



Moving forward on Irreversibility in Nuclear Disarmament (WP3125)

8 - 10 March 2023

Wilton Park, Wiston House, Steyning, West Sussex, BN44 3DZ



Foreign, Commonwealth
& Development Office



Norwegian Ministry
of Foreign Affairs

Wed
08
Mar

14:58

The action plan of the 2010 NPT Review Conference established three key principles of disarmament: transparency, verification, and irreversibility. As the latter has remained underdeveloped, Wilton Park organised a conference, co-funded by the FCDO and the Norwegian MFA, on Irreversibility in Nuclear Disarmament (IND) in March 2022. Following on from the NPT Review Conference in August, where the draft Final Document stated that “States parties recognise that further work is required to ensure the irreversibility of nuclear disarmament and, as a first step, are encouraged to build an understanding of the application of irreversibility measures in attaining and maintaining a world free of nuclear weapons and to exchange information on the application of the principle of irreversibility in relation to the implementation of their Treaty obligations”, this Wilton Park dialogue will assess how to take IND forward. The dialogue, convened in partnership with the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, thereby aims to further develop detailed thinking on the concept of IND, as well as its political, legal, practical, and technical aspects. This meeting will hence take up the challenge set out at the Review Conference to build shared understandings among NPT States Parties and advance the prospects for nuclear disarmament.

Goals and objectives

- To assess the spectrum of positions on IND and work towards a shared understanding of what IND will require.
- Based on commissioned original research, to identify and discuss the political, legal, practical, and technical aspects and criteria for irreversibility, both during a process of disarmament, and after disarmament has been achieved.
- To explore options for a programme of work and avenues for taking IND work forward that will include next steps and fora for collaboration.

14:59

In association with the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and the Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

15:00 - 16:00

Participants arrive. Tea and coffee on arrival

16:00 - 16:15

Welcome and introduction

Mark Smith

Senior Programme Director, Security and Defence, Wilton Park,
Steyning, United Kingdom

16:15 - 17:15

1. Opening session: aims, objectives and the parameters of IND

This session will set the objectives and context of the conference and introduce the critical issues surrounding IND. It will discuss how IND landed at the NPT Review, the outcomes of the discussions there, and the current state of play on IND.

Jørn Osmundsen

Special Envoy for Disarmament , Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Oslo, Norway

David Chambers

Head, Arms Control and Disarmament Research Unit, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), London, United Kingdom

Heather Williams

Director, Project on Nuclear Issues; Senior Fellow, International Security Programme, Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), Washington DC, United States of America

17:15 - 17:45

Tea/coffee

17:45 - 19:15

2. Conceptualising irreversibility in nuclear disarmament

Rebecca Gibbons

Assistant Professor, University of Southern Maine, Portland, United States of America

Nick Ritchie

Senior Lecturer, Department of Politics, University of York, York, United Kingdom

19:30

Reception followed by dinner

Thu

08:00 - 09:00

Breakfast

09

Mar

09:15 - 10:30

3. Lessons from other regimes

Amy Woolf

Specialist in Nuclear Weapons Policy, Congressional Research Service, Washington DC, United States of America

John Walker

Senior Associate Fellow, European Leadership Network; Former Head, Arms Control and Disarmament Research Unit, FCDO, United Kingdom

10:30 - 11:15

Photograph followed by tea/coffee

11:15 - 13:00

4. Legal and political issues of irreversibility

Dieter Fleck

Honorary President, International Society for Military Law and the Law of War; Formerly Director International Agreements & Policy, German Ministry of Defence; formerly Rapporteur, ILA Committee on Nuclear Weapons, Non-Proliferation and Contemporary International Law; Independent, Cologne, Germany

Irma Argüello

Founder and Chair, NPSGlobal Foundation, Buenos Aires, Argentina

Emiliano Buis

Professor of International Law and Director of the Observatory of International Humanitarian Law, University of Buenos Aires, Buenos Aires, Argentina

13:00 - 14:00

Lunch

14:00 - 15:00

Free time

14:30

Facilitator briefing, Library

15:00 - 16:30

5. Practical and technical aspects of irreversibility

Virtual: Togzhan Kassenova

Senior Fellow, Center for Policy Research, SUNY-Albany, Washington DC, United States of America

Ross Peel

Research and Knowledge Transfer Manager, King's College
London, London, United Kingdom

Grant Christopher

Co-Programme Director (Acting) , Verification Research, Training
and Information Centre (VERTIC), London, United Kingdom

16:30 - 17:00 Tea/coffee

17:00 - 18:30 **6. Breakout groups**

In this session, participants representing states and participants representing NGOs will separate and discuss their respective work and goals.

State representatives will take part in a breakout group led by representatives from the UK and Norwegian governments. The discussion will address the following questions:

- What are the most important elements of irreversibility work to focus on?
- How should IND work be taken forward and coordinated? Is a formal mechanism needed?
- What timelines and milestones are realistic for progressing IND work?
- By the end of this review cycle, what would a successful outcome of work on irreversibility be?
- Is there an opportunity for work on irreversibility to be carried out on a regional basis and what advantages might this bring?

Participants representing NGOs will split into two groups led by Andreas Persbo and Wilfred Wan. Discussions will address the following questions:

- In view of the research presented at this conference, what are the next steps to take IND work forward? Which aspects require continued attention and further research?
- What type of support is needed from governments to enable continued work on irreversibility? How can funding and government-organised meetings promote and aid research efforts?
- Would irreversibility research relate to and interact with other disarmament research programmes?
- Could regional coordination advance irreversibility research?

Facilitators:

Andreas Persbo

Director, Open Nuclear Network, London, United Kingdom

Wilfred Wan

WMD Programme Director , Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, Stockholm, Sweden

18:30

Facilitators de-brief, Library

19:00

Reception followed by dinner

Fri
10
Mar

08:00 - 09:00

Breakfast and checkout

09:15 - 10:30

7. Outcomes from breakout groups

In this session, the facilitators will summarise the discussions from the breakout groups and feed them into the wider discussion.

10:30 - 11:00

Tea/coffee

11:00 - 11:15

8. Evaluation survey

Completion of online survey <https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/wp3125/>

11:15 - 12:50

9. Final thoughts and closing remarks

This session aims to recapitulate the outcomes of the discussion on IND and consider how these can be taken forward in international policy and fora.

Alexandra Bell (Alex)

Deputy Assistant Secretary , US Department of State, Washington DC, United States of America

Tonie Jaquez

Coordinator for Disarmament and Non Proliferation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mexico City, Mexico

William Alberque

Director, STAC, International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS),
Berlin, Germany

Gaukhar Mukhatzhanova

Director, International Organizations and Nonproliferation Program
(IONP), Vienna Center for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation
(VCDNP), Vienna, Austria

13:00 Lunch

14:00 Participants depart