



CHRONOLOGY OF ARMAMENTS, DISARMAMENT AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY 2008

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This chronology lists the significant events in 2008 related to armaments, disarmament and international security. In addition to the headline-grabbing events, such as the Georgia–Russia conflict and the pirate attacks off Somalia, it also records the less publicized, but no less important, advances and setbacks in international peace and security.

Dates are according to local time. Keywords are given in the margins. Abbreviations are explained below.

1 January

Up to 50 people are killed in Kiambaa, near the town of Eldoret, Kenya, when a mob burns down a church where several hundred people (Kikuyus) were hiding from ethnic violence. The violent protests, which started after the allegedly fraudulent elections on 27 December 2007, continue throughout the country, and by 11 January at least 600 people have been killed. (See also **6 December**.)

Kenya

2 January

The Government of Sri Lanka formally withdraws from the 2002 ceasefire agreement, stating that the escalating violence makes the agreement redundant. Since mid-2006 the armed forces and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) rebels have fought regular clashes, despite the agreement still technically being in place. The decision takes effect on 16 January, and the government forces start a major offensive to end the conflict with the LTTE rebels.

Sri Lanka

10 January

A suicide bomb attack outside the High Court building in Lahore, Pakistan, kills at least 20 people and wounds about 60, mostly police officers. No group claims responsibility for the attack.

Pakistan; Terrorism

18 January

Israel closes all border crossings with the Gaza Strip, cutting off all aid shipments, in an attempt to stop rocket attacks into Israel from the Gaza Strip.

Israel; Gaza Strip

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**23 January**

DRC Meeting in Goma, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the government and more than 20 rebel groups sign a peace agreement, including an immediate ceasefire, a withdrawal of all rebel forces in North Kivu province, and the deployment of UN peacekeeping forces in 13 key locations.

28 January

EU; Central African Republic; Chad; Sudan Meeting in Brussels, the foreign ministers of the EU member states approve the 3500-strong peacekeeping force EUFOR Tchad/RCA, to contribute to the protection of civilians and UN personnel and to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid in Chad and the Central African Republic.

30 January

Israel; Lebanon The Israeli Commission to Investigate the Lebanon Campaign in 2006 (Winograd Commission) releases its final report. The report states that there were grave failings by Israel's leaders during the 2006 war in Lebanon but avoids direct criticism of the Prime Minister, Ehud Olmert.

12 February

China; Russia; Outer space; Arms control At the Conference on Disarmament (CD), Geneva, Switzerland, China and Russia propose a draft treaty to ban the use of weapons in outer space. The treaty would prohibit the deployment of weapons in space and the use or threat to use force against satellites or other spacecraft. The 1967 Outer Space Treaty already bans nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction from space. The USA rejects the draft treaty as impossible to verify.

13 February

Lebanon; Terrorism A car bomb in Damascus, Syria, kills Imad Mughniyeh, one of the leaders of the Lebanese Shia opposition movement Hezbollah. Israel is blamed for the killing but neither confirms nor denies any involvement.

17 February

Kosovo; Serbia The Kosovan Prime Minister, Hashim Thaçi, announces that he has endorsed the declaration of independence from Serbia made by the Kosovan Parliament. Serbia immediately declares Kosovo's unilateral decision illegal.

Afghanistan; Terrorism More than 100 people are killed in a suicide bomb attack in Kandahar, Afghanistan. It is the deadliest attack since the Taliban lost power in 2001. The Taliban deny involvement in the attack.

18–22 February

Arms control; Cluster munitions The fourth meeting of the Oslo Process on Cluster Munitions, held in Wellington, New Zealand, issues the Declaration of the Wellington Conference on Cluster Munitions. (See also **19–30 May**.)

21 February

Turkey; Iraq; PKK Turkish armed forces cross the border with Iraq in an attempt to destroy Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) rebel bases. There is no confirmed death toll after the fighting. On 29 February the Turkish troops withdraw from northern Iraq.



27 February–4 March

Over 100 Palestinians are killed in an Israeli military operation in the Gaza Strip in an attempt to stop the rocket attacks on Israel from the Gaza Strip. The EU criticizes Israel for a 'disproportionate use of force'.

Israel; Gaza Strip

28 February

After more than a month of negotiations under the mediation of former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, Kenya's President Mwai Kibaki and opposition leader Raila Odinga sign a power-sharing agreement. Under the agreement (the National Accord and Reconciliation Act), a two-party coalition government will be set up, with cabinet posts divided equally between the parties, and a post of prime minister will be created.

Kenya

29 February

China and the USA sign an agreement establishing a military hotline between their defence ministries. The hotline, announced in November 2007, is an effort to promote cooperation and further dialogue between the two countries.

China; USA; CBMs

1 March

Colombian forces cross the border with Ecuador and attack a Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) camp, killing Raul Reyes, one of the leaders of FARC, and 16 other rebels. As the row over the killings escalates, Ecuador and Venezuela both move troops to their borders with Colombia and break off diplomatic relations with Colombia. At an emergency meeting on 4 March, the Organization of American States (OAS) concludes that the attack is a violation of Ecuador's sovereignty. By June the diplomatic relations between the countries are restored.

Colombia; Ecuador;
Venezuela; OAS

3 March

The UN Security Council adopts by a vote of 14–0, with Indonesia abstaining, Resolution 1803, imposing additional sanctions on Iran over its nuclear programme, including the inspection of cargo suspected of carrying prohibited goods, the tighter monitoring of financial institutions, and the extension of travel bans and asset freezes.

UN; Iran; Nuclear
programme

13 March

Meeting in Dakar, Senegal, President Idriss Déby of Chad and President Omar al-Bashir of Sudan sign the Dakar Agreement, committing the two states to prevent cross-border rebel attacks and to implement past accords that have failed.

Chad; Sudan

Following protests by Buddhist monks in Lhasa, Tibet, against Chinese rule, Chinese forces seal off three monasteries. The protests began on 10 March, to mark the 49th anniversary of an uprising against Chinese rule. Several people are killed and injured.

Tibet; China

14 March

China and Russia open a military hotline between their defence ministries to strengthen military–political cooperation between the two countries.

China; Russia; CBMs

**17 March**

UN; Kosovo

While attempting to retake control of a courthouse seized by Serbs in Mitrovica, Kosovo, UN police clash with Serbian demonstrators and are forced to withdraw from Serbian areas of the city. More than 130 people are injured during the violence.

25 March

AU; Comoros

Comoran Government forces, backed by 1500 African Union (AU) forces and France, invade the island of Anjouan to restore control. Since a poll in June 2007, which was not recognized by the Comoros Government or the AU, Anjouan has been a breakaway province.

28 March

NATO; Russia; CFE Treaty

NATO urges Russia to end its December 2007 suspension of the 1990 Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE Treaty) and proposes a 'parallel actions package' concerning the treaty. The package includes a series of steps leading to the entry into force of the 1999 Agreement on the Adaptation of the CFE Treaty and promises a review of changes to the new treaty regime. Russia maintains its earlier demands put forward at the CFE Extraordinary Conference in June 2007.

31 March

UN; DRC; Arms embargoes

The UN Security Council unanimously adopts Resolution 1807, extending the arms embargo and other sanctions against militias operating in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) until the end of 2008 but lifting all restrictions on transfers to the Congolese Government.

2–4 April

NATO

At its summit meeting in Bucharest, Romania, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) invites Albania and Croatia to begin accession talks to become members of the alliance. The Bucharest Summit Declaration is issued, backing the planned US missile defence deployment in the Czech Republic and Poland. The decision on NATO membership for Georgia and Ukraine is postponed. (See also **2–3 December**.)

20 April

Georgia; Russia; Abkhazia

The Georgian Ministry of Defence claims that a Russian fighter aircraft has shot down a Georgian unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) over Abkhazia. The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs claims that the aircraft was shot down by Abkhazian rebels, and that the flight is a breach of the 1994 peace agreement which ended fighting in Abkhazia.

24 April

Syria; North Korea; USA

The US Government releases a statement accusing North Korea of helping Syria build a nuclear reactor that 'was not intended for peaceful purposes' and demanding that Syria 'must come clean before the world regarding its illicit nuclear activities'. Syria denies any cooperation with North Korea.



25 April

The UN Security Council unanimously adopts Resolution 1810, extending the mandate of the 1540 Committee for an additional period of three years. The committee was established by Resolution 1540 of 28 April 2004, which binds all states to refrain from supporting the acquisition of weapons of mass destruction by non-state actors. Resolution 1810 also requests the committee to consider a comprehensive review of the status of the implementation of Resolution 1540 and to report to the Security Council no later than 31 January 2009.

UN; WMD

6 May

Following a decision by the Lebanese Government to close down the telecommunications network of Hezbollah, fighting erupts in Beirut. Hezbollah groups storm and seize most of western Beirut. Four days of clashes leave about 40 people dead. On 10 May a ceasefire is called and areas seized by Hezbollah are handed over to the Lebanese Army.

Lebanon

10 May

North Korea hands over 18 000 pages of documents with details of its plutonium programme to the US Department of State. North Korea had agreed to disclose the details of its nuclear programme on 3 October 2007.

North Korea; Nuclear programme

13 May

A series of explosions in Jaipur, India, kills 63 people and wounds about 200. A previously unknown group, the Indian Mujahideen, claims responsibility for the attacks.

India; Terrorism

16 May

The Commission on the Prevention of Weapons of Mass Destruction Proliferation and Terrorism is established by the US Congress. The Commission will assess the current US activities, initiatives and programmes aimed at preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and terrorism, and make recommendations on how to coordinate them. The Commission's report, *World at Risk*, is presented on 3 December.

USA; WMD

19–30 May

Meeting in Dublin, Ireland, at the Diplomatic Conference for the Adoption of a Convention on Cluster Munitions, representatives of more than 100 countries negotiate to adopt the final text of a legally binding instrument prohibiting cluster munitions. On 28 May the delegates agree on a final draft of the treaty. A number of major cluster munition users and stockpilers, including Brazil, China, India, Israel, Pakistan, Russia and the USA, do not participate in the conference. (See also **3 December**.)

Arms control; Cluster munitions

**23 May**

- South America Meeting in Brasília, Brazil, the leaders of 12 South American countries—Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Uruguay and Venezuela—sign a treaty creating a new regional organization, UNASUR (Union of South American Nations). Under the treaty, a South American parliament will be established in Cochabamba, Bolivia. The organization, with its headquarters in Quito, Ecuador, aims to further political and economical integration in the region. UNASUR is built on the South American Community of Nations, established in December 2004 by the Cuzco Declaration.
- Uganda; War crimes; ICC The Ugandan High Court sets up a Special Division to deal with war crimes committed during the 20-year conflict in the north of the country. The Special Division will have the mandate to try Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) rebel leaders. This is an attempt to assure the International Criminal Court (ICC), The Hague, Netherlands, that the war crime trials can be handled internally. LRA leader Joseph Kony has refused to sign a peace agreement until the ICC lifts the indictments against him and other LRA leaders.
- Malaysia; Singapore; ICJ The International Court of Justice (ICJ), The Hague, Netherlands, rules on a 28-year-old territorial dispute between Malaysia and Singapore over the island Pulau Batu Puteh (Pedra Branca). The conflict is thereby solved without the use of force.

26 May

- Burundi The Government of Burundi and the FNL (National Liberation Forces) rebel group sign a ceasefire agreement in Bujumbura. The agreement is a first step in implementing the 2006 peace agreement.
- UN; IAEA; Iran The Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Mohamed ElBaradei, releases his report on the Implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement and Relevant Provisions of Security Council Resolutions in the Islamic Republic of Iran, covering the developments since 22 February 2008. The report states that Iran is still withholding information on its nuclear programme. Iran claims that the report is 'deceitful' and 'ambiguous'.

28 May

- China; Taiwan Chinese President Hu Jintao meets Wu Poh-hsiung, chairman of the Taiwanese political party the Kuomintang, in Beijing. This is the highest-level meeting between China and Taiwan since 1949. Bilateral talks on cross-strait relations will restart on 11–14 June.
- Arctic Ocean Meeting at Ilulissat, Greenland, foreign ministers of the five states with a coast on the Arctic Ocean—Canada, Denmark, Norway, Russia and the USA—adopt the Ilulissat Declaration, creating a political framework for peaceful development in the Arctic Ocean, and committing their states to the legal framework of the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.



29 May

The first International Compact with Iraq Annual Review Conference is held in Upplands Väsby, Sweden. The International Compact with Iraq (ICI) was launched on 3 May 2007, aiming to support Iraq's efforts to restore stability and to rebuild a functioning economy.

Iraq

The Turkish Air Force bombs Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) rebel bases in northern Iraq. Several raids have been conducted during May and the Turkish Army claims it has killed more than 150 rebels.

Turkey; Iraq; PKK

5 June

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev presents, in Berlin, Germany, an idea for a European security treaty reorganizing the present Euro-Atlantic security structures.

Russia; Europe

19 June

The US Senate approves an additional \$162 billion in funding for the military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. It does not set a timetable for the withdrawal of troops from Iraq.

USA; Afghanistan; Iraq

22 June

Following the violence after the first round of Zimbabwe's presidential elections in March, when more than 80 supporters of the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) were killed and 200 000 people displaced, the MDC leader Morgan Tsvangirai declares that he is pulling out of the second round election to be held on 27 June.

Zimbabwe

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors arrive in Syria to investigate the allegations made by Israel and the USA that Syria was constructing a nuclear reactor at al-Kibar.

Syria; Nuclear programme

26 June

North Korea hands over a declaration with details of its nuclear programme to Chinese officials. In return, US President George W. Bush agrees to lift some of the US sanction against North Korea and to remove it from the list of State Sponsors of Terrorism. On 27 June North Korea states that it is preparing to demolish the cooling tower at the Yongbyon nuclear reactor.

North Korea; Nuclear programme

2 July

French-Colombian politician Ingrid Betancourt and 14 other people, held hostage by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) rebels, are liberated by Colombian soldiers. Betancourt has been held by FARC for more than six years.

Colombia

7 July

A suicide bomb explodes outside the Indian Embassy in Kabul, Afghanistan, killing 41 people and wounding more than 100. A spokesman for Afghan President Hamid Karzai claims that 'foreigners' are behind the bomb attack, implying that the Pakistani intelligence agency is responsible.

Afghanistan; Terrorism

**7–8 July**

G8 The leaders of the Group of Eight industrialized states (G8), meeting in Toyako, Japan, adopt the G8 Hokkaido Toyako Summit Leaders Declaration, as well as three independent statements on global food security, on counterterrorism and on Zimbabwe.

8 July

USA; Czech Republic;
Missile defence

The Czech Foreign Minister, Karel Schwarzenberg, and the US Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, sign in Prague, Czech Republic, an agreement allowing a tracking radar base to be set up in the Czech Republic. The radar system is part of the missile defence system that the USA wants to install in Europe against long-range weapons from the Middle East. The deal has to be ratified by the Czech Parliament. Russia warns that the agreement could lead to a Russian military response. (See also **20 August**.)

10–12 July

North Korea; Nuclear
programme

The sixth round of the Six-Party Talks (China, Japan, North Korea, South Korea, Russia and the USA) is held in Beijing, China, after a nine-month long intermission. The parties agree to establish a mechanism to verify the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, including visits to facilities, reviews of documents and interviews with technical personnel.

14 July

Sudan; War crimes; ICC

The International Criminal Court (ICC), The Hague, Netherlands, formally requests an arrest warrant for Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir, on charges of genocide and crimes against humanity in Darfur. Sudan rejects the accusations.

14–18 July

UN; SALW

The UN Third Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the 2001 Programme of Action (POA) to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects is held in New York, USA.

15 July

Cambodia; Thailand

Following the arrest of three Thai protesters at the Preah Vihear temple, Cambodia, the tension on the border between Cambodia and Thailand has risen. Both countries send troops to the border, and Cambodia claims that Thai soldiers have crossed the border. Thailand denies the accusations.

19 July

EU; UN; Germany; Iran

Meeting in Geneva, Switzerland, representatives from the EU, the UN Security Council permanent members (the P5), Germany and Iran discuss nuclear issues. Iran is asked to suspend its uranium enrichment in return for a pledge not to introduce further sanctions and is given a deadline of 2 August to reply. The meeting is the first time that officials from Iran and the USA have direct talks on nuclear issues. Iran makes no public response to the offer, but President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad states in a television address on 3 August that Iran is 'serious about nuclear talks'.



21 July

Radovan Karadzic, the Bosnian Serb political leader, is arrested in Belgrade, Serbia, after 13 years in hiding. Karadzic is indicted by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), The Hague, Netherlands, on war crimes and genocide over the 1995 massacre at Srebrenica. Karadzic appears before the ICTY on 31 July.

Bosnia and Herzegovina;
ICTY

26 July

In a series of bomb attacks at official buildings and public places in Ahmedabad, India, at least 49 people are killed and over 100 wounded. An Islamist group, the Indian Mujahideen, claims responsibility for the attacks. In 2002 Ahmedabad experienced heavy sectarian violence between Hindus and Muslims.

India; Terrorism

4 August

Sixteen Chinese policemen are killed and another 16 are injured in an attack by Uighur separatists in Kashgar, Xinjiang, near the border with Tajikistan. The Uighur Islamists have waged a low-level campaign against Chinese rule for decades, and the Chinese authorities claim that the Xinjiang Islamists are the biggest danger to the Olympic Games, due to start in Beijing on 8 August.

China

6 August

At the first US war crimes trial since World War II, at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, Osama bin Laden's former driver, Salim Hamdan, is sentenced to five-and-a-half years in prison for supporting terrorism. After this sentence is served, Hamdan will be detained as an 'enemy combatant' as long as the USA's 'global war on terrorism' continues.

War crimes; Terrorism; USA

7-8 August

Heavy fighting occurs between Georgian armed forces and South Ossetian separatists, the latter supported by Abkhazia. On 8 August the parties agree to a ceasefire and peace talks to be mediated by Russia. Shortly after the agreement Georgian armed forces launch an attack on South Ossetian positions in Tskhinvali. Russia sends armed forces to back the South Ossetian rebels.

Georgia; Russia; South
Ossetia

12 August

Under the mediation of French President Nicholas Sarkozy, Georgia and Russia agree on a six-point peace plan. The parties agree to end the use of force; to stop all military actions; to give free access to humanitarian aid; to return Georgian forces to their place of permanent deployment; to return Russian forces to their pre-conflict positions; and to open discussions on the status of South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

Georgia; Russia

14 August

Nigeria completes the process of handing over control of the Bakassi peninsula to Cameroon, ending a 15-year-old territorial dispute. The International Court of Justice (ICJ), The Hague, Netherlands, ruled in Cameroon's favour in 2002, but Nigeria did not accept the ruling until 2006.

ICJ; Nigeria; Cameroon



- 20 August**
- USA; Poland; Missile defence
- The Polish Foreign Minister, Radek Sikorski, and the US Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, sign in Warsaw, Poland, an agreement allowing the deployment of 10 interceptor missiles at a military base on Poland's Baltic coast. The missiles are part of the missile defence system that the USA wants to install in Europe against long-range weapons from the Middle East. The deal has to be ratified by the Polish Parliament. Russia warns that the agreement creates a new arms race in Europe. (See also **5 November**.)
- 21 August**
- Pakistan; Terrorism
- An attack by two suicide bombers outside Pakistan's main munitions factory in Wah kills at least 63 people. It is the deadliest attack ever on a military site in Pakistan. Pakistani Taliban claim responsibility for the attacks.
- 26 August**
- Russia; Abkhazia; South Ossetia
- Russia formally recognizes the independence of the two breakaway Georgian regions, Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Russian President Dmitry Medvedev compares the recognition with the recognition of Kosovo in February 2008.
- North Korea; Nuclear programme
- North Korea announces that, as of 14 August, it has suspended the disabling of its nuclear facilities and accuses the USA of failing to remove North Korea from the list of State Sponsors of Terrorism. The USA states that North Korea will not be removed from the list until a more stringent verification process is agreed.
- 8 September**
- EU; Russia; Georgia
- Meeting in Moscow with French President Nicholas Sarkozy, representing the EU Presidency, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev agrees to dismantle the Russian checkpoints in Georgia and replace its troops with 200 EU monitors by 1 October. On 13 September Russian troops withdraw from Poti on the Black Sea, as specified in the agreement.
- 15 September**
- Zimbabwe
- After two months of negotiations mediated by South African President Thabo Mbeki, Zimbabwe's President Robert Mugabe and opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai sign a power-sharing agreement in Harare. Under the agreement Mugabe will remain president and head of the armed forces, and Tsvangirai will become prime minister and control the police force. The agreement is aimed at ending the political and economic crises in Zimbabwe.
- 17 September**
- International law; Armed conflicts; Human rights
- Meeting in Montreux, Switzerland, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and representatives of 17 countries agree on a new set of recommendations to enhance state control over private military companies. The Montreux Document on Pertinent International Legal Obligations and Good Practices for States Related to Operations of Private Military and Security Companies During Armed Conflict is not legally binding.



23 September

In an address to the UN General Assembly, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad states that Iran supports a continued dialogue but will not accept ‘illegal demands from a few bullying powers’ to stop its peaceful nuclear activities. On 22 September Iran was asked by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to be fully transparent about its nuclear programme.

Iran; Nuclear programme

24 September

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) reports that, at the request of North Korea, it has removed the seals and surveillance cameras from North Korea’s main nuclear facility at Yongbyon, and the IAEA inspectors no longer have access to the reactor. On 19 September North Korea announced it was working to reactivate the facility.

North Korea; Nuclear programme

27 September

A car bomb attack outside a security forces complex, close to the al-Sayyida Zeinab shrine, Damascus, Syria, kills at least 17 people and injures several more. No group claims responsibility for the attack, which is the deadliest single attack in Damascus since March 1986.

Syria; Terrorism

The UN Security Council unanimously adopts Resolution 1835, reaffirming earlier Council resolutions—1696 (2006), 1737 (2006), 1747 (2007) and 1803 (2008)—on Iran’s uranium enrichment and calling on Iran to comply with its obligations ‘fully and without delay’.

UN; Iran; Nuclear programme

1 October

The first of 200 unarmed observers from the EU Monitoring Mission (EUMM) enter the buffer zone around South Ossetia, to start monitoring the ceasefire between Georgia and Russia, agreed on 12 August. On 8 October Russia claims that it has withdrawn all its troops from the buffer zones, ahead of the 10 October deadline.

EU; Georgia; Russia; South Ossetia

3 October

The US Government announces that it has approved arms sales of \$6.4 billion to Taiwan, despite Chinese protests. The sales were originally proposed by the USA in 2001 but were stalled for seven years by opposition from both the Taiwanese Parliament and Chinese authorities.

USA; Taiwan; Arms trade

7 October

The UN Security Council unanimously adopts Resolution 1838, calling on states with naval vessels and military aircraft operating off the Somali coast to use ‘the necessary means’ against acts of piracy, in order to ensure that the World Food Programme (WFP) can deliver its humanitarian aid to the Somali population. The area off the Somali coast has experienced almost 100 pirate attacks during 2008. (See also **10 November**.)

UN; Somalia



- 8 October**
- UN; ICJ; Kosovo
- The UN General Assembly decides, by a vote of 77–4, with 74 abstentions, to refer Kosovo’s declaration of independence from Serbia of 17 February to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) for an advisory, non-binding opinion on the legality of the declaration.
- 9 October**
- North Korea; Nuclear programme; IAEA
- North Korea informs the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) that ‘effective immediately, access to facilities at Yongbyon will no longer be permitted’.
- 10 October**
- USA; India; Nuclear energy
- The US Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, and the Indian Minister of External Affairs, Pranab Mukherjee, sign in Washington, DC, the Agreement for Cooperation between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of India Concerning Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy (123 Agreement, US–India Civil Nuclear Cooperation Initiative).
- 11 October**
- USA; North Korea; Nuclear programme; IAEA
- Following the negotiations in Pyongyang on 1–3 October between the North Korean authorities and US officials, representing the parties to the Six-Party Talks, a number of important verification measures are agreed. The measures will serve as a baseline for a verification protocol to be finalized and adopted by the Six-Parties. Following the agreements the USA rescinds the designation of North Korea as a State Sponsor of Terrorism. On 13 October the IAEA inspectors confirm that North Korea has restored their access to the Yongbyon nuclear site.
- 15 October**
- EU; OSCE; UN; Georgia; Russia
- Meeting in Geneva, Switzerland, under the mediation of the UN, the EU and the OSCE, Georgian and Russian officials begin their first direct talks since the conflict over South Ossetia in August. The talks aim to encourage stability and security in the Caucasus region but fail after only one day and are resumed on 19 November.
- 20 October**
- NPT; Nuclear weapons; Non-proliferation
- The International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament, initiated by the Australian Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, in June 2008, has its first meeting in Sydney. The Commission, co-chaired by former Australian and Japanese foreign ministers, Gareth Evans and Yoriko Kawaguchi, is given a two-year mandate to revive the global debate on the proliferation of nuclear weapons ahead of the 2010 NPT Review Conference.
- 26 October**
- USA; Syria
- US helicopters attack a target on Syrian territory, killing Abu Ghadiyah, a key figure involved in smuggling foreign fighters into Iraq. Syria condemns the attack as an act of ‘terrorist aggression’ and claims that it killed several civilians. The White House neither confirms nor denies the incident.



27 October

Forces from the UN Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) support the Congolese Army in heavy fighting against the Tutsi rebel group CNDP (National Congress for People's Defence) that resumed in August, outside Goma in eastern DRC. At least 20 000 people flee the fighting. The CNDP's leader, Laurent Nkunda, signed the peace agreement in January but has refused to disarm as Rwandan Hutu rebels still operate in the area.

DRC

31 October

The UN First Committee votes, by a vote of 145–2, with 18 abstentions (the USA and Zimbabwe voting against), in favour of continuing the process towards an arms trade treaty, initiated in October 2006.

UN; Arms trade; Treaties

5 November

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev announces that Russia will deploy short-range Iskander missiles in the Kaliningrad oblast to 'neutralize', if necessary, the missile defence system that the USA wants to install in Eastern Europe.

Russia; Missiles

7 November

At an emergency summit in Nairobi, Kenya, leaders of seven African states (Burundi, the DRC, Kenya, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda), together with UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and representatives from the EU and the USA, call for an end to the violence that started in August in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The leaders call for an immediate ceasefire by all armed forces and militias in North Kivu province; the establishment of a humanitarian corridor throughout the area; the amendment of the peacekeeping forces' mandate to give them 'peacemaking' capabilities; and the disarmament of all rebel groups according to existing agreements.

DRC

9 November

Meeting in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, representatives of the Quartet—the UN, the EU, Russia and the USA—are briefed by Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and the Israeli Foreign Minister, Tzipi Livni, on the negotiating efforts made since the 2007 Annapolis conference. It is agreed that an international conference will be held in Moscow, Russia, in early 2009 as a step towards a permanent two-state solution to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict.

Israel; Palestinian territories

10 November

The Council of the EU adopts Joint Action 2008/851/CFSP on a EU military operation to contribute to the deterrence, prevention and repression of acts of piracy and armed robbery off the Somali coast (EU NAVFOR Somalia) in support of UN Security Council resolutions 1814 (2008), 1816 (2008) and 1838 (2008). The operation commences on 8 December and is the first EU maritime operation within the framework of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). (See also **16 December**.)

EU; Somalia

**14–18 November**

UN; DRC

The UN Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region, Olusegun Obasanjo, has separate meetings with President Joseph Kabila of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Congolese parliamentarians and Laurent Nkunda, leader of the rebel group CNDP (National Congress for People's Defence) to discuss a ceasefire agreement and a peace process in the DRC. On 18 November the rebels withdraw from two fronts north of Goma, creating humanitarian corridors.

16 November

USA; Iraq

The Iraqi cabinet approves the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), under which the US forces will be placed under the authority of the Iraqi Government; withdraw from the streets of Iraqi towns by mid-2009; hand over their bases to Iraq during 2009; lose the authority to raid Iraqi homes without an order from an Iraqi judge and permission from the government; and withdraw completely by the end of 2011. On 27 November the agreement is approved by the Iraqi Parliament and will replace the UN mandate expiring on 31 December 2008.

20 November

UN; DRC; Peacekeeping operations

The UN Security Council unanimously adopts Resolution 1843, authorizing a temporary increase until 31 December 2008 of the military strength of the UN Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) of up to 2785 military personnel and 300 police officers. The authorization of the extra troops is likely to be extended when MONUC's mandate is renewed.

24 November

China; South Korea; CBMs

China and South Korea sign, in Beijing, a Memorandum of Understanding opening military hotlines between their air forces and navies, in order to prevent accidental military incidents and to promote mutual cooperation in emergency situations.

26 November

India; Terrorism

Up to 10 coordinated bomb attacks targeted at the main tourist and business district in Mumbai, India, kill nearly 2000 people and injure almost 300. Almost 200 civilians are taken hostages at two hotels and other facilities. Several of the hostage and the terrorists are killed when special forces and police storm the buildings on 28 November. A previously unknown group, the Deccan Mujahideen, claims responsibility for the attacks. Indian officials claim that the militants have Pakistani links and make a formal protest to the Pakistani High Commissioner.

UN; EU; Kosovo; Serbia

The UN Security Council approves Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's plan to transfer police and customs duties in Kosovo from the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) to the EU Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX Kosovo). The plan is approved both by Kosovo and Serbia. The EULEX Kosovo operation reaches initial operational capacity by early December and starts to implement its mandate on 9 December.



2–3 December

Meeting in Brussels, Belgium, NATO reaffirms that Georgia and Ukraine will eventually join the alliance but offers no formal road map towards membership. NATO also agrees to resume low-level contacts with Russia, which were frozen over Russia's war with Georgia in August.

NATO

3 December

The Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) is opened for signature at the Signing Conference in Oslo, Norway. Of the 125 states participating, the CCM is signed by 94 and ratified by 4. The CCM will enter into force after the 30th instrument of ratification is deposited.

Arms control; Cluster munitions

4–5 December

Meeting in Helsinki, Finland, the OSCE Ministerial Council opens the prospect of high-level talks on Euro-Atlantic security but fails to adopt a political declaration.

OSCE

6 December

Heavy fighting takes place between government forces and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) rebels around the town of Kilinochchi, in northern Sri Lanka. The fighting has intensified throughout 2008 and government forces have captured important towns and villages from the rebels. (During the 25-year long conflict more than 70 000 people have been killed, and thousands more have been displaced.)

Sri Lanka

After a joint military exercise in the Caribbean Sea by the Russian and Venezuelan navies on 4 December, a Russian warship passes through the Panama Canal for the first time since 1944.

Russia; Panama Canal; Warships

8 December

The Council of the EU adopts Common Position 2008/944/CFSP defining common rules governing control of exports of military technology and equipment. The adoption transforms the 1998 EU Code of Conduct on Arms Exports into a legally binding agreement.

EU; Arms trade

9 December

Global Zero launches in Paris a new campaign to eliminate nuclear weapons. The group, consisting of 100 world leaders, presents its initiative in Moscow and Washington, DC, on 10–11 December.

Nuclear weapons; Disarmament

15 December

The 2007 ASEAN Charter enters into force, creating an improved structure for the organization, giving the organization's chair and secretary-general a new role in dispute settlement, and establishing an ASEAN human rights body.

ASEAN

Under agreements made on 4 November, direct daily passenger flights and cargo shipping open between China and Taiwan for the first time since 1949.

China; Taiwan; CBMs

Israel; Palestinian territories

UN; Somalia; Piracy

Israel; Gaza Strip

Israel; Gaza Strip

16 December

The UN Security Council adopts by a vote of 14–0, with Libya abstaining, Resolution 1850, calling on the Israelis and Palestinians to fulfil their obligations under the Performance-Based Roadmap agreed at the 2007 Annapolis conference, and urging an intensification of the diplomatic efforts to build a just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

The UN Security Council unanimously adopts Resolution 1851, authorizing states and regional organizations to use land-based operations in Somalia as part of the fight against piracy off the Somali coast. The Security Council affirms that the resolution applies only to the situation in Somalia and does not establish customary international law.

18 December

Hamas ends its six-month truce with Israel. In the following days it resumes rocket attacks on Israel.

27–31 December

Israel launches massive air strikes on the Gaza Strip in an attempt to destroy Hamas's infrastructure and declares the surrounding area a 'closed military zone'. By 31 December nearly 400 Palestinians, including many civilians, are killed and many more are injured. The fighting continues into 2009.

ABBREVIATIONS

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AU	African Union
CBM	Confidence-building measure
CFE	(Treaty on) Conventional Armed Forces in Europe
CNDP	Congrès National pour la Défense du Peuple (National Congress for People's Defence)
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
EU	European Union
FARC	Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia)
FNL	Forces nationales de libération (National Liberation Forces)
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
ICC	International Criminal Court
ICJ	International Court of Justice
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NPT	Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
PKK	Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan (Kurdistan Workers' Party)
SALW	Small arms and light weapons
UN	United Nations
UNASUR	Unión de Naciones Suramericanas (Union of South American Nations)
WMD	Weapons of mass destruction

SIPRI is an independent international institute for research into problems of peace and conflict, especially those of arms control and disarmament. It was established in 1966 to commemorate Sweden's 150 years of unbroken peace.



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