

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

15 March 2019
English
Original: Russian

Third session

New York, 29 April–10 May 2019

Nuclear disarmament

Working paper submitted by the Russian Federation

1. Ridding the world of the threat posed by weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons, is a key priority of Russian foreign policy. The Russian Federation has repeatedly declared its commitment to establishing a nuclear-weapon-free world. In pursuing this course the Russian Federation has taken successive steps to reduce and limit nuclear weapons, resulting in a more than 85 percent reduction in the Russian nuclear arsenal over the last 30 years.
2. Today the issue of nuclear disarmament is a central focus of the review process of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons: there is an urgent need to consider possible future steps in this area. The Russian Federation has reaffirmed its readiness for such work on many occasions, including at the highest level, based on the principle that further progress towards nuclear disarmament should be carried out in strict accordance with article VI of the Treaty, in the context of general and complete disarmament.
3. The approach taken by Russia is one based on realism and pragmatism.
4. We are convinced that nuclear disarmament efforts must be carried out incrementally, which implies steady progress towards this goal through practical measures to reduce and limit nuclear weapons and diminish their role in military planning.
5. In implementing practical measures geared towards nuclear disarmament, precedence should be given to the principle of indivisible security: their implementation should lead to the strengthening of international peace, stability and security for all States without exception.
6. Consistent efforts are needed to lay the groundwork for progress towards nuclear disarmament. First and foremost, this means improving the strategic situation in certain regions and in the world as a whole.
7. For Russia, the possession of such weapons is a necessity and the only possible response to very specific external threats. It will not be feasible to renounce nuclear weapons until these threats have been addressed. At the same time, the role of nuclear weapons could be further defined and reduced in the light of developments and changes in the strategic situation.



8. For this reason, the Russian Federation insists that nuclear disarmament cannot be dissociated from the host of factors that have a negative impact on strategic stability. The international community should pay particular attention to the destabilizing actions of certain countries which believe that looking after their own security does not require them to take into account the national security interests of other States.

9. We must vigorously oppose attempts to weaken the decades-old disarmament architecture while ensuring that the credibility of international organizations and arms control regimes is not undermined. Actions that are inconsistent with existing treaties and agreements in the areas of security, stability and arms control are unacceptable, as are attempts to weaken the defence capacity of other countries through the illegitimate practice of imposing unilateral sanctions in circumvention of the Security Council.

10. The international community should give priority attention to the destabilizing impact of unilateral and unfettered actions of the United States of America to develop and deploy its global missile defence system. It should also make every possible effort to prevent the weaponization of outer space and a new arms race driven by technological advances, leading to increased quantitative and qualitative imbalances in conventional weapons. Until these issues are resolved it is unlikely that the international security environment will be conducive to further steps towards nuclear disarmament.

11. The Russian Federation considers it a matter of urgency to launch comprehensive discussions on the security issues of concern to the international community, including those related to the improvement of existing types of weapons and the emergence of new ones.

12. A collective response is needed to address the growing number of international security challenges and threats and their negative impact on disarmament processes. In this connection, the Russian Federation has consistently and firmly advocated for the swift launch of a multi-stakeholder dialogue among all States with military nuclear capabilities.

13. A multilateral nuclear disarmament process will require the establishment of political and regulatory frameworks comprising a system of mutual commitments, understandings and procedures, including in the field of verification. In that regard, a consensus-based approach that takes the interests of all countries into account has become increasingly necessary.

14. Attempts to compel the nuclear-weapon States to give up their stockpiles unconditionally, without taking into consideration their strategic realities and legitimate security interests, are counterproductive. Such actions run counter to the principles of the maintenance of international stability and equal and indivisible security for all, and contribute to growing tensions within the international community. The Russian Federation has no doubt that a ban on nuclear weapons could be introduced as an effective nuclear disarmament measure in line with article VI of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. However, this can only be done in the final phase of the multilateral disarmament process, to ensure its irreversibility. Such a step would be premature in view of the current circumstances.

15. One of the most serious challenges to the nuclear regime are the so-called “nuclear sharing arrangements” employed by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), which combine nuclear planning with nuclear weapon deployment exercises involving the use of carrier aircraft, flight crews, airfields and land-based support units belonging to NATO members that are non-nuclear-weapon States. The Russian Federation has repeatedly drawn attention to the fact that this practice directly

contradicts the spirit and letter of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Article I of the Treaty prohibits nuclear-weapon States from transferring to any recipient whatsoever control over nuclear weapons or other explosive devices, directly or indirectly. Article II of the Treaty prohibits non-nuclear-weapon States from receiving the transfer from any transferor whatsoever of control over such weapons, directly or indirectly. In our view the other nuclear-weapon States should withdraw nuclear weapons to their territories, eliminate any infrastructure in place outside their borders that enables the rapid deployment of such weapons, and discontinue preparations for such deployment that involve non-nuclear-weapon States. Doing so would bolster international security and encourage the further reduction and limitation of nuclear stockpiles.

16. In sum, there can be no constructive and results-oriented cooperation on nuclear disarmament unless the security interests of all parties to the process are taken into account, all parties are treated with mutual respect and the principle of consensus is strictly observed to ensure that a balance between their interests is maintained. This is particularly the case in the light of the complex challenges facing international security and stability today. Any challenges to the non-proliferation regime can and must be resolved as provided for the Treaty, in strict compliance with the norms of international law.
