



Reaching Critical Will

**Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
Non-Proliferation Treaty
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Thank you, Chair.

This morning states began their work nuclear disarmament in Main Committee I. We are looking forward to an intensive debate about how to achieve the full objectives of article VI in this body. As an NGO that monitors implementation of NPT agreements, we have to say that there is much work to be done in this area.

Five years after the adoption of the NPT Action Plan in 2010 it is clear that compliance with commitments related to nuclear disarmament lags far behind those related to non-proliferation or the so-called peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

On nuclear non-proliferation, states were mainly asked to “stay the course,” hence, there has been success in implementing the actions in the area of nonproliferation.

A positive development since the adoption of the 2010 Action Plan has been the negotiations between Iran and the E3/EU+3, which led to the agreement of a Joint Plan of Action. The parties are still engaged in negotiations to reach a comprehensive agreement.

With regard to the actions on the “peaceful uses” of nuclear weapons, the most serious development since the adoption of the action plan has been the Fukushima nuclear disaster, which put the issue of nuclear safety at the centre of this section of the action plan. Other work on this issue has been ticking along, though we agree with those NPT state parties that have rejected nuclear power as part of their energy mix due its negative implications for health, environmental, safety, and disarmament.

But while the NPT states parties are getting along with the implementation of these aspects of the Treaty, of the 22 actions related to disarmament, only five have seen concrete progress.

Yet during the same five years, new evidence and international discussions have emphasized the catastrophic consequences of the use of nuclear weapons and the unacceptable risks of such use, either by design or accident. The NPT's full implementation is as urgent as ever, but 70 years after the use of nuclear weapons in Hiroshima and Nagasaki and 45 years after the NPT's entry into force, the promise of disarmament remains unfulfilled.

The five NPT nuclear-armed states have not met their limited commitments, which did not even require direct action to fulfill article VI's obligation of multilateral negotiations to end the nuclear arms race and eliminate nuclear weapons and delivery systems.

It is true there have been reductions of nuclear arsenals since the Cold War. But most of these reductions occurred before the 2010 Review Conference. And they have been countered by modernisation programmes, through which the nuclear-armed states have invested billions of dollars to extend the lives of and "upgrade" their remaining arsenals.

On their own, reductions are not disarmament. Reductions do not take away the risk of use, intentional or accidental. Reductions do not fulfill article VI's obligations for multilateral negotiations for nuclear disarmament and cessation of the nuclear arms race. And reductions are ineffective if nuclear-armed states continue to modernise and improve their nuclear weapons and delivery systems, extending the lives of these systems for perpetuity.

Non-nuclear-armed states, on the other hand, have initiated and led new meetings and processes related to nuclear disarmament, such as the conferences on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons, the open-ended working group on nuclear disarmament, and the high-level meeting on nuclear disarmament.

As a result, the discourse around nuclear weapons is changing. Even in the NPT context, nuclear weapons are now being viewed and described as dangerous and unacceptable weapons.

The 2010 NPT Review Conference expressed "deep concern at the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons." Since then, these consequences have increasingly become a focal point for discussion and proposed action.

Rather than being divisive, the humanitarian initiative has provided the basis for a new momentum on nuclear disarmament. It has involved new types of actors, such as the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, the United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the United Nations Development Programme, and a new generation of civil society campaigners.

The discussion around the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons has grown into the most positive development around nuclear weapons in many years, and should be fully supported by all states parties to the NPT.

It has also resulted in the Austrian Pledge, which commits its government (and any countries that wish to associate themselves with the Pledge) to "fill the legal gap for the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons." Today, 78 states have endorsed this Pledge.

These states are committed to change.

These states believe that existing international law is inadequate for achieving nuclear disarmament and that a process of change that involves stigmatizing, prohibiting, and eliminating nuclear weapons is necessary.

Yet some states here seem to insist on maintaining the status quo. This is a time for progress, not procrastination.

In the coming weeks, states parties will have to undertake a serious assessment of the last five years. They will also have to determine what actions are necessary to ensure continued survival of the NPT and to achieve all of its goals and objectives, including those on stopping the nuclear arms race, ceasing the manufacture of nuclear weapons, preventing the use of nuclear weapons, and eliminating existing arsenals.

Will another agreement on steps or building blocks lead to that?

We think no. We think it is time for those states committed to nuclear disarmament—the majority of countries—to take action now to start a process to prohibit nuclear weapons, even if the nuclear-armed states or some are not yet ready. It's time to start seriously fulfilling the objectives of the NPT.