

Looking back, looking forward

Considerations for the 2017 NPT Preparatory Committee

Globally recognised as the cornerstone of the nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime, the nearly 50 year old nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT) has withstood incredible changes in the world. Negotiated at a time of intense great power tension, breaking through the end of the Cold War with a recipe for disarmament, and now, approaching a new multipolar time of tension. It is worth noting that the masonry used to build this cornerstone remains solid- even if the machinery surrounding it may be rusty.

It is clear that not all states agree on what are the most effective measures right now towards nuclear disarmament, and the treaty itself does not offer explicit guidance in this. However, it *is* clear that there is definitely progress to be made in a number of key areas towards all pillars of the treaty. Non-proliferation efforts should be strengthened, including by reaffirming the additional protocol as the non-proliferation verification standard. Progress needs to happen on nuclear disarmament and making nuclear weapons comprehensively illegal is starting to move ahead from the decades of multilateral stagnation. And, when it comes to peaceful uses of nuclear technology, it is important to ensure the highest safety and security standards available including by incorporating the outcomes of the nuclear security summit processes into the NPT dialogue.

This paper examines some of the challenges facing the NPT and some of the broad agreements the regime can build upon. This paper also makes some recommendations for further discussions and consideration as food for thought for the upcoming Preparatory Committee meeting (Prepcom). The paper begins by reviewing the agreed plans to achieve nuclear disarmament- the 13 practical steps and their 2010 action plan iterations, and suggests some ways to grease the disarmament gears and get the machinery of the regime working smoothly again.

The NPT is regularly described as the cornerstone of the non-proliferation regime. But what does that mean to be a cornerstone? It is the stone on which the whole edifice depends. Those of us who are States Parties to the NPT must take our responsibilities seriously and must lead by example.
- Ambassador Patricia O'Brien (Ireland), 27 March 2017.

Looking back

Plans of Action

Every time we enter a new NPT Review Conference cycle, it is important to both take stock of where we are on past agreements, as well as put out some ideas in looking ahead. Let's not forget the action plans that have been agreed.

There were the Principles & Objectives and Resolution on establishing a Middle East Zone free of weapons of mass destruction in 1995. This is what led to the strengthened review process we have now, and while there have been numerous suggestions to further strengthen the process (including the idea of holding annual meetings with decision making powers instead of the lengthy five year wait between possible decision making moments), this is the process that is currently in place. It is useful to assess what has been agreed, but at the same time one cannot lose sight of the fact that the purpose of the NPT is not to negotiate consensus documents, it is to facilitate nuclear disarmament.

Action 1: Pursuing policies fully compatible with the Treaty

The number one action coming out of the last NPT agreement was to pursue policies that are fully compatible with the treaty. In a way, this supported the expansion of the role of the Non- nuclear-weapon States in supporting disarmament, and there are some efforts to celebrate under this first action.

Norway, Mexico and Austria held conferences to explore the humanitarian impact of any use of nuclear weapons. Following on from that Austria issued a national pledge to negotiate toward the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons. 123 votes were cast at the 2016 First Committee in favour of conducting these negotiations in 2017. They are in process now. The 130+ States participating in these negotiations should be applauded for taking their responsibilities under the 2010 NPT Action plan seriously, and furthering the objective of achieving a world without nuclear weapons.

There are, however, some States that should be chastised- those that rely on the nuclear weapons of others (NATO, Australia, Japan and the Republic of Korea to be precise). It is hard not to question whether they are still committed to nuclear disarmament, given their continued support for policies that are directly in contradiction to the objective of achieving a world without nuclear weapons, and the clear violation of agreed first action point from 2010.

2010 NPT members agreed *“To further diminish the role and significance of nuclear weapons in all military and security concepts, doctrines and policies”*¹. Taking NATO as an example, this has not happened. Instead, NATO declared *“as long as there are nuclear weapons in the world, NATO will remain a nuclear Alliance.”*² This apparent disregard to the commitments made only a few months earlier is something that could have been rectified during the 2012 NATO Defence and Deterrence Posture Review, but wasn't. The July 2016 Warsaw Summit had the option of addressing this issue as well, yet it also reiterated that *“As long as nuclear weapons exist, NATO will remain a nuclear alliance.”*³

The Warsaw Summit communiqué is also a demonstration of broader problems, and calls into question whether or not the Non- nuclear-weapon States members of NATO are still committed to the 2010 agreement. In Warsaw, NATO Heads of State and Government stated:

*NATO's nuclear deterrence posture also relies, in part, on United States' nuclear weapons forward-deployed in Europe and on capabilities and infrastructure provided by Allies concerned. These Allies will ensure that all components of NATO's nuclear deterrent remain safe, secure, and effective. That requires sustained leadership focus and institutional excellence for the nuclear deterrence mission and planning guidance aligned with 21st century requirements. The Alliance will ensure the broadest possible participation of Allies concerned in their agreed nuclear burden-sharing arrangements.*⁴

This demonstrates an elevation of the role of nuclear weapons across the Alliance and provides the political cover for the US plan to produce a new type of nuclear weapon (the B61-12) with new capabilities. It sends a signal that the US, and its allies, are perfectly comfortable raising the stakes and risking a nuclear confrontation in Europe. Considering the forward deployed US weapons are designed to be dropped by relatively short range airplanes, the citizens of NATO countries should be worried that the Warsaw communiqué put them back into the nuclear crosshairs (see map).

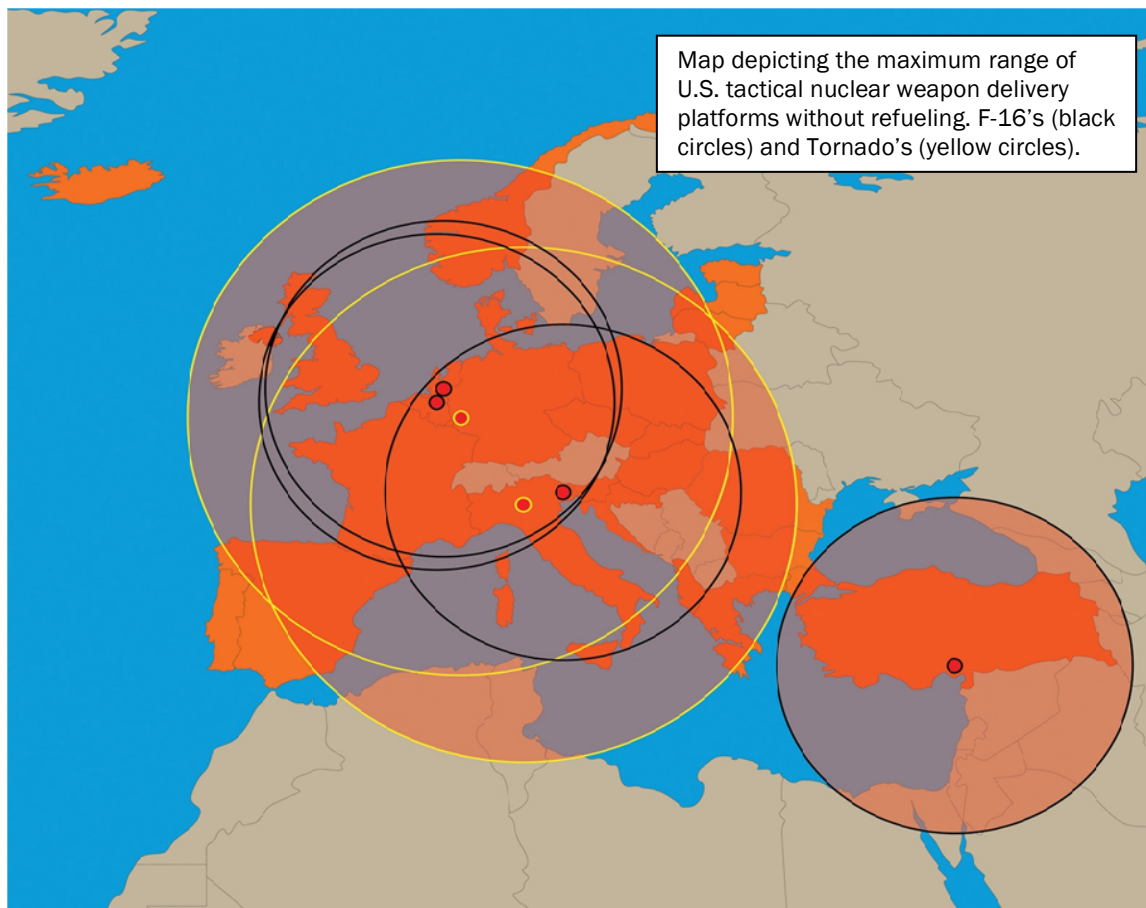
Retention, and even modernisation, of the B61 bombs currently stored in Europe will not result in the capability to use these weapons outside of the NATO alliance eastern boundaries. Currently, because of the range of the Dual Capability Aircraft assigned to drop these nuclear weapons, the most likely victims of any B61 use would be NATO citizens themselves. Removing the weapons from their forward deployment has a two-fold benefit. First, it is an action that shows sincerity & good faith in any offers of further disarmament negotiations, removing a big obstacle to talks. Second, it reduces the likelihood of use within alliance borders, preventing the possibility of a catastrophic humanitarian disaster and removing existing military targets.

¹ 2010 NPT Review Conference Final Document, Action 5.

² 2010 NATO Strategic Concept, http://www.nato.int/strategic-concept/pdf/Strat_Concept_web_en.pdf

³ 2016 NATO Warsaw Summit Communiqué, Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Warsaw 8-9 July 2016, paragraph 53. Found at: http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_133169.htm?selectedLocale=en

⁴ 2016 NATO Warsaw Summit Communiqué, Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Warsaw 8-9 July 2016, paragraph 53. Found at: http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_133169.htm?selectedLocale=en



In the Russian Federation, the role of nuclear weapons has been elevated, justified as a counter to the conventional military superiority of the NATO alliance, while every one of the nuclear weapons states has committed significant financial resources to modernization of their arsenals.

13 Steps & the 2010 Action Plan

In 2000, just after the treaty's indefinite extension, there was the profound agreement on the 13 Practical Steps towards nuclear disarmament. This consensus agreement took place at a different time in geopolitical relationships. Nevertheless, the plan of action was not fully implemented. As the 13 steps set the stage for the 2010 Action Plan, it is worth briefly looking back at the two of these together. Since the 13 steps were the disarmament framework the 2010 agreement was based upon, this brief review will focus go through those, noting how they were included in 2010.

Step 1/ Action 10: Entry into force of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty

Given the current political realities, the entry into force of the CTBT is not going to happen very soon, despite calls from the international community for "early" entry into force. Of course calls should be made to encourage ratification by China, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea), Egypt, India, Iran, Israel, Pakistan, and the US to allow the treaty's entry into force. The Action Plan (Action 12, 13, 14) made additional references to the CTBT, like reporting on activities to support EIF and supporting the CTBTO, and this is something all states can continue to do.

However, it is also good to take an honest look at what to do should the treaty never actually enter into force. One thing to consider is if an agreement by States at the Article XIV Conference, for example, could [set up an independent task force to conduct on site inspections if, and where needed](#). There are other provisions of the treaty that are in limbo pending EIF but most of the independent monitoring system is in place and fully functional. The CTBTO is an amazing organisation advancing the benefits of the International Monitoring System capabilities beyond the creators initial imaginations, and what's really missing is the capacity for inspections. So, why not develop a work around while waiting for the political winds to align for the last few ratifications, and set up a task force. The technical expertise is

useful and helpful to the overall disarmament and non-proliferation regime, and surely some of the wealthier CTBT champions can allocate the funding to make it happen.

Step 2/ Action 11: Nuclear test explosion moratorium

To paraphrase the comedian Chris Rock: you shouldn't get credit for stuff you're supposed to do. While it's great that the nuclear-weapon States haven't done any full scale tests, it's a pretty low standard to hold them to. It was known from early days how deadly nuclear testing is, and yet the tests continued until the 1990s. There have even been some calls for a return to testing, especially since the new warhead modifications (like the B61-12) may be unpredictable. In all seriousness, no one wants to see another mushroom cloud or accidental vent of a full scale test. [Maintaining the moratorium](#) should be a given, and everyone should be able to agree that this is something worth supporting.

Step 3/ Action 15: Negotiate a Fissile Materials Treaty in the CD (within 5 years)

Time, like the nuclear genie, isn't trapped in a bottle.⁵ We can't deny the fact that the five year timeline set out in 2000 to negotiate a fissile materials treaty passed over a decade ago, just as we cannot deny that the knowledge of how to make nuclear bombs is out there. The recent agreement ([A/RES/71/259](#)) to set up another small group to negotiate the possibility of negotiations while the negotiating body designed for negotiations remains deadlocked for its second decade, is an attempt to rub the international community just the right way⁶ and get this treaty started.

To truly create and maintain a world without nuclear weapons a fissile materials treaty will make a significant difference, and it is positive that the issue hasn't fallen off the agenda. And while it was envisaged in the late 1990s as a way to stop the India and Pakistan arms racing, with new nuclear weapon doctrines, lowered thresholds for use, and new production of nuclear weapons getting set up across the handful of nuclear armed countries, maybe there will be a broader applicability to a future treaty even if it only deals with future production.

However, to really have an impact on disarmament and the creation and maintenance of a nuclear weapons free world, getting a handle on the stockpiles is an urgent concern. This is something that was woefully neglected in the whole nuclear security summit process- despite the calls from Brazil and 25 others to take a look at the 85% of global fissile material stocks designated for military purposes.

Future negotiated disarmament agreements will need to look at alternatives to the types of counting rules that currently apply in the START regime. It may be time to begin looking at disarming capabilities instead. A baseline for this will need to be a good accounting of existing stockpiles.

The nuclear-weapon States don't want to report this information, because it gives insight to those very capabilities (and also might reveal some vulnerabilities including the loss and theft of materials which may or may not have occurred). So, if they don't want to report to the global community as a whole, they should [set up a group within the IAEA to take reports, and begin the accounting process](#). This could build off the experience of the Trilateral Initiative (see below). We all know that record keeping has been accidentally or intentionally sloppy when it comes to fissile materials, and reconstructing these records is going to take some time. Since negotiations are not going to be starting for at least a few more years, the nuclear-weapon States can get together some experts from the Agency and work together to get those records in order now. That would be a pretty good confidence building measure, and I'm sure that Non- nuclear-weapon States would contribute some expertise to be keep a role in the discussion.

Step 4/ Action 6: Set up a nuclear disarmament subsidiary body in the Conference on Disarmament

As noted above, anything related to the Conference on Disarmament hasn't moved in a generation. That includes setting up a nuclear disarmament subsidiary body.

⁵ Apologies Jim Croce for the paraphrased lyric.

⁶ Additional apologies to Christina Aguilera for the way this metaphor has turned out.

However the CD is only 65 nations, and the UNGA put some democracy back into the nuclear disarmament question. The Open Ended Working Groups, in 2013 and 2015 were not a subsidiary body, but they did significantly advance nuclear disarmament discussion. They were open to for all states to participate in, including non NPT members. They contained thought provoking and stimulating discussions, and they even generated outcomes that are actually moving forward.

Of course not everyone supported the outcomes, but this Prepcom should [celebrate the fact that a way to move beyond the blocked forums was developed](#), that all views were proportionally represented in the outcome of the OEWG and that there was a small step towards democracy in the nuclear disarmament debate.

Step 5/ Action 2: Maintain the principle of irreversibility

The bilateral arms control agreements that have entered into force in the last couple of decades, the SORT and new START agreements, can be questioned in terms of their irreversibility. SORT has already been replaced, but new START is set to expire soon- having an expiry date on the treaty raises questions about irreversibility. New bilateral negotiations should return to this principle. States currently negotiating the nuclear weapons prohibition treaty would also be served by upholding this principle and [ensuring there is no end-by date for the new nuclear weapon prohibition treaty](#). Additionally the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification (IPNDV) [should publish the results of the mapping exercise on verification capacity in all member states](#).

Step 6/ Action 3: “An unequivocal undertaking by the nuclear weapon States to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals leading to nuclear disarmament, to which all States parties are committed under article VI.”

The nuclear-weapon States need to recommit to the unequivocal undertaking, especially the commitment made in 2010 that outlined some parameters to implement it. There has only been a little bit of movement in the reduction of arsenals (though some movement is better than none at all). Also, some Non- nuclear-weapon States, especially those who are so afraid that a nuclear weapons prohibition will prevent them from holding the nuclear armed countries accountable to their Article VI commitments, need to take a hard look at how and where they are also supporting this unequivocal undertaking. Current policies and practices, including the direct technical upgrades supporting nuclear weapon modernisation taking place in some allied countries contradict an unequivocal undertaking. Suggesting that a country (or an alliance) will remain armed with nuclear weapons as long as nuclear weapons exist also sounds a lot like equivocating. All states have a responsibility to assert their commitment to the unequivocal undertaking. The nuclear-weapon States can demonstrate this by [ending modernisation programmes designed to maintain nuclear weapon arsenals into the next century](#), and Non- nuclear-weapon States can [stop helping them with these programmes](#) and demand their accountability to the undertaking in all relevant forums.

Step 7/ Action 4: START II, III and preserving and strengthening ABM as “a cornerstone of strategic stability and as a basis for further reductions of strategic offensive weapons, in accordance with its provisions.”

A new START is needed- but maybe not the same way that it was perceived in the past. Is it time to look at ways to manage arsenal reductions that do not rely on counting the number of delivery vehicles? Instead, perhaps its time to [revisit other ways of measuring arsenal reductions- like through an assessment of capacity](#). (Where capacity is not equivalent to yield, but perhaps instead to the number of deaths that would be attributed to the use of the weapon in a populated area). This could be a work around for the current plans wherein several nuclear armed countries are putting independently targeted multiple re-entry vehicles on the same missile. Those plans are putting countless lives at risk, and are detrimental to the strategic stability hoped for in this step & action.

Concerns about increased risk of nuclear weapons use have rallied governments to support all efforts, including indirect efforts, to reduce the likelihood of use and restrain arsenals. In the last several years a number of proposals have been put forward to reduce nuclear weapons (notably by the US after the conclusion of the latest START treaty), as well as proposals to restore arsenal superiority between both sides (notably the Russian proposal to resume talks on the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) treaty). However, these bilateral efforts have not brought results.

Past experience shows that other actors can take the lead in addressing some of these issues, improving conditions for further bilateral discussions. These could take place in the context of existing forums (e.g. by reviving the NATO – Russia council, or at G7/8 meetings, or at the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)), by raising concerns and proposals during the UN General Assembly, or by facilitating the creation of new norms outside traditional forums.

Non-nuclear armed countries have options to influence the nuclear armed states' reliance on nuclear weapons. They can show these countries that they believe nuclear weapons have no role in security arrangements by clearly stating their objection to the (threat of) use of nuclear weapons. The most structural way of doing this is by joining negotiations on a legal instrument prohibiting nuclear weapons for all.

Step 8: Trilateral initiative (US, Russia, IAEA)

Everyone at the NPT should love the trilateral initiative. It was a brilliant proposal, and an idea that set the stage for significant additional work on verification questions. Even if there were concerns about asymmetrical disposition of plutonium. There is scope to build on this, including learning from the Norway- UK- VERTIC study has given a lot of help towards addressing the security concerns associated with foreign inspectors. The changed context of a world where nuclear weapons are comprehensively prohibited should also alleviate the security concern, besides if a state has actually made an unequivocal undertaking to eliminate all its arsenals, shouldn't it take the South Africa approach and just stop stressing over warhead design competitiveness? Alternatively, coming back to the technical verification concept that allowed the IAEA to measure classified forms of fissile materials is just a good idea.

Other nuclear-weapon States should be lining up to set up agreements with the IAEA based on the models developed during the brief Trilateral initiative times. Declaring stockpiles of fissile materials to the IAEA and putting them under strict international controls is a fantastic contribution to the principles of transparency, irreversibility, and verifiability. The other nuclear-weapon States should be clamouring to get in on this- especially if they want to provide a positive example of what they could eventually want to see in a fissile materials treaty.

Step 9/ Action 5: Things the nuclear-weapon States should do

In 2000 there were six items on the list: unilateral reductions, increased transparency on capabilities, non- strategic nuclear weapon reductions, reducing operational readiness, reducing the role in security policies, and nuclear-weapon States engaging with each other to get to elimination. 2010 included reducing the risk of accidental use of nuclear weapons, and states agreed to address the question of all nuclear weapons regardless of their type or their location, instead of only focusing on strategic weapons.

A few of these things have seen some progress, the UK is lowering its numbers, and Russia and the US are still keeping up with the new START agreement (for now). But, there is a lot that just isn't happening, and in fact, there have been steps backwards from the earlier agreements.

Unilateral reductions

States should simply lower their numbers. It is simple, clear, and relatively easy for a state to do. Lowering numbers of delivery systems is one thing, but what would really help is for states to reduce the number of people they might potentially kill with nuclear weapons. So, for example, it's great that France is planning fewer weapons, but the fact that they're looking at increasing the ability to target those in a short range by developing cruise missiles is a problem. The Russian numbers are going down (though more as a result of the new START than unilateral decision making), but they are putting more warheads onto fewer missiles. Unilateral reductions cannot mean less missiles flying while still setting the stage for more people dying.

Reducing the risk of use, including lowering operational readiness and accident prevention

The real threat of use of nuclear weapons is increasing, dramatically. Taboo against the use of nuclear weapons alone will not reduce these risks, de-alerting will help and de-coupling warheads from delivery systems are also a positive action. Those negotiating the new nuclear weapons prohibition treaty recognise the risk is increasing, and have referred to the need to explicitly prohibit use, under any circumstances, as a way to – at least- strengthen the norm and put some checks on the risky

business currently underway. The risks are increasing because the nuclear-weapon States and their allies are either lowering stated threshold for use in their doctrines, actually threatening use against one another, or continuing to conduct military preparations for use that are dramatically increasing tensions in already unstable regions. To truly reduce the risk of use, the usual de-alerting and de-coupling suggestions still apply. So, however, does the need for all states to [vehemently condemn actions that increase tensions](#), and increase risk. Activities including military exercises and parades, and flaunting of weapons that by design will violate international humanitarian law increase risk. Instead, its really time to start demanding allies, friends, enemies and fre-nemies quit the war-games that put billions of lives at risk and reinvest in the diplomatic resources necessary for peace and stability.

Another part of that risk is the increasing kill capacity being developed by all the nuclear armed states. These so – called “modernisation” efforts are reducing the threshold against use, and significantly reducing strategic stability. Some nuclear armed countries are even expanding their arsenals, and as the new Reaching Critical Will report on modernisation stated “*The “upgrades” in many cases provide new capabilities to the weapon systems. They also extend the lives of these weapon systems beyond the middle of this century, ensuring that the arms race will continue indefinitely.*”

Reducing the Role of Nuclear weapons in security strategies or doctrines

As discussed above, NATO for one, has done the opposite of reducing the role of nuclear weapons in its doctrine. The same with the other nuclear-weapon States. It was earlier great power tensions that led to incredible breakthroughs (like the INF treaty at the height of the cold war, banning an entire class of nuclear weapons). [Great power tensions are not a reason to escalate rhetoric or increase the role of nuclear weapons](#) in security strategies, if anything they are the opposite.

Non Strategic nuclear weapon reductions or addressing all types of weapons

One can look back to the times of the first George Bush and think that was the hey-dey for non strategic nuclear weapon reductions. Back then, thousands of weapons were dismantled and taken off of deployment. Since that time however, the opposite is happening. The US is adding precision guided tail kits to increase accuracy of the B61 bombs now forward deployed in five NATO countries, making those weapons more attractive for use (even if their suggested range barely falls outside the alliance, see map above). And rumour has it that Russia has re-deployed sub-strategic weapons to Kaliningrad, as well as threatening to deploy Iskandar missiles.⁷ The nuclear-weapon States need to reduce all types of all weapons, and the Non- nuclear-weapon States need to be helpful with non-strategic reductions by changing their current policies which allow for weapons modernisation, re-deployment and even pay for parts of the weapon capabilities. The NPT forbids assistance, the NATO host states in particular (Belgium, Germany, Italy, Turkey and the Netherlands) need to [cancel the contracts that will allow all of their militaries \(except Turkey\) to deliver non-strategic nuclear weapons](#) and instead look to get the weapons out of their territories. Democracy demands it.

Increasing transparency

Information about the US arsenal is much more readily available than the other nuclear-weapon States (it’s why they are always on the hot seat). The other nuclear-weapon States have at least, made some reports available (see below on reporting). However, when it comes to transparency, a lot more can be done- and not just by the nuclear-weapon States. The Non- nuclear-weapon States, especially those who are involved in nuclear sharing agreements, should provide answers to parliaments about when and where they support the use of nuclear weapons. This first question- under what circumstances are you willing to cause catastrophic humanitarian harm- is a starting point. Many Non- nuclear-weapon States can already answer that they are never willing to do so. Addressing questions of transparency can start with [answering questions about what circumstances would justify violations of international humanitarian law](#) and massive civilian casualties.

Nuclear-weapon States engaging with each other

The nuclear weapon States have a lot to do. Steps, action plans, practical approaches, no matter what its called, it is lot more than the outcome so car (the glossary). Since it is clear what other things the nuclear-weapon States need to do to create a world without nuclear weapons, the negotiated

⁷ Richard Sisk. “Russia Threatens Massive Military Buildup to Counter US, NATO.” Text. *Military.com*, June 15, 2015. <http://www.military.com/dailynews/2015/06/15/russia-threatens-massive-military-buildup-to-counter-us-nato.html>.

agreement on the definitions in the glossary at least keep dialogues going, though they should open up to feedback from non-nuclear-weapon States. Nuclear-weapon States [engagement can and should also take place on technical issues](#) and it is logical to do so (for example with the IPNDV).

Step 10/ Action 16 & 17 & 18: Nuclear Weapon States putting excess fissile materials under IAEA controls

As mentioned above in discussing the issue of the trilateral initiative, getting materials out of the production pathway for nuclear weapons is a good thing. The nuclear-weapon States, after claiming so much great success with the Nuclear Security Summit process, should look at the other 85% of weapons usable materials in the world and get them into the IAEA control. While it is clear that the nuclear-weapon States have more nuclear related facilities than other states, they should also be seeking to [set the stage for future agreements with the Agency](#), beyond excess materials. They should be looking at how they will transform existing stocks of fissile materials either through nuclear energy programmes (as the Nunn-Lugar programme demonstrated was possible) or through other down-blending and decommissioning activities. Then, since these states are such strong proponents of the Additional Protocol, it would be helpful for them to figure out now, how they will eventually enact Additional Protocol type agreements on all nuclear facilities. This would demonstrate a real commitment to nuclear disarmament.

Step 11: Reaffirmation of ultimate objective- general and complete disarmament

Statements recommitting to the objective of general and complete disarmament as well as demonstrations of efforts in that direction (like ratification of disarmament treaties, reports on military expenditures, good faith participation in negotiations) are all avenues to take this issue forward. General and complete disarmament is not a utopian myth, and should not be treated as such. It is something States move toward every time they ratify a treaty prohibiting a weapon, or stop an arms sale because of its deadly human rights consequences. [Statements are helpful to set the stage for actions](#), and given the discussions right now, some statements in this regard might help increase the global comfort level a bit more than the current rhetoric focused on strategic stability.

Step 12/ Action 20 & 21: Regular reporting

It was recognised that enhanced transparency increases mutual confidence in non-proliferation and disarmament. As all nuclear-armed States were called upon to report on their implementation of the Action Plan at the 2014 Prepcom, the time is ripe to provide clear baseline data in order to accurately assess disarmament measures. However, the reports were not discussed. This Review Conference Cycle should consider [setting up some times to explicitly discuss the reports that were received in the last cycle, assess whether they were sufficient, and ask for updated information](#).

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. In order to avoid potential problems associated with counting rules, the nuclear-armed States could simply present a total number of nuclear weapons and warheads they currently possess without going into detail about strategic vs. non-strategic (tactical) weapons. The Cold War policy of neither confirming nor denying the storage of U.S. 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 objectively assessed.

The Non-proliferation and Disarmament Initiative⁸ suggestion of a standardized reporting form to demonstrate progress on the implementation of the commitments made during the 2010 Review Conference was a good recommendation. If NPT states parties as a whole are not interested in a direct dialogue on the reports submitted to the last conference, perhaps the [NPT will consider hosting a series of open - discussions](#).

⁸ Australia, Canada, Chile, Germany, Japan, Mexico, the Netherlands, Nigeria, the Philippines, Poland, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates

Step 13/ Action 19: Further development of verification

Progress on verification is being taken forward, through the IPDNV as well as through the Group of Governmental Experts established by [A/RES/71/67](#). This GGE will meet in 2018 and 2019, and should be able to offer additional recommendations during this review cycle.

Other items from the 2010 Action Plan

Security Assurances & Nuclear Weapon Free Zones, Action 7, 8 & 9

Negative security assurances are a stop-gap measure in place until disarmament happens. They give the impression that in some contexts (like when they're not pointed at me) it is okay to keep the capability to use nuclear weapons. At the same time, the States that have rejected nuclear weapons so completely deserve some assurance of their safety- or otherwise succumb to tantalising allure of nuclear weapon development that makes nuclear weapon possessors cling so tenaciously to their weapons. At the very least, the [nuclear-weapon States should ratify the relevant protocols to nuclear weapon free zone agreements and remove the reservations and conditions](#) some have in place.

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.*"⁹ 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, and PAX who have experience organising student attendance to NPT meetings. States should [provide funding for disarmament education](#) as well, and [ensure nuclear weapons issues are included in national curricula](#) from an early age.

Looking forward

The NPT in the current context: A reframed debate

In the last several years there has been a shift in the global nuclear weapons discourse. The focus is on the impact of the weapons, as it was when the first battlefield use burned the image of cancerous mushroom clouds on the global psyche. This refocusing of the problem to nuclear weapons as weapons which by design cause indiscriminate, disproportional, and inhumane suffering has afforded an opportunity to revitalise the global nuclear weapons debate and start negotiations on a new legal instrument, a treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons leading to their elimination.

The 2010 nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty Review Conference, "*expresse[d] its deep concern at the continued risk for humanity represented by the possibility that these weapons could be used and the catastrophic humanitarian consequences that would result from the use of nuclear weapons.*"ⁱⁱ This agreement spurred action to further examine the potential impact of any use of nuclear weapons through a series of intergovernmental conferences, hosted in Norway (2013), Mexico (2014) and Austria (2014). The UN General Assembly decided, in December 2016, to start a process to negotiate a treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons leading to their elimination. Negotiations remain open to all countries and have democratized the deadlocked nuclear disarmament process by keeping the focus on the weapons.

During the first round of negotiations on the nuclear ban treaty in March, a significant majority of states referred to this new treaty as a way to strengthen the NPT. The ban treaty, considered by many to be an effective measure leading towards nuclear disarmament, will undoubtedly be discussed in this NPT cycle. While issues related to the nuclear ban treaty negotiations will undoubtedly arise during the NPT Prepcom, it is important to see these efforts as ways to implement the obligation to negotiate effective measures leading towards nuclear disarmament, and not as the end of the discussion. Since the treaty was extended in 1995, a lot of effective measures have been suggested, and a few were even

⁹ 2010 NPT Final Document

acted upon. The nuclear weapon prohibition treaty is an effective measure that could catalyse action on the other plans to create and maintain a world without nuclear weapons, and should be recognised as such.

Recommit to the NPT

A treaty like the NPT is more than the sum of its parts, but we cannot overlook its parts and their contribution to the vision of a world without nuclear weapons. The Prepcom is a good moment to recommit to the vision of the treaty as laid out in the preamble. Particular attention should be paid to the agreement by states parties:

Declaring their intention to achieve at the earliest possible date the cessation of the nuclear arms race and to undertake effective measures in the direction of nuclear disarmament.

Urging the co-operation of all States in the attainment of this objective.

States should use this Prepcom to restate their commitment to the treaty as a whole, and to undertaking all effective measures in the direction of nuclear disarmament. A number of states indicated they would not support the negotiations of a nuclear weapons prohibition treaty because they were worried that they would lose the opportunity to pressure the NPT nuclear-weapon States on their disarmament obligations. If that is indeed the case, now is the time for these countries to demonstrate their commitment to nuclear disarmament, and demand action from the nuclear-weapon States.

In a time of increased great power tension, it is worthwhile to remember great tensions can lead to great breakthroughs- especially when it comes to reducing nuclear dangers- and with nearly half of the nuclear armed countries at the table in the NPT process, it is a forum we must take full advantage of to achieve our own, and the treaty's goals.

¹2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons Final Document . Available at: [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=NPT/CONF.2010/50%20\(VOL.I\)](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=NPT/CONF.2010/50%20(VOL.I)).