

NPT NEWS IN REVIEW

Civil society perspectives on the
Eleventh Review Cycle of the Treaty on the
Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)
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Reaching Critical Will

Editorial: The Gas Lights Are On and the Match is Lit— But We Can Still Prevent the Nuclear Fire

Ray Acheson | Reaching Critical Will

As expected, the **Eleventh Review Conference** of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) has so far echoed the rising tensions and conflicts outside the UN Halls. But despite several wars, ongoing genocide, and the escalating threats to use, test, or build more nuclear weapons, there was also a lack of urgency or momentousness during the general debate. The gaslighting—manipulations, obscurations, and outright lies—by the nuclear-armed states and their nuclear-supportive allies was intense, and the warnings from non-nuclear-armed states about the nuclear risks and dangers of nuclear war were prolific. But so far, there is little indication that all NPT states parties are sincerely working to overcome the trends of failure and fighting that have marked the last few review cycles. Some non-nuclear-armed states have come prepared, offering concrete suggestions for reducing nuclear risks, increasing transparency and accountability, and even achieving nuclear abolition. But states that believe in The Bomb's power to protect them seem more interested in scoring political points, trying to justify or obscure their outrageously unlawful behaviour by accusing others of worse crimes. If we have any hope of averting nuclear disaster, all states parties need to put their animosity aside and start the urgent work of denuclearisation.

Adventures in gaslighting

Unfortunately, based on the opening session and general debate, it seems that some states parties' willingness to undertake this work remains elusive. The US delegation brought out the fisticuffs early, objecting on Monday morning to Iran's election as one of the Vice Presidents of the Conference. Supported by Australia, **France, Germany, and the United Kingdom**, and the **United Arab Emirates (UAE)**, the US argued that Iran's alleged non-compliance with its NPT obligations, and what the UAE later described as it is "unprovoked attacks on its neighbours," should render Iran ineligible to hold office at the RevCon. The United States asserted that Iran has been given multiple opportunities to chart a different course, but has continued to lie and obfuscate about its nuclear programme. Australia claimed Iran is a threat to countries in its region, while the UAE asserted that Iran's "unlawful and brutal actions since 28 February have been in direct contrast to the aims and spirit of this Review Conference." In a right of reply later in the week, the UAE denied being involved in the conflict in any way, while a US right of reply claimed that it had embarked upon its war on Iran to "protect the American people" and that it has pursued a diplomatic solution in good faith but that Iran has rejected its efforts to resolve the situation.

Neither the United States nor any of the other governments condemning Iran's actions acknowledged that the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has **assessed** several times that there are "no credible indications" of activities relevant to weaponisation of Iran's nuclear programme after 2009 or any diversion of nuclear materials for military purposes; nor that all US intelligence agencies have **found** the same; nor that it was the US government's unilateral withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action that led to further uranium enrichment by Iran; nor that the US and Israel launched **two unlawful wars of aggression** against Iran; nor that Iran's attacks in the region are provoked by the US military's use of its **military bases in the region** to launch its war on Iran, including its **base in the UAE**; nor that the latest Israeli-US **war of choice** has **killed thousands of civilians, destroyed civilian infrastructure, displaced millions of people**, caused **massive environmental devastation**, and sent **shockwaves** through the **global economy**, making life even more difficult for billions of people around the world already struggling to survive life under capitalism. In a right of reply, the US delegation

asserted that its military is conducting its attacks on Iran in accordance with international humanitarian law, only attacking military targets it deems a threat—a demonstrably false assertion, given the carnage at the hundreds of Iranian **schools** and **health centres** that have been damaged or destroyed by Israeli and US strikes, as well as all the **animals**, **wetlands**, and **ecologies** that have been devastated.

The Monday morning disruptions reportedly could have been worse—apparently the US delegation wanted to demand a vote on Iran’s election, which could have derailed the work of the Conference before it even began. Thanks to diplomacy from other states, the US, UAE, and others disassociated from Iran’s election but didn’t seek to block it, and the general debate was able to begin on schedule. But the gaslighting continued unabashedly throughout the week, including about Iran’s nuclear programme and the Israeli-US war, but also about the arsenals, doctrines, and activities of the nuclear-armed states and their allies.

In right of replies and its **general debate statement**, the US delegation continued posturing as the vanguard of the international rules-based order, asserting, for example, its transparency and its attempts to engage in good faith with Russia and China on arms control and “strategic stability” discussions. It’s not clear though how can anyone be expected to engage with the US government as a good faith interlocutor when it has launched multiple unlawful wars, kidnapped or murdered heads of state, is threatening to invade and occupy other countries—including its so-called allies—and is playing a destabilising game of ping pong with economic tariffs. Decades of unlawful behaviour and unaccountable impunity from successive US governments have been amplified and reinforced under the current regime, which is facilitating one genocide and **threatening another** while it also **represses** dissent, democracy, and difference within its own borders. The **unfounded** US accusations about an alleged low yield nuclear weapon test conducted by China six years ago seem oriented towards **setting the stage** for the US to resume explosive nuclear testing—establishing a pretext to justify what will be an unconscionable, unlawful, immoral, and dangerous decision if it is made.

China and **Russia** rightly pointed out the many hypocrisies of the United States, and warned of its aggressions masquerading as good will, but they too are engaging in gaslighting and finger pointing. China pretends it is not expanding its arsenal and asserts how “responsible” it is even as it ramps up its nuclear programme, condemning the US nuclear modernisation efforts but not mentioning its own. Russia has pretended for years that its unlawful war against and occupation of Ukraine, its nuclear rhetoric, and its attacks against nuclear power facilities, are not violations of international law. **France** criticised Russia for “pursuing a revisionist, imperialist, and colonial policy,” to which Russia in a right of reply highlighted France’s own bloody colonial history. (**Algeria’s general debate statement** brought this colonialism into sharp relief, describing the devastating health and environmental impacts of France’s nuclear weapon testing and its refusal to provide information or compensation to help remediate or address this legacy.)

For its part, France reasserted with conviction that it is in full compliance with its NPT disarmament obligations, and then casually mentioned it is making an “upward adjustment” to its arsenal—a blatant euphemism for **increasing its nuclear stockpile**—even as it condemned China for doing the same. France also lamented that the risks of nuclear proliferation have never been so high, without acknowledging its role in driving this proliferation through its **embrace of “forward deterrence”** in Europe and its steadfast devotion to nuclear weapons as the ultimate and essential guarantee of French security.

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) members likewise peppered their statements and right of replies with defences of NATO nuclear sharing and “extended nuclear deterrence” doctrines, reiterating their **historically inaccurate and demonstrably false** assertions that these policies have always been accepted, are fully consistent with the NPT. They even claimed that their sharing of nuclear weapons is

actually a non-proliferation mechanism because it means other European states won't seek to acquire nuclear weapons of their own. (But of course, this only works for *their* nuclear sharing, as these same countries condemn Russia's nuclear sharing with Belarus.) In reality, all of these proclamations about the importance of NATO nuclear deterrence only perpetuate the mythical notion that nuclear weapons are essential to security and thus serve as a *driver* of proliferation—which is why several European countries are in fact openly discussing their desire to acquire their own nuclear weapons given the “deteriorating security environment” *that their own actions are fuelling*.

Fear is not a security strategy

As the **European partner organisations of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN)** said during the civil society presentations on Friday, “Basing security on fear amounts to encouraging proliferation.” A group of **Nordic civil society organisations** also noted that the current debate around European nuclear weapons “reveals a recurring theme of eurocentrism.” They argued that failures of diplomacy create tensions and insecurity, which “corrupts our societies and creates the false illusion that nuclear weapons create security” when in fact they only make the world more dangerous.

But as the states that believe in nuclear deterrence theory twist themselves in knots to claim that their support for nuclear weapons is compatible with their legally binding obligation to eliminate these weapons, it is inevitable that they come to see *disarmament* as the thing that makes them insecure. It has become implicit, and sometimes explicit, in their remarks that the full implementation of the NPT would actually make them less secure, even as they rush to say that they are in full compliance their treaty obligations.

Most NPT states parties reject this false premise that nuclear weapons make anyone safer. In various ways, the majority of states parties said in their general debate statements that nuclear weapons make the world insecure. “Peoples around the world are all living in fear, engulfed by terror, subsisting under the perpetual ‘crushing burden of armament,’” warned **Palestine**. **Samoa** described nuclear weapons as a “nemesis to all,” while **Bangladesh** said that a handful of states have generated “a dense cloud of nuclear insecurity” with the doctrines and policies. The **states parties and signatories of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW)** noted, “Nuclear weapons do not provide enduring national, regional, or international security. To the contrary, nuclear weapons and nuclear deterrence entail significant, even potentially existential risks to humanity.” Similarly, **Indonesia** argued, “Deterrence may claim to prevent war, but it also sustains the conditions for its escalation.”

Most delegations argued that disarmament, not deterrence, is what provides real security. “My country maintains that true security is not built by expanding the nuclear sphere, but by reducing it,” said **Colombia**. “It is not built by multiplying threats, but by strengthening norms, commitments, and effective controls.” This is, after all, why governments negotiated and adopted the NPT in the first place. “Born of tension and in the midst of crisis,” as **Ireland** explained, the NPT clearly recognises the dangers of nuclear war and legally obligates its states parties to end the nuclear arms race and eliminate their nuclear arsenals. “The NPT did not create a world free of nuclear weapons; it created the obligation to build one,” reminded **Costa Rica**. It urged the Review Conference “to recognize that progress on disarmament is a condition for the sustainability of the non-proliferation regime.”

The NPT does not contain conditionalities for its implementation, many delegations pointed out. Its provisions have to be implemented by everyone at all times. “We are often told that the current international climate is not conducive to disarmament,” noted **Brazil**, to which it responded, “crucial political decisions have the power to shape and reshape geopolitical realities. There is no such thing as geopolitical determinism or a perfect political context.” Similarly, **Armenia** noted that the implementation

of the NPT's disarmament provisions remains pivotal especially *because* of the current challenging security environment. **Thailand** argued that a deteriorating security architecture cannot be fixed with more arms and fewer commitments, while **Kenya** noted that a world "in which powerful nations cast aside international law in favor of brute force undermines the very system that safeguards smaller and less powerful states."

In this context, many delegations raised concerns with escalating military spending, which in turn escalates tensions, competition, and violence. The **latest figures** released by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) on the first day of the NPT Review Conference indicate that global military expenditure has reached the all-time high of 2.887 trillion USD. SIPRI reported that the main contributor to the global increase was a 14 per cent rise in Europe. Also this week, the Canadian government **announced** it will host a "multinational defence bank" to provide financing for NATO members and allies to invest even more in weapons and warfighting.

Refusing and resisting the horrors of militarism

The world that these militarised states are building is a threat to us all. But it is not inevitable. Neither is the resumption of nuclear testing, nor the further spread of nuclear weapons. We need urgent action now to change course. This Review Conference can play a role in averting disaster, if its states parties work together for concrete action. As **Colombia** said, "This Conference bears a historic responsibility: to demonstrate that multilateralism in the nuclear realm remains relevant—capable of absorbing tensions and offering collective responses, rather than amplifying them." The Colombian delegate said, "It remains possible to demonstrate that multilateral cooperation is capable of halting nuclear drift" and "to prove that, even amidst geopolitical tensions, the international community is capable of reaching reasonable minimum agreements in the interest of survival."

This is not the time for gaslighting and gamesmanship. The curtain has been pulled back, we all know what the nuclear-armed states and their nuclear-supportive allies are up to. There is no point in charades of compliance, they need instead to get down the business of figuring out how to get out of the mess they have created. The answer, fortunately, is straightforward when it comes to nuclear weapons: we need to abolish them. The legal instruments and the technical know-how exists—we have the NPT, the TPNW, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty; we have extensive research and experience with nuclear disarmament verification and monitoring and inspection mechanisms. We need to build these out, and invest in the institutions, processes, and practices of disarmament instead of those of deterrence.

"Difficult circumstances should not limit our ambition, rather, they should motivate us to demonstrate that collective action is still possible," said **Indonesia**. "Together, we must, and we can, demonstrate leadership and political courage. Let us move beyond managing divisions. Let us begin rebuilding trust."

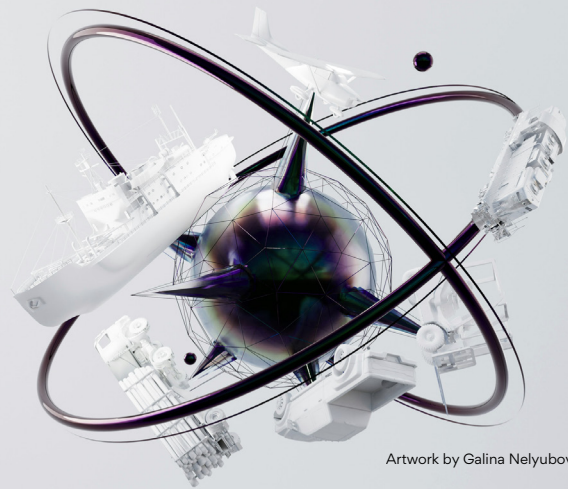
This edition of the *NPT News in Review* provides coverage of the opening session and general debate. Main Committee I, which held meetings on Thursday and Friday, will continue its work on Tuesday and be covered in a future edition. Main Committees II and II begin their work on Monday.

Be sure to subscribe to our reports to stay up to date with all the action!

Emerging Technologies and Nuclear Weapon Risks

Presentations and discussion
with Princeton's Program on
Science and Global Security

Side event
NPT Review Conference
Tuesday 5 May, 13:00-15:00
Conference Room A
UN Headquarters



Artwork by Galina Nelyubova

There is a race to develop new technologies, including **artificial intelligence**, **sensors** with continuous global coverage, **missile defense** initiatives, and **outer space** developments that carry significant global security implications. Such developments could lead to even riskier nuclear postures and increase the likelihood of nuclear war.

This event features research advancing a **science-based common understanding** and recognition of shared vulnerability due to emerging technological developments so as to enable new interest and cooperation among both nuclear-armed and non-nuclear-armed states in restraints, reductions, and disarmament.

Speakers

Igor Moric | Tamara Patton | Sébastien Philippe | Zia Mian



Opening Session

Ray Acheson | Reaching Critical Will

The Eleventh Review Conference (RevCon) of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) began its work on Monday, 27 April 2026 with **remarks** from UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Izumi Nakamitsu, Review Conference President Ambassador Do Hung Viet of Viet Nam, and UN Secretary-General António Guterres. These speakers highlighted the grave backdrop to this year's meeting, including threats to use or test nuclear weapons, attacks on nuclear facilities, nuclear weapon modernisation, and rising military expenditure. Ambassador Do Hung Viet expressed concern that the possibility of the acquisition of nuclear weapons by new countries is openly discussed as if the legal norms against it don't exist, while António Guterres warned that a "state of collective amnesia" about the horrors of nuclear weapons seems to have taken hold, putting past agreements in peril. Both speakers highlighted the enduring legacy of the NPT but, as the RevCon President noted, the Treaty's legitimacy cannot rest on its existence alone. He argued that if it is not fully implemented, it risks becoming a relic that no longer guides the actions of states. He urged all NPT states parties to move beyond entrenched divisions and achieve a balanced outcome that reaffirms core commitments and sets out practical steps forward. To this end, Guterres called on all states to keep their promises under the Treaty without caveats, conditions, delays, or excuses. Echoing the message of the 2014 Nobel Peace Prize laureate Nihon Hidankyo, Guterres affirmed, "Disarmament is not the reward for peace. Disarmament is the foundation of peace."

Despite the opening speakers' calls for cooperation and a constructive spirit, the drama started early. During the usually innocuous election of officers to the RevCon, the US delegation objected to Iran's election as a Vice President. The United States argued that Iran's alleged non-compliance with its NPT obligations made it ineligible to hold such a position at the RevCon. Australia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and France, Germany, and the United Kingdom speaking jointly, also registered their objections to Iran's election, criticising what they claim are Iran's failures to cooperate with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Australia and the UAE also condemned Iran's attacks on its neighbours without acknowledging any context for these actions, including that the US was using military bases in those countries to illegally attack Iran.

Iran and Russia objected to these interventions, with Russia describing them as political attacks and urging states to discuss these matters constructively during the relevant main committees. Iran highlighted the hypocrisy of nuclear-armed states alleging that other states parties are not in compliance with NPT, given their failure for many decades to fulfil their legal obligation to eliminate their nuclear arsenals. Iran condemned the United States' illegal war against it, including the US attacks against Iranian nuclear facilities, which Iran pointed out is a violation of international law and an assault on the global non-proliferation regime.

The objecting countries did not block Iran's election but disassociated from it. The US delegation then objected to the share of costs of the RevCon. It argued that the NPT's financing formula is unfair, noting that it pays more than Russia and much more than China, and that eleven non-nuclear-armed states pay more than China. It asserted that this internal distribution of costs has failed to keep pace with economic realities. In response, China warned that pushing for adjusting cost sharing without consultations is not conducive to reaching agreement. It said it would seek guidance from capital and would need time to do so. In the meantime, it urged the US delegation to pay its arrears for the cost of this RevCon, arguing that it is unacceptable to use arrears as a tactic to pressure for cost adjustments. Russia supported China's intervention and agreed it would need time and consultations. The RevCon President said he would defer the agenda item to undertake consultations on this issue.

General Debate

Ray Acheson and Laura Varella | Reaching Critical Will

The Eleventh Review Conference (RevCon) of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) held a **general exchange of views** from Monday, 27 April to Wednesday, 29 April. The following is a summary of discussions, not a comprehensive accounting of all views expressed.

Importance and fate of the NPT

Most delegations reaffirmed the importance of the NPT. Australia said that without the NPT, “the world would be a more dangerous, unpredictable and unfriendly place.” It stressed that states need to protect the Treaty, strengthen it, and ensure it continues to deliver in a very different world from the one in which it was negotiated. The Czech Republic said that the erosion of the NPT would not enhance anyone’s security. It also noted that selective implementation, disregard for obligations, or their reinterpretation undermine trust and weaken the Treaty as a whole.

On this note, Brazil said the NPT “has reached a critical point of imbalance and selectivity that must be addressed and reversed,” while Greece warned that “any withdrawal from international obligations and commitments weakens the integrity of the disarmament architecture especially when it is accompanied by an offensive nuclear rhetoric.” Rwanda stated that in the current juncture, continuing with business as usual is not neutrality, but complicity. It stressed that commitment must be matched by credibility, and credibility requires implementation.

The New Agenda Coalition (NAC) warned that the RevCon is meeting “at a precarious juncture characterised by a highly polarised and confrontational geopolitical environment, with conflicts in Europe, the Middle East, and Northeast and South Asia all involving a nuclear dimension, including dangerous nuclear threats.” The NAC members called for courage from NPT states parties to send a clear message that nuclear disarmament is necessary, urgent, legally binding, and will be pursued by the nuclear-armed states now.

Japan said the paramount objective of the RevCon is to reaffirm states parties’ commitment to the NPT. Brazil, Gambia, Malaysia, and many others, said past commitments, including those made in 1995, 2000, and 2010, must be reaffirmed by this RevCon. Switzerland highlighted that while different types of outcomes are possible, it is essential that any outcome safeguard the Treaty’s integrity, including commitments already undertaken by states parties, and chart a credible path forward for its implementation.

Nuclear disarmament

The African Group, the Arab Group, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the NAC, the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), Armenia, Bangladesh, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Cameroon, Chile, Colombia, Côte d’Ivoire, Cuba, Djibouti, Ecuador, Gambia, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guyana, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kiribati, Lao People’s Democratic Republic (Lao PDR), Lebanon, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Mauritania, Mexico, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Oman, Palestine, Peru, Philippines, Singapore, South Africa, Syria, Sudan, Thailand, Tunisia, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Venezuela, Yemen, and Zambia expressed concern with the continued failure of nuclear-armed states to advance nuclear disarmament. The NAC and others argued this failure is undermining confidence among states parties about the sustainability and integrity of the NPT’s “grand bargain”. Mexico noted that progress towards nuclear disarmament has not only been virtually non-

existent, but it has suffered serious setbacks. Most states called on the nuclear-armed states to urgently comply with their disarmament obligations under Article VI of the NPT.

Brazil, Iraq, and several others emphasised that the international security environment cannot be used as an excuse for the failure to disarm. “We are often told that the current international climate is not conducive to disarmament,” noted Brazil, to which it responded, “crucial political decisions have the power to shape and reshape geopolitical realities. There is no such thing as geopolitical determinism or a perfect political context.” Similarly, Armenia noted that the implementation of Article VI remains pivotal especially because of the current challenging security environment. The Arab Group expressed deep concern over repeated attempts by nuclear-armed states to reinterpret their obligations under Article VI or to link their implementation to preconditions that hollow out their obligations invoking deterrence, strategic stability, or the unfavourable security environment.

Costa Rica underlined that the NPT did not create a world free of nuclear weapons; it created the obligation to build one. “This Conference exists to demand that that obligation be fulfilled,” stressed Costa Rica. Rwanda noted that disarmament continues to be deferred, while nuclear arsenals are modernised and expanded. “This contradiction cannot be ignored. It weakens trust, undermines the Treaty, and raises a fundamental question: are we preserving the NPT or hollowing it out?” asked Rwanda.

Most delegations highlighted the special responsibility of nuclear-armed states to pursue good faith negotiations on nuclear disarmament and the cessation of the nuclear arms race, in line with Article VI of the Treaty. Singapore urged all nuclear-armed states to significantly reduce their arsenals in a transparent, verifiable, and irreversible manner, which many other delegations echoed. Italy called for the total elimination of nuclear weapons through a “progressive, realistic, pragmatic, and realistic approach” and an “effective, verifiable, irreversible process.” Greece and Slovenia made similar remarks.

The states parties and signatories to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) jointly, and in many national and group statements, reaffirmed the TPNW’s contribution to fulfilling Article VI.

The Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative (NPDI) underscored the central importance of the full and effective implementation of Article VI. The Group called for concrete, transparent, and verifiable steps by nuclear-armed states, including further reductions in nuclear arsenals, enhanced confidence-building and transparency measures, doctrinal reviews to reduce the role and operational status of nuclear weapons, and intensified efforts on nuclear risk reduction.

The nuclear-armed states broadly asserted their compliance with Article VI, though as the Marshall Islands pointed out, the NPT, and multilateral disarmament more broadly, does not exist in a vacuum, and “words do not gain compliance only because diplomats insist upon it.”

France claimed it is in compliance with its disarmament obligations, even as it simultaneously reaffirmed its announcement from March 2026 that it is making an “upward adjustment” to its arsenal. France said the largest nuclear-armed states are backing out of their disarmament commitments and in particular accused Russia of “dishonouring itself” with its imperial and colonial policies. In a right of reply, Russia said that the accusation by France of Russia engaging in colonial practices was ironic due to France’s long and bloodied colonial history. Russia also said that France’s intention to build up its arsenal is a violation of Article VI, and objected the deepening of nuclear military cooperation between European states proposed by President Macron’s initiative.

The United Kingdom (UK) stated it will “continue our work to create the conditions to support nuclear disarmament when the security circumstances allow” and that the right approach is to “proceed step

by step, in a transparent, verifiable, and irreversible manner, based on the principles of increased and undiminished security for all.” China also said that nuclear disarmament should be advanced in a step-by-step manner in accordance with the principles of maintaining global strategic stability and undiminished security for all. The United States (US) highlighted its president’s desire “to see a world with fewer nuclear weapons and to move further to the goal of eventual worldwide elimination.”

The US also highlighted its proposal for multilateral strategic stability and arms control with China and Russia, erroneously arguing that Article VI requires “good faith negotiations on arms control” (the language of Article VI is clear that it requires disarmament). In a right of reply on Tuesday, 28 April, the US delegation asserted that it has demonstrated the seriousness of its proposal and that other countries have a responsibility to ensure strategic stability. However, Russia noted that the US has not engaged with its proposals for post-START arrangements.

Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW)

Mexico noted that 74 states have legally acceded to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). The NAM took note of the entry into force of the Treaty and its meetings of states parties. The states parties and signatories to the TPNW, the African Group, Bangladesh, Djibouti, Ecuador, Guyana, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Viet Nam called for all states to join the TPNW. Nicaragua and Vanuatu highlighted their support for the TPNW. Myanmar reiterated that its plan to ratify the TPNW was disrupted by the military coup. Kyrgyzstan noted it has signed the TPNW.

Kazakhstan, Mongolia, and Mozambique recognised the complementary role of the TPNW in reinforcing the humanitarian dimension of nuclear disarmament. The African Group, CARICOM, Cambodia, Côte d’Ivoire, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Kiribati, Jamaica, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Nigeria, Panama, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Timor-Leste, Uruguay, Venezuela, and Zambia noted that the TPNW complements and reinforces the NPT’s disarmament and non-proliferation pillars. ASEAN and others said that the TPNW complements the NPT, the CTBT, and other existing nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation instruments.

Cambodia, Liechtenstein, and Malaysia said they are looking forward to the First Review Conference of the TPNW and stand ready to work with partners to advance its objectives. The states parties and signatories to the TPNW encouraged constructive engagement by all states, including those not yet party to the Treaty, at the upcoming Review Conference of the Treaty.

Syria welcomed the TPNW and the Vienna Declaration and Action Plan from the First Meeting of States Parties, noting that these reflect the increasing international commitment to nuclear disarmament.

Nuclear weapon free zones (NWFZs)

Most delegations voiced support for the development of NWFZs. The Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL) stated that nuclear-weapon-free zones are not a peripheral element of the non-proliferation regime, but one of its most effective and concrete manifestations.

Brazil noted that the formation of the Latin American NWFZ, developed in response to the Cuban missile crisis, shows that security can be strengthened through restraint, rather than allowing themselves to be “drawn into the abyss of nuclear competition.” Mongolia said its decision to declare its territory a NWFZ contributes to strengthening confidence and predictability. Other NWFZ states parties highlighted their zones’ contributions to regional and global peace and security.

The states parties to the Central Asian NWFZ, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Zimbabwe, and others urged nuclear-armed states to ratify the relevant protocols of the NWFZ treaties.

The African Commission on Nuclear Energy (AFCON) and the states parties to the Central Asian NWFZ highlighted their cooperation with other NWFZs. Mongolia said it attaches importance to enhancing cooperation among NWFZs, including through exchanges of best practices and experiences.

The states parties to the Central Asian Nuclear Weapon Free Zone, the African Group, ASEAN, the Arab Group, the EU, the GCC, the League of Arab States, the NAC, the NAM, the Nordic countries, Algeria, Armenia, Belarus, Brunei Darussalam, China, Djibouti, Egypt, Greece, Iceland, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritania, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nepal, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Oman, Palestine, Peru, Qatar, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Singapore, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Syria, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Tunisia, Türkiye, Venezuela, and Yemen urged the development of a weapon of mass destruction free zone in the Middle East, with many of these delegations noting that the 1995 NPT resolution on this subject remains in effect until it is fulfilled. Sri Lanka said that the acute regional strife, including attacks against nuclear facilities, has made the establishment of this zone even more important. Malaysia, Peru, and Syria made similar remarks.

Oman similarly said this zone is a strategic necessity to enhance regional and global security. As president of the seventh session of the UN General Assembly conference on the zone, it is committed to continuing the process in good faith to create favourable conditions for the participation of all states. Syria urged all states to push for Israel to participate in these conferences. Palestine pointed out, “Those who decide to exclude themselves cannot blame others for their so-called exclusion.”

Nuclear weapon modernisation, expansion, and spending

Most delegations raised concerns about the modernisation of nuclear weapon arsenals, including the Arab Group, CARICOM, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), League of Arab States, NAC, the NAM, Algeria, Bangladesh, Brazil, Cameroon, Colombia, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Djibouti, Ecuador, Gambia, Guatemala, Guyana, Holy See, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Ireland, Jamaica, Jordan, Kenya, Liechtenstein, Maldives, Mozambique, Namibia, Nepal, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Oman, Panama, Philippines, Portugal, Samoa, Senegal, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Togo, Venezuela, Viet Nam, and Zimbabwe. The NAM reminded that this modernisation trend is a new nuclear-arms race and thus a clear violation of Article VI. Singapore and others called on all nuclear-armed states to not expand or qualitatively enhance their nuclear arsenals.

Several delegations, including Bangladesh, Guyana, Kenya, Maldives, Mexico, Morocco, Nepal, Nicaragua, and Uruguay, critiqued rising military spending, including on nuclear weapons. The Maldives noted, “Every dollar spent on nuclear weapons is a dollar not spent on climate resilience, health systems, food security, and education.” Mexico noted that several developed countries are cutting back on their official development assistance to invest instead in militarism. It recalled the proposal of Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum to allocate 10 per cent of global spending on weapons to launch a global programme enabling millions of people to reforest millions of hectares every year. Mexico noted that according to the **report** published by the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), military spending on nuclear weapons in 2024 exceeded 100 billion dollars. “We cannot allow this immoral squandering of resources to continue, and that is why our goal must be a significant reduction in these weapons, leading to the complete elimination of the most destructive—and most costly—weapons humanity has ever seen,” stressed Mexico. Ethiopia similarly underlined that the vast amounts of resources that are allocated to the development of nuclear weapons could save millions of lives if spent to address the multifaceted development challenges the world is facing today.

Many delegations expressed concern with the expansion of nuclear arsenals.

The Nordic countries condemned Russia's expanding nuclear capabilities, including maybe in outer space. Russia rejected these allegations saying that this is propaganda spread by the US and that President Putin has made clear Russia has no intention to place nuclear weapons in outer space.

The EU, the Nordic countries, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, France, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, the UK, and the US expressed concern with China's nuclear arsenal expansion. In a right of reply on the first day, China urged states to stop distorting and smearing China's nuclear policy and exaggerating the "so-called China's nuclear threat." China said it maintains an open attitude towards arms control dialogue, but that it will not participate "in any negotiations aimed at curtailing China's national defense capabilities or undermining the strategic security environment." (More on this below in the "nuclear arms control" section of the report).

Nuclear weapon doctrines and deterrence

Many delegations expressed concern with the continued or increasing salience of nuclear weapons in security doctrines or promoting of nuclear deterrence theory, including the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the NAC, the states parties and signatories to the TPNW, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Djibouti, Ecuador, Gambia, Guatemala, Guyana, Holy See, Indonesia, Jordan, Lebanon, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Oman, Panama, Peru, Samoa, San Marino, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tunisia, Uruguay, Venezuela, and Zambia.

The states parties and signatories to the TPNW emphasised that nuclear weapons do not provide enduring national, regional, or international security, on the contrary, "nuclear weapons and nuclear deterrence entail significant, even potentially existential risks to humanity." They highlighted that these risks and the resulting consequences of a nuclear detonation would be borne by all states and all of humanity, as confirmed by a growing body of scientific evidence.

New Zealand warned that while nuclear-armed states justify their nuclear doctrines and policies "on the basis that increasing strategic mistrust makes these changes necessary," in reality "such steps also contribute to further mistrust and strategic competition. And they increase the risks that nuclear weapons could be used." Nepal argued that "notions such as responsible possession, nuclear deterrence, and nuclear sharing perpetuate a dangerous nuclear status quo and are neither acceptable nor legitimate." Malaysia said it is "deeply concerned that evolving doctrines risk normalising the notion that nuclear weapons confer security, when in reality they exacerbate insecurity for all."

Palestine argued, "Nuclear deterrence is an oxymoron. Peace and stability cannot arise by the threat of assured and mutual destruction. Nuclear deterrence is not a sane, safe, or sustainable model." Gambia noted that true and lasting security cannot be built on the threat of mutual destruction. Similarly, Rwanda rejected the narrative that security derives from possession. "True collective security cannot be built on the indefinite retention of weapons capable of catastrophic destruction," it said. The IAEA noted that while "in several countries there is a growing perception that perhaps having nuclear weapons could be good for national security," nothing is further than the truth.

Indonesia stressed that "deterrence may claim to prevent war, but it also sustains the conditions for its escalation." It said that states must confront this false assumption, "ensuring that the full implementation of the NPT obligations serves as mutual security for all." Zimbabwe urged nuclear-armed states to move away from security competition and focus on collective security.

Austria shared its position that increasing nuclear capabilities and arsenals do not increase collective international security. “We argue that more nuclear deterrence leads to more risks, more nuclear actors, more nuclear weapons, more possibilities for accidents leading to possible catastrophic consequences,” said Austria. It urged all parties to consider “the negative potential of nuclear deterrence and to choose means of deterrence that increase security of our citizens without endangering humankind.”

The nuclear-armed states expressed an opposing view. Russia said it could not agree with attempts to impose on nuclear-armed states “an immediate and unconditional renunciation of nuclear weapons and the concept of nuclear deterrence without developing effective alternative security mechanisms.” The UK stated that “nuclear deterrence remains the bedrock of UK security and our commitment to NATO” and that it would “take the steps necessary to maintain our deterrence capability.” France reaffirmed its commitment to nuclear deterrence, which it asserted has contributed to the peace and security of the European continent. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) asserted that “deterrence has never stood in the way of disarmament.”

Canada warned that current doctrines blur intent and reduce predictability, also that deterrence is evolving into more complex trilateral and multipolar dynamics. It said that as a NATO ally, it understands “the security realities,” but also acknowledged the risk of “deferral becoming the default.”

South Africa argued that non-nuclear-armed states that maintain a role for nuclear weapons in their security doctrines must also be accountable for undertaking risk reduction measures and transparency initiatives.

Nuclear weapon alliances and sharing

Many states lamented the formation of new nuclear alliances and/or nuclear sharing arrangements. The League of Arab States stated that nuclear weapon-sharing practices and extended deterrence are incompatible with the NPT. The Arab Group also opposed nuclear sharing arrangements and extended nuclear deterrence policies, stating they contradict the spirit, letter, and objectives of the Treaty. The African Group expressed deep concern with the continued and evolving nuclear weapons sharing arrangements and extended deterrence. The Group strongly called for an immediate end to this trend, stating it is a clear violation of the Treaty.

Iran argued that NATO’s nuclear sharing arrangement is “a direct operational proliferation mechanism.” China advocated for the abolition of NATO’s nuclear sharing and extended deterrence arrangements. More broadly, it opposed nuclear-armed states deploying nuclear weapons, constructing nuclear weapons infrastructure in non-nuclear weapons, constructing nuclear weapons infrastructure in non-nuclear-armed states or transferring to them weapons grade nuclear materials for military purposes.

France argued that that “forward deterrence” is fully in keeping with the NPT and said this doctrine is important to buttress peace and security on the European continent. Denmark welcomed this decision by France. Russia and Iran criticised the French announcement of a new nuclear alliance with European countries.

The Nordic countries, Belgium, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Poland, and Romania, Slovenia, Türkiye, the UK, and NATO asserted that NATO’s nuclear sharing policies are fully consistent with the NPT. Latvia said that NATO’s nuclear deterrence is a necessity and a stabilising factor in European and global security. It also argued that “recent commitments by European partners to strengthen deterrence, reflect broader efforts to maintain credible security measures, prevent escalation and reinforce non-proliferation norms.” Germany argued that while it concluded that its security is best served by joining the rules-based

framework of mutual restraint and collective deterrence, Russia's war on Ukraine and nuclear rhetoric made NATO's deterrence culture more necessary than ever. In a right of reply on Tuesday, 28 April the US delegation asserted that the "tired arguments" about NATO's deterrence posture a distraction and called on states to "refocus on the work at hand".

Poland argued that "nuclear deterrence for defensive purposes does not weaken our commitment to the long-term objective of a world free of nuclear weapons." It stressed that it supports this goal while emphasising that "a responsible disarmament must

in effect strengthen international security." Albania argued that in the context of Russia's aggression against Ukraine, European nuclear deterrence postures are "crucial" and welcomed its European partners reviewing their doctrines. Greece said the "complex security environment" in some regions, including Europe, "highlights the contribution of extended nuclear deterrence as a means to deter aggression."

In contrast, many of these same countries, including Albania, Denmark, and Lithuania, condemned Russia's nuclear sharing with Belarus. On its end, Belarus said that Russia's deployment of nuclear weapons to its territory was a response to the military buildup up along its western borders and asserted that these weapons are for "defence," are "proportionate to threats and escalation in the region," and are in "strict accordance" with international law, including the NPT.

Russia claimed that the UK and France were considering the idea of transferring elements of nuclear weapons to Ukraine. The UK rejected this allegation and said this is another piece of disinformation from Russia. Ukraine also rejected these allegations.

Nuclear threats and rhetoric

The African Group, the NAC, Austria, Belarus, Colombia, Djibouti, Ecuador, Guyana, Holy See, Indonesia, Iraq, Maldives, Malta, Mexico, Myanmar, New Zealand, Oman, Philippines, San Marino, Uruguay, Venezuela, and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) expressed concern with renewed nuclear rhetoric, including threats to use nuclear weapons.

Malta warned that the normalisation of nuclear threats in regional conflicts has shattered the "nuclear taboo". New Zealand noted that nuclear threats and coercion are leading some states to ask if nuclear weapons might be their only guarantee against aggression.

Ecuador said no circumstances justify the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. Guyana said all threats to use nuclear weapons must be condemned. The states parties and signatories to the TPNW firmly deplored all nuclear threats and nuclear rhetoric, stressing they are "increasingly strident and only serves to undermine disarmament and non-proliferation efforts, and international peace and security more broadly." Italy rejected any form of aggressive nuclear rhetoric. Ireland stated that all threats of the use of nuclear weapons are unacceptable and must stop.

Cuba stressed that a new nuclear arms race has been triggered by the US government's rhetoric and behaviour, including its unlawful use of force against sovereign states, disregard for multilateralism, and its failure to comply with nuclear disarmament and arms control obligations.

A group of 43 states parties, the EU, the Nordic countries, Albania, Austria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, NATO, Poland, and Romania condemned Russia's nuclear rhetoric during its illegal war on Ukraine.

The Arab Group condemned irresponsible nuclear threats by Israel and its leadership. The Arab Group called on the international community to compel Israel to fulfil its legal obligations under the provisional measures and the advisory opinion of the ICJ, including ending its occupation of Arab territories. “Compliance with international law is an obligation, not a choice. Normalising impunity is a serious threat to international peace and security,” stated the Arab Group.

Most non-nuclear-armed states called for legally binding negative security assurances from the nuclear-armed states. Kenya warned, however, that while “security assurances remain an important tool of nuclear diplomacy, they point to intent and are never guarantees.”

Nuclear testing

The NAC warned that long-held norms are under threat, including commitments to nuclear testing moratoria and efforts to achieve the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). The Arab Group, the NAM, Algeria, Kiribati, Mexico, South Africa, and Sri Lanka also expressed concern about the possibility of the resumption of nuclear testing.

ASEAN, the EU, Armenia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Denmark, Indonesia, Latvia, Lithuania, Madagascar, Nepal, Norway, Philippines, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Timor-Leste, and Zimbabwe urged all states to uphold the moratorium against explosive nuclear weapon testing.

The Parties to the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty, the African Group, ASEAN, the EU, the NAC, the Vienna Group of Ten, Albania, Armenia, Australia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belarus, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Canada, Costa Rica, Côte d’Ivoire, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Estonia, Gambia, Georgia, Greece, Guyana, France, Finland, Fiji, Holy See, Iceland, Indonesia, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Madagascar, Maldives, Myanmar, Moldova, Namibia, Nepal, Nigeria, Norway, Panama, Philippines, Portugal, Romania, ROK, Samoa, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Türkiye, UAE, Ukraine, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Viet Nam, and Zambia called for all states to ratify the CTBT to achieve its entry into force. Denmark urged Russia to reverse its withdrawal from the CTBT. Lao PDR said the CTBT is complementary to the NPT and strengthens global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation efforts.

The US claimed China had conducted a yield-producing nuclear test in 2020. China repeatedly refuted this accusation, saying it is committed to the objectives and purposes of the CTBT and strictly adheres to its moratorium on nuclear testing.

Algeria lamented that the legacy of past nuclear weapon testing “is far from being forgotten, but more painfully, they are not even recognized, nor addressed.” It highlighted the 17 nuclear weapon tests France conducted in Algeria in the 1960s, the consequences of which “remain an open wound.” The Algerian delegation asked why France has not provided it with maps of the exact location of these tests and buried waste; why it has not disclosed the historical archives, radiological data, and medical records that are essential for environmental remediation and public health; and why France has rejected Algeria’s proposals for the rehabilitation of contaminated sites, especially when it has already dismantled its technical facilities and conducted decontamination activities at its testing sites in French Polynesia.

Samoa, reiterating its total opposition to all nuclear testing, said the Pacific region has endured over 300 nuclear tests, “the consequences of which continue to affect our people and environment across generations. The Marshall Islands described its experience with the 67 nuclear tests conducted by the United States between 1946 and 1958, many of which were undertaken after Marshallese leaders petitioned the UN to halt these tests.

The Marshall Islands said the International Day Against Nuclear Testing, established by General Assembly resolution 64/35, “is a key umbrella to address all peoples who experienced exposure” from nuclear weapon tests. It also noted that the 1995 and 2000 NPT Review Conferences recognised “that a special responsibility exists towards former UN Trust Territories adversely affected by weapons tests conducted under the auspices of the UN. Strong steps have since been taken—including establishment of a national nuclear commission to coordinate effort—but huge challenges remain.”

Kiribati recalled that between 1957 and 1962, 33 nuclear tests were conducted in Kiribati, affected the 500 citizens of Kiribati living on Kiritimati Island, which left a legacy of harm. It called on all states to address the importance of nuclear justice and recognise the role of affected communities. It noted that the first-ever international meeting on victim assistance and environmental remediation will take place later this year.

Vanuatu also stated that it is imperative to address the legacies of harm to humans and the environment caused by nuclear testing.

Humanitarian and environmental impacts of nuclear weapons

The Arab Group, the states parties and signatories to the TPNW, CARICOM, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Chile, Dominican Republic, Egypt, El Salvador, Ghana, Guyana, Ireland, Jamaica, Kenya, Liechtenstein, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Mexico, Myanmar, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Norway, Panama, Samoa, Singapore, Timor-Leste, Venezuela, Zambia, and Zimbabwe recalled and/or expressed concern with the humanitarian and environmental impacts of nuclear weapons. ASEAN emphasised that the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons must remain central to all disarmament deliberations. Kiribati called upon all states to reaffirm the reference in the outcome document of the 2010 NPT Review Conference on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons.

The EU noted the “very severe consequences” associated with nuclear weapons use and emphasised that all states share the responsibility to prevent such an occurrence from happening.

Japan recalled the plea of the hibakusha that the catastrophic consequences of nuclear weapons must never be repeated. Dominican Republic called for more education and awareness about the humanitarian impacts of nuclear weapons.

Algeria outlined some of the humanitarian and environmental impacts of the 17 nuclear weapon tests France conducted in Algeria, noting that fallout reached thousands of kilometres from the sites and the IAEA is still recording elevated radioactivity in these areas. Algeria noted that the affected communities “suffer these consequences daily: illness, congenital disorders, and barren land.”

Samoa highlighted specific harms from nuclear testing in the Pacific, including that some communities living close to “ground zero” were relocated from their ancestral islands and restricted from using the ocean resources for their livelihoods. These communities “also experience an upsurge in medical problems, including cancers and birth defects,” said Samoa, adding, “At the end of these nuclear tests, radioactive waste and machinery were either buried or dumped into the Pacific Ocean.” Samoa warned, “the risk of transboundary and transgenerational harm—particularly to the health of our ocean—is of existential concern.”

The Marshall Islands described the devastating impacts of the 67 nuclear tests conducted by the United States on and near it, including the experience of “medical surveillance as test subjects, of death and ongoing health impacts inherited through generations, of our displaced populations who still live in exile or who were resettled in unsafe circumstances, and then had to be removed.” Even today, the Marshall

Islands noted, “science remains a moving target and our exiled local communities are still struggling with resettlement.” The Marshall Islands pointed out that the UN General Assembly has recognised the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons, as has UN Human Rights Council resolution 57/77 on Marshall Islands.

Fiji also noted that the region continues to bear the enduring human, environmental, and health consequences of nuclear testing conducted in the Pacific. The Maldives noted that for Small Island Developing States, which are “already facing the pressures of climate change, sea-level rise, debt stress and external shocks, the consequences” of a nuclear weapon detonation would be devastating.

Kazakhstan noted that as a nation that has first-hand knowledge of the human and environmental cost of nuclear weapons testing, it remains engaged in efforts to promote victim assistance and environmental remediation.

The states parties and signatories of the TPNW noted that they are “advancing the humanitarian provisions of the TPNW, including through, inter alia, the discussions on the feasibility and potential establishment, amongst any other feasible mechanisms, of an international trust fund for victim assistance and environmental remediation that is viable, effective, and sustainable.”

The states parties to the Central Asian Nuclear Weapon Free Zone noted that environmental rehabilitation of territories impacted by nuclear weapons is an innovative feature of the zone. The Parties to the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty acknowledged the enduring legacy faced by Pacific communities most directly affected by nuclear testing, and the continuing need for recognition, assistance, and remediation.

The NAC noted that recent scientific research has added to the world’s understanding of the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons. It welcomed the ongoing work of the independent UN Scientific Panel on the Effects of Nuclear War. But it also warned, “as with other areas of our Treaty, this affirmation and its scientific underpinnings have been subject to efforts to undermine them.” It urged the RevCon “send a clear message reaffirming the catastrophic humanitarian impacts and consequences of nuclear weapons.” Some other delegations welcomed the establishment and work of this panel.

The states parties and signatories to the TPNW noted that the “growing body of research confirms that the effects of a nuclear detonation are more severe, cascading, long-lasting, and complex than previously understood, involving short and long-term damage to the global economy, food security and the health of current and future generations, including the disproportionate impact that nuclear weapons have on women and girls, including as a result of ionising radiation, as well as on infants and children given their particular vulnerability to the effects of nuclear weapons.” San Marino made similar remarks.

Malta also acknowledged “the disproportionate biological harm radiation inflicts on women and girls, and the social burdens survivors carry.” A joint statement on gender by 24 delegations highlighted the fact that “women and girls experience exposure to ionizing radiation differently than men and boys.” They noted, “It is a fact that women face higher levels of cancer from this exposure than men, particularly cancers that affect the female reproductive system; and it is a fact that increased reports of birth defects, miscarriage, and reproductive illnesses directly followed exposure to nuclear explosions, both in Japan, and directly following nuclear testing in communities located near nuclear test sites worldwide.”

New Zealand called on all states to “reflect that the explosive power of nuclear weapons is so overwhelming that it’s difficult to comprehend the scale of the devastation stemming from their use.” It pointed out:

We do know they are weapons that can destroy entire cities. Cities that house civilians. We know that no State or international authority has the capacity to respond adequately to nuclear weapon detonations. We know the effects of nuclear weapons are indiscriminate and take no account of borders. They cause long-term, intergenerational harm—as we have seen in the Pacific. The drafters of the NPT understood this when they determined that the devastation of nuclear war would affect all humankind, and that every effort must be made to avert such a danger. They understood that despite their destructive power, nuclear weapons are not a force of nature; they stem from human choices.

Nuclear risks and risk reduction measures

Most delegations warned that nuclear weapon risks are on the rise and pose an urgent danger to the world. Colombia warned that the world has “lost transparency, predictability, and trust; and when these elements disappear—and the rules erode—the boundaries that contain nuclear risk are weakened.”

ASEAN, the EU, the GCC, the Nordic countries, Armenia, Belgium, Brazil, Cambodia, Cyprus, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Egypt, Finland, Indonesia, Italy, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Malaysia, Mexico, Moldova, Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Switzerland, Oman, San Marino, Slovenia, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Tajikistan, Thailand, Türkiye, and the ICRC supported the development and implementation of nuclear risk reduction measures. The ICRC stated that reducing the risk of nuclear weapons use is a humanitarian imperative and referenced its [working paper](#) on risk reduction.

Colombia, Dominican Republic, Nigeria, Portugal, Sri Lanka, and others noted that such measures are neither a substitute nor prerequisite for nuclear disarmament. Rwanda questioned if states are genuinely managing risks or normalising them.

Portugal argued that strategic stability is linked to communication and risk reduction. Italy said that dialogue must be preserved and strengthened in the face of the risks posed by the new arms race. Nigeria supported strengthening crisis communication mechanisms among nuclear-armed states as a risk reduction measure, along with de-alerting and no first use policies.

France said it would focus on reducing strategic risks in the upcoming P5 process discussions. Latvia and the UK supported the process. The US said it has provided detailed proposals to Russia and China on nuclear risk reduction as well as steps on transparency and nuclear testing, and that it is encouraged that they have “shown some willingness to engage on these topics.”

A number of delegations expressed concern with heightened risks posed by emerging technologies, including the African Group, the NAM, Côte d’Ivoire, Cuba, El Salvador, Guyana, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Malta, Mexico, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nigeria, Portugal, San Marino, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Viet Nam, and Zambia. Many states noted that artificial intelligence (AI) can heighten the risk of misunderstanding or lead to escalations. Malta warned the rise of AI-enabled command systems and hypersonic delivery vehicles has increased the risk of catastrophe through miscalculation and intent. Thailand said the integration of AI in nuclear systems “risks an unintended, automated escalation—a gamble humanity cannot afford.”

Mexico said states must urgently address the risks posed by the intersection between nuclear weapons and new technologies, ensuring that, as long as such weapons exist, human beings retain control over them. Sri Lanka similarly said that meaningful human control over nuclear weapons, including command, control, and communication systems, must be maintained at all times. Guyana likewise called for human control and oversight, while the African Group and the NAM underscored the necessity of ensuring full and effective human control over these weapons pending their total elimination. The states parties

and signatories to the TPNW called for “full human control and oversight over command, control and communications of their nuclear weapons and their delivery systems in the context of the development of artificial intelligence technology in the military field.” The Arab Group called for ensuring “full human control of nuclear arsenals until their total elimination.” Kenya called for “inclusive, transparent, and multilateral dialogue to ensure that such technologies are governed responsibly, in accordance with international law, and contribute to peace rather than conflict.”

The Stockholm Initiative referenced its [working paper](#) on emerging technologies.

Nuclear arms control

Many countries lamented the deterioration of the nuclear arms control regime, including the Vienna Group of Ten, Bangladesh, Brazil, Colombia, Cuba, Ireland, Mozambique, New Zealand, Panama, South Africa, Sri Lanka, and Yemen.

The Nordic countries, Argentina, Kazakhstan, New Zealand, Spain, and others indicated their support for dialogue on nuclear arms control. The US said it has proposed multilateral strategic security and arm control discussions. Sweden welcomed US efforts to initiate dialogue and urged Russia and China to engage without preconditions. Germany, Latvia, Norway, and Slovenia made similar remarks. The Nordic countries, Iceland, Slovakia, and others urged China and Russia to engage in dialogue and confidence-building measures with the United States. Russia called on France and the UK also to also engage in multilateral arms control.

The Nordic countries said the expiration of the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) is an unfortunate and dangerous development, but suggested it could open the door for a stronger framework that includes tactical nuclear weapons. The NAC expressed concern with the expiration of New START and urged the negotiation of a successor instrument. ASEAN, the EU, the NAM, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Malta, Myanmar, Netherlands, Peru, Slovakia, Slovenia, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and Türkiye made similar remarks. Cuba argued the expiration of New START is a further manifestation of policies of insecurity based on the use of force and erosion of agreed measures.

Russia said the US has “categorically rejected the Russian initiative to preserve the legacy of the New START Treaty through voluntary self-limitations.” Russia also said that it remains “open to seeking equal and mutually acceptable, dialogue-based solutions aimed at the comprehensive stabilization of the strategic environment, provided that appropriate conditions are in place for such engagement, which should focus on viable solutions serving the core interests of all parties.”

The US argued that Russia unlawfully purported to suspend its New START obligations while it was in force. In a right of reply on Tuesday, 28 April, the US delegation argued that the expiration of New START provides an opportunity to negotiate new arms control agreements that “fit today’s environment,” saying that New START didn’t address Russia’s novel nuclear weapons or China’s arsenal. In this context, the US said it is “confused” with China’s words versus its actions, noting that while China says it is committed to arms control it also says that asking it to join arms control negotiations is unfair; and that while China says it won’t engage in a nuclear arms race it also won’t provide baseline transparency about its arsenal.

China said that the US is calling for a “multilateral nuclear arms control and strategic stability dialogue” with the real purpose of shrinking its special and primary responsibilities as a country with the largest nuclear arsenal. It said it has no interest in such kind of arrangement, and called on the US to actively consider Russia’s proposal regarding the expiration of the New START in a responsible manner. In a right of reply, China added that the US proposal for dialogue has elements of political posturing, not

serious dialogue. It said it will not accept a hypocritical approach that calls for dialogue but pursues confrontation in action. China said that the US' serious negative actions have damaged global and regional strategic stability, increased risk of nuclear conflict, and fuelled the arms race. It called on the US to seriously consider China's proposal of negotiating a mutual no first use treaty or issue a political statement to that effect.

The Vienna Group of Ten, the Stockholm Initiative, Australia, Bangladesh, Bulgaria, Denmark, Estonia, France, Greece, Holy See, Iraq, Italy, Morocco, Myanmar, Nepal, Nigeria, Philippines, Portugal, ROK, Romania, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Türkiye, UK, and Ukraine indicated support for the negotiation of a fissile material cut-off treaty. Several delegations said such a treaty should include existing stocks and most called for a moratorium on the production of fissile material in the meantime.

Transparency and accountability

The African Group, the EU, the GCC, the NAM, the NPDI, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Egypt, France, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Malaysia, Moldova, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Philippines, Portugal, San Marino, Slovenia, Venezuela, and Yemen affirmed their support for increasing transparency and/or reporting obligations. New Zealand highlighted its work with Ireland and Switzerland on reporting and interactive dialogues, as outlined in **Working Paper 7**.

The NAC said improving transparency and accountability would not solve all challenges facing the NPT but would be a modest improvement to build confidence and trust. The NAC argued that “standardised and substantive reporting—including agreed baseline information and mutual understanding on criteria and benchmarks, in line with related decisions and commitments adopted in 1995, 2000 and 2010—by nuclear-weapon States would allow for comparability on direction of travel.” It called for the formal institution of enhanced reporting and an interactive dialogue with each nuclear-armed state. The NAC also called for measures taken to reduce the salience of nuclear weapons in military and security doctrines be included in national reporting.

Norway states that transparency is essential for confidence and progress. It noted that reporting by nuclear-armed states remains uneven, calling for greater detail, and a system for structured engagement. Japan said it is vital that states have more substantive discussions on transparency at the RevCon. The NPDI called on all states parties to commit to regular, standardised reporting on their implementation of Treaty obligations across all three pillars. It urged nuclear-armed states to report at least twice per review cycle using standardised formats.

Non-proliferation

France noted that no military solution can offer last guarantees against proliferation. Brazil called on states to reject “the illegal use of force as an alleged means of enforcing non-proliferation.” Albania said proliferation threats should be addressed in a responsible and measured manner. Ghana underscored the importance of resolving all proliferation concerns through peaceful and diplomatic means, in accordance with international law. Malaysia said it “is deeply concerned by developments in the Middle East, which continue to erode confidence in the global non-proliferation regime.” In this regard, Malaysia condemned “Israel's actions that fuel instability and undermine prospects for peace and security in the region.”

The NAC expressed concern with signs of potential interest in horizontal proliferation and actions by states parties encouraging or legitimising this. The states parties and signatories to the TPNW expressed concern with the “troubling rhetoric on the proliferation of nuclear weapons.”

Colombia expressed its concern with nuclear programmes “that advance dangerously close to the nuclear threshold, in contexts where verification mechanisms are weakened or eroded, and likewise, over states that have chosen to position themselves openly outside the regime.”

Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK)

The Nordic countries, Australia, Canada, Croatia, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Singapore, Slovenia, Türkiye, and the UAE expressed concern with and/or condemned the DPRK’s nuclear programme.

Malaysia called for “restraint, de-escalation, and the resumption of dialogue towards the realisation of lasting peace and stability in a denuclearised Korean Peninsula.” Slovenia urged the DPRK to accept offers of dialogue and work toward denuclearisation. Greece said it is ready to engage with all relevant parties to promote a diplomatic solution for the complete, verifiable, irreversible denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula.

Spain called on the DPRK to comply with relevant UN Security Council resolutions, end its nuclear and missile tests, cooperate with the IAEA, and commit to full denuclearisation. The EU, Myanmar, Netherlands, Singapore, Slovakia, and the UK made similar remarks. Austria, Bulgaria, Germany, and many others called on the DPRK to dismantle its nuclear programme. Malta called for the Review Conference to address the DPRK’s nuclear programme.

Albania and the ROK called upon Russia to cease its illegal military cooperation with the DPRK. Slovenia said Russia’s comment that the DPRK’s nuclear weapon programme is a “closed issue” is not acceptable and goes against the object and purpose of the NPT.

Iran

Argentina, Canada, Croatia, Czech Republic, Germany, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Norway, the US and others expressed concern with the Iranian nuclear programme. Argentina argued that Iran has not fully cooperated with the IAEA or successfully demonstrated the peaceful nature of its nuclear programme and appealed to it to cooperate. Norway expressed concern that Iran has enriched uranium to levels with no credible civilian justification. The US asserted that Iran is in violation of Article III of the NPT and its IAEA safeguards agreement. The IAEA did not mention Iran in its statement.

Malta called for the Review Conference to address Iran’s nuclear programme. Argentina said this RevCon must send a clear message that Iran must never have a nuclear weapon. The Nordic countries and Denmark made similar remarks.

Singapore noted that the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) “is an important part of the international nuclear non-proliferation architecture” and expressed hope “that all parties will intensify efforts to reach agreement and uphold their respective obligations under the JCPOA.” Greece said it “strongly supports a jointly made and comprehensive post-JCPOA agreement for Iran and calls all countries involved to conclude and implement such an agreement at the earliest possible, having also in mind the current negotiation effort in Islamabad.”

Spain urged Iran to fully cooperate with the IAEA and continue a diplomatic process to research a constructive, consensual, and sustainable solution. The EU, Austria, Germany, Greece, Bulgaria, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Slovakia, and UAE also encouraged Iran to cooperate with the IAEA. Albania said Iran’s nuclear programme must remain peaceful under IAEA safeguards.

Slovenia said that while it is concerned with “the unclear nature” of Iran’s nuclear programme, the “recent military escalation in Iran and the wider region has not done away with these concerns.” It called on all sides “to prioritize de-escalation and protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure,” expressed its solidarity with the countries of the region, and called for the implementation of UN Security Council resolution 2817 (2026), noting, “There is only a diplomatic solution to Iran’s nuclear program, and the IAEA must be a part of it.”

Spain rejected the escalation of conflict in the Middle East and called for restraint and the full respect for international law. Switzerland condemned any use of force in violation of the United Nations Charter and international law. It noted that to reduce tensions and achieve lasting results, diplomatic engagement, compliance with NPT obligations, and verification by the IAEA are essential. Luxembourg stated that any strike targeting nuclear facilities or their surrounding areas could have catastrophic consequences and called for de-escalation. Cuba condemned the violation of Iran’s sovereignty and the illegal Israeli-US attacks against it. It emphasised that any concern with proliferation must be resolved through peaceful means, including dialogue and diplomacy.

Russia opposed the US’ and Israel’s attacks against Iran, saying they attacked a good faith NPT party “under the pretext of false allegations of a military nuclear programme.” It noted “the tendency on the part of a group of Western States and their allies to exploit the NPT for their short-term political interests.” China said that without the authorisation of the Security Council, launching military strikes against the nuclear facilities of other countries and IAEA safeguards constitutes a serious violation of international law. It noted these actions “under the pretext of non-proliferation trample on the sovereignty of other countries, seek regime change, and pursue geopolitical interests, thereby greatly increasing the risk of nuclear proliferation.”

In a right of reply on the first day of the conference, the US made what could arguably be considered a military threat, when it stated: “The administration is continuing to test a diplomatic path from a position of strength. President Trump has been clear that he prefers a diplomatic solution, but Iran has to make the right choices. If not, Iran will continue to face mounting military, economic, and diplomatic pressure with no relief in sight.”

In its national statement, Iran condemned the wars of aggression launched by Israel and the US against it in 2025 and 2026. It argued these wars were based on the lie that Iran is seeking to build nuclear weapons, which it categorically rejects. Iran asserted its uranium is accounted for and the real reason for the attacks is the US desire to distract from its own noncompliance with the NPT, the seizure of Iran’s oil and gas, and regime change. Iran highlighted the attacks on civilian infrastructure, including a girl’s school, which have resulted in massive civilian casualties. Iran criticised the silence of the international community.

In a right of reply at the end of the general debate, Iran stressed it has paid a higher price for not building a weapon than others have for actually doing so. It also noted that the JCPOA succeeded because it recognised Iran’s right to dignity, and that it had collapsed not because of Iran, but because the US unilaterally withdrew from it and European states failed to maintain their obligations. Iran said that the world witnessed what so-called US diplomacy entails: the use of aggression in practice. It stressed that openly threatening further military and economic pressure is not diplomacy, but clear and simple pressure. It said that the US must cease path of extortion, intimidation, and pressure, highlighting that dignity, not coercion, must form the basis of engagement.

The Arab Group condemned Iran’s missile and drone attacks against Jordan, the UAE, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar, Kuwait, and Iraq. In their individual statements, Jordan, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the UAE condemned Iran’s alleged “unprovoked attacks” on neighbouring countries.

Iran said that some states were portraying themselves as victims by distorting the facts. It noted that the attacks conducted by the US and Israel used the territory and aerospace of neighbouring states. It said that the attacks, including against Iran's civilian infrastructure, were facilitated through operational support originated in their countries. Iran referenced UNGA resolution 33/14 entitled "Definition of aggression," adopted on 14 December 1974, which explicitly provides that the action of a state in allowing its territory to be used by another state for perpetrating an act of aggression against a third state engages its responsibility. Iran said this provision establishes that a host state is complicit in any act of aggression launched from its territory. Iran said the positions advanced by the UAE and other delegations are entirely one-sided and deliberately ignore the root cause of the current situation, the unlawful use of force against Iran and its peaceful nuclear facilities by the US and Israel, as well as the support provided through military facilities in parts of the Persian Gulf region.

In its right of reply, the GCC countries rejected claims that their territories had been used for the attack and stressed that they are not party to the conflict. Iran said that this is not factually correct and that it has documented the use of these countries' territories in such attacks in multiple communications addressed to the UN Security Council, which contain precise details, including the locations and timing of the attacks launched from their territories against Iran.

Syria

The Syrian delegation said it has "turned the page" on its nuclear file since the fall of the Assad regime, and is pursuing cooperation rather than confrontation. It called on the IAEA to remove the Syrian nuclear file from its agenda.

Australia-United Kingdom-United States (AUKUS)

Indonesia said it is time to address the issue of naval nuclear propulsion (NNP), arguing that the AUKUS nuclear-powered submarine agreement serves as a test case for the future of safeguards verification regime. It said it will submit a working paper on this topic.

China said all countries should be highly vigilant regarding the nuclear proliferation risks posed by the AUKUS nuclear submarine operation. Iran described AUKUS as a "new proliferation arrangement."

Australia, the UK, and the US said jointly that Australia's NNP programme is proceeding in full compliance with AUKUS partners' respective international obligations, including under the NPT, Australia's Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement (CSA) and Additional Protocol (AP), and Australia's obligations under the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty. They said Australia is continuing its engagement with the IAEA to develop a safeguards and verification approach for its NNP program within the framework of Australia's CSA and AP, including an Article 14 arrangement.

Japan

China argued Japan is pushing to revise its pacifist constitution and its non-nuclear principles, expand its long-range strike capabilities, and seek to have nuclear weapons deployed on its territory by its allies.

Japan said that it observes the three non-nuclear principles as policy guidelines. It clarified that under these principles, the introduction of nuclear weapons is not permitted. Japan said it has been limiting its research, development, and use of nuclear energy exclusively for peaceful purposes. It noted that all nuclear materials in Japan, including plutonium, are subject to the exceptionally stringent IAEA safeguards and that the IAEA has been drawing the conclusion that all materials remain in peaceful activities. It stressed that there are no issues in relation to non-proliferation.

Nuclear safety and security

In a statement delivered by Ukraine, a group of 43 states parties highlighted the fortieth anniversary of the disaster at the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant (NPP) and warned that nuclear safety is again being tested in Ukraine because of Russia's unlawful war and occupation. The group condemned Russia's recent drone strike against Chernobyl, Russia's seizure of the Zaporizhzhia NPP, and its repeated strikes on Ukraine's energy infrastructure. The states recalled the UN General Assembly resolutions on the safety and security of Ukraine's NPPs and reiterated their support for the IAEA's mission in Ukraine. They called on all states to hold Russia accountable through coordinated diplomatic, political, and economic actions.

Several delegations, including the EU, the Vienna Group of Ten, Albania, Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Georgia, Greece, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Moldova, Romania, Slovenia, Sweden, Türkiye, and Ukraine also expressed concern about or condemned the attacks on Ukrainian nuclear facilities by Russia.

Spain highlighted the vital importance of ensuring nuclear security and preventing attacks against nuclear facilities, which it strongly condemned. Brazil called on states to reject any attack or threat of attack against nuclear facilities. Ireland said it was troubled by the erosion of the norm that nuclear facilities should not be targeted in conflict. Sri Lanka said that IAEA-safeguarded nuclear facilities must never be subject to armed attack, arguing that any attack on such facilities undermines the credibility of both the NPT and the safeguards regime. Belarus made similar remarks.

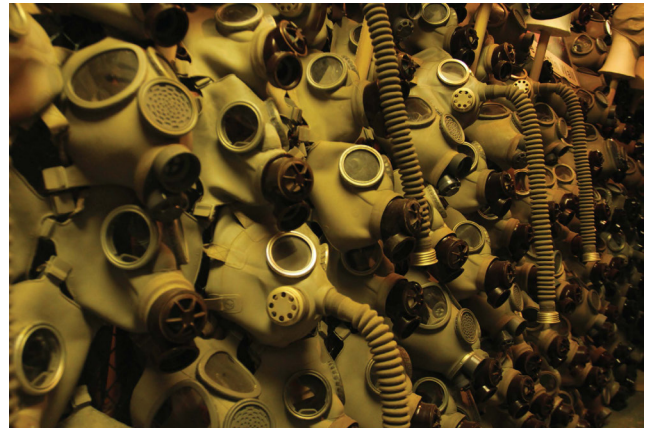
Canada opposed any action, by any state, that creates nuclear safety and security risks, including military activity near nuclear facilities. New Zealand likewise raised similar concerns about military activities around nuclear facilities in multiple armed conflicts. "It is a problem no longer isolated to one conflict or region and underlines the importance of upholding the prohibition of strikes on peaceful nuclear facilities. For this reason, New Zealand will co-sponsor a **Working Paper** on this important topic." Iran also highlighted its **working paper** on this topic.

Nuclear energy

Most delegations reaffirmed the NPT's provisions on nuclear energy and encouraged enhanced cooperation for technical assistance and sharing through the IAEA.

Greece noted that the fortieth anniversary of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster is a reminder of the "devastating consequences of nuclear accidents." It noted:

Nuclear safety or security incidents recognize no boundaries and, if occurred, can have far-reaching implications on a regional or even global level. Countries that utilize nuclear energy, or aspire to do



2026 NPT BRIEFING BOOK



Reaching Critical Will

so in the future, should stick on the highest standards of transparency, with respect to the possible implications on the transboundary natural environment, especially in regions with dynamic seismic and earthquake activity.

Greece also warned that nuclear energy carries proliferation risks, noting, “The growth of civilian nuclear programmes and the increasing complexity of the Safeguards challenges may lead to increasing international tensions and a complete lack of trust. Nevertheless, without effective verification, the option to pursue a nuclear weapon ‘just in case’ will always be a possible threat.”

Austria said it respects fully every nation’s sovereign choice of its energy mix, but that in its assessment, several aspects, such as the question of waste disposal, health, and environmental risks, as well as the linkages between civilian and military activities, have led it to avoid nuclear energy on the whole.

Finland highlighted that an operating license for a facility for the disposal of spent nuclear fuel could be granted by the end of 2026. It said it remains committed to sharing its expertise with other countries as the first country to begin the final geological disposal of spent nuclear fuel.

Kenya announced that it will commence construction of a nuclear power plant in 2027, for which grid connection is expected in 2034. Armenia indicated its NPP will be bringing new capacity by 2036.

The UK said it is driving the largest expansion of civil nuclear power in a generation, including through small modular reactors (SMRs). A few delegations expressed interest in SMRs. The US said that it is unleashing “a golden age of American energy” and that together with the UK it is launching the “ASCENT initiative to amplify non-power peaceful uses and pave a pathway to future civil nuclear power programs for responsible NPT States.”

Myanmar expressed concern with the “enhanced collaboration between the military junta and a major NWS on their so-called nuclear power plan,” arguing that the junta weaponises dual-use items and commits war crimes, and thus cannot be trusted to apply nuclear energy for exclusively peaceful purposes. It called for an end to nuclear cooperation with Myanmar until the military dictatorship has ended and appealed to all states to cut the flow of weapons, jet fuel, dual-use items, and related technologies to the military junta.

Gender and intersectionality

Canada delivered a joint statement on behalf of 24 delegations on integrating gender perspectives in the NPT review cycle. These states lamented that 26 years after the adoption of UN Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace, and security, the inclusion of gender perspectives in the NPT’s work is being regularly challenged, “despite evidence showing that gender equality is a primary predictor of peace.” The states called on NPT members to “reply on facts to systematically mainstream gender perspectives and advance gender equality.” The joint statement highlighted that women continue to be underrepresented in nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, and that “women’s contributions to nuclear disarmament remain insufficiently researched, inadequately resourced, and unevenly implemented.” The joint statement called on the Review Conference to:

- Reaffirm the critical role of women in advancing a world free from nuclear weapons;
- Review efforts to advance gender equality when assessing the Treaty’s implementation in the next Review Cycle;
- Ensure gender perspectives are included and considered in the next Review Cycle; and

- Promote the full, equal, and meaningful participation of women in disarmament and non-proliferation processes.

The Arab Group, the EU, the Stockholm Initiative, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Costa Rica, Malta, San Marino, and Spain also highlighted issue related to gender diversity and perspectives.

Bosnia and Herzegovina highlighted the importance of diversity in disarmament, including the engagement of women and young professionals. It noted the importance of enhancing education and public awareness.

Spain reaffirmed its commitment to diversity and gender equality, including the full and effective participation of women in disarmament and non-proliferation. The Stockholm Initiative reiterated the importance of participation and leadership of women in nuclear disarmament, while the Arab Group underscored the importance of women's empowerment in the field of disarmament.

The EU underlined that gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls are top cross-cutting priorities. It highlighted the importance to integrate gender perspectives into discussions across the NPT.

Costa Rica noted that when arsenals grow and use thresholds are lowered in political discourse, that conviction erodes, and with it the protection of civilian populations and, with particular severity, of women and girls. San Marino noted the disproportionate impact on women, girls and children of the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons.

Malta said disarmament and non-proliferation is a question of justice and inclusion, noting, "As Gender Focal Point for TPNW States, Malta underlines that a gender-blind approach to nuclear policy is an ineffective one, as it overlooks the differentiated impacts of nuclear weapons and excludes perspectives essential to informed, legitimate, and sustainable decision-making." Malta reaffirmed its commitment to advancing gender-responsive approaches across disarmament fora, including through sustained advocacy for the full, equal, and meaningful participation of women in nuclear policy processes. "Diversity is not a checkbox; it is a prerequisite for better, more durable outcomes in the disarmament machinery," said Malta.

Universalisation

Many delegations called for the full universalisation of the NPT, calling on those states outside the Treaty to join as non-nuclear-armed states.

A number of delegations, including Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Malaysia, Maldives, Palestine, Syria, and Yemen, called on Israel to join the NPT and place its nuclear facilities under IAEA safeguards. Syria noted that Israel's refusal to join the NPT remains the greatest obstacle to peace, security, and stability in the Middle East. Malaysia "unequivocally reiterates that the integrity of the NPT cannot be preserved while one State in the region remains outside the Treaty and continues to benefit from exceptionalism." Maldives urged the IAEA to continue reporting on the lack of implementation of UN Security Council resolution 487 in this regard.

Singapore suggested that "there must be a mechanism to encourage and engage countries with nuclear weapon capabilities that remain outside the NPT regime to abide by the same international rules and safeguards."

Mobilizing Scientific Communities to Advance Nuclear Disarmament

NPT Review Conference side event

Monday 4 May, 13:00-15:00
Conference Room A
UN Headquarters

"Tremendous progress has been made in reducing global nuclear stockpiles and nuclear risks, but we are now heading in the wrong direction...There is no greater obligation than to prevent the catastrophe of nuclear war." - **Nobel Laureate Assembly for the Prevention of Nuclear War, 2025 (signed by 129 Nobel Laureates)**



Cosponsors:

Austria, Brazil, Mexico, New Zealand, and Princeton University Program on Science and Global Security

"Scientists can work to educate each other, especially the next generation, and the public and policy makers on the risks posed by nuclear weapons arsenals and policies; and expand the role of science for disarmament, conflict resolution and peace and as a bridge between states and societies globally." - **Scientific Advisory Group for the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, 2025**

This event will feature presentations by scientists and nuclear policy specialists on how scientists understand today's nuclear challenges, what is being done to address them, and what more is needed from scientists, governments, and the public.

Global processes to address nuclear dangers need to be more representative, better informed, more publicly accessible, and more collaborative. This requires advancing the roles of the global scientific community, especially from the Global South, in efforts to reduce and end nuclear dangers, and especially in developing and communicating the understanding of the catastrophic effects of nuclear warfare.

SPEAKERS

Frank von Hippel: Co-founder in 1974 of Princeton University's Program on Science & Global Security, and author of "Ending the Nuclear Arms Race: A Physicist's Quest" (2024).

Stewart Prager: Co-founder of the Physicists Coalition for Nuclear Threat Reduction, and professor emeritus of astrophysical sciences at Princeton University.

Sébastien Philippe: Assistant professor University of Wisconsin-Madison, visiting researcher Princeton Program on Science and Global Security, and member UN Scientific Panel on the Effects of Nuclear War.

Zia Mian: Co-director, Princeton University Program on Science & Global Security, and co-chair of the Scientific Advisory Group of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

Leyatt Betre: Independent researcher for the project "Mobilizing Scientific Communities on the Effects of Nuclear War and Nuclear Disarmament" and research collaborator, Princeton University Program on Science & Global Security.

Tamara Patton: Independent researcher for the project "Mobilizing Scientific Communities on the Effects of Nuclear War and Nuclear Disarmament" and research collaborator, Princeton University Program on Science & Global Security.

Scan below for an introductory resource guide on the global environmental effects of nuclear war. This **living resource** is being developed by Princeton SGS to support and expand scientific engagement.



“The Security of All Peoples”: Leveraging Science in the NPT Review Process and Multilateralism

Leyatt Betre, Zia Mian, Tamara Patton | Program on Science and Global Security, Princeton University

The 2026 NPT Review Conference is unfolding in a world shaped not by a sudden return of nuclear danger, but by its persistence and deepening. The first week of the Review Conference featured multiple side events highlighting the humanitarian consequences of the nuclear age. These discussions—sponsored by Austria, Hiroshima, Kiribati, New Zealand, and the Philippines, among others—have emphasized the fact that nuclear risks have endured across generations, even as the structures meant to constrain them have weakened. Arms control agreements have eroded. Nuclear-armed states continue to modernize their arsenals and in some cases expand their capabilities. Paths toward disarmament remain geopolitically gridlocked. Yet one question remains as urgent as ever: what would nuclear war do to people, societies, and the planet?

NPT states parties should engage seriously with what is cited in the Treaty’s preamble concerning the “devastation that would be visited upon all mankind by a nuclear war” and its attendant obligations to “make every effort to avert the danger of such a war” and “to safeguard the security of peoples.” They should do more than reference these consequences and goals in statements in the NPT Review Conference. Commitments are needed to support and elevate the kind of scientific work that can clarify the risks posed to states parties by the paralysis that has long prevailed within the NPT framework. Two concrete opportunities for such commitments would be engaging the work of the UN Scientific Panel on the Effects of Nuclear War and the World Health Organization (WHO)’s study on the effects of nuclear war on public health.

To this end, diplomats should consider designating a national point of contact within their respective scientific communities to begin coordinating the work of professional networks on nuclear war effects research. Another possible measure would be for each NPT state party to ask its national science academy to review and develop a national research plan based on the 2024 joint statement by the science academies of the G7 countries (US, UK, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, and Japan), which declared that it is a responsibility of the scientific community “to continue to develop and communicate the scientific evidence base that shows the catastrophic effects of nuclear warfare on human populations and on the other species with which we share our planet.”

To support diplomats in this process of broadening engagement, we have developed an introductory resource guide on the global environmental effects of nuclear war that maps key areas of research, highlights major debates, and provides a starting point for those looking to understand and engage the field more deeply.

Nuclear war effects as a multilateral problem

If scientific participation in this field is to widen, diplomats should not treat science only as something to receive at multilateral meetings, but as something states must cultivate by engaging and encouraging their own scientific communities to contribute. International scientific collaborations, to be sure, cannot dissolve political disagreement, but they can help create common reference points for international concern. That is especially important in a world where decision-making power over nuclear weapons remains highly concentrated, while exposure to broader harms is far more widely distributed. Who decides to fight a nuclear war and who suffers the consequences of a nuclear war are not the same. Put

simply, since nuclear war threatens everyone's security and wellbeing, our understanding of nuclear war effects must correspondingly draw from a global body of research.

The recognition that nuclear war effects transcend conventional boundaries between “scientific” and “humanitarian” concerns was understood by the first generation of leaders and diplomats from the Global South. This was made clear at the famous **1955 Bandung Conference of Asian and African States**, which issued an unequivocal call for an international legal convention banning nuclear weapons. Over the course of the conference, delegates introduced several proposals to undertake scientific collaborations evaluating the effects of nuclear testing on humans and the environment. Global South countries, many of which are now party to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), are uniquely positioned to build on this legacy.

The question of the nature and extent of nuclear war effects is not new, nor did it originate with the NPT in 1968. Since the 1940s, scientists have worked to understand and answer that question. Their research has shown that the consequences of nuclear weapon use cannot be understood only in terms of blast damage, immediate casualties, or military outcomes. Nuclear war would have broader climatic, environmental, agricultural, and public health consequences that could cross borders and unfold over time. Even limited nuclear use could produce effects far beyond the states involved. These are not only strategic concerns. They are scientific, humanitarian, and political concerns all at once.

What science can offer the NPT review process and multilateralism

In a world with a handful of nuclear-armed states that endanger all, the NPT review process remains an important and consequential multilateral forum for contestation in advancing nuclear disarmament. It is not the only venue in which nuclear responsibilities are debated, but it remains one of the principal arenas in which states and civil society struggle over what it means to advance the cause of global security. For that reason, the scientific study of nuclear war effects should sit squarely within the scope of its discussions.

The UN Scientific Panel on the Effects of Nuclear War and the WHO study can help consolidate and elevate awareness of the current state of knowledge on nuclear war effects within a multilateral framework. The NPT review process should be prepared to engage the Panel and its findings as part of a broader effort to strengthen the scientific basis of the NPT process. For instance, NPT member states can invite official briefings from the Panel and the WHO in a plenary session of the next NPT Preparatory Committee.

To be clear, what science can offer the NPT review process is not consensus where politics has failed to produce it. It cannot resolve the structural inequalities or geopolitical crises that have long frustrated the Treaty's disarmament dimension. But it can help reset the terms of debate. It can clarify that the consequences of nuclear weapon use are a matter for all and that all states parties should take actions under Article VI.

Beyond the NPT: the wider multilateral landscape

The NPT is by no means the sole institutional home for this work. The broader multilateral landscape also matters: the UN system, TPNW, WHO, academic networks, and civil society all have roles to play in shaping how nuclear war effects are studied, interpreted, communicated, and acted upon. This landscape already features long-standing traditions of scientific engagement on nuclear dangers, from scientists' work during the Cold War—including figures such as Frank von Hippel—to contemporary initiatives such as the **Physicists Coalition for Nuclear Threat Reduction**. The scientific study of

nuclear war effects remains one of the clearest ways to illuminate what is at stake in a world that continues to live with nuclear weapons. But science alone cannot give that knowledge political force.

For that, institutions matter. Not because they function perfectly, and not because multilateral diplomacy has overcome the deep political obstacles to disarmament, but because institutions remain the spaces in which knowledge can be publicized, contested, broadened, and connected to international responsibility. The task ahead is not only to preserve and update knowledge about the consequences of nuclear war. It is also to widen the scope of who produces that knowledge, which disciplines and regions shape it, and how it enters multilateral debate. The NPT review process is one consequential part of that longer struggle. So too are the wider institutions and networks that sustain international scientific and diplomatic engagement.

No single institution can carry the full burden. Some forums can authorize scientific inquiry. Others can connect it to humanitarian, health, or environmental agendas. Others can help elevate voices historically marginalized in the work of nuclear governance. Together, these institutions make possible forms of visibility, legitimacy, and collaboration that science alone cannot generate.

Creating traction: why science and multilateral diplomacy reinforce each other

Science and multilateral diplomacy are distinct enterprises, but they are not separate worlds. Science helps build reliable knowledge from observation, testing, and comparison across diverse sites and modes of experimentation. Diplomacy helps build shared political understandings across divergent national interests and unequal power. One seeks to build consensus regarding the structure and workings of the physical world; the other seeks to build consensus regarding the structure and workings of the political world. Neither can pursue the work of disarmament alone.

This symbiotic relationship was visible in the humanitarian initiative that helped to recenter debate around the catastrophic consequences of nuclear weapon use and led to the creation of the TPNW, as well as the establishment of the Treaty's Scientific Advisory Group. A key part of the initiative's strength lay in mobilizing science as a way of clarifying foreseeable human and environmental consequences from political decisions about nuclear weapons development, testing, possession, hosting, use and threats of use.

The consequences of nuclear weapon use do not automatically translate into political understanding or action. Scientific research can illuminate the attendant harms and the many inequalities in how these could be experienced. But science alone does not determine which findings become politically urgent or which institutions respond. For that, multilateral processes matter. They are imperfect by design and often marked by contention, but they remain among the few deliberative spaces in which scientific knowledge can be translated into a shared basis for international concern and linked to state, public, and human responsibilities, including the responsibility to pursue nuclear disarmament.



Cascades of Harm, Cascades of Care: Disability Rights and Nuclear (In)justice

Sean Howard and Tammy Bernasky | Disability Rights and Disarmament Initiative

The detrimental effects of radiation from nuclear explosions are often described as “cascading” through bodies, minds, generations, environments, cultures, and societies. As such explosions constitute the most extreme form of violent power ever unleashed, such “cascades” are correspondingly unprecedented in scale and scope across time and space.

In a November 2025 **study** by Norwegian People’s Aid and Partners, Freidericke Friess writes that the “detonation of a single nuclear weapon can unleash a cascade of environmental consequences, ranging from immediate, local devastation by fire and blast to long-lasting, potentially global effects.” Noting that the 46 atmospheric tests (and subsequent underground blasts) conducted by France in Mā’ohi Nui (French Polynesia) “compromised” the “foundations” of atoll reefs, “even risking their collapse in certain circumstances,” Tamatoa Tepuhiarii and Nabil Ahmed also attend to the partial collapse of cultural foundations triggered by a massive “military influx” disrupting “the socio-economic fabric of the territory, with a cascade of consequences for the local population.”

In the same study, Matthew Breay Bolton deftly turns the language of proliferating harm into its positive opposite. Referring to the “significant health disparities” experienced by many nuclear-affected “Indigenous Peoples in Australia, the United States, and elsewhere,” Bolton writes: “While it may be difficult to establish high quality specialized care in certain locations, at a minimum there is a need for good systems of accessible primary care and efficient referral and support up a cascade of care.”

Bolton is part of the **Disability Rights and Disarmament Initiative (DRDI)**, an international coalition formed in 2023 to raise the (woefully low) profile of disability rights in disarmament spaces, including in the implementation and review of the NPT and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). In November 2025, DRDI **addressed** the TPNW’s Scientific Advisory Group (SAG) on the “implications for victim assistance under the TPNW of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).” Our main contention was twofold: 1) that cascading harms from nuclear violence have not only caused vast numbers of disabilities, but also compounded existing disabilities in ways increasing already high levels of deprivation, marginalization, and stigmatization; and 2) that disability perspectives thus belong at the TPNW table, where they can contribute to the implementation of the Treaty’s “positive obligations” on victim assistance and environmental remediation, and help make the case for treaty universalization and—the goal, too, of the NPT—a nuclear-weapon-free world.

Similar points were made in an input provided to a **study** by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) “addressing the obstacles and barriers to the full realization of the human rights of the people of the Marshall Islands stemming from the State’s nuclear legacy.” Although the Marshall Islands is not (yet) part of the TPNW community, as we argued in the ***NPT News in Review last year*** a rights-based approach to nuclear impacts affords powerful common ground and cause across treaty spaces.

Why is the CRPD so important? Adopted twenty years ago, it establishes human rights and social models of disability in place of medical and charitable models generally “othering” persons with disabilities as victims of misfortune rather than agents of change. In numerous provisions, it clarifies the right to—that is, the obligation to guarantee—the meaningful participation of persons with disabilities in

all discussions, negotiations, places, and processes concerning their welfare and rights, both as persons with disabilities and as equal members of our diverse human community.

In addition, Article 11 of the CRPD mandates “all necessary measures to ensure the protection and safety of persons with disabilities in situations of risk, including situations of armed conflict, humanitarian emergencies and the occurrence of natural disasters.” Though it is rarely described this way, nuclear use and testing—among the most unnatural events to befall humanity—has created a state of permanent humanitarian and environmental emergency, generating (in the process of preparing for nuclear war) radioactive wastelands, exclusion zones, and sacrifice zones on a scale comparable to the ravages of the world’s worst conventional conflicts.

The rights-based approach of the CRPD also helps us take due care with the word “care” in the context of the positive “cascade” all members of the NPT—most of whom (99) have also signed the TPNW—should seek. Rather than simply “looking after” persons whose disabilities are caused or compounded by nuclear violence, care must be taken to ensure that their rights—alongside those of other affected individuals and communities—are placed at the centre of relevant decision- and policy-making processes.

Recommendations

At this Review Conference, states parties and international organizations should:

- Request and propose language in the outcome document identifying disability as a legitimate dimension of concern in regard to the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons use and testing, raising a set of complex issues requiring a rights-based response in alignment with the CRPD; and
- Include in statements recommendations for increasing the meaningful participation and inclusion of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in future meetings of the NPT and related United Nations fora and processes.

FUNDRAISING APPEAL

Reaching Critical Will is facing budget cuts that will impact our ability to participate in conferences that we monitor and report on, coordinate civil society activities for, and maintain an archive of statements, working papers, and other documents.

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Beyond Strongly Worded Statements: Ten Concrete Actions to Press for Nuclear Disarmament

Cesar Jaramillo | Security Alternatives for a New Era

This article is reprinted from the SANE Policy Institute [website](#).

Nuclear weapons are routinely described as the gravest threat to humanity. The language is familiar, almost ritualistic. Leaders of non-nuclear-weapon states, increasingly frustrated by the lack of progress toward abolition, reiterate warnings about existential risk, catastrophic consequences, and the shared responsibility to prevent nuclear war. Yet much of the available leverage remains untapped.

As the 2026 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference opens, the question is not whether these warnings will be repeated, but whether they will be acted upon. If nuclear weapons truly are the gravest threat, then state behaviour should look very different.

Policies would reflect urgency. Alliances would be held to account for their reliance on nuclear deterrence. Financial flows sustaining nuclear arsenals would be treated as politically and ethically unacceptable. Diplomatic engagement would impose costs, not simply register concern. Governments would not continue to support, enable, or quietly accommodate the indefinite modernization of weapons they consider incompatible with nuclear disarmament.

Instead, the dominant pattern is one of managed contradiction. States affirm disarmament while adapting to its absence and warn of nuclear danger while leaving the systems that sustain it largely intact.

Nowhere is this contradiction more visible than in the functioning of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty itself. Review cycles have become highly choreographed exercises in language management, where success is often measured not by substantive progress, but by the ability to produce consensus text that is subsequently ignored. Commitments are reaffirmed, principles restated, and familiar formulations recycled, even as the underlying trajectory moves steadily in the opposite direction.

At the centre of this dynamic is the persistent failure of nuclear-weapon states to meet their disarmament obligations. Article VI is routinely invoked but rarely operationalized. Concrete steps are diluted, deferred, or blocked outright. Efforts to strengthen accountability are resisted. Even modest advances on risk reduction, transparency, or doctrinal restraint are often treated as concessions rather than responsibilities.

In recent cycles, this pattern has hardened into open obstruction. Red lines are drawn not to advance disarmament, but to prevent it. Language is negotiated down to the lowest common denominator or rejected altogether. The result is not only paralysis, but erosion: of trust in the process, of confidence in the regime, and of the credibility of disarmament commitments themselves.

Expanding the Toolbox

It is not that governments lack tools. But the prevailing approach has long shown its limits. Too often, discussions about what non-nuclear-weapon states can do rely on language that sounds active but is, in practice, empty. Governments and other stakeholders “urge,” “encourage,” “call upon,” or “express concern.” These formulations create the appearance of movement, but they rarely translate into action.

What does it mean, in concrete terms, to “urge” a nuclear-armed state to disarm? What follows if that urging is ignored, as it almost always is? In most cases, the answer is nothing – and the pattern simply repeats, with little consequence or change in behaviour.

This is not a semantic issue. It is a structural one. As long as the primary tools available to non-nuclear-weapon states are framed in terms of persuasion without consequence, their influence will remain limited. If disarmament is to advance, the question cannot simply be how states express their position, but how they act on it.

What costs are imposed, what policies are adjusted, and what forms of cooperation are made conditional? Might, for example, visa restrictions for officials directly involved in the nuclear weapons enterprise be a viable option? Sanctions on the basis of non-compliance?

Responding to the nuclear weapons threat with the seriousness it demands requires more than reaffirming long-term goals. It requires deploying the full range of political, legal, economic, and security levers already available to states.

Another NPT review cycle built on carefully balanced language will produce a familiar outcome. Only the imposition of cost, the setting of conditions, and the testing of commitments can begin to alter the trajectory.

Ten Concrete Actions States Can Take Now

1. Make endorsement of the final outcome document conditional on concrete benchmarks, targets, and timelines for disarmament

States should make clear from the outset that endorsement of the final outcome document is contingent on measurable progress, including defined benchmarks, time-bound targets, and credible implementation steps. This conditionality should shape positions throughout the negotiating process, including on draft texts and intermediary language. Without such standards, consensus risks entrenching drift rather than advancing disarmament, and should not be treated as an end in itself but as a means to achieve concrete outcomes.

2. Link diplomatic cooperation to disarmament progress

States should begin linking broader diplomatic engagement to measurable progress on nuclear risk reduction and disarmament. This does not require across-the-board confrontation, but rather the deliberate use of leverage where it exists. Areas of cooperation – political, economic, or security-related – should not remain insulated from nuclear policy when disarmament commitments are being ignored or actively resisted. Selective conditionality can signal seriousness without undermining broader relationships.

3. Oppose and actively undermine nuclear modernization programs

States should move beyond rhetorical concern and directly challenge the expansion and modernization of nuclear arsenals. This includes coordinated diplomatic pressure, public opposition to specific programs, and refusal to support industrial or technological cooperation that enables modernization. Where existing export controls, procurement rules, or financial regulations allow such contributions, they should be strengthened or replaced to close those gaps and ensure national policies do not enable what states publicly oppose.

4. Operationalize the TPNW's 2MSP indictment of non-compliance

States Parties to the TPNW should build on the Second Meeting's unprecedented and explicit declaration that nuclear-weapon states have "unquestionably" failed to meet their legally-binding obligations under Article VI of the NPT, and draw out its practical, legal, and political implications. This includes consistently referencing the finding of non-compliance in diplomatic engagement, integrating it into national and multilateral positions, and using it to shape expectations of state behaviour across forums.

5. Restrict financial and industrial support for nuclear weapons

Governments should actively restrict public financing tied to nuclear weapons production and require transparency around private sector involvement. Public pension funds, sovereign funds, and state-backed institutions should not be invested in the indefinite maintenance of nuclear arsenals. Financial systems are a largely untapped lever for constraining the material foundations of nuclear weapons and increasing the cost and reputational risk of participation. Civil society initiatives such as ICAN's Don't Bank on the Bomb have helped bring greater transparency to such financial links.

6. Enact national legislation limiting assistance to nuclear weapon activities

States can further codify their disarmament commitments by restricting forms of material, financial, or technical assistance that contribute to nuclear weapon systems and infrastructure. Such legislation helps close the gap between stated policy and actual practice, ensuring that domestic frameworks do not quietly enable the very activities governments oppose internationally. It also establishes clearer standards for compliance and provides a basis for enforcement and accountability.

7. Distance security policy from nuclear deterrence

Governments that rely on extended nuclear deterrence should begin reducing that reliance, including reassessing nuclear-sharing arrangements, opposing forward deployment, and revising doctrines that treat nuclear weapons as central to security. Incremental changes in posture, planning, and doctrine can begin to shift expectations and reduce dependence over time. As long as nuclear weapons remain embedded in security strategies, disarmament will remain an aspirational objective rather than an achievable reality.

8. Strengthen and expand coordinated blocs

Isolated action has limited impact. Cross-regional coalitions should work together to press nuclear-armed states consistently, not only during major conferences but in the periods between them. Coordinated positions, shared benchmarks, and sustained, visible engagement can shift political dynamics, increase negotiating leverage, and prevent disarmament from being sidelined in fragmented diplomatic efforts. Collective action also helps reduce the political cost for individual states.

9. Extend pressure across multilateral forums

States should ensure that pressure on nuclear-weapon states is not confined to the NPT, but maintained across other multilateral settings, including the UN General Assembly and regional forums. This means regularly raising gaps in disarmament, calling out obstruction, and reinforcing expectations. Sustained cross-forum engagement increases political visibility, limits the ability to deflect criticism within any single process, and helps ensure that accountability is continuous.

10. Increase reputational and political costs for inaction

States should challenge misleading narratives, deny diplomatic cover to governments expanding arsenals while invoking disarmament, and oppose the elevation of persistent obstructionists in multilateral forums. Inaction should be framed not as a neutral position, but as a failure to meet obligations, with corresponding political and reputational consequences. Over time, such costs can influence behaviour by affecting credibility, standing, and influence within the international system.

From Rhetoric to Action

None of these steps, on their own, will produce disarmament. Taken together, they would begin to change the political environment in which nuclear weapons are maintained. By introducing costs, constraints, and pressures that are largely absent today, they would begin to alter the dynamics that have long sustained the status quo and normalized continued reliance on nuclear deterrence.

The tools required to shift this dynamic are neither novel nor unavailable. They already exist within the political, legal, economic, and security frameworks that states operate every day, and have been used in other domains to shape behaviour and enforce norms. The question is not whether more can be said, but whether governments are prepared to act in a manner consistent with the gravity of the nuclear weapons threat and the urgency of a solution.



Photo © Darren Ornitz | ICAN

The Cornerstone Report: What We Just Heard, and What It Means

Florian Eblenkamp | International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons

Congratulations, the NPT Review Conference's first week has come to a close. You have sat through the general debate where you have heard governments express their unequivocal commitment to a world without nuclear weapons. You have heard about stepping stones, balanced approaches, and the indispensable role of the NPT as the cornerstone of the international non-proliferation architecture.

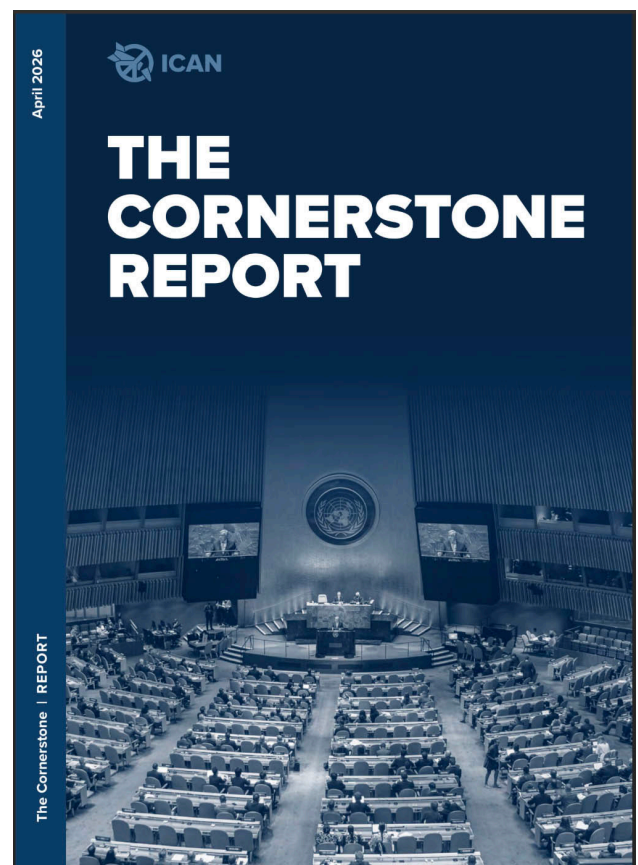
You may have also noticed that several of the governments delivering these commitments are currently expanding their arsenals, raising their warhead ceilings, or, in a development that would have been remarkable at any previous review conference, publicly calling for more nuclear weapons in Europe. The gap between the statements delivered in the general debate and the policies announced in national capitals has never been easier to document. So we dit.

The Cornerstone Report, released for this conference, maps the full machinery of performing compliance with the NPT without delivering it. Working papers. Transparency initiatives. Risk reduction frameworks. Stepping stones to other stepping stones. Each element is defensible in isolation. Together, however, they amount to sidelining a legally binding disarmament obligation that has never produced a single binding disarmament step.

This past week offered fresh material. France, which announced in March that it would increase its warhead stockpile and stop publishing figures on its arsenal, no doubt reiterated its full commitment to Article VI and highlighted its transparency and accountability papers. The European states publicly advocating for nuclear weapons, amongst other Germany, Belgium, Poland, Finland, Norway, Latvia, Lithuania, and the Netherlands, have spoken warmly of the treaty's three pillars.

The Cornerstone Report does not end in despair. While nuclear states and their closest allies were constructing stepping stones to other stepping stones, a global majority adopted the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons—not to replace the NPT, but to finally implement its disarmament obligation. The TPNW's first Review Conference takes place this November in New York. Every state serious about what the general debate this week was supposed to be about should be there.

The Cornerstone Report is available at https://www.icanw.org/the_cornerstone_report. ICAN will be presenting it at a side event at the NPT Review Conference on Wednesday, 6 May at 10:00 EDT in Conference Room A. We would be honoured to welcome you there.



Advancing Nuclear Disarmament in Northeast Asia: Regional Perspectives on the NPT Review Conference

Meri Joyce | Peace Boat and GPPAC Northeast Asia

In advance of the 2026 NPT Review Conference (RevCon), the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) Northeast Asia, Japan Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons and Asia-Pacific Leadership Network co-convened a closed **discussion** on practical steps for Northeast Asia regional cooperation to reduce nuclear threats and advance disarmament. This paper summarizes the resulting insights and recommendations (at the sole responsibility of GPPAC-NEA).

The region, and world, now faces an existential crisis driven by a complex and unstable security environment, serious competition, further proliferation, and arms races, which have eroded trust and challenged the legitimacy of the rule-based order. In Northeast Asia, China is increasing its nuclear arsenal and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) is becoming a fully nuclear-armed state. Also noted was uncertainty over the future of Japan's Three Non-Nuclear Principles, as well as the reliability of the US as a responsible actor. This situation represents the complexity of "reassurance," with different kinds needed across various directions—between allies and adversaries. Reassurance provided to one is often perceived as a threat by another, creating a difficult background of arms race and nuclear proliferation. There is thus a pressing need for regional disarmament and nuclear arms control, with increasingly important roles for civil society and middle power countries committed to international norms.

Despite pessimism regarding prospects for a successful outcome, the 2026 NPT RevCon remains a vital opportunity for sincere disarmament dialogue. The NPT regime's credibility is currently at a serious risk, standing at a critical crossroads due to structural shifts, weakening arms control frameworks, and situational changes in leaders' behaviors. This is compounded in Northeast Asia by the uncomfortable reality that denuclearization diplomacy for the Korean Peninsula has failed, resulting in an increased actual risk of nuclear use. Granting the DPRK de facto nuclear weapon state status would undermine the non-proliferation commitments of other states, potentially providing a pretext for the Republic of Korea (ROK)'s push for enrichment, reprocessing, and nuclear-powered submarines. Participants stressed the need to pursue peace in parallel—including normalizing diplomatic relations and encouraging US-DPRK and Japan-DPRK talks—as a prerequisite for achieving the ultimate goal of denuclearization.

Shifting dynamics and China-US competition formed another core discussion theme. As the US moves away from the rules-based international order, China is hesitant about its role—multipolar, bipolar, or unipolar—and currently lacks a policy toolbox suited to its desired future. This leads to mixed actions, such as China supporting international organizations including the UN while simultaneously demonstrating power in the region. China's mixed nuclear approach, combining a commitment to no-first-use (NFU) of nuclear weapons with an un-reassuring build-up and intransparency, underscores the need for dialogue. The US fear of China is heightened by a lack of exchange in policy spaces, and both countries tend to exaggerate the other's influence in the Asia-Pacific, increasing threat perceptions. Extended deterrence was also discussed. Some see it as a realistic security policy preventing proliferation, while others emphasise the need for dialogue toward common understanding. It was noted that strengthening extended deterrence could increase the risk of nuclear conflict, to say nothing of the legal question of the compatibility of nuclear sharing with the NPT. Creative thinking is needed to move away from hard coercive approaches toward more innovative policies, as well as opportunities for interaction with policy leaders to bridge these gaps.

Proposals to the 2026 NPT Review Conference from the regional perspective

In considering these challenges, participants emphasized the need for strengthening non-proliferation and promoting disarmament. Specific recommendations included:

- **Non-Proliferation Commitments:** ROK, Japan, and the US to reaffirm commitment to the NPT, and ROK and Japan to commit to non-nuclear status, including enhanced domestic legislation to lock in commitments against nuclear latency, regardless of future changes in government.
- **Nuclear Arsenal Reduction and Elimination:** Re-state the goal of the total elimination of nuclear weapons while simultaneously seeking both the capping and reduction of nuclear arsenals. A follow-up mechanism to New START is needed as we see the return of the US-Russia nuclear arms race and nuclear expansion by other countries, including China. Yet, singling out any one specific country would not be constructive.
- **Transparency and Accountability:** The RevCon should reinforce the norm that major nuclear buildups cannot remain politically insulated from international scrutiny; opacity itself has become a source of strategic risk.
- **N5 Coordination and Joint Statements:** Past failures of unilateral approaches emphasize the need for the five NPT nuclear-armed states (N5) coordination as a priority. The N5 should issue joint statements to reaffirm their commitment to disarmament, and also explain their understanding of extended deterrence and the modernization of their arsenals.
- **Nuclear Risk Reduction:** As a pragmatic measure, the N5 should recommit to measures to assure non-nuclear-armed states, while engaging in more discussion on strategic stability. Risk reduction efforts must be based on accepting and respecting mutual vulnerability.
- **Testing Moratorium:** The nuclear testing moratorium must be upheld by all. A joint N5 statement on recommitment would reassure other states. Bilateral collaboration such as between China-US on testing criteria, or cooperation towards verification of closure of test sites, would also be helpful.
- **A Pro-Active Role for China:** Actions by China to demonstrate commitment to a law-based order through the NPT platform, such as improving the NPT review process through accountability mechanisms, would be supported by other governments and NGOs.
- **NFU Treaty:** Discussions should be held on concrete proposals to strengthen NFU policies, including examining China's proposed legally binding multilateral treaty, and its potential dual-track submission to both the NPT and the UN General Assembly First Committee.
- **Korean Peninsula Denuclearization:** The goal of denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula should be reaffirmed. The DPRK nuclear programme reduces the credibility of the NPT regime, and all regional states, including China and Russia, should take serious, cooperative steps toward denuclearization.
- **Nuclear Weapon Free Zones (NWFZ):** While a Middle East NWFZ will be a priority at the NPT, regional initiatives and future aspirations for a Northeast Asia NWFZ should also be noted.

In this current situation of geopolitical competition, an integrated approach with dialogue on nonproliferation and nuclear risk reduction such as at the NPT hand-in-hand with security and peace mechanisms is vital. A better chance of denuclearization exists only when the region is peaceful. Given the increasing difficulty of physical travel, participants reaffirmed the essential nature of dialogue, and the organizers their commitment to continuing to foster such spaces.

The Mirage of European Nuclear Weapons

Pavel Podvig | Russian Nuclear Forces Project

A Norwegian version of this article was first published in Forsvarets Forum as “Kjernevåpen for Europa – en illusjon,” Forsvarets forum, 28 April 2026.

Events of the last several years have raised serious questions about the stability of the existing security order. Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 dealt the most serious shock to the system. The scale of this war, its duration, and its enormous human cost sent many states, especially those in Europe, on a search for security arrangements that could protect them from an aggression of this kind. Traditionally, Europeans relied on the protection provided by NATO, with the United States being the pillar of the alliance. The NATO guarantee was backed by the US promise to defend allies with nuclear weapons if necessary. Or so it appeared. The policies of the current US administration, from rhetorical disengagement from Europe to direct threats to take land from an ally, have made this promise look less and less credible.

With the US nuclear umbrella in doubt, Europeans started looking for something to replace it. This is not an easy task. There are two NATO nuclear powers, France and the United Kingdom, but their umbrella is even less reliable than the US one. The French president offered a vision of “forward deterrence,” which **some experts find attractive**. The problem is that France insists that it alone will decide what its vital interests are and whether it will act to protect them. The French proudly insist that they would be ready to sacrifice Paris to save Paris, but it is really doubtful that they would do so to save Oslo or Tallinn.

Some European countries have gone further and turned to the idea of getting nuclear weapons of their own. There is an open discussion of nuclear options across the continent. Ideas range from national nuclear programs to nuclear weapons built by a coalition of states, like a group of Nordic countries. While most of these discussions talk about the symbolic value of nuclear weapons and the complexity of technical and logistical details, they miss most important question: How exactly would nuclear weapons make their owners more secure?

The scenario that the authors of all these proposals have in mind, not entirely without reason, is a Russian aggression against them. The assumption is that as a nuclear weapon state Russia could either use a threat of nuclear use or actually use nuclear weapons to break the will of defenders to resist and secure victory on its terms. This is, no doubt, a worrying prospect.

The problem with this assumption, however, is that the war in Ukraine has proven it wrong. Russia has neither managed to intimidate Ukraine into surrender nor used nuclear weapons to end the war on favorable terms. It did try to ramp up nuclear rhetoric, only to discover that nuclear coercion does not work without a credible threat of attacking cities and killing a large number of civilians. The recognition of this reality created a strong pushback from the entire international community, including from those countries that were reluctant to criticize Russia otherwise. The consolidated message unequivocally said that nuclear threats are inadmissible. In the end, Russia has found that the very high political cost of nuclear threats has made nuclear weapons essentially unusable.

The paradox of the situation is that this political cost would not have been nearly as high had Russia faced a nuclear-armed adversary, such as a coalition of states armed with nuclear weapons. In this case, nuclear weapons would become tools of signaling and escalation management. Nuclear threats would stack against each other in a macabre competition of who can threaten to kill more people than his adversary. This is probably not a competition Europeans would want to find themselves in.

It may appear that the mere possession of nuclear weapons guarantees that an aggression can be reliably deterred. Not necessarily. For one, the aggression may not take the form of a full-scale invasion of the kind that Russia started four years ago. It may look more like the takeover of Crimea and the events in Eastern Ukraine eight years before that. Nuclear weapons can do nothing about that. But even in the case of a full assault, all nuclear weapons can do is to pull the defending side into the competition in death and destruction with the aggressor, which no one could hope to win in any meaningful sense.

The bottom line is that there is no scenario in which nuclear weapons can contribute to the security of the Europeans. What European nuclear capability can do is to legitimize nuclear weapons as an instrument of coercion and terror, which would only make the defense more difficult. This does not mean that the danger of aggression can be ignored. But it can and should be dealt with by a thorough delegitimization of nuclear weapons, which we have seen working against Russia's nuclear threats. Aggressive intentions should be dealt with by investing in building security mechanisms to reduce and then eliminate armaments, whether nuclear or conventional. The ultimate goal should be to eliminate armed confrontation altogether. Nuclear weapons are just a useless distraction on this path.



Photo © Seth Shelden

Side Event Report: Preventing Backsliding in Nuclear Disarmament

Esmée de Bruin | Reaching Critical Will

On 29 April, the Hiroshima Prefectural Government, the Hiroshima Organization for Global Peace (HOPE), and the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) organised a side event to discuss how backsliding on nuclear disarmament could be prevented. Panellists included Ms. Mika Yokota, Governor of Hiroshima Prefecture and HOPE; Dr. Tytti Erästö, Senior Researcher at SIPRI; Ms. Gaukhar Mukhatzhanova, Director of the International Organisations and Non-Proliferation Programme at the Vienna Center for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation (VCDNP); and Mr. Declan Penrose, Policy Fellow at BASIC. The moderator was Dr. Nobumasa Akiyama, Director of the Center for Disarmament, Science and Technology at the Japan Institute for International Affairs. The speakers reflected on changing nuclear deterrence narratives in non-nuclear-armed states and provided an overview of current national debates in these states.

Governor Yokota started the discussion by addressing the impacts of nuclear weapons on civilians, organisms, and the environment. She stressed that the suffering continues long after the use of nuclear weapons. As more states have started relying on nuclear deterrence, she emphasised that the only way to avoid these devastating consequences of nuclear weapons is their complete elimination.

Dr. Akiyama responded by saying that we now seem to be witnessing an erosion of the nuclear taboo. According to him, this makes it even more relevant to think about how a security result can be established without nuclear deterrence.

Dr. Erästö discussed the findings of study conducted by SIPRI. In the study, they looked at six different non-nuclear-armed states that have voiced that they are considering nuclear weapons through nuclear sharing or by obtaining the weapons themselves. She explained that security narratives within Germany, Poland, Japan, the Republic of Korea (ROK), Ukraine, and Iran were studied. These states can be placed in different categories. The European states have changed their rhetoric after the invasion of Ukraine, while Japan and ROK want to strengthen their nuclear regime because of regional threats. In Japan, there seems to be conflict between the reliance on extended deterrence and the strong societal norm against the use of nuclear weapons. Ukraine and Iran, on the other hand, have not only faced threats, but have faced attacks by nuclear-armed states. In both states, minority voices have expressed that the possession of nuclear weapons should be allowed.

Ms. Mukhatzhanova replied that the changing security narratives that are identified by the study are deeply disturbing. She notes that of the six studied states, four already rely on extended deterrence. According to her, this could make it easier to ramp up discussions about this topic in these states. She further shared that for Ukraine and Iran, obtaining nuclear weapons might be a bigger leap, but the fact that they are currently being attacked could change the situation. She described that although Ukraine and Iran are currently facing these attacks by nuclear-armed states, the study indicates that these states seem to be more concerned about an external reaction than the other studied states. This points to the internalisation of the norms of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Ms. Mukhatzhanova continued by describing that in a 2010 VCDNP study, similar security narratives were studied. These findings indicated that states that were more economically integrated were less likely to pursue nuclear weapons. She nevertheless raised concerns that the situation could be different today as the consequences of pursuing nuclear weapons might be less severe. In addition,

she discussed that the personality of political leaders seemed to play a critical role in whether a country would move towards developing nuclear weapons.

Mr. Penrose discussed a report by BASIC that looked at different pathways towards nuclear disarmament. He stressed the importance of challenging the potential narrative that giving up nuclear weapons makes states more vulnerable to attack. He further described how cultural disarmament recommendations were formed through focus groups in the BASIC study.

Dr. Erästö joined Mr. Penrose in emphasising that it is important to avoid a narrative of regret about not getting nuclear weapons as well. According to her, although non-nuclear-armed states could play a role in pressuring nuclear-armed states to reduce their stockpiles, this might be difficult for some as they rely heavily on extended nuclear deterrence. She further discussed that nuclear latency is not a form of deterrence as past attacks have shown.

Participants asked questions about alliance theory and the division between non-nuclear-armed states that rely on extended deterrence and those that do not. Dr. Erästö replied to the questions by expressing that conventional arms deterrence might be alternative to nuclear arms deterrence.

The discussion was followed by concluding remarks by Governor Yokota.

Side Event Report: Preventing Nuclear Use and Escalation—Lessons from the Nuclear Close Calls

Esmée de Bruin | Reaching Critical Will

On 1 May, Soka Gakkai International Action for Peace and the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey organised a side event on the different lessons that could be learned from nuclear close calls from the past. The speakers included Dr. Sarah Bidgood, Postdoctoral Fellow Technology and International Security at the UC Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation; Ms. Chie Sunada, Director of Disarmament and Human Rights at Soka Gakkai International; Mr. Yanliang Pan, Research Associate at the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies; Mr. George-Wilhelm Gallhofer, representative of Austria; Prof. Dr. Alayne G. Whyte, Professor at Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies and former Ambassador to the United Nations; Dr. Carla Freeman, Senior Lecturer at Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies; and Mr. Daryl G. Kimball, Executive Director at the Arms Control Association. Prof. Dr. William Potter moderated the side event. Together, the speakers reflected on what we learn from historic moments in which we have come close to nuclear catastrophe in times rising geopolitical tensions and rapid technological change.

Mr. Gallhofer opened the discussion by stating that these close calls are not an indication that deterrence works, but are an indication that deterrence sometimes almost fails. In the past, the avoidance of a nuclear attack has depended on luck and human intervention. Mr. Gallhofer then made the connection with the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) and explained that the nuclear taboo can only be sustained by behaving like nuclear weapons will never be used. According to him, Austria rejects the notion that the TPNW is merely a moral treaty. The country instead views it as essential for security. He further stressed the importance of informed human judgement in nuclear decision making.

Dr. Bidgood discussed different trends and gaps in current nuclear security research. She has observed that there has been an increase in studies on the impact of changing technology, studies in which there is an incorporation of new empirical evidence, and research into different types of crises. According to her, there seems to be a lack in research on the interaction between nuclear crises and policy. She further pointed out that her research indicates that crises are not great at teaching states about the dangers of nuclear weapons but rather seem to reaffirm existing beliefs.

Mr. Pan focused on the implications of artificial intelligence (AI) through the lens of past close calls. He explained that past incidents show that automation is not new and that these risks exist independent of definition and classification of AI. According to Pan, we should talk about the effects of automation under human control. He further discussed that the traditional risk reduction should still be adequate.

Dr. Freeman, who specialises in US-China relations, proposed a possible reassurance spiral that could improve the relationship between the two countries. She explained that this can be accomplished if both sides give the signal that they are willing to restrain their nuclear capabilities. These signals can be low cost and can take place step by step in response to the reaction of the other state.

Mr. Kimball stressed that the risk of nuclear escalation increases if this Review Conference is unsuccessful. Therefore, he gave three ideas on what kind of agreement can be reached. He suggested that the five NPT nuclear-armed states could reaffirm their commitment to immediate consultation in times of crisis. He further encouraged them to agree on a technical process towards risk reduction and on legally binding negative security assurances.

Prof. Dr. Whyte discussed how the Cuban Missile Crisis led to the establishment of the first nuclear weapon free zone and addressed the importance of security assurances. She further explained how the TPNW could help to raise bars and reinforce the nuclear taboo. She made it clear that we must learn from the lessons from the generation that knows most about the risk of escalation and highlighted Article 33 of the UN Charter, which mandates states to find a peaceful solution to a dispute.

Ms. Sunada explained that it is important to remind people of the human reality of what a close call feels like. To illustrate this point, she discussed a close call in Okinawa, Japan, where a nuclear launch almost took place due to a mistake by the computer system. The launch was prevented through human intervention. She raised the point that emotion is missing from the current discourse. According to her, the nuclear taboo weakens if we forget about these emotions and the consequences of a nuclear attack.

Questions were asked about the reassurance spiral and the relationship between the US and China. The speakers explained that one way to approach the issues is to acknowledge that the US and China have a different security culture in which they view assurances and risk reduction differently. Further, the speakers addressed that the China is learning from the behaviour of the US and that it is, therefore, important for the US to show the right example.

Ms. Sunada ended the session by showing a current picture of Okinawa. In the picture, the previous nuclear weapons storage site is dismantled and has become part of a peaceful landscape. While showing the picture, Sunada stressed that the picture indicates that a change towards a more peaceful security situation is possible.

Civil Society Presentations

Friday, 1 May 2026

- Japan Confederation of A-and H-Bomb Sufferers Organizations**, delivered by Mr. Jiro Hummus
- Japan Council against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs**, delivered by Ms. Yayoi Fujita Tsuchida
- Mayors for Peace**, delivered by Mr. Kazumi Matsui, President of Mayors for Peace and Mayor of Hiroshima, and Mr. Shiro Suzuki, Vice President of Mayors for Peace and Mayor of Nagasaki
- Hiroshima Prefectural Government**, delivered by Ms. Mika Yokota, Governor of Hiroshima Prefecture
- Nagasaki Prefectural Government**, delivered by Mr. Yuko Baba, Vice Governor of Nagasaki
- Korean Atomic Bomb Survivor**, Mr. Shim Jintae
- Affected Communities and Allies Working Group for a Nuclear-Free World**, delivered by Mr. Benetick Kabua Maddison
- Manhattan Project for a Nuclear-Free World**, delivered by Ms. Mari Inoue
- International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons**, delivered by Ms. Alicia Sanders-Zakre
- Civil Society Statement on Gender and Intersectionality**, delivered by Mx. Ray Acheson
- International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War**, delivered by Ms. Magritte Gordaneer
- Nuclear Age Peace Foundation**, delivered by Dr. Ivana Hughes
- International Trade Union Confederation**, delivered by Ms. Catherine Feingold
- International Association of Lawyers Against Nuclear Arms**, delivered by Deepshikha Kumari Vijh
- Arms Control Association**, delivered by Mr. Daryl Kimball
- International Peace Bureau and the Middle East Treaty Organization**, delivered by Ms. Lina Arafat and Dr. Leonardo Bandarra
- Solidarity for Peace and Reunification of Korea**, delivered by Ms. Gil Kim
- Civil Society Nordic Statement**, delivered by Mr. Daniel Gudbrandsen
- European partner organisations of ICAN**, delivered by Mr. Jean-Marie Collin and Ms. Janina Rüter
- Pathways To Peace**, delivered by Mr. Rinor Jani
- European Leadership Network and Arms Control Association**, delivered by Ms. Jana Baldus
- Civil Society Interfaith Statement**, delivered by Sister Carol Gilbert
- Religions for Peace**, delivered by Reverend Masamichi Kamiya
- Abolition 2000 Nuclear Risk Reduction Working Group**, delivered by Mr. John Hallam
- Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament**, delivered by Mr. Bill Kidd
- NuclearAbolitionDay.org**, delivered by Ms. Rebecca Shoot
- World Federalist Movement-Institute for Global Policy**, delivered by Ms. Kehkashan Basu
- Bagmati UNESCO Club**, delivered by Mr. Desantar Roka Magar
- Open Nuclear Network**, delivered by Ms. Elin Bergner
- Civil Society Youth Statement**, delivered by Mr. Jahrik Browner and Ms. Rooj Ali
Hiroshima and Nagasaki Peace Messengers, delivered by Mr. Daiki Katsukawa
- Youth Fusion**, delivered by Mr. Gabriel McGuire

NPT NEWS IN REVIEW

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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