

**2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the
Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)**

Main Committee I:

De-alerting:

**Decreasing the operational readiness of nuclear
weapons systems**

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Nations.

New York, 1 May 2015

Mr. Chair,

I have the honour of taking the floor on behalf of Malaysia, New Zealand, Nigeria, Sweden, Switzerland and my own country Chile to address the issue of De-alerting, or decreasing the operational readiness of nuclear weapons systems, and to introduce Working Paper Nr. 21 (WP.21).

Our countries remain deeply concerned that today roughly 1'800 warheads are deployed and ready for use within a matter of minutes. Such high alert levels multiply the risks posed by nuclear weapons. They increase the probability of an inadvertent, erroneous, unauthorised or precipitate launch. They represent an unacceptable danger to humanity as even a small percentage of these warheads, if used, could kill millions of people.

During this NPT cycle, we have seen increased international focus on the catastrophic humanitarian consequences and growing risk of a nuclear weapon detonation. The evidence presented in the context of the humanitarian initiative has served to highlight the urgent necessity to achieve the total elimination of nuclear weapons, which would provide the only guarantee against their future use. Pending this achievement nuclear-weapon States must take urgent action to minimise the risk of a nuclear weapon detonation, including by reducing alert levels.

Expectations of progress in this area are growing. The UNGA resolution on lowering operational readiness, which called for further practical steps to be taken in this area and looked forward to the issue being addressed at this Conference, achieved its highest ever level of support in 2014. The growth in expectations can also be seen in the number of States and groups that have taken up this issue in the context of the NPT Review Cycle, including the NAC and the NPDI.

In recent years, a significant number of former senior military commanders, defense ministers and national security experts have stressed the need and opportunities to move forward on De-alerting. In this respect, a number of recommendations and practical measures were developed and discussed. Last week's side event, organized by Switzerland, Sweden and New Zealand, in cooperation with Global Zero, saw the launch of the most comprehensive effort in this regard.

These different elements underscore not only the expectation that progress be made in the area of De-alerting but also that forward movement in this domain is eminently possible.

Mr. Chair,

Lowering alert levels is an integral element of the nuclear disarmament process. The 13 Practical Steps of the 2000 Review Conference highlighted De-alerting as a step leading to nuclear disarmament and called for "*concrete agreed measures to further reduce the operational status of nuclear weapons systems*". Ten years later, the 2010 Review Conference reaffirmed the nuclear-weapon States' commitment to accelerate concrete progress on the steps leading to nuclear disarmament contained in the Final Document of the 2000 Review Conference. Under Action 5 of the 2010 Action Plan, the nuclear-weapon States agreed to "*consider the legitimate interest of non-nuclear weapon States in further reducing the operational readiness of nuclear weapons systems*".

While we welcome that reports submitted by the nuclear-weapon States under the 2010 Action Plan addressed De-alerting, there is no evidence in these documents or in the wider public domain that meaningful progress has been achieved since 2010. High alert levels continue to play a central role in the doctrines of certain countries and no substantial progress has been achieved in this domain.

Action 5 of the 2010 Action Plan provided for the 2015 Review Conference to take stock of progress and to consider the next steps for the full implementation of Article VI of the NPT. Accordingly, the working paper introduced by the De-alerting group invites the Conference to do two things.

Firstly, in taking stock of developments over the past review cycle, it invites the Conference to recognize the link between high alert levels, associated risks and the catastrophic humanitarian consequences posed by nuclear weapons, and to recognize that reductions in the operational status of nuclear weapons are key to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, in particular for further diminishing the role and significance of nuclear weapons in all military and security concepts, doctrines and policies. The paper also recommends that the Conference reaffirm de-alerting as a pragmatic, interim and practical disarmament measure – pending the full implementation of article VI – as contained in the 13 practical steps of 2000 and the 2010 Action Plan and note the lack of progress in this regard since 2010.

Secondly, as part of the Conference's deliberations on specific measures needed during the next review cycle for the full implementation of Article VI and of other existing obligations including under Action 5 of the 2010 Action Plan, the De-alerting Group recommends that the Conference agree on concrete set of De-alerting measures.

More specifically, we believe that nuclear-weapon States should agree to constructively engage on the issue and take all steps to rapidly and comprehensively address the high risks related to high alert levels, including by developing confidence-

building measures as well as further measures contributing to the prevention of accidental, unauthorized, inadvertent and unintended launches.

The De-alerting Group also recommends that the nuclear-weapon States take steps to rapidly reduce operational readiness -unilaterally, bilaterally or otherwise. This could include the drawing together and implementation of an inventory of options available for further reducing operational readiness of all types of nuclear weapons on high alert, and by implementing measures with regard to nuclear doctrines, postures and force structures enabling the reduction of the level of alert of nuclear weapons.

Finally, the De-alerting Group recommends that the nuclear-weapon States should provide annual reports on the operational readiness of nuclear weapons during the 2015-2020 Review Cycle as part of a consolidated standardized reporting form, and issue a separate and comprehensive report to the 2019 Preparatory Committee on all steps taken to reduce operational readiness, enabling the 2020 Review Conference to consider appropriate follow-up action.

Mr. Chair,

It is clear that moving more resolutely forward in the implementation of Article VI at the Review Conference is necessary for the credibility and sustainability of the NPT. De-alerting is not only a long-standing commitment, it is an area where progress is urgent and well overdue, and where the implementation of practical measures should be possible.

We would like to invite all delegates to study closely the proposals made in WP21 and hope for broad support for this issue as well as for an in-depth discussion on the specific recommendations that we have put forward.

Thank you.