race and the need for disarmament. The UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) coordinates it.

Key facts

Dates	24–30 Oct (from UN founding anniversary)
Origin	SSOD-I Final Document, 1978 (resolution S-10/2)
UN body	UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA)
Nuclear treaties	NPT (1968/1970); CTBT (1996 – not yet in force); TPNW (2017/2021)
Other treaties	Biological Weapons Convention (1972/1975); Chemical Weapons Convention (1993/1997) – OPCW, The Hague
India's policy	Nuclear doctrine, 4 Jan 2003 – No First Use, credible minimum deterrence

Background

- Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT): opened for signature in 1968; in force in 1970. India has not signed it, calling it discriminatory (it divides nuclear-weapon States from others); Pakistan and Israel have not signed either; North Korea withdrew in 2003. India has also not signed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT, 1996), whose organisation (CTBTO) is in Vienna.
- Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC): opened for signature in 1993 and in force on 29 April 1997; it bans an entire class of weapons of mass destruction with a verification system. Its body, the OPCW, is at The Hague, Netherlands, and won the 2013 Nobel Peace Prize. India is an original State Party. The Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) came into force in 1975. The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) was adopted in 2017 and came into force on 22 Jan 2021 – India has not joined it.
- India's stand: on 9 June 1988, at the UNGA's third Special Session on Disarmament (SSOD-III), PM Rajiv Gandhi presented the 'Action Plan for a Nuclear-Weapon-Free and Non-Violent World Order'. Pokhran tests – 1974 and 1998 (Rajasthan). Under the 2003 doctrine, only the Political Council of the Nuclear Command Authority, chaired by the Prime Minister, can authorise nuclear use; the Executive Council is chaired by the National Security Adviser.
- UN machinery: the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva is the world's single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which promotes peaceful uses of nuclear energy, is in Vienna.

Tamil Nadu link: Dr R. Chidambaram (1936–2025), an alumnus of Presidency College, Chennai and IISc Bengaluru, played a key role in the first nuclear test (1974) and led the Department of Atomic Energy team in the Pokhran-II tests (1998). He was Atomic Energy Commission Chairman (1993–2000), Chairman of the IAEA Board of Governors (1994–95) and Principal Scientific Adviser (2001–2018). On peaceful uses: the 500 MWe Prototype Fast Breeder Reactor (PFBR) at Kalpakkam, designed by IGCAR and built by BHAVINI, attained first criticality on 6 April 2026.

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