

2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

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Working paper submitted by New Zealand on behalf of Chile, Malaysia, Nigeria and Switzerland

I. Background

1. In 2000, States parties agreed on 13 practical steps, which constituted “systematic and progressive efforts” to implement article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. One of these agreed steps was that all nuclear-weapon States should “further reduce the operational status of nuclear weapons systems”.
2. In its resolutions 62/36 and 63/41, the General Assembly also called for reductions in the operational readiness of nuclear weapons systems, with a view to ensuring that all nuclear weapons were removed from high alert status.
3. Despite the end of the cold war, large numbers of nuclear weapons still remain on high levels of readiness. The decision-making process with respect to the launch of any nuclear weapon must be substantially lengthened not only to minimize the risk of use in error but also to improve levels of mutual confidence and in order to indicate a diminished role for nuclear weapons in military doctrines.
4. Lowering the operational readiness of nuclear weapons systems is consistent with the imperative expressed in the first preambular paragraph of the Treaty to make every effort to avert the danger of nuclear war and to take measures to safeguard the security of peoples from the devastation of such conflict. Lowering the operational readiness of nuclear weapons systems will also contribute to the climate in which reliance on nuclear weapons is reduced, benefiting the causes of both nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

II. Progress regarding operational readiness at the 2010 Review Conference

5. States parties at the 2010 Review Conference should approve an ambitious outcome on decreasing operational readiness as a tangible demonstration of the implementation of article VI commitments and as an interim step towards the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. We recommend that the Conference:



1. Recognize that reductions in alert levels would contribute to the process of nuclear disarmament through the enhancement of confidence-building and transparency measures and a diminishing role for nuclear weapons;
 2. Urge that further concrete measures be taken to decrease the operational readiness of nuclear weapons systems, with a view to ensuring that all nuclear weapons are removed from high alert status;
 3. Call on the nuclear-weapon States to regularly report on measures taken to lower the operational readiness of their nuclear weapons systems.
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