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General and complete disarmament

Observance of environmental norms in the drafting and implementation of agreements on disarmament and arms control

Report of the Secretary-General

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* [A/75/50](#).



I. Introduction

1. In paragraph 4 of its resolution 74/52, entitled “Observance of environmental norms in the drafting and implementation of agreements on disarmament and arms control”, the General Assembly invited all Member States to communicate to the Secretary-General information on the measures that they had adopted to promote the objectives envisaged in the resolution, and requested the Secretary-General to submit a report containing that information to the Assembly at its seventy-fifth session.

2. Pursuant to that request, notes verbales were sent to Member States on 23 January and 4 May 2020 inviting them to provide information on the subject. The replies received are contained in section II below. Any replies received after 31 May 2020 will be posted on the website of the Office for Disarmament Affairs in the original language received. No addenda will be issued.

II. Replies received from Governments

Cuba

[Original: Spanish]
[13 May 2020]

The observance of environmental norms must be taken into account in all scenarios, including in the drafting and implementation of disarmament and arms control treaties.

The existence of weapons of mass destruction and their ongoing refinement pose the greatest threat to international peace and security, to the fragile environmental balance of our planet and to sustainable development for all without distinction. Suffice it to recall the devastating consequences of the nuclear attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which affected not only the population but also the flora and fauna of those cities.

Cuba reaffirms its support for the total and complete prohibition and elimination, in a transparent, verifiable and irreversible manner, of all weapons of mass destruction; that is the only absolutely sure means of preventing the acquisition and use of such weapons, including by terrorists.

We reaffirm our full support for the existing multilateral regimes banning weapons of mass destruction. Cuba, which is a State party to, among others, the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction, the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Convention on Cluster Munitions and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, strictly observes the environmental norms and other obligations arising from those instruments.

Protecting the environment is a priority for Cuba, as enshrined in the 2019 Constitution and Act No. 81 (the Environment Act) of 4 February 1997. Cuba has a solid legal framework, which is enforced rigorously by the competent bodies, for the protection of the environment and natural resources.

Under article 75 of the Constitution, everyone has the right to enjoy a healthy and balanced environment. The State protects the country’s environment and natural resources and recognizes the close link between them and the sustainable

development of the economy and society in making human life more rational and ensuring the survival, well-being and security of present and future generations.

International peace and security, the fragile environmental balance of our planet and its sustainable development are seriously threatened by the continued refinement of weapons of mass destruction and the possibility of their use. The only truly effective way to avoid the harmful consequences of the use of such weapons is to eliminate the weapons in their entirety.

It would be a great boon if those who have developed nuclear technology were to use it for the good of humankind rather than threaten its existence. Nuclear applications used for peaceful purposes could contribute enormously to soil protection, the elimination of communicable and non-communicable diseases, industrial development or the mitigation of the effects of environmental pollution. Cuba has developed many projects and programmes with the International Atomic Energy Agency, at both the national and the regional levels.

At a time when solidarity among all States is urgently needed in order to preserve the environment, it is vital to eliminate the large arsenals and allocate resources to development and environmental protection.

Forums for the negotiation of international treaties and agreements on disarmament and arms control must take the relevant environmental norms fully into account.

Ecuador

[Original: Spanish]
[31 May 2020]

Ecuador was the first country in the world to recognize the rights of nature in its Constitution and views the protection of the environment as vitally important in all areas, including with regard to the negotiation and implementation of disarmament and arms control agreements.

Under Ecuadorian criminal law, the development, production, introduction, storage, transport, dumping or use of chemical or other dangerous substances that are harmful to nature are punishable as offences against the management of the environment. Heavier penalties apply where those substances are related to chemical, biological or nuclear weapons (arts. 254 and 362 of the Comprehensive Organic Criminal Code).

In line with those principles, Ecuador supported the inclusion in the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which was adopted in 2017, of an article under which each State Party, with respect to areas under its jurisdiction that are contaminated as a result of activities related to the testing or use of nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, shall take measures towards the environmental remediation of those areas.

Ecuador is a party to the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade, the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal and the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material and the amendment thereto.

The national nuclear and chemical weapons authorities have strict protocols for the import, transport and storage of chemical and nuclear products, in compliance with the relevant international instruments and standards and in cooperation with the

International Atomic Energy Agency and the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

Mexico

[Original: Spanish]

[8 May 2020]

Mexico does not possess, nor has it ever possessed, weapons of mass destruction or weapons that produce inhuman and indiscriminate effects. It does not produce, nor has it ever produced, such weapons. This underscores its active, constant and committed support for prohibiting such weapons and achieving general and complete disarmament. Mexico is convinced that only through disarmament can a safer and more peaceful, equitable and inclusive world be achieved for present and future generations.

Over the past decade, Mexico, together with other countries, has raised the issue of the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons in multilateral negotiations on nuclear disarmament. Those consequences intersect with such twenty-first century security concerns as the adverse impact on people's health and on food security, climate change, damage to ecosystems, and migration, not to mention the inability of countries and organizations to deal with a humanitarian catastrophe on such a scale. Nuclear weapons should therefore never again be used under any circumstances. We should strive, rather, to eliminate them totally, for that is the only way to remove the risk that they pose. This approach is known as the humanitarian initiative.

That initiative has led to the adoption by the United Nations of a series of resolutions. All were important but the most significant was General Assembly resolution [71/258](#), in which the Assembly decided to convene a United Nations conference to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination. The conference was held in New York from 27 to 31 March and from 15 June to 7 July 2017, with participants from 135 accredited States and from international organizations. The conference concluded with the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which will enter into force once 50 States have ratified it. To date, it has been signed by 81 States and ratified by 36. Mexico deposited its instrument of ratification on 16 January 2018.

With regard to conventional arms control, Mexico, through the Secretariat of National Defence, destroys conventional arms by one of the following methods: incineration, detonation, immersion, burial or other means. Care is always taken to generate zero environmental impact, in accordance with International Organization for Standardization (ISO) standard 1400. Efforts are made to manage the environment properly by complying with and implementing environmental norms and applying agreements on disarmament and arms control.

When issuing general or special permits for the manufacture, repair, transport or sale of firearms, accessories, explosives and chemical substances, the Secretariat of National Defence ensures that environmental norms are met by monitoring the transport, storage and use of those items, and complies with current regulations and the recommendations of the relevant United Nations group of experts.

Mexico will continue to support initiatives recognizing the complex and interrelated nature of the immediate, medium- and long-term repercussions that the accidental or deliberate detonation of a nuclear weapon would have on, among other things, the environment, food security, climate and development, which would be systemic and potentially irreversible for humanity as a whole.

Portugal

[Original: English]

[14 May 2020]

At its seventy-fourth session, the General Assembly, recalling the previous resolutions adopted on this issue, reaffirmed the importance of the observance of environmental norms in the drafting and implementation of agreements on disarmament and arms control, in particular in relation to nuclear weapons. In that context, the Assembly adopted resolution [74/52](#), in which it recognized the importance of the adoption by Member States of measures that ensure environmental progress in the context of international security.

Portugal has adopted the highest standards of environmental protection and pollution prevention. Moreover, best-practice guidelines and recommendations from the relevant international organizations have been translated into national legislation, in particular in the Environmental Directive for National Defence, dated 19 April 2011. Furthermore, Portugal fully complies with European Union Law concerning environmental norms.

The Portuguese Armed Forces, in theatres of operation, comply with the most environmentally protective or favourable provisions enshrined either in the Portuguese or the host country legislations.

When drafting and implementing contracts for dismantling military equipment or demilitarizing ammunition, the Ministry of Defence of Portugal requires contractors to have quality and environment management systems in place, and to be certified according to ISO 9001: 2015 and ISO 14001: 2015, or equivalent standard.

In this context, companies make a commitment to prevent pollution and to comply with all the applicable European and national legislation concerning waste management, in particular for its collection, transport, storage, treatment, recovery and disposal, in order to avoid the creation of hazards or damage to human health and the environment, and to avoid or reduce emissions into the air, water and soil and the generation of waste, in particular through recycling or proper disposal.

When drafting and implementing contracts for the design and construction of military ships, the Ministry of Defence of Portugal requires that the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships of 1973, as modified by the Protocol of 1978 relating thereto, be observed.

In addition, Portugal is party to all major disarmament and non-proliferation conventions. In accordance to its international obligations under the Convention on Cluster Munitions and the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, Portugal has disposed of or destroyed its stock of, inter alia, cluster munitions and landmines and, in doing so, fully respected applicable environmental norms, which include standards agreed upon by the States members of the European Union (Council directive 94/67/EC on the incineration of hazardous waste).

Being party to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction and the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction requires that Portugal adopt control measures, which are either fully in place or being implemented, thus contributing to environmental safety and security.

In addition, Portugal complies with those norms when destroying firearms that are found or seized by police forces. The procedures by which they are destroyed are

described in more detail in the report of Portugal to the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons.

Portugal is a State signatory to the Convention on the Prohibition of Military or Any Other Hostile Use of Environmental Modification Techniques (contained in the annex to General Assembly resolution [31/72](#)) which recalls the Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, adopted at Stockholm on 16 June 1972, and it remains ready to proceed with its ratification.

Qatar

[Original: Arabic]

[16 April 2020]

Qatar possesses only internationally sanctioned conventional weapons, and only as many as it needs to protect its national security in view of prevailing international and regional conditions. Qatar strives to increase the efficiency of its armaments through maintenance and training, thereby increasing the lifespan of its arsenal and obviating the need to increase its size.

In April 2004, Qatar established the Environment Directorate, an independent environmental body within its armed forces tasked with various duties relating to the environment. The Directorate has full authority to monitor the application and implementation of environmental standards and requirements, including the observance of environmental norms in the drafting and implementation of disarmament agreements, in relation to all military activities carried out by the Qatari armed forces. To that end, the Environment Directorate does the following:

- It develops environmental requirements and standards for the armed forces and oversees the implementation thereof.
- It participates in the work of all committees that oversee military exercises and manoeuvres to ensure compliance with environmental norms prior to, during and after said activities in order to avoid damaging the environment or affecting its elements or natural characteristics.
- It monitors the disposal of ammunition and missiles that are past their expiry date in order to ensure compliance with environmental norms. The disposal process takes place under the supervision of the Environment Directorate, which issues the environmental certification for the disposal site and guarantees that environmental safety standards and requirements are met. The Environment Directorate also collects samples from the disposal site, both before and after the disposal process. The samples are submitted for laboratory analysis in order to ensure that no environmental contamination has occurred.
- It oversees, from the environmental point of view, all firing exercises carried out by the various military units.
- It participates in the drafting of national laws and regulations concerning the implementation of international agreements, including the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction.

Turkmenistan

[Original: Russian]
[6 March 2020]

At its sixty-fifth session, the General Assembly adopted resolution 65/54 on the promotion of multilateralism in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation. Reference is made therein to Assembly resolution 56/24 T of 29 November 2001 on multilateral cooperation in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation and global efforts against terrorism. Resolution 65/54, based on the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, was adopted with a view to maintaining international peace and security, taking effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace, and bringing about by peaceful means, and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations which might lead to a breach of the peace.

Pursuant to this resolution, the Disarmament Commission is carrying out vital and useful work on confidence-building and transparency measures relating to conventional weapons, focusing on multilateralism in addressing those issues. The Commission is one of the most appropriate platforms for international efforts to revitalize multilateral disarmament diplomacy and to strengthen existing international non-proliferation and arms control mechanisms and establish new ones. In 1998, the post of Special Coordinator on transparency in armaments was established. Transparency in armaments can help to build mutual trust, prevent destabilizing arms transfers and create an atmosphere conducive to general disarmament.

In addressing disarmament issues, the Office for Disarmament Affairs undertakes advocacy and awareness-raising activities aimed at ensuring balanced military spending, preventing the threat of nuclear war and combating illicit arms trafficking.

On 12 December 1995, the declaration by Turkmenistan of its permanent neutrality was recognized in a resolution of the General Assembly. On that basis, the Constitutional Act on the Permanent Neutrality of Turkmenistan was promulgated on 27 December of the same year. The Act forms the basis for the domestic and foreign policy of Turkmenistan, which is aimed at building a more stable and harmonious society and developing friendly and mutually beneficial relations with States in the region and throughout the world.

As a neutral country and given its international obligations, Turkmenistan has adopted a foreign policy that is peaceful in nature and guided by the notion that all issues should be resolved only by political and diplomatic means, primarily through the United Nations and other authoritative international organizations. The aim of its foreign policy is to develop relations with other States and international bodies and to resolve issues relating to the establishment of a humane and productive world order. It also plays a constructive role in maintaining regional security and peace, which is of vital importance to the international community.

The position of Turkmenistan with regard to peace and security issues is largely determined by its neutrality, the non-aligned focus of its foreign policy and its rejection of force as a means of resolving international disputes. In that context, Turkmenistan fully supports international efforts to combat the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Turkmenistan has enshrined in law its renunciation of the possession, production, storage or transport of nuclear, chemical, bacteriological and other types of weapons of mass destruction, and of any new technology for their manufacture.

Turkmenistan joined other States in the region in signing the Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia in the city of Semipalatinsk. The Treaty is unique in many respects; it signals, for the first time since the Second World War, the emergence in the northern hemisphere of a vast region free of nuclear weapons. It is telling that our joint initiative chimes with the aspirations of most countries around the world. It has been highly praised by the international community and won the approval of the General Assembly.

The signing of the Treaty by five Central Asian States, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, is a fine example of multilateralism at work in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation. The coming to fruition of the idea for establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region has been a powerful contributing factor to the maintenance of regional peace and stability and fruitful cooperation between our countries. It represents our collective contribution to the advancement of the global community and is, of course, vital for strengthening security in the region and for nuclear disarmament.

Turkmenistan has ratified a number of international conventions and treaties with the aim of fulfilling its disarmament obligations: the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction; the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons; the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction; the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction; the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty; the International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings; and the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

With regard to environmental protection, the conduct of commercial and other activities by legal entities and individuals in Turkmenistan is regulated by the Environmental Safety Act. The aim of the Act is to ensure the vital interests of people and society and avert threats to the environment arising from human activity or natural phenomena.

Under the Act, any commercial or other type of activity, whether planned or under way, is subject to an official environmental safety review to ensure that it meets environmental safety requirements and that sufficient safeguards are in place to avert any threats to the environment that might arise from the carrying out of projects relating to said activities. The review is an integral part of the official environmental impact study and includes a comprehensive, documented assessment of the adequacy of the aforementioned safeguards. All hazardous activities and any planned commercial or other type of activity that could pose a threat to the environment are subject to the review.

Acceptable and maximum permissible risk level indicators for the potential adverse impact on the environment and public health of such activities serve as a regulatory yardstick for ensuring that environmental safety standards are met.

Chemical and petrochemical products, machinery and electrical power goods produced in Turkmenistan, as well as processes, works and services carried out in its territory, must be certified as environmentally safe.

The environmental safety of businesses and manufacturers is ensured by observing established technical standards and regulations, environmental quality

standards, standards for maximum permissible environmental impact, government environmental protection standards and specific environmental safety regulations.

Imported chemical and petrochemical products, machinery and electrical power goods with special trademarks and environmental safety certificates issued in the country of manufacture require a certificate of conformity.

In the interests of environmental safety, the State authorities may not take or enforce decisions that allow the following:

(a) The conduct of commercial or other types of activities without the successful completion of an official environmental safety review or without a duly issued licence for such activities;

(b) The conduct of experiments of a scientific, economic or other nature that contravene environmental safety laws in Turkmenistan;

(c) Activities generating harmful global changes in the environment and its components, including those carried out in violation of the international agreements on environmental safety to which Turkmenistan is a party;

(d) The use of substances for which no assessment has been made of their potential to harm the environment or people;

(e) The use, breeding or introduction of organisms that are not endemic to a territory, or artificially produced organisms, in the absence of effective safeguards to prevent their uncontrolled reproduction and spread.

Turkmenistan neither produces weapons nor allows the transport of weapons of any kind through its territory, thus fulfilling its obligations concerning disarmament and non-proliferation and preventing threats to international peace and security. It advocates a concerted effort by the entire international community to achieve disarmament and non-proliferation.

The points contained in the resolution entitled "Observance of environmental norms in the drafting and implementation of agreements on disarmament and arms control" will make it possible to address pressing issues concerning disarmament, international security and the protection of the environment and to contribute to scientific and technological progress in those areas.
