

Promoting a successful outcome to the 2021 NPT Review Conference
Event organized by Austria, Kazakhstan and Switzerland 28/4/21
Statement by HE Gustavo Zlauvinen, President-designate

Excellencies
Distinguished delegates
Ladies and gentlemen

I would like to start by thanking the Permanent Missions of Austria, Kazakhstan and Switzerland to the International Organizations in Vienna for co-organizing this event, and Tariq Rauf for arranging it. All three States Parties have been committed supporters of the NPT and, more broadly, to the goal of achieving a world free of nuclear weapons. The speakers from each of those missions that we will hear from today have individually proven themselves to be champions of that goal.

I would also like to take the opportunity to express my sympathy and solidarity for all those who have suffered through this terrible pandemic. COVID-19 continues to take the lives of thousands and upend the lives of millions. It is a reminder how seemingly low probability threats, such as a new pathogen or the use of nuclear weapons, can become all too real, all too quickly.

Before turning to the substance of the Treaty and potential issues to be discussed at the Review Conference, I want to briefly touch on the question that is at the forefront of everyone's minds – will the Review Conference be held in August as planned?

Nevertheless, my consultations have revealed an ongoing commitment to the Treaty and its goals, with a desire for an outcome that emphasizes balance and the mutually reinforcing nature of the three pillars – disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

A majority of states have expressed concerns about the negative trends in disarmament. Many have stressed the urgency of measures to reduce nuclear risks – especially those at the intersection of technology and nuclear weapons. At the same time, other States have cautioned that any risk reduction measures need to be directly linked to concrete progress in disarmament – and not a mere substitute for it.

Others have cited the need for greater transparency by the nuclear-weapon States, and commitments to further reductions in arsenals. There have been numerous calls for all States Parties to reaffirm the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons and to preventing any use of nuclear weapons. Linked to this are increased concerns about the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons and, additionally, how to deal with the TPNW.

There has been strong support for the Conference to advocate for the entry into force of the CTBT and negotiations on an FMCT, as well as strengthened and legally binding approaches to negative security assurances. Charting a pathway forward in disarmament will, therefore, be an important goal for the Review Conference.

Proliferation concerns remains a sensitive topic for many. It has been repeatedly noted that circumstances around the JCPOA on Iran's nuclear programme are moving too fast to predict how it will impact the Review Conference, although calls for all parties to return to full compliance retain strong support.

On the issue of North Korea, the need for complete, verifiable and irreversible disarmament of its programme is a priority for States, and thus the calls for a diplomatic solution for the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

It is worth noting that part of the NPT's enduring success rests on the commitments its States Parties have undertaken in good faith. Resolving this issue is central not only to the Tenth Review Conference, but to the future of the Treaty.

No doubt those who have heard me speak before will be tired of hearing me say that it is not my responsibility to devise an outcome to the Review Conference. But it is a fact that this is entirely the purview of States Parties. Having said that, based on my consultations it does seem as though there is much to draw on. I hope that States Parties will now focus on flexibility and compromise for the sake of our common good. I trust they will continue to work to narrow divergences and expand common ground.

As the great Nelson Mandela said: Where people of goodwill get together and transcend their differences for the common good, peaceful and just solutions can be found even for those problems which seem most intractable.

The issues at the core of this treaty are of consequence to the entire international community. It is therefore the responsibility of States Parties, on behalf of the global population, to ensure the NPT is fit for purpose and able to meet rising challenges.

I look forward to working with you all as we seek to utilize the Tenth NPT Review Conference to advance this cause.

Thank you.