

IKV Pax Christi Recommendations to the 2012 NPT Preparatory Committee Meeting

IKV Pax Christi warmly welcomed the consensus action plan agreed at the 2010 NPT Review Conference. However, we are greatly concerned that actions are not substantively progressing towards a nuclear weapons free world. Instead the policies and practices of mostly western countries are shifting away from the agreed steps to create such a world.

Now is an excellent opportunity to examine the big picture- the overarching framework that will bring about a nuclear weapons free world. It is the right time to reaffirm that vision, and assess implementation of the practical steps that will get us there. Everyone knows what the steps are, what we need is the political will to implement them. The positive 64-point action plan which emerged from the 2010 NPT Review Conference offered a glimmer of hope for progress towards a nuclear weapons free world. Since then some States who rely on nuclear weapons for their security reaffirmed the central role nuclear weapons play for their security strategies, and NATO's 2010 Strategic Concept failed to seize the opportunity to take further steps towards creating a nuclear weapons free world. Instead, nuclear weapons States are modernizing their arsenals and NATO members hypocritically announced that the alliance would remain nuclear as long as nuclear weapons exist. This reaffirmation of the continued role nuclear weapons play in security strategies is in direct contravention of the agreements made only six months earlier in New York.

As this coming NPT Prepcom will initially focus on procedural issues, IKV Pax Christi is advocating for a balanced agenda that incorporates a full review of the treaty's operation, including an assessment of commitments made in the 1995, 2000 and 2010 Review Conferences. Only by looking at the progressive development of the treaty regime as a whole, can the international community be assured that political bias will not overtake technical assessments of compliance with ALL treaty obligations. We expect States parties to approach the PrepCom with flexibility and produce a balanced outcome that reflects the commitments made only two years ago.

IKV Pax Christi looks forward to a positive outcome of the NPT PrepCom and to working with all interested parties to ensure its success.

IKV Pax Christi is the joint peace organization of the Dutch Interchurch Peace Council (IKV) and Pax Christi Netherlands. IKV Pax Christi works for peace, reconciliation and justice in the world. We join with people in conflict areas to work on a peaceful and democratic society. We enlist the aid of people in the Netherlands who, like IKV Pax Christi, want to work for political solutions to crises and armed conflicts. IKV Pax Christi combines knowledge, energy and people to attain its objectives. More information about IKV Pax Christi can be found at www.nonukes.nl.

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Disarmament Recommendations.....	3
Nuclear Weapons Convention or Comprehensive Framework of Agreements.....	3
Modernization.....	3
Europe's responsibility.....	3
Tactical Nuclear Weapons in NATO	4
Nuclear Security Doctrines & Strategies	4
Transparency.....	4
Reporting.....	5
Russia and the United States	5
Trilateral Initiative	5
Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT).....	6
Fissile Materials Treaty	6
Positive security assurances.....	6
Negative Security Assurances	7
Nuclear Weapons Free Zones	7
De-Alerting	7
Disarmament Education.....	7
Non-Proliferation Recommendations	8
Role of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)	8
Materials Trade & Export Controls	8
Additional Protocol and Nuclear Trade.....	8
Nuclear Terrorism	9
Peaceful Uses Recommendations	9
Multilateralisation of the Nuclear Fuel Cycle.....	9
Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Materials.....	9
Recommendations towards the Middle East WMD Free Zone Conference	9
Civil Society Participation.....	9
Reporting.....	10
Expert Meetings	10
Regional Security Mechanism	10
Confidence Building Measures.....	10

Disarmament Recommendations

Nuclear Weapons Convention or Comprehensive Framework of Agreements

There is growing international support for the start of negotiations on a treaty eliminating nuclear weapons. This is most clearly demonstrated by the voting patterns at the UN General Assembly, particularly on the resolution “Follow-up to the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons” which “*Calls once again upon all States immediately to fulfil that obligation by commencing multilateral negotiations leading to an early conclusion of a nuclear weapons convention prohibiting the development, production, testing, deployment, stockpiling, transfer, threat or use of nuclear weapons and providing for their elimination;*”¹. It is imperative for States to commence and conclude negotiations on the global prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons as mandated by the legal obligation unanimously proclaimed by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in 1996. It cannot be lawful to continue indefinitely to possess weapons which are unlawful to use or threaten to use, are already banned for most States, and are subject to an obligation of elimination. On November 26, 2011, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movements adopted a resolution on the irreconcilability of nuclear weapons with IHL, calling on States to undertake in good faith, and conclude, negotiations to prohibit the use of and completely eliminate nuclear weapons through a legally binding international agreement. While resolution A/RES/66/46 calls on States to do this via the Conference on Disarmament, if that body is unable to agree even on a programme of work, a diplomatic conference should be held to, at the very least, establish a negotiating process for such a treaty.

States should start negotiations on a multilateral legally binding prohibition on the development, production, testing, deployment, stockpiling, transfer, threat or use of nuclear weapons.

Modernization

All nuclear armed States are in the process of modernizing their arsenals. Even debating modernization undermines the credibility of their commitment to the NPT, and specifically their disarmament obligations under Article VI. This was explicitly recognized by a group of non nuclear weapons States in a working paper presented to the 2009 NPT Preparatory Committee meeting, in which they stated “*the development of new types of nuclear weapons...and the lack of significant progress in diminishing the role of nuclear weapons in security policies undermine disarmament commitments and work counter to the letter and spirit of the Treaty*”². More than one trillion dollars is currently allocated for modernisation expenses over the next decade by the nuclear weapons States.³ Modernization of nuclear weapons systems, including missiles and launch platforms, also undermines the credibility of States calling for strengthening of the non-proliferation aims of the NPT.

Nuclear weapons States should declare that they will not modernize their weapons and weapons delivery systems, and these declarations should be supported and encouraged by States hosting or protected by nuclear sharing or umbrella agreements.

Europe’s responsibility

Eight European nations have nuclear weapons in their territory- Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Turkey, the Russian Federation and the United Kingdom. Of these, all but Russia are members of NATO with a specific responsibility to deal with the U.S. nuclear weapons currently deployed in Europe. These weapons were called an ‘anachronism’ in a resolution by the European Parliament in March 2010⁴, and are in violation of the spirit -if not the letter- of Art. I and II of the NPT, which prohibit any transfer of nuclear weapons to nonnuclear weapon States. EU statements for NPT conferences tend to focus on the

¹ A/RES/66/46, retrieved from <http://www.reachingcriticalwill.org/political/1com/1com11/res/L42.pdf>

² [NPT/CONF.2010/PC.III/WP.30](http://www.un.org/disarmament/NPT/CONF.2010/PC.III/WP.30)

³ http://www.reachingcriticalwill.org/political/cd/2012/statements/part1/8March_WILPF.pdf

⁴ <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&reference=P7-TA-2010-0062&language=EN>

nuclear disarmament steps that other countries should make. Instead, the EU should recognize that it is part of the proliferation problem by not insisting that NATO take responsibility and change the semi-nuclear status of Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Turkey..

European States must recognize their non-proliferation responsibilities and take transparent, irreversible and verifiable steps to reduce the number of States with nuclear weapons on their territory. Where the EU is unable to speak with one voice, individual member States must express their view and uphold their non-proliferation obligations by insisting that U.S. nuclear weapons be removed from European soil.

Tactical Nuclear Weapons in NATO

While NATO is currently undergoing a Defence and Deterrence Posture Review, NATO States currently hosting nuclear weapons have a key role to play in the broader disarmament and non-proliferation efforts. The continued stationing of nuclear weapons in non-nuclear weapons States, as well as the training of their military to use these weapons is in violation of Article 1 and 2 treaty commitments, and that practice must be abolished so that Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Turkey can be in full compliance with all of their treaty obligations.

The NATO practice of nuclear 'burden-sharing' should be ended so that Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Turkey can comply with their NPT non-proliferation obligations.

Nuclear Security Doctrines & Strategies

In 2010 NPT members agreed *"To further diminish the role and significance of nuclear weapons in all military and security concepts, doctrines and policies;"*⁵. NATO States, all of whom are NPT members, failed to seize the opportunity of the 2010 NATO Strategic Concept to reduce alliance reliance on nuclear weapons. Instead, NATO declared *"as long as there are nuclear weapons in the world, NATO will remain a nuclear Alliance."*⁶ This apparent disregard to the commitments made only a few months earlier is something that can be rectified during the current NATO Defence and Deterrence Posture Review. In advance of the May 2012 NATO Summit in Chicago, alliance members have the opportunity to uphold their commitment to non-proliferation and disarmament by insisting that the alliance indeed reduce its reliance on nuclear weapons. China and Russia, the two recognised nuclear weapons States not part of NATO, can also use the opportunity of the NPT PrepCom to revise their own military strategies and demonstrate a reduced reliance on nuclear weapons.

NATO members should affirm that the NATO Defence and Deterrence Posture Review will actually diminish both the role and significance of nuclear weapons in NATO security policies. Non- NATO members should insist that NATO members review and amend nuclear sharing practices in light of Articles 1 and 2 of the NPT.

Transparency

Increasing the transparency of nuclear weapons holdings will build confidence among non nuclear weapons States. We welcome the announcements by some States at the 2010 Review Conference of their numbers of deployed nuclear weapons. It is not necessary for States to report all locations of their nuclear weapons, but it is important to set a baseline for disarmament by having an accurate count of how many nuclear weapons there are in total among the five recognized nuclear weapons States under the NPT. In order to avoid potential problems associated with counting rules, the nuclear weapons States could simply present a total number of nuclear weapons they currently possess without going into detail about strategic vs. sub-strategic (tactical) weapons. The Cold War policy of neither confirming nor denying the storage of US nuclear weapons in Europe should also be ended. This would increase the level of accountability by providing a baseline for comparison in future reporting, so that reductions towards zero can be honestly assessed.

⁵ 2010 NPT Review Conference Final Document, Action 5.

⁶ 2010 NATO Strategic Concept, http://www.nato.int/strategic-concept/pdf/Strat_Concept_web_en.pdf

Nuclear weapons States should provide an accurate count of the numbers of all nuclear weapons they possess both deployed and non-deployed; in calculating reductions, nuclear weapons States should not make a distinction between strategic and sub-strategic (tactical) nuclear weapons.

Reporting

We welcome the efforts of ten NPT Members, the Non-proliferation and Disarmament Initiative⁷ to promote the non-proliferation and disarmament requirements of the treaty, in particular their suggestion of a standardized reporting format to demonstrate progress on implementation of the commitments made during the 2010 Review Conference. The Office of Disarmament Affairs has also created an as of yet unused web page⁸ for this purpose. Regular reporting was also one of the agreements made both to strengthen the review process in 1995, and reaffirmed in 2000. Regular standardized reporting provides an opportunity for objective analysis as to the status of implementation of NPT agreements.

Nuclear Weapons States should commit to a standardized reporting format to enable assessment of their implementation of the 2010 agreed action plan and treaty obligations, and at the minimum should start submitting reports to the UN Office of Disarmament Affairs online repository without delay.

Russia and the United States

The two States holding the largest arsenals have made significant reductions in the number of nuclear weapons since the height of the Cold War, and we welcome the ratification and entry-into-force of the new START agreement. However, we also note that this treaty does not necessarily meet the disarmament principle of irreversibility, as it does not include a specific dismantlement requirement for warheads. The time has come for the Russian Federation and the United States to irreversibly reduce their arsenals to, at least, levels comparable with other nuclear armed States, to create the conditions necessary for other nuclear weapon States to engage in negotiations to zero. A new round of negotiations should begin on the next step in deep reductions of all types (strategic AND sub-strategic or tactical) of nuclear weapons.

The United States and Russian Federation should begin the next round of negotiations for deep reductions to levels comparable with other nuclear armed States, without distinction between strategic or sub-strategic weapons.

Trilateral Initiative

With the implementation of the new START agreement between the Russian Federation and the United States the time is ripe to revisit the commitment made in 2000, and reaffirmed in 2010, for *“The completion and implementation of the Trilateral Initiative between the United States of America, the Russian Federation and the International Atomic Energy Agency”*⁹. The Trilateral Initiative was designed so that Russia and the U.S. (and eventually perhaps other nuclear weapons States) could bring items to the IAEA for permanent safeguarding that were formerly part of classified nuclear weapons programmes, including nuclear warheads, warhead components, pits, or secondaries. Restarting such an initiative would increase confidence in the verifiability by an international non-discriminatory agency, of disarmament efforts by the two most heavily armed nuclear weapon States. Technical advances developed during the VERTIC, United Kingdom and Norway verification study should be incorporated in designing a revised initiative.

The Russian Federation and the United States should re-engage with the International Atomic Energy Agency to restart the previously abandoned Trilateral Initiative.

⁷ Australia, Canada, Chile, Germany, Japan, Mexico, the Netherlands, Poland, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates

⁸ <http://www.un.org/disarmament/WMD/Nuclear/Repository/>

⁹ NPT/CONF.2000/28 (Parts I and II)

Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT)

We welcome the recent ratification by Indonesia of the CTBT. The CTBT was opened for signature 16 years ago and despite global calls for an 'early' entry-into-force, the failure of 8 Annex II States to ratify the treaty has prevented this from happening. At the same time, the Provisional Secretariat has established monitoring stations across the globe and is almost fully operational, although without signatures from India and Pakistan monitoring stations on their territory cannot be built. Russia and the U.S. have admitted to conducting subcritical nuclear tests, which are technically permissible under the CTBT, yet defeat the spirit of the treaty as they can lead to qualitative improvements of nuclear arsenals. China is also suspected of conducting subcritical tests, and the UK has conducted tests jointly with the U.S.

The Netherlands, Australia and Japan, as "Friends of the CTBT" should put diplomatic pressure on China, The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), Egypt, Israel, India, Iran, Pakistan and the United States to ratify the CTBT without delay.

China, Russia the UK and the U.S. should refrain from subcritical nuclear tests, which contravene the spirit of the CTBT and can lead to qualitative improvements to their nuclear arsenals.

Fissile Materials Treaty

Currently, negotiating a treaty to ban fissile materials for nuclear explosive devices is meant to take place in Geneva at the Conference on Disarmament, and a program of work is currently being discussed which would allow for these negotiations to begin. The problem is that under the current rules of procedure, the Conference on Disarmament cannot seem to agree to begin the negotiations. NPT States have repeatedly agreed that this is the next logical step towards disarmament. The EU, in a working paper to the last NPT said a *"Fissile material cut-off treaty is the next logical multilateral instrument to be negotiated for the cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament in accordance with article VI of the NPT"*¹⁰. It is important that these negotiations begin, and come to a conclusion. The NPT States parties can recommend a deadline and request that negotiations be completed by 2014. There are a number of issues related to a fissile materials treaty that will need to be dealt with in the negotiations including stocks and the intrusiveness of inspections in creating a verification mechanism. The Non-Proliferation Disarmament Initiative (NPDI, composed of Australia, Canada, Chile, Germany, Japan, Mexico, the Netherlands, Poland, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates), in April 2011 developed a paper on the effective verification of a fissile materials treaty, and has suggested several times that the establishment of an expert group, assigned to examine technical aspects of such a treaty, could contribute to negotiations. The NPT Prepcom should therefore recommend that if the CD cannot enter into negotiations before the end of 2012, then negotiations should be established through another fora- either diplomatic conferences (as with the Anti-Personnel Landmine treaty or Ottawa Process and the Cluster Munitions Convention or Oslo Process) or under the auspices of a group established for that purpose in the General Assembly.

Negotiations on a Fissile Materials (Cutoff) Treaty should be completed by November 2014; Failure to enter into negotiations before August 2012 should lead to the establishment of a new forum or mechanism for negotiations under the auspices of the General Assembly. Until negotiations begin, States should engage proactively at every opportunity to discuss technical issues related to the future treaty.

Positive security assurances

Non-nuclear weapons States who rely on positive security assurances from nuclear weapons States can also reduce the role that nuclear weapons play in their national security strategies. They can demand that their security arrangements do not include a nuclear retaliation option. These umbrella countries can also state publicly that they do not link their national security to nuclear weapons, thereby contributing to the reduced reliance on nuclear weapons in all security strategies as committed to in 2010.

Non- nuclear weapons States with bilateral positive security assurances should declare that security is not reliant on nuclear weapons.

¹⁰ [NPT/CONF.2010/PC.I/WP.26](http://npt.conf.2010/PC.I/WP.26)

Negative Security Assurances

The non nuclear weapons States and especially the Non Aligned Movement (NAM) have been calling for legally binding negative security assurances for a long time. This would be a further guarantee that those States who have willingly given up the option to develop nuclear weapons, and remain in good standing with their arms control and disarmament agreements, will not have nuclear weapons used against them. Many nuclear weapons States argue that the assurances provided in UN Security Council Resolutions 255 and 984 should be enough to make the non nuclear weapons States feel at ease. However, these resolutions do not in fact guarantee that nuclear weapons will not be used against a country that does not possess nuclear weapons. Instead, they offer 'positive security assurances' wherein a country possessing nuclear weapons will use them to respond to the use of nuclear weapons on an unarmed State. Nuclear weapons States should, at the very least, make no first use policy declarations, in order to provide this kind of security assurance. While these declarations are not legally binding, they do provide the political space to begin negotiations on negative security assurances in the near future, and demonstrate political will to do so.

States should declare their willingness to negotiate a legally binding international arrangement on negative security assurances.

Nuclear Weapons Free Zones

The entire southern hemisphere is currently covered by nuclear weapons free zone agreements, yet when nuclear weapons States have not yet signed or ratified the relevant provisions in these agreements, they are not as effective a guarantor of security as they were designed to be. China and the Russian Federation have indicated support for the Bangkok Treaty, yet no Nuclear Weapons States has signed the relevant protocols, nor have the protocols for the Semipalatinsk Free Zone been signed. All nuclear weapons States should sign and ratify the relevant protocols of nuclear weapons free zone agreements without delay or conditionality.

Nuclear weapons States who have not yet done so should submit resolutions for ratification of Nuclear Weapons Free Zone treaties to their national legislatures.

De-Alerting

It is estimated that the US can launch 1,600 nuclear warheads within a few minutes. Russia can launch around a thousand. Keeping these nuclear weapons on hair-trigger alert is unacceptable. De-alerting includes measures such as removing nuclear warheads from missiles, storing nuclear bombs and cruise missiles away from airports, keeping submarines in seaports and – when these ships sail – establishing alerts that last at least one full day. Such measures reduce the chance of errors and of the risk that can occur during a coup or an attack on nuclear facilities. Moreover, this is a practical application of diminishing the role of nuclear weapons in defense strategies.

NPT States Parties should encourage nuclear weapons States to take weapons off 'hair trigger alert' and encourage the de-coupling of warheads from their delivery systems.

Disarmament Education

In Action 22 of the 2010 Final Document, all States were *"encouraged to implement the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations (A/57/124) regarding the United Nations study on disarmament and non-proliferation education, in order to advance the goals of the Treaty in support of achieving a world without nuclear weapons."*¹¹ States should seek opportunities to collaborate with civil society in this regard, and specifically take note of the efforts of the Ban All Nukes Generation (BANg), University of Darmstadt, University of Hamburg, and IKV Pax Christi who organised student delegations totalling nearly 100 students to this Prepcom.

All States should report on their disarmament education activities in advance of the July 2012 UN Secretary General report on implementation of the 34 recommendations adopted in A/57/124, as

¹¹ 2010 NPT Final Document

well as support, engage with and encourage cooperation with civil society organisations to promote disarmament education in their countries.

Non-Proliferation Recommendations

Role of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

The International Atomic Energy Agency is the only global body with credible authority to investigate suspected proliferation. However, the IAEA is subject to restrictions. The verification system has several weaknesses that were addressed by the creation of the Model Additional Protocol. The introduction of the additional protocol has increased the IAEA's access to locations and information, but not all countries have ratified the protocol. That puts a restriction on its operation. The Additional Protocol¹² is understood as the international standard in verification of non-proliferation and should become a requirement under the NPT.

All NPT member States should negotiate Additional Protocol Agreements with the IAEA without delay. The IAEA should report on progress in universalizing the Additional Protocol at the next NPT meeting of States parties.

NPT States parties and the EU should seek to increase their regular contributions to the IAEA in order that the agency can significantly increase its budget and remove the 'zero real growth' constraint placed on it. The agency is continually being asked to take on more responsibility, yet is only able to do this through extra-budgetary support for key functions. In particular, technical cooperation should be part of the IAEA regular budget, and not based solely on voluntary contributions.

NPT States parties should significantly increase their contributions to the IAEA, allowing the Agency to make technical cooperation a part of its regular budget.

Materials Trade & Export Controls

Articles I and II of the NPT require effective nuclear export controls. Nuclear control regimes, namely the Zangger Committee and the Nuclear Suppliers Group do exist but should be more transparent. Increased transparency on the parts of these regimes would be an effective tool for developing further cooperation around trade of these materials. Nuclear utilities do not generally require that customer States give up their national development of proliferation sensitive technologies including uranium enrichment and plutonium reprocessing. Companies need to exercise more restraint in selling nuclear technology and need to ensure that safety considerations take priority.

Nuclear utilities should insist that customer States renounce the development of proliferation sensitive technology and should not engage in trade with nations that have not ratified an additional protocol or the Convention on Nuclear Safety.

Additional Protocol and Nuclear Trade

The Additional Protocol is the recognized safety and verification standard with regard to weapons usable materials. Bilateral trade agreements for nuclear materials, with States that have not negotiated an additional protocol with the IAEA should be reconsidered. Additionally, there are current loopholes in the existing safeguards system which should be closed through an amendment of Annex II of the Additional Protocol. This amendment could, inter alia, deal with changes in technology, and the proliferation sensitivity in existing procurement practices.

NPT States parties should agree to close current loopholes in the safeguards system through the negotiation of an amendment to Annex II of the Additional Protocol.

¹² http://www.iaea.org/OurWork/SV/Safeguards/sg_protocol.html

Nuclear Terrorism

While progress has been made in securing nuclear materials, and preventing diversion to non-State actors, States should ratify and implement the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism, as well as ensure they are meeting their obligations under UN Security Council Resolution 1540. This is particularly important for States who are engaged in the Nuclear Security Summits. The Netherlands in particular, as host to the 2014 Nuclear Security Summit, has an obligation to ratify this convention without delay.

All States that have not yet done so, and particularly the Netherlands should ratify the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism without delay. All States should maintain their commitments to the full implementation of UNSCR 1540.

Peaceful Uses Recommendations

Multilateralisation of the Nuclear Fuel Cycle

There is currently no international body with the mandate to control all fissile materials. One should either be created, or the mandate for such control should be turned over to the IAEA. As States move closer to disarmament, there is a growing need to regulate the fissile materials cycle- both civilian and military and the size of nuclear capacities. All existing enrichment and breeder conversion reactors and heavy water factories must be placed under the authority of this international authority. This includes factories and reprocessing facilities located in the nuclear weapon States. The authority will be authorized to grant production licenses to existing sites and, where needed, regulate the expansion of production capacity. The creation of such a body will allow for universal application of verification and security measures to prevent the misuse of fissile materials. Putting the nuclear fuel cycle under international control in this way will reduce proliferation risks, while allowing for States who do not yet have an indigenous fuel cycle capacity to develop peaceful nuclear uses if they so choose. As Mohamed ElBaradei, then director of the IAEA, argued in early 2008, this would contribute to a nuclear weapons free world “so that no one country has the exclusive capability to produce the material for nuclear weapons”. The IAEA – like the European Atomic Energy Community– should be given a supranational status as legal owner of all the fissile material used for peaceful purposes.

NPT States parties should agree to establish the IAEA as the international authority to control the entire fissile materials cycle and should provide regular budgetary contributions to support this responsibility.

Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Materials

Additional ratifications of the 2005 Amendment to the convention are needed to allow it to enter into force.

States who have not yet done so should ratify the 2005 Amendment to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Materials without delay.

Recommendations towards the Middle East WMD Free Zone Conference

Civil Society Participation

The forthcoming conference in Finland should recognize, as the 2010 Review Conference final document did, “*the important role played by civil society in contributing to the implementation of the 1995 Resolution*”. To meet the agreement to “*encourages all efforts in this regard*” the conference should make room for civil society actors from the region, as well as those with specific technical expertise, to engage directly with conference participants. Transparency is a necessary confidence building measure, and sessions should be open to the public. Civil society actors offer a unique

perspective and can encourage out-of-the-box thinking. A session of the forthcoming conference should be devoted to civil society presentations.

The forthcoming conference should be open to civil society participation, and should dedicate a session to hear from civil society actors directly.

Reporting

The agreement in 2010 that the UN Secretary General would convene a meeting of all States in the region to discuss the conditions necessary to negotiate an international and effectively verifiable treaty for the establishment of a weapons of mass destruction free zone in the Middle East is widely supported. However, considering not all regional States are party to NPT, this conference should be required to report back to the UN General Assembly directly on its progress, not solely to NPT conferences.

The forthcoming conference in Finland should report to the UN General Assembly, not to the NPT processes.

Expert Meetings

The upcoming conference should consider the idea of setting up a series of expert group meetings- where each state in the region would be invited to participate and send their own experts. A timetable for reporting back to meetings of States Parties, perhaps in an annual, or even semi-annual conference, could be given to these experts, as could a series of initial questions to consider. These questions could, and should, start with the most technical issues to grapple with- including verification. This would provide a place for technical progress, absent of political considerations. Then, when politics are ready to catch up, at least some of the technical groundwork will be laid.

The upcoming conference should set up a series of expert meetings, comprised of regional experts to address technical challenges associated with the creation of such a zone.

Regional Security Mechanism

The forthcoming conference provides an excellent opportunity to set up a regional security discussion forum, considering the lessons learned during the ACRS process of the 1990s. Such a regional forum could, inter alia, discuss expert group reports, engage in confidence building dialogues and develop economic and other incentives towards peace building.

An ongoing regional security dialogue should be affirmed as a beneficial outcome of the forthcoming conference.

Confidence Building Measures

States in the region should sign and ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty as a confidence building measure towards the creation of this zone free of weapons of mass destruction. States should also declare moratoriums on fissile materials production in anticipation of an eventual fissile materials treaty.

Saudi Arabia and Syria should sign and ratify, and Israel, Iraq, Yemen, Egypt, and Iran should ratify the CTBT. State should declare moratoria on fissile materials production.