UNODA United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs

CNS Virtual Diplomatic Workshop
(Final) Preparations for the Tenth NPT Review Conference

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Virtual
9 December 2021

Dr. Potter,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to address today's workshop and I commend Dr. Potter and the team at the James Martin Center for Non-Proliferation Studies for arranging it. Workshops such as this have become the hallmark of CNS' commitment to the NPT and to the health of the broader disarmament and non-proliferation regime. For that, you have my thanks.

We have less than a month now until the Review Conference. As I have said previously, after such a lengthy delay, simply holding the Conference will feel like a victory. But this is not the end of the road. The hard work begins on 4 January 2022 and States need to start rolling up their sleeves.

The issues covered by the NPT are too important and the Review Conference too rare an opportunity not to aim high. States parts must be ambitious in pursuing an outcome that strengthens the implementation of the Treaty and ensures it is fit for purpose to address the challenges of our time.

In short, States parties need to use this occasion to reinforce the NPT's role as the bastion of international peace and security and a bulwark against the dangers of nuclear weapons. Everyone at this event is aware of the obstacles in the road to achieving such an outcome. The nuclear landscape today is vastly different from even that of 2015.

Three trends are particularly alarming.

First, the prominence of nuclear weapons has risen sharply – both in the context of so-called "great power" competition but also regional conflict. Greater investments are being made in nuclear weapons as they concurrently receive greater attention in national security strategies. In parallel, proliferation drivers are accelerating as long-simmering regional crises threaten to bubble over.

Second, the intersection between nuclear weapons and emerging technologies is fraught with risk. Technological advancements and new domains in cyber and outer space have exposed

potential vulnerabilities in nuclear weapons structures – from command and control to supply chains. Those same technologies are also being integrated into novel new weapons systems with destabilizing capabilities.

Third, these developments are taking place when confidence-building mechanisms are absent and when transparency and dialogue are passed over in favor of opacity and competition. They are occurring at a time when guardrails are largely non-existent at the nexus between technology and peace and security.

The Tenth NPT Review Conference has an opportunity to be a circuit-breaker – to interrupt this surge of nuclear danger and avoid a short circuit of catastrophic proportions.

There are six key outcomes that I believe the Conference should prioritize to help reverse current trends.

First, States Parties should reaffirm their commitment to all of the Treaty's goals. They should clearly state their commitment to a world free of nuclear weapons and to the norms against the use, proliferation and testing of nuclear weapons.

Second, States Parties should agree to a plan to reduce the risk of a nuclear weapon being used, including through the of development practical transparency and confidence-building measures that can be implemented between now and the eleventh Review Conference. Measures to mitigate the dangers at the intersection of technology and nuclear weapons will be particularly important.

Third, risk reduction is not enough. The only way to eliminate nuclear risk is to eliminate nuclear weapons. The Conference should agree to near-term steps to get us back on the path to a world free of nuclear weapons. This could, for example, include commitments to further reductions or doctrinal measures.

Fourth, non-proliferation and disarmament are two sides of the same coin – the strength of one enables the strength of the other. Gaps in the non-proliferation regime increase nuclear risk. The safeguards system must be watertight. It must be properly resourced in terms of human and financial capital.

Fifth, regional proliferation crises undermine global stability and the non-proliferation regime. States parties can play an instrumental role through, inter alia, supporting dialogue and political resolutions.

Finally, the strength of any treaty rests on its implementation. The NPT is no different. The issue of how to implement commitments given at previous Review Conferences must be resolved. This may require agreement on accountability mechanisms.

I appreciate that none of these will be easy to achieve. However, I trust in the enduring commitment of States parties to the Treaty and to the benefits it continues to provide. To that end, I also trust that they will approach the Review Conference ready to negotiate, willing to listen and able to take decisions that reinforce our collective security.

I thank you very much for your attention.