

FACT SHEET

CONVENTION ON THE PROHIBITION OF MILITARY OR ANY OTHER HOSTILE USE OF ENVIRONMENTAL MODIFICATION TECHNIQUES (ENMOD)

The Convention on the Prohibition of Military or Any Other Hostile Use of Environmental Modification Techniques (ENMOD) was approved by the United Nations General Assembly in resolution 31/72 of 10 December 1976. The text of the Convention and the Understandings were the product of intensive negotiations at the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament, a predecessor of the Conference on Disarmament. ENMOD is of unlimited duration and entered into force on 5 October 1978.



Structure of ENMOD

The Convention contains 10 articles and one annex on the Consultative Committee of Experts. The Convention also includes the Understandings relating to its articles I, II, III and VIII.

Scope of the Convention

- States parties are not to engage in military or any other hostile use of environmental modification techniques having widespread, long-lasting or severe effects as the means of destruction, damage or injury to another State party.
- States parties undertake to prohibit and prevent any activity in violation of the provisions of the Convention.
- ENMOD does not hinder the use of environmental modification techniques for peaceful purposes and is without prejudice to the generally recognized principles and applicable rules of international law concerning such use.
- States parties should facilitate, and have the right to participate in, the fullest possible exchange of scientific and technological information.
- States parties agree to consult and cooperate in solving any problems which may arise in relation to the objectives of, or in the application of the provisions of, the Convention.

Definition of environmental modification technique

Any technique for changing — through the deliberate manipulation of natural processes — the dynamics, composition or structure of the earth, including its biota, lithosphere, hydrosphere and atmosphere, or of outer space.

The Understandings

The interpretative Understandings are not incorporated into the Convention but are part of the negotiating record and were included in the report transmitted by the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament to the United Nations General Assembly in September 1976. They aim at clarifying the restrictive clauses “having widespread, long-lasting or severe effects” (known as the “troika”); the phenomena that could be caused by the use of environmental modification techniques; the compatibility of environmental modification techniques for peaceful purposes with generally recognized principles and applicable rules of international law; and the procedure for amending the text of the Convention.

Compliance

ENMOD provides for a consultation mechanism to solve any problem arising in relation to the objectives and in the application of the provisions of the Convention. Consultation and cooperation may be done through appropriate international procedures and may include the services of appropriate international organizations or the establishment of a Consultative Committee of Experts to be chaired by the Secretary-General of the United Nations or his/her representative.

Review process

According to article VIII, five years after the entry into force of the Convention, a conference of the States parties to the Convention shall be convened at Geneva, Switzerland, by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, who is the Depositary. It also provides that, at intervals of not less than five years thereafter, a majority of the States parties to the Convention may obtain, by submitting a proposal to this effect to the Depositary, the convening of a conference with the same objectives, and that if no conference has been convened within 10 years following the conclusion of a previous conference, the Depositary shall solicit the views of all States parties to the Convention concerning the convening of such a conference. The Depositary shall take immediate steps to convene such a conference if one third or 10 of the States parties, whichever number is less, respond affirmatively.

ENMOD implementation facts

- ENMOD was opened for signature from 18 to 31 May 1977 at Geneva, Switzerland. Subsequently, it was transmitted to United Nations Headquarters where it was opened for signature by States until 4 October 1978.
- ENMOD was signed by 48 States and currently has 76 States parties.
- The First Review Conference of ENMOD was held in September 1984, with the attendance of 35 States parties. The Second Review Conference took place in Geneva in September 1992.
- In 2013 the Secretary-General of the United Nations invited the States parties to express their views on convening the Third Review Conference, but the minimum necessary number of 10 affirmative responses for convening such a conference was not reached.
- On 5 November 2001, the United Nations General Assembly declared 6 November of each year as the International Day for Preventing the Exploitation of the Environment in War and Armed Conflict (A/RES/56/4).

For more information: www.unog.ch/enmod