

Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

7 May 2019

Original: English

Third session

New York, 29 April–10 May 2019

Gender in the Non-Proliferation Treaty: recommendations for the 2020 Review Conference

Working paper submitted by Ireland

Background

1. In the preamble to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the States parties to the Treaty, in its first paragraph, consider “the devastation that would be visited upon all mankind by a nuclear war and the consequent need to make every effort to avert the danger of such a war and to take measures to safeguard the security of peoples”. When the States parties agreed in 1995 to the indefinite extension of the Treaty, the decision on principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament included a reaffirmation of the preamble and provisions of the Treaty. The provision of regular reports within the framework of the strengthened review process, agreed in 1995, with respect to the implementation of article VI was included in the 13 practical steps in the Final Document of the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. The Final Document of the 2010 Review Conference expressed “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”.

2. This clear and reiterated humanitarian impetus for our Treaty was reinforced by the terms of the 1996 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons, which observed that

The destructive power of nuclear weapons cannot be contained in either space or time. They have the potential to destroy all civilization and the entire ecosystem of the planet.

...

In order correctly to apply to the present case the Charter law on the use of force and the law applicable in armed conflict, in particular, humanitarian law, it is imperative for the Court to take account of the unique characteristics of nuclear weapons, and in particular their destructive capacity, their capacity to cause untold human suffering, and their ability to cause damage to generations to come.



The advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice in this matter is also recalled in the 13 practical steps adopted at the 2000 Review Conference.

3. Ireland has engaged with determination and commitment in the Non-Proliferation Treaty review process and does so again on this occasion. We believe firmly in the humanitarian impetus behind the Treaty and its commitment to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. We have therefore welcomed the renewed impetus and focus, since the adoption of the 2010 outcome document, on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons; in particular the new information that has been made available with regard to the serious and imminent risks and catastrophic consequences of any nuclear weapons detonation. The three conferences held between 2013 and 2014 in Oslo, Nayarit, Mexico, and Vienna, as well as the work presented at the 2013 and 2016 open-ended working groups, have shown clearly that nuclear disarmament in accordance with article VI is urgent and necessary.

4. Ireland was centrally involved in the United Nations-mandated multilateral treaty negotiations in New York that led to the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in July 2017. The preamble to the Treaty recognizes that the equal, full and effective participation of both women and men is an essential factor for the promotion and attainment of sustainable peace and security, and commits to supporting and strengthening the effective participation of women in nuclear disarmament. It also recognizes that nuclear weapons “have a disproportionate impact on women and girls, including as a result of ionizing radiation”. Reflecting best practice, the Treaty also contains a specific provision in article 6 (1), which commits States parties, with respect to individuals under their jurisdiction who are affected by the use or testing of nuclear weapons, in accordance with applicable international humanitarian and human rights law, to adequately provide age- and gender-sensitive assistance, without discrimination, including medical care, rehabilitation and psychological support, as well as provide for their social and economic inclusion.

5. As a non-nuclear-weapon State, we believe that every opportunity to seek progress in nuclear disarmament must be seized. Our view is that the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons strengthens and reinforces the disarmament provisions of the Non-Proliferation Treaty and we encourage all States parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty and all States Members of the United Nations to join. Equally, we trust that this review cycle and its outcome will also provide a stimulus for action. The Non-Proliferation Treaty is not a charter for the indefinite retention of nuclear weapons, and the heightened regional and international tensions that we are currently witnessing make the case for action on multilateral nuclear disarmament even more urgent than before.

Gender in the Non-Proliferation Treaty: recommendations for the 2020 Review Conference

6. The present working paper builds on a number of working papers submitted during the current review cycle, including [NPT/CONF.2020/PC.I/WP.38](#), on gender, development and nuclear weapons, submitted by Ireland for the 2017 Preparatory Committee meeting; [NPT/CONF.2020/PC.II/WP.38](#), on impact and empowerment: the role of gender in the Non-Proliferation Treaty, submitted by Ireland for the 2018 Preparatory Committee Meeting; [NPT/CONF.2020/PC.III/WP.25](#), on improving gender equality and diversity in the Non-Proliferation Treaty review process, submitted by Australia, Canada, Ireland, Namibia, Sweden and the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research; and [NPT/CONF.2020/PC.III/WP.27](#), on integrating gender perspectives in the implementation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, also submitted by Australia, Canada, Ireland, Namibia, Sweden and the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research.

7. The Chair's factual summaries from both the 2017 and 2018 Preparatory Committee meetings made reference to the gendered impact of ionizing radiation from nuclear weapons and also to the low participation of female delegates in nuclear disarmament discussions such as the Non-Proliferation Treaty review cycle. We welcome that this is the first review cycle in which these issues have been reflected in factual summaries issued by the Chairs of the Preparatory Committee meetings and hope that this important trend continues into 2020.

8. Ireland considers that the significant humanitarian question of the disproportionate effect of a nuclear weapons detonation on women and girls must be reflected in the outcome document of this Non-Proliferation Treaty review cycle. This is a significant aspect of any nuclear weapons detonation, one deserving of far greater attention from States parties to the Treaty than has been the case up to now.

9. Ireland also wishes to use the opportunity of the present working paper to make recommendations on another aspect of gender and nuclear weapons: the question of women's participation in negotiating forums. This is particularly important in nuclear disarmament, where research highlighted throughout the present review cycle and in the working papers referred to above clearly shows that women continue to be seriously underrepresented in nuclear disarmament work, including at First Committee and Non-Proliferation Treaty review meetings. The disparity is even worse if we study groups of governmental experts working on nuclear disarmament-related matters.

10. Ireland has committed strongly to a gender perspective in our disarmament work. A focus on gender equality has been a cross-cutting issue for Ireland's foreign policy, in line with Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), for many years. This is particularly reflected in our work on human rights, conflict prevention and post-conflict rehabilitation, as well as our work to promote sustainable development, including Goal 5, on gender equality. In 2015, our second national action plan on women, peace and security, following a wide public consultation process, included for the first time specific commitments to support the inclusion of a gender perspective and the effective participation of women in disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. Ireland is scheduled to launch our third national action plan on women, peace and security in June 2019. The plan, which will run for five years, reaffirms and expands on our prior commitment to prioritizing the inclusion of women and their perspectives in disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation.

11. Diversity and differing perspectives enrich our deliberations. Fifty years after the adoption of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, and with a failure to agree an outcome document in 2015, this review cycle offers us an opportunity for more effective discussions and outcomes. Ireland reiterates its call for a conscious and genuine commitment to improving women's engagement and participation in the work relating to the Treaty. It is a common-sense approach that will result in a more inclusive, positive and representative review process.

Recommendations

12. The Chair of the 2019 Preparatory Committee should reflect the growing momentum toward integrating gender perspectives and promoting gender diversity in the Non-Proliferation Treaty and recommend that the 2020 Review Conference should:

(a) Recognize the disproportionate impact of ionizing radiation on women and girls from the detonation of nuclear weapons;

(b) Encourage delegations to consider a gender analysis across all three pillars of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, to better understand the gendered impacts of nuclear weapons and how national policies can better reflect the diversity of impacts and needs associated with disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy;

(c) Welcome the working papers submitted in the current review cycle and encourage delegations to build upon the recommendations therein, including to utilize the sample “gender analysis framework” developed by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research and the Geneva-based disarmament impact group;

(d) Encourage Non-Proliferation Treaty delegations to ensure gender diversity across all levels of representation, and to ensure that diverse perspectives on disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy are integrated in Treaty discussions;

(e) Encourage delegations to step outside the traditional, one-dimensional security approach to addressing nuclear weapons, and embrace issues of gender equality and human security;

(f) Encourage delegations to avoid the use of gendered discourse that perpetuates harmful stereotypes about power and security.
