

NPT NEWS IN REVIEW

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IN THIS ISSUE:

- 1 Editorial: Let Us Not Await the Ashes
- 6 Overview of Changes in the Draft Outcome Document
- 7 Report on the Closing Session



Reaching Critical Will

Editorial: Let Us Not Await the Ashes

Ray Acheson | Reaching Critical Will

On Friday, 22 May, the President of the Review Conference released the **final version of the outcome document**. It further weakened the text from the **previous day's version**; an overview of those changes is in a separate short article in this edition. The new draft contained bracketed text around paragraph 15, which included the line that “Iran can never seek, develop or acquire any nuclear weapons.” After spending the day in consultations, the President announced on Friday evening that consensus could not be reached on the outcome document.

While the disagreement between the United States and Iran over singling Iran out in this way was clearly part of the reason consensus could not be reached, many delegations expressed concerns with the final draft text during their closing remarks. By not tabling the document for adoption, the President avoided a situation where any one state or group of states blocked it. Some delegations thanked him for this decision, as a way to avoid deepening the already wide divisions among states parties. Regardless, the fact remains that after four weeks of work at this Review Conference—along with the three Preparatory Committees and all the working papers, national reports, consultations, briefings, and side events that have gone into them—NPT states parties failed to adopt a substantive outcome for the third time in a row. The divisions are there, even if not fully exposed on the final day.

Deepening divides on disarmament

The core division, as many delegations said on Friday evening, remains that between the nuclear-armed and non-nuclear-armed states. The Arab Group pointed out that throughout this Conference, every nuclear-armed state gave precedence to its own perspective, to the detriment of the regime as a whole and to the concerns of non-nuclear-armed states. Malaysia expressed concern that the nuclear-armed states seem to increasingly be trying to normalise their indefinite possession of nuclear weapons—despite law and past commitments to the contrary.

This effort was clear from the final version of the outcome document, which conveys the sense that it was written by the nuclear-armed states. It contains no reference to nuclear threats or rhetoric, nuclear weapon modernisation or arsenal expansions and build-up. It doesn't mention nuclear sharing or extended nuclear deterrence—it doesn't mention deterrence at all. There is no reference to the illegal acts of aggression by nuclear-armed states that have served as the backdrop to this review cycle. The references to Article VI and nuclear disarmament have been deprived of any urgency or concreteness; the arms control and risk reduction provisions remain heavily caveated and bound to no sense of time or obligation. Russia's instance on language such as the “ultimate and complete elimination” instead of “total elimination” has slipped in, a reformulation that gestures towards the promise that eventually, somewhere perhaps towards the end of time, the nuclear-armed states will get around to disarming. In the meantime, the new elements on reporting, including interactive dialogues, were in the final version only to be addressed in “private plenaries”—making these transparency mechanisms decidedly non-transparent.

The **New Agenda Coalition (NAC)** expressed dismay that the nuclear-armed states even re-cast “nuclear risk reduction” in the final draft text as “strategic risk reduction,” which the NAC described as a speculative approach that opens the door for more conditionalities at the will of nuclear-armed states. As **Mexico** warned, dialogue and efforts to enhance trust and predictability among nuclear-armed states is important, but does “not constitute actual disarmament measures and may even serve to idealize a supposed stability predicated on nuclear weapons, a notion that ultimately erodes the NPT itself.”

Meanwhile, previous commitments are mentioned, but they are not reaffirmed, just recalled. Like something vaguely remembered from a distant past, that has no bearing on the future. Future threats, too, have been discarded; there is no reference to the emerging challenges and risks from the integration of artificial intelligence into nuclear command and control systems. There is no recognition of a norm against nuclear testing, and the language on the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons has been distorted into a focus on nuclear war—as if the people, animals, land, and water who have experienced a nuclear weapon detonation distinguish between “war” or “use”. The effects, regardless, are devastating, long-lasting, intergenerational, transboundary, and unconscionable.

This is a text in which the nuclear-armed states got virtually everything they demanded, and the non-nuclear-armed states got very, very little. The factual reference to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) held, somehow—likely because acknowledging that a treaty exists costs the nuclear-armed states nothing, regardless of how much of a fuss they make about it. The language on the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) also held in, though is weaker than previous drafts and previous years. The draft contains no call on the nuclear-armed states to ratify the CTBT, and no recognition that a norm against nuclear testing exists.

The recognition, however, that “that the environmental and humanitarian dangers of any resumption of nuclear explosive testing would constitute a serious threat to international peace and security and risk igniting a new nuclear arms race,” is significant, especially when it is coupled with the recognition of the calls for assistance to people and communities affected by nuclear weapons and for environmental remediation, and with calls on all states parties to engage on this issue.



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These elements, of course, are in the outcome document because civil society has fought for them for decades. Affected communities, activists, academics, international organisations, and others have worked with like-minded states to advance understandings of the catastrophic humanitarian and environmental impacts of nuclear weapons in all their aspects, and to elevate the perspectives of survivors. Without this painstaking work by so many of us that have no official voice in the NPT meetings beyond one “civil society segment,” this outcome document would be essentially devoid of meaning.

The willful defiance of a bully

Thus it should be no surprise that it is this element of humanitarian harm that the nuclear-armed states most vociferously objected to in the draft outcome. This is what Russia accused non-nuclear-armed states of “instrumentalising” in order to pressure the nuclear-armed states to disarm. What this means, in essence, is that those who renounce the bomb used the horrific, demonstrable, real-world impacts of nuclear weapons to try to compel nuclear-armed states to comply with their long-standing legal obligation to eliminate their arsenals—to comply with a law which they agreed to of their own violation yet have arrogantly violated for 56 years.

This willful defiance of international law, and the denial of the security concerns of the vast majority of states and people around the world, is echoed in the nuclear-armed states approach to international politics more broadly. This Review Conference did not take place in a vacuum. We have met at a time of genocide of peoples, of invasion and occupation of countries, of kidnappings and killings of state leaders. The Conference takes place during the resurgence of Manifest Destiny as a foreign policy principle; a time when the most violent governments in the world are exercising their dominance through coercive control and physical abuse of those they deem less powerful. It is perhaps no surprise, then, that the interests of those with the capacity to destroy the world many times over were treated as paramount at this Conference. If they want to seize the pen of the outcome document, who will stop them?

In its closing remarks, Mexico expressed concern with the conduct of governments “that increasingly shy away from negotiation and diplomacy.” It noted that despite the President’s efforts, delegations did not really engage in negotiations during this Conference. “There was no genuine search for common solutions based on a negotiating package that integrated the priorities of all States in a balanced manner,” Mexico pointed out, warning, “Consensus cannot be achieved through formulas that seek to eliminate language without taking into account the positions of all parties—nor can it be built upon previously agreed-upon foundations if it relies instead on setbacks, reinterpretations, or alterations to fundamental principles and values.”

Consensus also cannot be achieved through intimidation or pressure. Reportedly, some of the nuclear-armed states and even some nuclear-supportive allies applied pressure to other states during this Conference to change their positions and retract statements. The way in which these countries proclaim the importance of “undiminished security for all” and the sanctity of sovereign decision-making or national security, and then domineer others into silence or submission, is beyond hypocritical. It is damaging to the Treaty, to multilateralism, and to global peace and security.

Illusions of “good faith”

Given the damage done to past commitments and legal obligations in the unadopted outcome document from this Conference, many delegations reaffirmed on Friday night that the disarmament language in this text has no standing in the NPT context. As the NAC firmly stated, this language, and “any caveats concerning the implementation of Article VI obligations and commitments contained therein,” cannot be considered as a new baseline or “new normal”. Most delegations reaffirmed that, as the NAC said, “the

agreed decisions and commitments of 1995, 2000 and 2010 are unaffected. They are and will continue to be valid until their full and effective implementation.”

Yet the nuclear-armed states remained unabashed about their intransigence in relation to nuclear disarmament and diplomacy, performing virtuousness to the very end of the evening. Russia asserted that the final version of the draft outcome document is a “serious compromise reflecting a delicate and well-calibrated balance.” It lamented that not all states parties participated in the Conference in the interests of “preserving and strengthening the Treaty”—rich words from a delegation that demanded the systematic removal of agreed language on long-established commitments. China talked about the difficulties of the international security environment, while France and the United Kingdom (UK) spoke about how the main challenge to the Treaty are risks of proliferation. Their own existing arsenals, apparently, are not the real problem. The United States (US) drove this home in an aggressive closing statement in which it proclaimed, “This is called the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, not the nuclear disarmament treaty.” It said that “while the United States takes its Article VI obligations incredibly seriously, it raises concerns about whether some states parties understand the core purpose of this Treaty.”

The US also accused Iran of holding the Conference hostage, arguing that Iran is a consistent Treaty violator and doesn’t want to be called out for that. Several delegations called on Iran to comply with its safeguards agreement and lamented the Conference wasn’t able to adequately address this situation. The UK called on Iran to meet its obligations, and said it will continue to work for a diplomatic solution. What no one mentioned is that two nuclear-armed states, one of them an NPT state party, have launched two unlawful wars of aggression against Iran over the past year. During these illegal attacks, Israel and the US have bombed Iranian nuclear facilities in violation of countless international laws—acts that many delegation have condemned Russia for in the context of its unlawful war against Ukraine.

The level of surrealness of this deliberately constructed vacuum around the Iran situation has been one of the most preposterous aspects of this Review Conference. Whatever work Iran has to do to resolve outstanding concerns about compliance with its safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency, which NPT states parties have a legitimate interest in seeing carried forward, the international community must account for the reality of these unlawful acts of aggression against Iran. The idea that this Review Conference could or should be tasked with resolving this situation through some text in an outcome document is nonsensical. The US and Israel have committed war crimes against Iran; the US President threatened genocide against the entire civilisation of Iran. Diplomatic efforts to resolve the situation are underway, ceasefires have been established and violated and re-established. How is the NPT Review Conference expected to credibly weigh in on this situation?

Furthermore, how can the state party that instigated an unlawful war accuse the state being attacked of holding the Conference hostage? The US refused to drop the language on Iran. It also likely refused inclusion of a reference to the Israeli-US attacks on Iran and its safeguarded nuclear facilities, which Iran wanted reflected in the text. Thus, the US could also be accused of holding the Conference hostage on this issue. Other delegations were reportedly upset about other aspects of the text, including the deleted references to the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea’s nuclear weapon and ballistic missile programmes, and Russia’s attacks on the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant. The failure of this Review Conference to adopt a consensus outcome did not come down to one state; the President made sure of that. It does come down to a profound failure of diplomacy and compliance by the nuclear-armed states.

Moving on and building back

As the Review Conference wrapped up its work on Friday night, many delegations affirmed that the lack of a consensus agreement does not mean the lack of a Treaty. “We, the Parties to the NPT, particularly

the non-nuclear-weapon States, fulfill our obligations and commitments, and we will continue to do so,” said Mexico. “We demand—and will continue to demand—that the nuclear-weapon States demonstrate the same level of compliance when it comes to disarmament.”

The clear rejection of the disarmament text in the draft outcome sends a clear signal that the attempts by the nuclear-armed states to contextualise and condition their nuclear disarmament obligations will not be accepted. But other concerning signals came from this Conference as well. There were attempts to establish pretexts for the resumption of nuclear testing and denials of the well-established global norm against this. There were clear attempts to dominate rather than negotiate, wherein the few prioritise their alleged security interests over the genuine concerns of the many. The overarching signal from the nuclear-armed states and their nuclear-supportive allies was that their addiction to nuclear deterrence theory and their possession of nuclear weapons will continue indefinitely, and they clearly tried to project the sense that there’s nothing anyone can do about it.

But this cannot, must not, hold. Those who pitch their weight around diplomatically, economically, politically, and violently, can keep trying to throw the fight in their favour. But they can’t keep “winning,” not forever. Their winning means our loss—loss of international law, cooperation and collective relations, loss of our humanity. Our planet cannot survive it. We the people, working with each other, must turn this around. The conference rooms of the UN are part of our theatre, but they are not the only stage. Working together, we have made new international law banning nuclear weapons. We have blocked arms transfers to genocide and airspace to unlawful attacks. We can and must do more.

As Palestine said in its closing remarks, no country should possess nuclear weapons. There must be no exception, and no exceptionalism. The choice by nuclear-armed states and their allies to not eliminate nuclear weapons is placing everyone on Earth in harms way. We have known this since 1945. Collectively, we have created international law to address this. We have undertaken countless initiatives to ensure that nuclear disarmament can be undertaken safely in a verified and irreversible manner. We know how to dismantle an atomic bomb; what remains missing is the willingness of a handful of governments to dismantle their sense of power derived from these bombs. To deconstruct their political economies of violence that have embedded nuclearism into their infrastructure of global dominance.

This cannot hold. It will not hold. Either these weapons will be used again, and we will all suffer catastrophically for it, or we change our path, build our shared destiny in a different direction. The NPT, the TPNW, the work to understand and address humanitarian and environmental harm, the work on verification, irreversibility, and transparency—all of this is relevant to forging our new path. We have built much of what we need for disarmament and denuclearisation. We know how to engage in constructive diplomacy through multilateralism—states have done it before and must do it again. This path we are on, of dominance and despair, is untenable. But a whole new world awaits us, ready to be built. Let’s build not from the ashes of future catastrophe, but from where we are now, as difficult as it might be. This is our imperative, for peace, justice, and survival.

Overview of Changes to the Draft Outcome Document

Ray Acheson | Reaching Critical Will

Between the **CRP.2/Rev.3** and **CRP.4** versions of the draft outcome document, the reaffirmation of the obligation of all states at all times to comply with applicable international law, in particular the Charter of the United Nations and international humanitarian law, was moved from the operative portion of the text to the preamble. The reference it was previously attached to, in operative paragraph 2, was changed from expressing deep concerns about the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of “the use of nuclear weapons” to “nuclear war”.

Paragraph 1 added “in accordance with Article VI” to the unequivocal undertaking of nuclear-armed states to eliminate their nuclear weapons.

Paragraph 3 changes “urge” the nuclear-armed states to fully implement their obligations under Article VI to “call on”. The paragraph also adds “and call for enhanced transparency by nuclear-weapon States with regard to the implementation of Article VI obligations and nuclear-disarmament related commitments,” which replaces former paragraph 4 that stressed “the necessity of enhanced and equal transparency by nuclear-weapon States with regard to the implementation of article VI obligations and nuclear-disarmament related commitments.”

In paragraph 6 on negative security assurances, the line that stressed “the importance of full adherence by all nuclear-weapon States to all existing obligations and commitments related to security assurances given to non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the Treaty either unilaterally or multilaterally,” has been changed to reaffirming “that all nuclear-weapon States commit to fully respect their existing commitments with regard to security assurances.”

The paragraph on nuclear sharing and extended nuclear deterrence was deleted entirely, as was the paragraph on the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea.

The paragraph on nuclear weapon free zones (NWFZs) adds a line that “support efforts of States parties to enhance the cooperation between the nuclear-weapon-free zones.” A new paragraph in this section takes language from previous NWFZ paragraph that encouraged “the nuclear-weapon States to review any reservations or interpretative statements made in connection with ratification of such protocols and to engage in dialogue in this regard with members of the zones” and changed it to, “call for the ratification and accession by nuclear-weapon States of the relevant protocols to nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties, and encourage the nuclear-weapon States to review any reservations or interpretative statements made in connection with ratification of such protocols and to engage in dialogue in this regard with members of the zones.”

Paragraphs 27 and 28 on nuclear energy retain the same content but were split into two paragraphs.

In the section on attacks against nuclear facilities, the reference to the IAEA Director General’s Seven Indispensable Pillars for ensuring nuclear safety and security during an armed conflict and his Five Concrete Principles for nuclear safety and security at the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant have been deleted.

The paragraphs on enhanced transparency and reporting shift the settings from public to private plenary meetings for both nuclear-armed and non-nuclear-armed states.

Report on the Closing Session

Ray Acheson and Laura Varella | Reaching Critical Will

On Friday, 22 May, after suspending the NPT Review Conference meetings all day for consultations on the **draft outcome document**, the President of the Conference began the closing plenary after 17:00 EST. Highlighting the amount of work he and his team, and many states parties, put into the draft document, he announced that despite best efforts, it was clear that the Conference was not in a position to achieve agreement on the document. He therefore did not put the document forward for adoption. He read out an oral amendment to the Conference's procedural report, CRP.3, expressing regret that that states parties were unable to reach consensus on the substantive portion of the work, and the Conference adopted the procedural report with this amendment.

The President noted that the threat posed by nuclear weapons is a collective one, and it demands a collective response. Even after the failure to reach consensus on this document, he said he believes that delegations do share a goal of a world without nuclear weapons, even if they differ on how to achieve it. He argued that despite mistrust and lack of dialogue, states parties at this Conference were able to speak frankly and honestly and found new areas of common ground. This included on process, which he said is not substance nor political will, but can lead to better understanding and better results. Finally, he noted, in 2031 the NPT will pass the mark of 20 years without an outcome. He said it is the responsibility of states parties to ensure the NPT endures at least until Article VI is implemented, and urged all states to bolster, refresh, and reinvigorate this Treaty as a central tool in addressing modern threats.

Proposal on strengthening the review process

The President then closed the substantive portion of the plenary and opened the floor to closing remarks. The United States (US) took the floor to suggest extracting paragraphs 37–43 on Strengthening the Review Process into a separate decision. It said that the language in these paragraphs is not perfect, and noted in this regard that it would have preferred open rather than private plenary meetings to be held on national reports, but said it was worth putting forward in order to salvage something from the outcome document.

The European Union (EU), Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Germany, Ghana, France, Iceland, Ireland, Japan, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, the Philippines, Spain, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom (UK) supported this proposal.

China, Iran, and Russia opposed it. China and Russia argued that the draft decision was part of a package and could not be decided separately from the outcome document.

At the end of the meeting, the President said since there is no consensus, it would not be adopted as a separate decision.

Non-adoption of the document

The vast majority of delegations thanked the President, his team, the Secretariat, and the Main Committee Chairs for their work and efforts. Most also expressed deep regret that the Conference could not reach consensus for third time in a row on an outcome document.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) supported the President's decision not to put the document up for adoption, which it believed saved the Conference from widening divisions further and

casting doubt where there has been consensus. Egypt also appreciated that the President decided to preserve the integrity of the review process and protect what remains from further politicisation and polarisation. Russia regretted that the document was not tabled for adoption.

The Central Asian states jointly contextualised this failure in the broader context of challenges to the international security environment and multilateral diplomacy. Austria similarly noted that “the absence of an outcome document is itself a reflection of the wider problems we face—a lack of willingness to earnestly engage, and to confront the issues actually at hand.”

Russia said that a large group of states arrived at the Review Conference with the sole purpose of settling political scores. It said that despite attempts to derail it, the review cycle has fulfilled mandate to review the implementation of the Treaty.

China said that the NPT is an indispensable pillar of post-war international security infrastructure, and that despite the failure to reach a substantive outcome, the NPT still remains the cornerstone of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. It called on all states to further practice genuine multilateralism, eliminate the root cause of proliferation, and create a more favourable environment for nuclear disarmament.

Ghana recognised the challenging security environment but said this shouldn't serve as a reason for paralysis, rather it should be a reminder of urgency of collective action. Similarly, Brazil said the failure of this Conference to agree on an outcome must not be seen as a reason for paralysis but should serve as a call to restore the Treaty's credibility. Egypt reaffirmed that the inability to produce a consensus document despite troubling recurrence must not be accepted as a new norm. Similarly, Guatemala underlined that the absence of consensus should not be interpreted a lack of relevance of the Treaty, but rather as an urgent call to redouble political and diplomatic efforts to ensure its full implementation.

The failures on nuclear disarmament

The Arab Group, the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), Austria, Brazil, and South Africa clearly expressed that the core issue at this Review Conference was the continued lack of flexibility demonstrated by the nuclear-armed states, in particular, as the NAM said, in relation to their unwillingness to engage constructively on longstanding commitments to nuclear disarmament. The NAM said this failure of the nuclear-armed states undermines confidence in the review process and that the consecutive setbacks underscore the urgent need to renew political will. The Arab Group pointed out that every nuclear-armed state gave precedence to its own perspective, to the detriment of the regime as a whole and the concerns of non-nuclear-armed states. South Africa reminded that the nuclear-armed states undertook to join the Treaty and made solemn obligations for nuclear disarmament, to which they must adhere to advance collective security.

The New Agenda Coalition (NAC) said that against the backdrop of elevated nuclear risks, it would have expected to see more flexibility from the nuclear-armed states. Mexico expressed concern regarding trends that run counter to effective multilateralism, which is reflected in the conduct of delegations that increasingly shy away from negotiation and diplomacy. “Consensus cannot be achieved through formulas that seek to eliminate language without taking into account the positions of all parties,” emphasised Mexico.

Canada emphasised that the primary weight of responsibility for restoring the Treaty's credibility rests with the nuclear-armed states. Singapore underlined that the NPT is only as meaningful as actions states parties take to implement it.

ASEAN, Brazil, the Holy See, Malaysia, Palestine, and South Africa highlighted the growing concerns with nuclear weapon modernisation and the expansion of arsenals, the growing role of nuclear weapons in doctrines and arrangements, and other actions that undermine nuclear disarmament. Austria pointed out outside the Conference rooms, states have been engaged in “nuclear exercises, tests of nuclear-capable missiles, rapid development of related AI systems, implicit nuclear threats, direct threats to our European partners, attacks on civilian nuclear installations and noncompliance.” The Holy See stated that precisely when humanity is confronted with growing and unprecedented risks, it is deeply concerning that the language on these issues was progressively weakened and could not be adopted. “What is ultimately at stake is not simply a question of strategic doctrines or geopolitical calculations. What is at stake is human life itself, indeed, the very right to life,” said the Holy See.

South Africa reaffirmed that the indefinite extension of the NPT in 1995 did not give the nuclear-armed states or nuclear umbrella states the right to indefinitely possess nuclear weapons, and warned that normalising nuclear doctrines, deployment, and sharing runs counter to the letter and spirit of the Treaty. Malaysia also objected to the normalisation of the possession of nuclear weapons.

Brazil expressed concern that commitments that are painstakingly negotiated are treated as optional references rather than agreed objectives. Egypt expressed disappointment at the absence of clear political will among nuclear-armed states to meaningfully advance the implementation of the commitments they have undertaken since the NPT inception. Malaysia emphasised that the refusal by nuclear-armed states to undertake concrete and meaningful measures remains an obstacle to the Treaty. Guatemala also stressed that the continued divergence on substantive issues, especially nuclear disarmament, hinders collective progress towards the objectives of the Treaty. Nigeria expressed concern with the persistent lack of progress by nuclear-armed states in implementing Article VI.

The Arab Group, the NAM, the NAC, Ireland, Mexico, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, and Thailand emphasised the continued validity of the outcomes, conclusions, recommendations, and commitments from the 1995, 2000, and 2010 Review Conferences. The NAM and Switzerland said that the absence of an agreed outcome here must not be interpreted as an erosion of past commitments. South Africa warned that any efforts to reinterpret, delete, or retreat from these commitments poses a grave risk to the credibility of the NPT. Mexico also expressed concern with setbacks, reinterpretations, and alterations of fundamental principles and values.

The NAM, the Holy See, Mexico, and others called for the full implementations of all nuclear disarmament commitments and the unequivocal undertaking assumed by the nuclear-armed states. The African Group called on nuclear-armed states to demonstrate political will, flexibility, and undertake concrete actions to restore confidence and make progress towards a nuclear weapon free world. The NAM said for non-nuclear-armed states, the grand bargain of the NPT is clear: non-proliferation in exchange for serious, credible, measurable nuclear disarmament, and access to nuclear materials and technology for nuclear energy and non-power applications. The NAM warned this bargain cannot be maintained if nuclear disarmament is qualified, delayed, or weakened.

Brazil noted that substantive engagement isn't a substitute for implementation and dialogue alone can't replace action. It also noted that divisions have too often overshadowed the collective objectives of the Treaty, and warned that as long as the security of some states is predicated on nuclear weapons, insecurity will persist for the vast majority of states. Mexico regretted that no willingness was shown to adopt new disarmament measures, or even to reaffirm compliance with past commitments, but rather merely a promise to initiate dialogue amongst nuclear-armed states, lacking any clear disarmament objectives. It said that while it welcomes calls for dialogues, such steps do not constitute actual disarmament measures, and may even serve to idealise a supposed stability predicated on nuclear weapons, which is a notion that ultimately erodes the NPT itself.

Canada said that for too long, non-nuclear armed states have been expected to accept limited concessions in place of real progress. It emphasised that this position does not set Canada against its allies, it is “simply asking the nuclear weapons states to honour their word”.

The NAC, Guatemala, and Palestine emphasised that nuclear disarmament is a legal obligation. The NAC also said it is a moral and ethical imperative, and urged good faith discussions in order to achieve progress and tangible actions. Palestine emphasised that no state should possess nuclear weapons, including Israel. Palestine stressed that nuclear deterrence is an oxymoron and that nuclear weapons only deter the safety and security for all.

Meanwhile, the US stated that “this is called the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, not the nuclear disarmament treaty.” It said that “while the United States takes its Article VI obligations incredibly seriously, it raises concerns about whether some states parties understand the core purpose of this Treaty.”

Comments on the final draft outcome document

A number of delegations spoke about particular aspects of the draft outcome document.

Nuclear disarmament

The Arab Group lamented that the draft outcome document did not contain any practical, urgent steps for nuclear disarmament, and warned that paragraph 5 contained conditions on implementation of nuclear disarmament commitments, linking them to other things including reinterpreting obligations.

The NAC expressed disappointment with the novel formulation “complete and ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons.” It stressed that it does not consider the disarmament language of the draft 2026 outcome document, or any caveats concerning the implementation of Article VI obligations and commitments, as a new baseline or new normal. Ireland also emphasised that does not consider the nuclear disarmament language in this document as a new baseline.

Arms control and risk reduction

The EU said that forward-looking measures on nuclear disarmament, such as a moratorium on the production of fissile materials, should have been included in the outcome document. Zimbabwe reiterated its call for immediate commencement of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty.

Austria noted the measures on risk reduction and dialogue agreed among nuclear-armed states and said these would be welcome to be implemented. The US said it was positive that the five NPT nuclear-armed states agreed to pursue constructive dialogue that could facilitate future arms control discussions. France also supported this process.

The NAC stated that the recasting of nuclear risk reduction, which complements but doesn't substitute nuclear disarmament, in favour of a speculative approach of strategic risk reduction was problematic and opened the for more conditionalities at will of nuclear-armed states.

Humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons and the prohibition of nuclear weapons

The NAC, Austria, Brazil, Mexico, and South Africa regretted the weakened language on the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons, with Brazil noting that these consequences are not theoretical or contingent, but transboundary and enduring. Brazil also noted that any doctrine that

relies on nuclear weapons must be assessed against this reality. Austria argued that the fact that this is a contentious issue “shows that the discussion is tilted heavily towards the security concerns of nuclear weapons states, and that it does not sufficiently reflect the concrete and legitimate security concerns of the vast majority of non-nuclear-weapon States.”

The NAC reiterated that states parties affirmed their deep concern with these consequences in 2010, and there is no justifiable reason why states should not do so again. The NAC emphasised that the level of awareness of the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons has advanced over the years.

Mexico said it is disconcerting that several states parties insist on denying the grave humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons, preferring instead to speak solely of nuclear war. Mexico expressed its unequivocal rejection of any attempt to trivialise the use of nuclear weapons, stressing that it cannot support calls to downplay the significance of nuclear detonations. It highlighted that the historical record regarding the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons stems from the use of such devices, as well as from thousands of nuclear tests, not from a nuclear war. Thailand and Zimbabwe reiterated grave concern about the humanitarian and/or the environmental impact of any use of nuclear weapons. Ireland underscored that the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons must inform and give urgency to the conference’s work.

Austria welcomed recognition of the humanitarian and environmental consequences of nuclear testing, and the urgent need to assist the victims and to undertake environmental remediation, which underlines the complementarity between the NPT and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). New Zealand also stated that the catastrophic humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons is a motivation to keep working, including in terms of addressing nuclear legacies and supporting nuclear weapons free zones and the TPNW. New Zealand reiterated that the TPNW complements the NPT and said it is looking forward to the TPNW Review Conference later this year.

Thailand said that the lack of an outcome document highlights the relevance of the TPNW as a complementary contribution to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. It noted that 99 TPNW states parties, representing the majority of NPT states parties at the Review Conference, acted with a conviction to advance the full implementation of Article VI. Palestine also said that the failure to achieve consensus confirms the relevance of the TPNW and call on all states to join this Treaty.

Nuclear testing

Australia, Austria, Mexico, and Zimbabwe highlighted the importance of achieving the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). Ireland said that the norm against nuclear testing must be upheld. Australia emphasised that preventing nuclear testing has and always will be a vital step on the path to nuclear disarmament. The European Union (EU) said that language on the CTBT should have been more precise. Mexico expressed concern at the requests to remove language regarding the norm against nuclear testing and on the entry into force of the CTBT. The NAC also expressed disappointment over the language on the CTBT.

Attacks on nuclear facilities

Austria welcomed the expressions of concern over attacks on peaceful nuclear installations. Ireland lamented that the Review Conference wasn’t able to deal with the challenge of nuclear safety and security of facilities in conflict.

Australia and France reiterated their concern about nuclear safety and security in Ukraine. Austria said the document should have recognised the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)’s role at the

Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant, which is illegally occupied by Russia in its unprovoked illegal war of aggression, with its subsequent consequences for Ukraine's national safety and security. Belgium, Canada, Germany, Japan, Norway, and the United Kingdom (UK) also said that nuclear safety and security concerns with the ZNPP should have been reflected clearly. The EU and Ireland regretted not seeing key concerns reflected in the outcome document, particularly Russia's actions, including nuclear threats, the seizure of the ZNPP, and its war of aggression against Ukraine.

Canada and Japan said it would have been important to reference the IAEA's Director General Seven Indispensable Pillars for ensuring nuclear safety and security during an armed conflict, as well as the Five Concrete Principles for nuclear safety and security at the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant.

Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction

The Arab Group reiterated that the 1995 resolution on the Middle East remains valid. It also highlighted the importance of the universalisation of the Treaty, including Israel's accession. Egypt and Saudi Arabia made similar remarks. The NAC expressed disappointment over the language on the Middle East free zone of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.

Artificial intelligence

The Arab Group, the Holy See, and Mexico lamented the draft document did not reflect important elements such as the need for human control over nuclear systems. Mexico said the vast majority was insistent on this, and that it was an opportunity to bring the NPT up to date with the realities of the 21st century and address the possible risk of integration of artificial intelligence in command and control of nuclear weapons.

Nuclear sharing and extended nuclear deterrence

The Arab Group lamented the draft document did not reflect important elements such as nuclear sharing and extending nuclear deterrence, negative security assurances, and more. Iran reiterated that nuclear sharing and extended nuclear deterrence are a clear breach of Articles I and II of the NPT.

Proliferation concerns

France, the UK, and the US regretted that the text didn't address Iran's nuclear programme. Germany and Norway also regretted that the conference fell short in expressing concern about Iran's safeguards violations. Ireland regretted the conference could not reflect the findings of the IAEA on Iran's non-compliance with its safeguards agreements.

Australia and Canada stressed that Iran must never be allowed to develop a nuclear weapon. Australia also stressed that Iran must comply with its safeguards obligations and provide access to the IAEA. France and the UK called on Iran to meet all concerns and obligations. The UK said it will continue to work for a diplomatic solution.

The US accused Iran of holding the Conference hostage, arguing that Iran is a consistent Treaty violator and doesn't want to be called out for that.

Iran reiterated its condemnation of the US and Israel's attacks, including against its nuclear facilities. Iran objected to the "use of the NPT Review Conference to distort realities," including to repeat the allegation, "that has been circulated for over 400 months," that Iran is only two weeks away from acquiring a nuclear weapon. Iran said that by doing this, the US and its allies attempt to divert international attention from the

fact that they continue to fail to fulfil their own obligations under the NPT, as well as the dangers posed by Israel, the only nuclear-armed state in the region.

The EU, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Ireland, Japan, Norway, Republic of Korea (ROK), and the UK regretted the lack of references in the outcome document of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)'s nuclear programme. Japan and the ROK emphasised that the DPRK must not have the status of a nuclear-armed state under the NPT.

The EU regretted the lack of references in the text to China's arsenal build-up.

Nuclear energy

The EU said that the safeguards language in the outcome document could have been strengthened, as well as the language on export controls.

Zimbabwe noted that language on peaceful uses of nuclear energy was expended in this review cycle, with additional provisions on technology cooperation, capacity building, training for skilled workforce, and on financing. It reiterated the call for the provision of mobilisation of adequate, affordable, predictable, and accessible financing to bridge the nuclear science and technology gap.

Transparency and reporting

The NAC expressed disappointment over the package on structured discussions on the national reports by nuclear-armed states. It said that an open process, embedded in the NPT review cycle and focused in particular on Article VI, would have been preferable.

Mexico noted that since the first Preparatory Committee of this review cycle, there has been a clear interest in incorporating interactive discussions regarding reports submitted by nuclear-armed states. It regretted that this initiative has given rise to politicisation and mistrust. Australia also regretted that even modest steps couldn't be taken on transparency and interactive reporting.

Thailand called on the nuclear-armed states to commit to transparency mechanisms for the next review cycle as a way of preserving the credibility and integrity of the Treaty. The EU, Canada, and the UK reiterated their support for transparency mechanisms.

FUNDRAISING APPEAL

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Reaching Critical Will (RCW) is a project founded in 1999 to coordinate and enhance the engagement of activists and organisers in the work for disarmament at the United Nations.

RCW works for disarmament and the prohibition of many different weapon systems; confronting militarism and military spending; and exposing gendered aspects of the impact of weapons and disarmament processes with a feminist lens.

RCW also monitors and analyses international disarmament processes, providing primary resources, reporting, and civil society coordination at various UN-related forums.

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