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General and complete disarmament: nuclear disarmament

Summary of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on nuclear disarmament

Note by the President of the General Assembly

I. Introduction and organizational matters

1. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution [67/39](#), a high-level meeting of the General Assembly on nuclear disarmament was convened as a one-day plenary meeting, with the stated aim of contributing to achieving the goal of nuclear disarmament. The resolution encouraged Member States to participate in the meeting at the highest level. The meeting took place on 26 September 2013 and constituted the first such meeting of the General Assembly devoted solely to the topic of nuclear disarmament.

2. Seventy-four statements were made by Heads of State and Government, ministers and representatives at the meeting. Statements were made by the following 12 Heads of State and Government: the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Hassan Rouhan; the President of Austria, Heinz Fischer; the Prime Minister of Japan, Shinzo Abe; the President of Mongolia, Elbegdorj Taskhia; the Prime Minister of Malaysia, Dato' Sri Mohd Najib bin Tun Haji Abdul Razak; the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Sheikh Hasina; the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Muhammad Nawaz Sharif; the Prime Minister of the Czech Republic, Jiri Rusnok; the Prime Minister of New Zealand, John Key; the Prime Minister of Lesotho, Motsoahae Thomas Thabane; the President of Namibia, Hifikepunye Pohamba; and the President of Costa Rica, Laura Chinchilla Miranda.

3. Statements were made by 48 speakers at the ministerial level, and by 5 international organizations: the League of Arab States; the International Parliamentary Union; the International Committee of the Red Cross; the International Atomic Energy Agency; and the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization. Two representatives from civil society also addressed the meeting.



4. Participants expressed their views on a range of issues related to nuclear disarmament and the existing commitments and future opportunities that might lead towards the realization of this goal.

5. In accordance with paragraph 5 of resolution [67/39](#), the President of the General Assembly has prepared this summary document as the outcome of the high-level meeting.

II. General view and principles

A. Role and significance of the high-level meeting

6. States welcomed as a historic gathering the convening for the first time in the history of the United Nations of a high-level meeting of the General Assembly on nuclear disarmament.

7. They expressed appreciation to Indonesia, acting on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, for carrying this initiative forward and to the Secretary-General for his active and continuing engagement on disarmament issues.

8. States recalled that nuclear disarmament has been on the international agenda since nuclear weapons were first used and that the first resolution adopted by the General Assembly sought the elimination from national armaments of atomic weapons and of all other major weapons adaptable for mass destruction.

9. States reaffirmed with a sense of urgency their unwavering commitment to achieving and maintaining the shared goal of a world free of nuclear weapons.

10. Many States considered the participation of many world leaders in the high-level meeting to be a clear manifestation of support for nuclear disarmament.

B. General principles related to nuclear disarmament

11. Many States considered that a world free of nuclear weapons would be a global public good of the highest order, as stated by the Secretary-General.

12. Many States expressed their grave concern at the threat posed to humanity by the continued existence of nuclear weapons and their potential use. They noted that these weapons continued to number in the thousands, and considered that they pose a threat to international peace.

13. Many States reaffirmed that as long as nuclear weapons exist, there remains the risk of their use, either intentionally or accidentally, or of their further proliferation.

14. States reaffirmed that the only guarantee against the threat of nuclear weapons is their total elimination.

15. Many States stressed that there are no right hands for these wrong weapons. In addition, many States reaffirmed that there could be no indefinite possession of nuclear weapons.

16. Many States considered that steps to detarget, de-alert or reduce the number of nuclear weapons are not a substitute for their total elimination.

17. The wisdom of devoting enormous amounts of resources to building up weapons of mass destruction was questioned, particularly given the scarce resources devoted to pursuing socioeconomic development.

C. Relationship between non-proliferation and disarmament

18. Many States reaffirmed that nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation are mutually reinforcing. They expressed the view that both objectives should be pursued simultaneously, comprehensively and in a non-discriminatory manner. Many States affirmed that nuclear non-proliferation derives its legitimacy from the greater objective of nuclear disarmament.

19. States continued to consider the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons as the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime, the essential foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament in accordance with its article VI, and an important element in the further development of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

20. The substantial contribution of the Non-Proliferation Treaty to progress in the limitation and reduction of nuclear weapons over recent decades was noted. Many States continued to consider the conclusions and recommendations for follow-on actions agreed to at the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons as the framework for further progress on nuclear disarmament. States considered the implementation of this action plan to be a collective responsibility.

21. States recalled the inalienable right of States to develop research, production and peaceful use of nuclear energy without discrimination and in conformity with the Non-Proliferation Treaty. They further recalled that all States parties to the Treaty are committed to facilitating participation in the fullest possible exchange of equipment, materials and scientific and technological information for the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

III. Taking stock of the unilateral, bilateral and multilateral disarmament commitments and of disarmament proposals

A. Review of progress made on nuclear disarmament

22. Many States welcomed the reductions made so far, taking into account the special responsibility of the States that possess the largest arsenals. It was noted that the number of nuclear weapons had decreased considerably since the end of the Cold War. Many States also welcomed the increased transparency by some nuclear-weapon States and encouraged continued efforts by all nuclear-weapon States in this regard.

23. Many States welcomed the indications of progress by the Russian Federation and the United States on the implementation of the Treaty between the Russian Federation and the United States of America on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (New START Treaty).

24. A number of States welcomed the proposal made by President Barack Obama on 19 June 2013, in Berlin, to negotiate further reductions of nuclear weapons, and called for all concerned to embrace this opportunity.

25. Nuclear-weapon States recalled that they had been engaging with each other to an unprecedented extent in high-priority, regularized dialogue on disarmament-related issues. They noted that they had made significant progress in nuclear arms reduction, disarmament, confidence-building and transparency, and that stocks of nuclear weapons are now at far lower levels than at any time in the past half-century.

26. Nuclear-weapon States also recalled the reductions they had achieved and their nuclear disarmament policies.

27. China recalled its no-first-use policy and its unequivocal negative security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States and to nuclear-weapon-free zones.

28. France stated that it had reduced by one third the number of nuclear weapons, missiles and aircraft of its airborne component, leading to an arsenal totalling fewer than 300 nuclear weapons.

29. The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland stated that it had reduced the numbers of warheads and missiles on board its nuclear deterrent submarines, which will bring down the requirement for operationally available warheads to no more than 120 and its overall nuclear weapon stockpile to no more than 180.

30. When implemented, the New START Treaty will result in the lowest number of deployed nuclear weapons in the Russian Federation and the United States of America since the 1950s and 1960s.

B. Concern over the lack of progress

31. While acknowledging the progress, reductions and successive undertakings made to date, many States expressed disappointment at the slow pace of nuclear disarmament and considered that much remains to be done to achieve and maintain a world free of nuclear weapons.

32. A number of States expressed deep concern over reports that some States continue to quantitatively increase their nuclear arsenals, despite the clear intent of the international community to eliminate nuclear weapons. States not yet engaged in nuclear disarmament efforts were called upon to make a political commitment not to increase their stockpiles of nuclear weapons and to reduce them with a view to achieving their total elimination.

33. Many States expressed concern that, in spite of global financial constraints, large amounts continued to be invested in the modernization and development of new types of nuclear weapons, which undermines efforts for their total elimination and is inconsistent with disarmament obligations.

34. It was noted that some States continued to value nuclear deterrence as the ultimate guarantor of security. In view of the growing technical capabilities of more States in the nuclear sphere, putting more States in a position to potentially acquire nuclear weapons, should they so decide, the only sustainable approach would be to

reduce and eliminate the perceived political and security motivations for the possession of these weapons.

C. General calls for progress

35. The nuclear-weapon States were called upon to implement their obligations on nuclear disarmament under article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, recognizing the responsibility of all States in this regard.

36. Many States emphasized that the nuclear-weapon States had the primary responsibility for achieving nuclear disarmament.

37. States reaffirmed the application of the principles of irreversibility, verifiability and transparency to nuclear disarmament agreements.

38. The Russian Federation and the United States of America were encouraged to seek further reductions in their nuclear arsenals, including strategic, non-strategic, deployed and non-deployed weapons. They were especially encouraged to include non-strategic nuclear weapons in the next round of their bilateral nuclear arms reductions, while agreeing on the importance of further transparency and confidence-building measures.

39. States were called upon to end any arrangements for nuclear sharing, to return all nuclear weapons maintained on their territory to the country of origin and to eliminate any infrastructure that would allow for rapid redeployment of those weapons.

40. Nuclear-weapon States and other States possessing nuclear weapons were called upon to cease immediately the qualitative improvement, development, production and stockpiling of nuclear weapons.

41. Many States called for funds devoted to nuclear weapons to be invested in various other objectives, such as development, and in eradicating poverty, ignorance and diseases.

42. A number of States commended those that have renounced the acquisition, development, production and testing of nuclear weapons.

43. Many States considered that any use of nuclear weapons would be a violation of the Charter of the United Nations and a crime against humanity.

D. Conditions for disarmament

44. Some States expressed the view that primary efforts should be focused on creating conditions to enable phased movement towards nuclear disarmament, while strengthening strategic stability on the basis of equal and indivisible security for all. Those States found it hard to imagine nuclear disarmament without such conditions.

45. They held that a strong and effective non-proliferation regime is an essential condition for achieving nuclear disarmament and that halting the proliferation of nuclear weapons would further step-by-step progress towards nuclear disarmament. The view was expressed in this context that concerns about non-compliance must be addressed.

46. The view was also expressed that further reductions of strategic offensive arms could only be possible if all factors influencing global strategic stability were taken into account, such as plans for the deployment of strategic missile defence systems, the development of non-nuclear strategic offensive arms, the potential development of weapons in outer space, quantitative and qualitative imbalances in conventional weapons amid persistent or emerging regional conflicts, and uncertainty over the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

E. Revitalizing the disarmament machinery

47. States expressed serious concern regarding the continued stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament, including its failure to agree on, and implement, a comprehensive and balanced programme of work.

48. Many States reaffirmed the role of the Conference on Disarmament as the single multilateral negotiating body on disarmament, as established at the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament.

49. Many States recognized the work of the open-ended working group on advancing multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations, which provided an opportunity for discussions on elements required for the achievement and maintenance of a world free of nuclear weapons.

50. States recalled the importance of multilateralism in advancing nuclear disarmament objectives. Intensified efforts across regional groups were called for in order to move beyond old divisions and entrenched positions.

51. A few States expressed the view that, while encouraged by the increased energy and enthusiasm on nuclear disarmament, they regretted that this energy has been directed towards initiatives such as the present high-level meeting and other efforts to address nuclear disarmament outside the established United Nations disarmament bodies.

IV. Approaches on how to take forward multilateral negotiations for the achievement and maintenance of a world without nuclear weapons

A. Step-by-step approach

52. Some States expressed the view that a practical step-by-step process is the only way to make real progress on nuclear disarmament while upholding global security and stability. Those States considered that there is no other way to achieve a world without nuclear weapons outside of methodical and steady progress.

53. The view was expressed that such a process should be built upon a realistic framework of iterative, mutually reinforcing and progressive steps, with each step built upon the accomplishment and momentum of the preceding steps and taking into account changes in the international security environment.

54. The nuclear-weapon States and those States possessing nuclear weapons were urged to enact various initial concrete measures towards the rapid elimination of

their nuclear weapons. Those States were called upon to increase the transparency of their nuclear arsenals.

55. They were called upon to reduce and eliminate the role and significance of nuclear weapons in their security doctrines, concept strategies and policies or as an approach to managing international conflict. Many States recognized the interests of many Governments and civil society in encouraging a decreased emphasis on dependence on nuclear weapons. Many States considered military doctrines for the use of nuclear weapons to be unjustifiable.

56. All nuclear-weapon States were called upon to lower the operational readiness of their nuclear forces to help lower the risk of inadvertent use of nuclear weapons.

57. They were called upon to reduce and eliminate all types of nuclear weapons, both strategic and non-strategic, deployed and non-deployed, in a transparent, verifiable and irreversible manner.

58. States recognized the legitimate interest of non-nuclear-weapon States in receiving unequivocal and legally binding security assurances from the nuclear-weapon States.

59. Many States called for the conclusion of a universal and legally binding instrument granting unequivocal assurances from nuclear-weapon States to non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.

60. Many States emphasized the crucial importance of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. They reaffirmed their strong support for the entry into force of the Treaty as soon as possible, and pledged to continue to support it through diplomatic and financial engagement. All States that had not yet done so, particularly those whose ratifications are required for the Treaty to enter into force, were called upon to sign and/or ratify the Treaty without delay.

61. Pending the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, all States were called upon to uphold national moratoriums on nuclear weapon test explosions and all other nuclear explosions.

62. A number of States called for all States to refrain from actions inconsistent with the object and purpose of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which they considered to include nuclear-weapon test explosions, other nuclear explosions or any other relevant non-explosive experiments, including subcritical experiments, for nuclear weapons development purposes.

63. A number of States called for the immediate commencement of negotiations on a non-discriminatory and internationally verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. A number of States considered the negotiation of such an instrument to be the next logical step in advancing multilateral nuclear disarmament.

64. Some States called for an immediate moratorium on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, pending the conclusion of a fissile materials treaty.

65. Many States looked forward to the forthcoming group of governmental experts on recommendations on possible aspects that could contribute to a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

B. Humanitarian approach

66. Many States considered that the renewed international focus on the catastrophic consequences of nuclear weapons has led to a reinvigoration of international nuclear disarmament efforts.

67. Many States reaffirmed their view that, owing to their indiscriminate nature, any use of nuclear weapons would have catastrophic global consequences. It was emphasized that new research had increased the understanding of the international community on these consequences, including the likelihood that any use of nuclear weapons would cause severe humanitarian emergencies and have global consequences for the environment, global health, climate, social order, human development and the economy.

68. Many States expressed the view that these aspects should be at the core of the discourse on nuclear weapons and the focus of global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation efforts, and the role of civil society in raising awareness in this regard was recognized.

69. Many States recalled conclusions reached at the conference held in Oslo in March 2013, including that any detonation of a modern nuclear weapon would cause destruction and human suffering in excess of the devastation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, that it would cause a humanitarian emergency beyond the capabilities of any State or international body to provide adequate assistance, and that the effects of any use would not be constrained by national borders. Those States looked forward to the follow-up conference to be held in Mexico in February 2014, where they hoped to continue fact-based discussions on the matter.

70. Nuclear-weapon States stated that they fully understood the serious consequences of nuclear weapon use and that they will continue to give the highest priority to avoiding such an outcome. They affirmed that their efforts in disarmament, non-proliferation and nuclear security are aimed at avoiding the use of nuclear weapons.

71. Many States expressed support for the immediate negotiation of a universal and legally binding instrument banning nuclear weapons, including a comprehensive convention or agreement.

72. Such a convention could prohibit the development, production, acquisition, testing, stockpiling, transfer, use or threat of use of nuclear weapons and provide for their destruction through a phased programme and within a specified time frame.

73. A number of States expressed support for the development of concrete proposals in this regard.

C. Regional approaches, including nuclear-weapon-free zones

74. States recognized the valuable contribution of nuclear-weapon-free zones to nuclear disarmament and to international peace and security. States encouraged their further establishment in additional regions on the basis of agreements freely arrived at among States of the regions concerned, in line with the 1999 guidelines of the United Nations Disarmament Commission.

75. The nuclear-weapon States were called upon to ratify the protocols to all treaties establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones, withdraw any reservations or interpretative declarations incompatible with their object and purpose, and respect the denuclearized status of these zones.

76. Many States expressed concern over the failure to hold in 2012 the conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction. They called for all efforts to be exerted with a spirit of cooperation and flexibility to hold the Conference without further delay. Pending the establishment of the Middle East zone, all States of the region that had not yet done so were called upon to join the Non-Proliferation Treaty without preconditions or further delay.

D. Disarmament and non-proliferation education

77. States stressed the importance of disarmament and non-proliferation education in empowering individuals with the awareness, knowledge and skills to contribute to the realization of global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation objective.

E. Statements made on behalf of civil society

78. Two statements were made to the high-level meeting on behalf of civil society. Both emphasized the devastating effect of the use of nuclear weapons and expressed the disappointment of civil society regarding the slow pace of progress towards nuclear disarmament. Both also expressed certainty that, in spite of the difficulties and impediments, nuclear disarmament is achievable and necessary, citing the success in banning other types of weapons, including biological and chemical weapons, as well as certain categories of conventional weapons. They called for leadership by non-nuclear-weapon States, and noted the ability of all individuals to impact their nations' policies.

V. Follow-up to the high-level meeting

79. Many States called for the establishment of an international day for nuclear disarmament and called for the convening of a high-level conference in 2018 to review progress achieved on nuclear disarmament. Those States considered that this conference could identify ways and methods to eliminate nuclear weapons with the briefest possible delay, aimed at agreeing on a phased programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons within a specific time frame in order to ban the development, production, acquisition, testing, stockpiling, transfer, use or threat of use of nuclear weapons and provide for their destruction.