

Preparatory Committee for the 2026 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

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Taking forward nuclear disarmament

Working paper submitted by Ireland on behalf of the New Agenda Coalition (Brazil, Egypt, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand and South Africa)

1. In 2023, the New Agenda Coalition will mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of its foundation. Since then, the Coalition has worked in partnership with all States to reach agreement on specific disarmament commitments related to the full implementation of article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. These include the unequivocal undertaking of the nuclear-weapon States to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals, leading to nuclear disarmament; the “13 practical steps” agreed at the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons; and the 64-point action plan of the 2010 Review Conference. These outcomes built upon the three decisions and one resolution on the establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, agreed at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference.
2. Fulfilment of all obligations and commitments under the Non-Proliferation Treaty, especially those pertaining to article VI, is crucial for the realization of the “grand bargain” upon which the Treaty was founded, and for the effectiveness of the regime established by the Treaty. Regrettably, the commitments and obligations related to article VI have not yet been implemented by the nuclear-weapon States. There is a clear need to reinject a sense of urgency for concrete progress on implementation, without conditionality, and for greater transparency measures to benchmark progress. The full implementation of commitments is essential in order to rebuild credibility with regard to the Non-Proliferation Treaty.
3. The consecutive failures of the Review Conferences to achieve consensus on a meaningful outcome document is deeply concerning for the implementation of article VI, and takes us into uncharted territory.
4. No new disarmament commitments have been agreed at the Review Conferences since the 13 practical steps in 2000 and the action plan in 2010. The implementation of existing commitments and obligations in this field remains unfulfilled. Ongoing inaction on article VI implementation has the potential to affect global and regional security, create proliferation risks and increase the risk of a nuclear detonation. It has also contributed to the erosion of trust among Treaty parties and in the credibility of the Treaty.



5. This highlights the urgent need for progress and underscores the importance of beginning work on substantive matters specifically related to nuclear disarmament during this first session of the Preparatory Committee of the 2026 review cycle of the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

6. All States parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, particularly the nuclear-weapon States, have a responsibility to prevent a repeat of such a failure from occurring again, and to strengthen the Treaty regime and Treaty implementation so that it delivers across all three pillars. The New Agenda Coalition will advocate for the disarmament pillar of the Treaty to be concretely and meaningfully included in the outcome of the current review cycle. We urgently require an outcome that satisfies global expectations for nuclear disarmament.

7. At its launch in Dublin in 1998, the foreign ministers of the New Agenda Coalition declared that: “The proposition that nuclear weapons can be retained in perpetuity and never used – accidentally or by decision – defies credibility. The only complete defence is the elimination of nuclear weapons and assurance that they will never be produced again.”

8. As we embark on a new review cycle of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, this understanding remains a central pillar of the New Agenda Coalition’s approach. The first Preparatory Committee of this cycle is an opportunity for all States parties, and particularly the nuclear-weapon States, to demonstrate their commitment to the full implementation of the Treaty.

The global security environment and the urgency of nuclear disarmament

9. In the 13 years since the Non-Proliferation Treaty last reached a consensus outcome, we have witnessed a marked deterioration in the international security environment.

10. The diminishing, dismantling and suspension of core agreements among the nuclear-weapon States, such as the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, the Open Skies Treaty and the New START Treaty, is deeply concerning. These actions weaken the non-proliferation and disarmament architecture and undermine key norms. They damage international security and stability and move us further away from achieving our shared goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

11. In addition, the adoption of national plans by the nuclear-weapon States to expand, modernize and qualitatively improve nuclear arsenals, as well as plans by the nuclear-weapon States and States under extended nuclear security guarantees to maintain or increase the role of nuclear weapons in security doctrines, including with regard to the placement of nuclear weapons on the territory of non-nuclear-weapon States, are destabilizing and profoundly dangerous. Such actions contradict existing commitments and could fuel a new nuclear arms race.

12. Cumulatively, these actions damage prospects for progress on the disarmament pillar of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, thus moving us further away from achieving the goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

13. The nuclear dimension of current international tensions, including within the context of the conflict in Ukraine, is also deeply concerning. The New Agenda Coalition is alarmed and dismayed by threats to use nuclear weapons and by increasingly strident nuclear rhetoric. The Coalition stresses that any use or threat of use of nuclear weapons is a violation of international law, including the Charter of the United Nations and international humanitarian law. The Coalition condemns unequivocally any and all nuclear threats, whether they be explicit or implicit, and irrespective of the circumstances.

14. The nuclear-weapon States should redouble their efforts to advance nuclear disarmament through unilateral, bilateral or multilateral reductions and arms control measures. These States have a special responsibility for achieving nuclear disarmament. Moreover, States that have not yet joined the Non-Proliferation Treaty must do so as non-nuclear-weapon States without further delay or preconditions.

15. The possibility of a conventional conflict escalating into a nuclear exchange is rising, including as a result of technological developments. This is an extremely perilous situation and requires the renewed determination of the international community to reject any attempts to justify security policies based on nuclear deterrence doctrines in any form. In order to avoid a new arms race, and as a risk reduction measure, it is essential to prioritize progress on disarmament.

16. Attempts to normalize the threat of use of nuclear weapons, nuclear rhetoric or efforts designed to make nuclear weapons palatable must be challenged or they will continue to damage the Non-Proliferation Treaty regime. The consequences of inaction could be catastrophic.

17. The New Agenda Coalition fully supports the calls by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, in the context of the New Agenda for Peace, for, inter alia, the nuclear-weapon States to commit to the “no first use” of nuclear weapons as an interim step and to assure States that do not have such weapons that they will not use – or threaten to use – nuclear weapons against them, pending the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons according to clear benchmarks and within an agreed time frame.

18. The indefinite possession of nuclear weapons cannot be justified. Such an attitude is incompatible with Treaty obligations and commitments, particularly those of the nuclear-weapon States, and with the integrity of the nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation regime. It is a fact that most of the countries of the world have decided not to rely on nuclear weapons for their national security, and have taken legal and policy steps to ensure their nuclear-free status.

19. As long as some States continue to possess nuclear weapons and justify the value of nuclear deterrence or the need for extended nuclear security guarantees, citing security reasons for doing so, others may aspire to acquire them. An increase in States seeking to rely on nuclear deterrence in their security policies has a negative impact on nuclear non-proliferation efforts.

20. While nuclear-weapon States often claim that the strategic environment is not conducive to nuclear disarmament, history has demonstrated that times of international tension are precisely when multilateralism, arms control and nuclear disarmament measures have proven most useful. Moreover, these arguments fail to acknowledge the role that nuclear-weapon States have themselves played in dismantling the arms control architecture, adopting nuclear modernization plans and in not adequately prioritizing nuclear disarmament. The strategic environment does not exist independent of States. Rather, it is a function of State behaviour.

Catastrophic humanitarian consequences of a nuclear weapon detonation

21. The New Agenda Coalition recalls that the participants in the 2010 Review Conference expressed their deep concern at the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons and reaffirmed the need for all States at all times to comply with applicable international law, including international humanitarian law. Since then, the body of expert research and contributions presented at the four Conferences on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons have significantly added to our knowledge and understanding of the grave impact any nuclear weapons use, accidental or deliberate, would have for humanity and for the planet.

22. While consensus outcomes were not possible during the 2015 and tenth Review Conferences, important progress was made in the way this research contributed to discussions and draft outcomes during those Conferences.

23. Beyond the immediate indiscriminate and large-scale human suffering any detonation of a nuclear weapon would cause in a populated area, any detonation would also have damaging environmental impacts. As confirmed by the International Committee of the Red Cross and the United Nations, the international community would not be able to respond adequately to such a catastrophic occurrence.

24. In addition to the grave, long-term and well-known problems that arise from excessive nuclear radiation for the environment and for humanity as a whole, the New Agenda Coalition would like to highlight the compelling evidence on the gendered and disproportionate impact of ionizing radiation on women and girls.

25. The threat of use of nuclear weapons has not disappeared and now looms larger over the world than at any point since the peak of tensions during the cold war. During this review cycle, the New Agenda Coalition calls for the catastrophic humanitarian consequences and risks associated with nuclear weapons to be given due attention. States parties should reiterate the grave concern expressed since 2010, and continue to elaborate these concerns as an underpinning for the urgent need to achieve a nuclear-weapon-free world.

The increased risk of a nuclear weapon detonation

26. Decades of inaction on nuclear disarmament have created a very dangerous situation. The New Agenda Coalition urges States to acknowledge this peril and take urgent measures to rectify it instead of resorting to stand-offs, destabilizing forms of behaviour and nuclear modernization.

27. In the light of dramatically increased nuclear risks, the nuclear-weapon States should take the opportunity during this review cycle to reduce those risks through the implementation of practical measures that facilitate and reinforce progress on disarmament.

28. While the New Agenda Coalition supports some measures aimed at urgently reducing nuclear weapons risk, such risk reduction efforts must be recognized as interim measures that can never legitimize the indefinite possession of nuclear weapons, whose catastrophic humanitarian effects are well understood and whose mere existence presents inherent risks. Risk reduction measures cannot be considered in any way as a substitute or a prerequisite for the implementation of obligations on nuclear disarmament in accordance with article VI of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Such measures must be properly contextualized and taken forward in a manner that facilitates and reinforces concrete progress on the implementation of existing nuclear disarmament obligations and commitments.

29. The total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only guarantee against their use, whether deliberate, unintentional or accidental, or the threat of use. Without a direct link to the ultimate goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world, nuclear risk reduction measures, at best, sustain the illusion that we can live with nuclear weapons indefinitely.

30. In this regard, the New Agenda Coalition stresses the necessity for enhanced transparency by the nuclear-weapon States with regard to their nuclear weapons capabilities and the implementation of their article VI obligations and nuclear disarmament-related commitments as a confidence-building measure to support further progress on nuclear disarmament, as agreed in action 5 of the 2010 action plan.

31. All States parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, particularly the nuclear-weapon States, should implement their article VI obligations and nuclear disarmament-related commitments in a manner that enables progress on implementation to be regularly monitored and reviewed over the course of the review cycle.

32. To this end, the New Agenda Coalition recalls its proposals made during the previous review cycle in relation to strengthening accountability through enhanced transparency, reporting and measurability of nuclear disarmament obligations and commitments under the Non-Proliferation Treaty, contained in [NPT/CONF.2020/PC.I/WP.13](#).

33. In addition, the New Agenda Coalition reiterates the central importance of the agreed principles of transparency, verifiability and irreversibility of any nuclear disarmament efforts, which are complementary and strongly interrelated. The achievement of common understandings on those principles should help lay the groundwork for the implementation of nuclear disarmament obligations and commitments, but cannot be construed as a precondition for them. In this connection, the Coalition calls for the implementation by the nuclear-weapon States of the agreed commitment to declare to the International Atomic Energy Agency all fissile material designated as no longer required for military purposes and to place such material, as soon as practicable, under safeguards.

Conclusions and recommendations for the present review cycle

1. The New Agenda Coalition emphasizes the need for urgent action to be taken to accelerate the implementation of all nuclear disarmament obligations under the Non-Proliferation Treaty, as well as all commitments and undertakings entered into at the 1995, 2000 and 2010 Review Conferences, without conditionality. This should be done in line with the principles of irreversibility, verifiability and transparency. The new review cycle should look into these commitments with a sober eye and review to which degree these commitments have been fulfilled.

2. In the current fragile international security environment, States parties, and in particular the nuclear-weapon States, should reject any normalization of nuclear rhetoric and, in particular, the threat of use of nuclear weapons, which only serves to undermine the disarmament and non-proliferation regime and is against the Charter of the United Nations.

3. The New Agenda Coalition supports the development of focused measures aimed at urgently reducing nuclear risk during this review cycle. The Coalition stresses that such risk reduction efforts must be properly contextualized as interim measures, and cannot be considered in any way as a substitute for progress on the implementation of obligations on nuclear disarmament in accordance with article VI of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. The total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only guarantee against their use or threat of use. As interim steps, the New Agenda Coalition urges nuclear-weapon States to remove operational nuclear weapons from high-alert status, remove non-strategic nuclear weapons from deployed sites and to put in place, as a matter of urgency, additional legal and procedural safeguards aimed at reducing the risk of a nuclear detonation.

4. The present review cycle should develop clear measures for strengthening accountability through enhanced transparency and measurability of the implementation of nuclear disarmament obligations and commitments. These measures should include, but not be limited to, improved reporting by the nuclear-weapon States, as well as the establishment of a structured dialogue at

the Preparatory Committee meetings and at the Review Conference on these reports.

5. The New Agenda Coalition reiterates the need for urgent action on the necessary, full implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East for the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems. All States parties to the Treaty, particularly the nuclear-weapon States, are called upon to take all the necessary measures to fully implement it without further delay. In this regard, the Coalition acknowledges the successful organization in 2019, 2021 and 2022 by the Secretary-General of the United Nations of the first and second sessions of a conference to elaborate a treaty to establish the zone on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at by all States of the region, and is encouraged by their outcomes.

6. The New Agenda Coalition calls upon all nuclear-weapon States and those that rely on nuclear weapons in their security postures to take immediate measures to diminish the role of nuclear weapons in their military doctrines, in accordance with previous commitments, and calls upon such States to include in their regular reporting details on progress towards this end. This should include the irreversible and verifiable removal of nuclear weapons stationed on the territory of non-nuclear-weapon States.

7. The New Agenda Coalition calls upon States to continue building our collective understanding of the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons, including the disproportionate gendered impact of ionizing radiation, and the widespread impact of nuclear testing in the Pacific and elsewhere. The impacts of nuclear weapons, and their associated risks, should be fully reflected in the outcome of this review cycle. States parties should both reiterate their grave concern about these consequences and undertake to prevent them, in accordance with the preamble of the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

8. States parties to the Treaty should take into account that failure to fulfil agreements and undertakings reached at successive Review Conferences poses a very real threat to the long-term sustainability of the Treaty and the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. All States parties to the Treaty must pursue the full implementation of article VI without delay.
