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Open-ended Working Group taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations¹

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Item 5 (ii) of the agenda

**Taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations
measures to reduce and eliminate the risk of accidental, mistaken,
unauthorized or intentional nuclear weapon detonations**

Measures to confront growing risks of catastrophic nuclear weapons use

Submitted by Global Zero

Introduction

1. A recent report by the Global Zero Commission on Nuclear Risk Reduction² clearly establishes that the risks of the use of nuclear weapons are significant and growing in light of rising regional tensions³ among nuclear weapons countries and their close allies.
2. The modernization of nuclear weapons underway around the world will not reduce, let alone eliminate, these risks and the threat to humanity that these weapons pose. On the contrary, this modernization will increase the risks. It threatens to spark a new nuclear arms race involving nine countries and to spark proliferation among countries led to mistakenly view nuclear weapons as a security blanket. The role of nuclear weapons in their national security policies will expand and the risks that they will be used by accident, by unauthorized acts, by mistake, by deliberate or inadvertent escalation, or by terrorists will increase.
3. All these risks are being run in the name of deterrence and security. But deterrence cannot prevent the unintended use of nuclear weapons, and in fact it may not prevent intentional use. Deterrence could fail catastrophically at any moment. Deterrence does not

¹ Established pursuant to resolution 70/33 of the General Assembly of the United Nations.

² "De-Alerting and Stabilizing the World's Nuclear Force Postures," *Global Zero Commission on Nuclear Risk Reduction*, April 2015,
http://www.globalzero.org/files/global_zero_commission_on_nuclear_risk_reduction_report_0.pdf.

³ "Nuclear Weapons Countries: Military Incidents, March 2014 – November 2015," *Global Zero*, January 2016, http://www.globalzero.org/files/mi_briefing_update_march_2016.pdf.

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confer security. Its core premise is to threaten the use of nuclear weapons, which only engenders insecurity.

4. The only way to eliminate these risks and achieve true security is to eliminate all nuclear weapons. To this end, Global Zero has proposed an action plan⁴ consisting of two core elements: First, the United States of America and the Russian Federation cut their arsenals to one thousand (1,000) total weapons (strategic and non-strategic, active and reserve) on each side, and second, they and other key countries negotiate a nuclear weapons treaty. Under this plan, bilateral deep cuts would be agreed and undertaken while the nuclear weapons countries and other key nations convene to discuss and propose pathways for elimination, a process that culminates in multilateral negotiations for the phased, proportional, and verifiable time-bound reduction of the world's stockpiles down to zero.

5. Although this agenda, or alternative approaches for prohibiting the possession and use of nuclear weapons and pursuing their complete elimination, is urgent, elimination cannot happen overnight under any approach. And yet the world cannot ignore the current daily risks that nuclear posturing poses. We need to fill the immediate practical gap that endangers the world and threatens a humanitarian catastrophe.

Recommendations

6. Global Zero advocates a set of interim measures that would reduce the risks of nuclear weapons use. They are presented in the Global Zero Commission Report on Nuclear Risk Reduction.⁵ The Commission, composed of 30 former senior government officials, national security advisors and top military commanders from around the world (including from China, France, Germany, India, Israel, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Pakistan, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America) made the following core recommendations:

(a) The United States of America and the Russian Federation should agree to eliminate launch on warning from their strategy. They should immediately cease conducting exercises that involve launching strategic missiles on the basis of data from early warning sensors (infrared satellites and ground radar facilities). Launch-ready nuclear postures of the Russian Federation and the United States of America present unnecessary risk. Both sides run the risk of launching on false indications of enemy attack – indeed false alarms have brought both close to mistaken launch on numerous occasions – and the emergence of cyber warfare threats has increased the risk.

(b) The United States of America and the Russian Federation should agree to begin taking their strategic missile forces off of hair-trigger alert, by adopting physical measures such as downloading warheads to storage that extend the time required to launch from the current period of minutes and seconds to a period of days (24 to 72 hours). Beginning with an immediate twenty (20) per cent reduction in the number of their missiles forces kept on high alert under day-to-day conditions, the two parties should verifiably stand down all their forces from high alert in phases over the next ten years.

(c) The President of the United States of America, at an appropriate upcoming venue such as a visit to Hiroshima, should announce that the U.S. strategic missile forces slated for elimination under the New START Treaty with the Russian Federation will be immediately taken off of launch-ready alert as a gesture of U.S.A. intention to seek a mutual stand-down of U.S. and Russian nuclear forces. Among the forces to be

⁴ “The Global Zero Action Plan” *Global Zero*, February 2010, http://www.globalzero.org/files/gzap_6.0.pdf.

⁵ Global Zero Commission on Nuclear Risk Reduction, op. cit., pp. 85-9.

immediately de-alerted and eventually eliminated is a squadron of fifty (50) Minuteman ICBMs, a deactivation currently planned to be implemented in order to achieve the ceiling on operational deployments by 2018 under the Treaty. Such de-alerting moves should be visible to other countries, e.g. by placing objects on the lids of the 50 silos to render them incapable of launch.

(d) All nuclear weapons countries should agree to refrain from putting any nuclear forces on launch-ready alert except under tightly controlled conditions. This agreement would sharply limit the scope and timing of any re-alerting undertaken for training, exercising, or national security emergencies, and would require pre-notification of such activities.

(e) The United States of America, the Russian Federation and China should establish a joint warning and risk reduction center and invite additional countries to participate. This center would serve to reduce the risks of mistaken launch caused by false indications of missile attack, process pre-launch notifications, monitor re-alerting procedures, and assess cyber threats to nuclear command, control, communications, and early warning networks.

(f) The United States of America and the Russian Federation should lead an effort to ban cyberwarfare aimed at nuclear command, control, communications and early warning networks. The vulnerabilities of these networks are uncertain, but grave threats to their integrity may exist. (This is another reason for taking strategic missiles off of launch-ready alert; they otherwise will fire instantly upon receipt of a short stream of computer code, the source of which may be unauthorized.)

(g) The United States of America and the Russian Federation should work with other nuclear weapons establishments to share knowledge, best practices, and technologies in the areas of security and safety. The current safety features on the nuclear weapons of the new nuclear weapons countries are inadequate; the risks of accidental detonation are unacceptably high today.

(h) The United States of America and the Russian Federation should remove their non-strategic nuclear weapons from their combat bases on the European Continent and re-locate them to national storage facilities. These Cold War relics are generally agreed to serve no military purpose. In a 2012 report,⁶ top Global Zero leaders from NATO countries and the Russian Federation (former defense ministers, national security experts and senior military commanders) call for the United States of America and the Russian Federation to remove these weapons as a step toward increasing stability, defusing nuclear tensions and increasing the time needed to prepare non-strategic nuclear weapons for use in the European theater.

(i) Implement new confidence-building measures that help reduce the risk that rising geopolitical risks and increasing numbers of dangerous military encounters among the nuclear weapons countries and their close allies around the world could escalate by design or inadvertence to the nuclear threshold.

(j) The United States of America, the Russian Federation, other nuclear weapons countries and other key countries should convene an official nuclear security roundtable to discuss and propose new measures for reducing nuclear risk.

⁶ "Removing U.S. and Russian Tactical Nuclear Weapons from European Combat Bases," *Global Zero NATO-Russia Commission*, February 2012, http://www.globalzero.org/files/gz_nato-russia_commission_report_-_en.pdf.