



Wilton Park



Report

## **Nuclear non-proliferation: challenges and opportunities for the global regime**

Monday 11 – Wednesday 15 December 2017 | WP1561

In association with:





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The NPT regime is increasingly fraught with challenges. Instabilities and risks are increasing. Potentially dangerous rhetoric on the utility of nuclear weapons is rising and nuclear weapons are deployed in some of the most crisis-prone regions in the world. Ongoing nuclear modernisation programmes are improving the quality and quantity of nuclear weapons, raising the spectre of a new global arms race.

Moreover, there is decreasing bandwidth to manage all these issues. The adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) has contributed to further polarisation of the global nuclear community; the UN disarmament machinery is paralysed and unable to conduct negotiations on a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty (FMCT); entry into force of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) is unlikely in the near term. There are also growing concerns over the possibility of more virtual nuclear states, i.e. non-nuclear weapon states (NNWS) that possess the ability to develop nuclear weapons.

However, these developments should not completely overshadow recent successes in the global non-proliferation regime. New START is being implemented, with both the US and Russia on track to meet the central limits by the February 2018 deadline. Positive and practical verification initiatives have been underway and include the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification (IPNDV), which works to further understanding of the technical challenges in nuclear disarmament verification (NDV). The Quad Nuclear Verification Partnership (QNVP), a multi-year arms control simulation initiative undertaken by Sweden, the US and the UK and Norway, builds on from the UK-Norway Initiative (UKNI) and the US-UK arms control verification technical cooperation. The amount of nuclear material and the number of nuclear facilities coming under International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards is growing steadily.

Looking ahead, a number of issues could negatively affect and disrupt the 2020 NPT Review Conference (RevCon) and the broader global non-proliferation regime. These include the potential collapse of Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPoA), lasting repercussions of the TPNW, further developments in the nuclear weapons and missile programmes of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), and lack of progress on the Middle East Weapons of Mass Destruction-Free Zone (MEWMDZFZ). Tangible progress before 2020 is

necessary. The so called step by step process needs to demonstrate further progress, crucially by going beyond efforts on disarmament verification to include political agreements.

**Summarised below are the main policy recommendations of the conference:**

- The 2018 Preparatory Committee coincides with the 50th anniversary of the NPT's opening for signature, while the 2020 Review Conference will mark 50 years after entry into force and 25 since indefinite extension. This offers the chance to re-examine and honestly reflect upon the successes and failures of the past, and adds a further extra obligation to deliver on substance.
- Following the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), international efforts should be undertaken to build bridges and find common ground between the nuclear weapon states and non-nuclear weapon states.
- The United States and Russia should continue with strategic stability talks and work to address issues of compliance on existing arms control treaties. In the longer term, the international community should look to multilateralise these talks.
- Best efforts should be undertaken to preserve the JCPoA by all parties to the agreement through full implementation of its provisions and by maintaining a firewall between the nuclear issue and other issues of concern. The ten year period bought by the JCPoA should be used to build the necessary trust and confidence with Iran to bring it back into the international community.
- The international community should work to fully implement and better target sanctions on North Korea. At the same time, private talks between the United States and North Korea should be initiated without preconditions.
- India and Pakistan should implement a number of tried and tested risk reduction measures, such as resuming and institutionalising a comprehensive dialogue and expanding existing confidence building measures.
- China and India should establish strategic stability talks to discuss a range of issues related to nuclear programmes and doctrines.
- States should seek to implement proliferation resistant measures by design and redouble their efforts to keep pace with new technological developments that could pose proliferation risks.
- Steps should be taken to improve implementation of counter-proliferation finance initiatives, such as by training or regulating the private sector to play a stronger role. The United States should play a greater role on disrupting proliferation financing, given its strong record of enforcement, investigative abilities and dominance as the global financial rule maker.
- A greater attempt should be made to identify and address states' underlying strategic rationales for pursuing the acquisition of nuclear weapons, and the international community should consider means to raise the economic and political costs of maintaining virtual nuclear arsenals.
- International organisations and norms must be nurtured and protected. For example, the IAEA must continue to be supported to monitor safeguards compliance, requiring appropriate resourcing and shielding from discreditation.
- All states should work towards the universal application of Comprehensive Safeguards Agreements and the Additional Protocol as the gold standard of IAEA safeguards.

- Recent successful initiatives on the technical challenges of nuclear disarmament verification add further credibility to the proposition that disarmament verification is achievable and should be continued and expanded.
- States should muster their energies and explore compromise to break the political deadlock in the Conference on Disarmament, without which real questions may be asked of relevance of FMCT after such a protracted negotiation period.
- States should continue to ensure adequate funding for the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty Organisation (CTBTO) and explore incentives to bring the CTBT into force.
- In general, small successes must be recognised, more effectively communicated and built upon.

## **Introduction**

The annual Wilton Park conference on nuclear non-proliferation was convened after a turbulent year for the regime. Participants discussed ways in which the international community could manage the growing number of nuclear issues in this current review cycle. This included discussions on North Korea, Iran, counter-proliferation and sanctions, US non-proliferation policy, and the newly adopted Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, among others. This report attempts to reflect the diverse opinions expressed. A recurrent theme was the desire to build bridges between opposing groups across issue areas. At a time when deep and protracted problems plague the global non-proliferation regime, there is hope in the efforts of many to find ways to ensure that the NPT remains healthy and resilient.

## **The global non-proliferation context**

1. The global non-proliferation regime is under unprecedented stress. A myriad of challenges confronts the NPT and the global nuclear order, amid growing concern over the current Review cycle and the ability to achieve success – however that might be defined – at the 2020 RevCon. The most acute challenge in 2017/2018 is the crisis over the Korean peninsula, with consensus that the DPRK should not be recognised as a nuclear state. The united position of the UN Security Council (UNSC) with agreed rounds of UNSC resolutions and sanctions is positive, and the international community must maintain unity and continue to apply pressure on the regime.
2. There is frustration over the stagnation of nuclear disarmament and arms control discussions. Beyond New START, no bilateral nuclear reductions between the United States and Russia are forthcoming. All other nuclear-armed states are modernising their arsenals, yet many argue that Russia and the US must lead the way with practical, pragmatic steps to reduce their weapon stockpiles. Coupled with the increasingly challenged and decreasingly effective multilateral disarmament machinery at the Conference on Disarmament (CD), this negatively affects the global atmosphere on disarmament diplomacy ahead of the NPT RevCon in 2020. The international community must therefore work to protect the gains of the past whilst attempting to make progress for the future. US President Trump's objections to the JCPoA have put the agreement in jeopardy. If the agreement collapses or is abrogated, this will have a negative bearing on NPT regime and may also create a transatlantic rift between the parties of the deal.

3. The nuclear ban treaty has exposed deep fissures in the global nuclear regime. Proponents are seeking to establish a new norm to stigmatise nuclear weapons use and possession. Some fear that this alternative regime could undermine or rival the NPT. Either way, the ban sends an important political message that non-nuclear weapon states are running out of patience for meaningful progress on disarmament. Having now adopted the ban treaty text, the UN will focus on bringing the 2020 RevCon to a successful conclusion and both ban treaty opponents and proponents should turn their attention towards bridge building, in particularly with regards to nuclear weapons education, risk reduction, and addressing the practical challenges of disarmament.
4. The UN is considering ways to kick start the CD, working with members to find a way forward out of the current impasse on the FMCT. States parties must have serious discussions on how to define success in 2020 and start to lay the groundwork. Participants discussed the technical verification of disarmament as a path towards future progress on disarmament. Recent successful technical initiatives are a crucial part of this pathway. More must be done to promote and build on these successes.

### **US nuclear non-proliferation policy**

5. The new US administration is heavily focused on non-proliferation and counter-proliferation efforts, applying pressure to deter further proliferation, fully implementing existing sanctions and encouraging other states to do the same. On the future of arms control in Europe, the current administration has stated itself as more willing to call out and punish perceived violations by Russia. Although acknowledging that arms control can help to preserve strategic stability, the administration's view is that it cannot be divorced from the broader strategic environment. There are concerns that while the Russians are flouting the INF Treaty, the United States remains constrained by its terms and does not wish to be left empty handed should the treaty collapse. The future of New START also remains uncertain. US conditionality is attached to Russia meeting its New START central limits by the deadline, coming back into compliance with INF, and the results of the Nuclear Posture Review. The administration has also initiated a response to Russian violations of the Open Skies Treaty. The first round of strategic stability talks between the US and Russia in Helsinki in September were broadly considered positive.
6. On the DPRK, the US is working with partners to ensure that implementation of UNSC resolutions and the sanction regime is being enforced. On the JCPOA, at the time of the conference the United States remained in the deal, complying with its terms, while working with Congress to add further legislative 'teeth' to the agreement. The administration wishes to reign in what it regards as unacceptable aspects of Iranian behaviour, including curbing Iranian missile development and addressing the so called 'sunset clauses' within the deal, with indefinite extension of limits on Iran's uranium enrichment and other nuclear activities.
7. There is continuing bipartisan agreement over the importance of nuclear security and finding a follow-on mechanism to the Nuclear Security Summit process. The United States is committed to integrating these into the international community's everyday 'muscle memory'. Although there were concerns over the US National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) restricting the United States' contribution to the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO), funds are said to be assured and available for the International Monitoring System. It remains US policy to have protections on civil nuclear cooperation. The US is firmly committed to 123 Agreements to advance non-proliferation norms principles in conjunction with other non-proliferation instruments, such as the NPT. Administrations of both parties have worked to dissuade the spread of sensitive nuclear capabilities.

## North Korean nuclear proliferation

8. As the DPRK develops its nuclear weapon capability, serious challenges over the horizon include the risk of war by miscalculation or accident, rifts emerging between Washington D.C. and Seoul as the crisis tests the health of the alliance, and the United States potentially bypassing South Korea altogether to ramp up military escalation on the Peninsula. Steps must be taken to prevent decoupling between the US and the South Koreans as sought by the DPRK.
9. The DPRK are likely to conduct more missile testing, operational testing and further training with units, and as the programme diversifies it will look to generate further income, presenting the danger of onward proliferation. The international community must take the DPRK's advancing cyber capabilities seriously, which is primarily using for revenue generation at present, but which could be purposed to other means. Managing any possible escalation and finding the right configuration to deal with the problem, therefore, is critical. However, there is no shared understanding between the United States and Asian allies on which DPRK capabilities should be deterred, with South Korea and Japan primarily concerned with the DPRK's short- and mid-range missiles and the United States primarily concerned with the DPRK's ICBM capabilities. Although Beijing is concerned about the prospect of mass refugee movements on its borders in the event of regime collapse and implements UNSC sanctions at a minimal level to maintain its reputation, it is not in China's strategic interest to solve the DPRK problem for the international community. To begin with, US-DPRK 'talks about talks' should be held without preconditions.

## The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)

10. The JCPOA, or Iran Deal, continues to function and all sides are presently in compliance, with Iran subject to the IAEA's most robust verifiable technical limitations and transparency regime. Nevertheless, with uncertainty over the United States' commitment to the deal, the JCPOA must not be taken for granted. It was advised that all parties implement their obligations in full and uphold the spirit of the treaty. The implications of a breakdown would be felt far beyond the E3+3, souring the atmosphere prior to the 2020 RevCon and arresting progress on the WMDFZME. The continued success of the Iran Deal also sets a good example, and may well be a precondition, for successful diplomacy with the DPRK. With Congress having chosen not to reimpose sanctions on Iran following the decertification, the eyes of the world will closely follow the Trump Administration's actions over recertification of the sanctions waiver.
11. As all partners presently remain committed to the deal, it is important for all sides to avoid the temptation to pass swift judgement on lower level infractions, such as continued questions about Iranian unwillingness to allow IAEA inspectors full access to military sites, or make hasty unilateral decisions on commitment to the deal without keeping the bigger picture in mind. E3 governments will continue to work with the US Administration and Congress to develop constructive policy responses. It is important that a 'firewall' is maintained between issues covered by the JCPOA and other issues of concern to the international community. The original deal could not have been struck had not issues been kept separate during negotiations. Similarly, persistent concerns about the ten year 'Sunset Clause', military site inspections, Iranian ballistic missile development and wider issues such as human rights, should be addressed in parallel negotiations to the JCPOA, rather than by reopening the terms of the deal. This approach would improve atmospherics and have better chances of cooperation from international partners that would prefer to retain the deal as it currently stands. As originally conceived, the ten year period bought by the JCPOA should be used to build the necessary trust and confidence with Iran to bring it back into the international community.

## The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons

12. The humanitarian impacts conferences and the subsequent ban treaty process have both drawn international attention to nuclear disarmament. Many non-nuclear weapon states feel more invested and empowered on the issue. It is unlikely that the TPNW initiative will be capable of governing a global disarmament process alone or without steps, but supporters hope that some of the energy generated by the process could be directed into the established non-proliferation regime. There is concern that the ban treaty might cause harm to the objective of the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons. International organisations and states often devote limited resources to departments dealing with disarmament, resulting in limited bandwidth. Time spent on the nuclear ban treaty has opportunity costs elsewhere. Increasing polarisation fomented by the campaign could further hamper efforts to achieve consensus in 2020 and potentially in other fora. Though a ban treaty that has come into force would not legally affect any non-signatory states, some participants felt that the proposed norm that nuclear weapons are illegitimate could disproportionately affect democratic possessor states and states under extended deterrence, potentially to the detriment of their security and at limited cost to less democratic nuclear regimes, and that these concerns had never been adequately addressed by proponents. There is also a concern that the ban treaty does not require the universal application of the highest safeguards standard as recognised by successive RevCons, and rather sets a higher standard of safeguards for nuclear-armed states once disarmed and another for non-nuclear weapon states depending on their safeguards arrangements when they have acceded to the treaty.
13. Bridge building will be central to the peaceful coexistence or complement of the ban treaty and the NPT. All states have an equal responsibility to ensure the smooth functioning of the review cycle and to avoid disproportionately disruptive positioning. States could improve their messaging around successes within the step by step approach, as well as truthfully acknowledging the obstacles it has encountered and the lessons to be learned from mistakes. This might be one method of tempering radical claims that the NPT has failed. States advocating the TPNW should offer greater clarity around their objectives and flaws in the treaty, but their concerns must also be listened to. If states disagree, they should respond by making a reasoned and respectful case for the step by step process.

## Nuclear risks in South Asia

14. There are growing risks of nuclear conflict between China, India and Pakistan, with relations founded on mutual suspicion, competition and growing nationalism. Each maintains a different force posture, force and alert level, and they lack shared concepts. While China and India have declared nuclear No First Use policies, Pakistan has not, and while India considers that missile defence systems can be stabilising, China and Pakistan think the opposite. Each differs on the need and utility of transparency to enhance security. Areas of divergence such as these could be bridged by determining possible risk reduction measures. This could include India and Pakistan resuming and institutionalising a comprehensive dialogue which is insulated from tensions in their bilateral relationship; expanding existing confidence building measures to include an 'incidents at sea' agreement; expanding the 1991 non-attack on declared nuclear facilities agreement with annual exchanges of a list of nuclear facilities which should not be subject to attack; and not conducting cyberattacks against critical infrastructure during peacetime.

15. Both China and India are investing in maritime defences, missile defences, hypersonic weaponry as well as modernising their nuclear capabilities. Yet there is a lack of understanding of the other's modernisation objectives. As China's economy grows and its Belt and Road initiative expands into the Indian Ocean, the danger of a security dilemma increases. Strategic stability dialogues between India and China should be agreed to discuss doctrines and programmes. As part of these discussions China and India could agree measures including direct dialogue or bilateral exchanges on maritime security; notification of ballistic missiles tests; civil nuclear cooperation; and expand security related dialogue and confidence building measures (CBMs). This should also be considered within the broader universe of non-proliferation regime, which includes Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR). It is important to start dialogues as soon as possible; many of programmes, such as offensive cyber capabilities targeted at nuclear command and control, or missile defence, are still in their early stages. There could also be an expansion of crisis communication mechanisms, further dialogues on approaches to civil nuclear cooperation with third countries to improve nuclear export policies and dialogue on negative security assurances. Dialogue is necessary to help preserve regional nuclear stability, particularly since India and Pakistan remain unlikely to join the NPT in the near term.

### **Countering the spread of nuclear technology**

16. A number of institutions and processes now exist which are tasked with preventing and countering the spread of nuclear technologies. The Obama Administration drew significant attention to the importance of nuclear terrorism prevention with four Nuclear Security Summits between 2010 and 2016, resulting in the emergence of new norms, instruments and institutions to enhance nuclear security. However, there has since been a loss of leadership and momentum on this issue. Although there have been some efforts to ensure the implementation and normalisation of good nuclear security practices in the international community, these would appear not to have been fully realised. Debates continue over whether nuclear security is best served by securing stocks or by disarmament. It is imperative to continue to embed nuclear security norms in the international community, protect gains (including reminding domestic bureaucracies of the commitments made at the summits), and galvanise expanded and ambitious top level leadership and cooperation going forward. This will require continued political support and resource commitments from national governments to agree a follow on mechanism to the Nuclear Security Summit process, and 'bake in' best practices to the international system. Further dialogue on safeguarding material in military facilities is needed, though first an appropriate venue for this discussion must be identified.

17. The IAEA faces distinct political and technical challenges: an increasing number of operations on a limited budget, the spread of nuclear knowledge in both the public and private spheres, verifying non-proliferation against the backdrop of emerging technologies such as additive manufacturing, the growing politicisation in the Agency, the breakdown of multilateral arms control, persistent questions about the mandate of the IAEA to verify nuclear disarmament and recruiting the next generation of safeguards inspectors, to name a few. The IAEA will need to continue to evolve and adapt to new challenges, as it has throughout its history, and work with its members to define the scope of its mandate in a changing context.



18. The Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) presently has a large membership for an export control regime of forty eight states and four applications under consideration from India, Pakistan, Namibia and Jordan. Alongside perennial debates, the question of admitting two non-NPT nuclear-armed states (India and Pakistan) is the most significant political challenge for the group, which has consequently decided on non-discriminatory, two step, criteria based approach to the question of new membership. NSG decisions, which are implemented by members' national legislatures, need to be more effectively and evenly implemented, and information exchanges within and between the NSG and other groups around emerging technologies and other common issues should be improved.

### **Counter-proliferation sanctions and finance initiatives**

19. The international community is not doing well on disrupting proliferation financing. The typologies are poorly understood with no universally recognised definition of the 'financing of proliferation'. The international community lacks a top down or UN-down approach, with UNSC resolution 1540 containing relatively few requirements on proliferation financing and a poor implementation record. Traditional counter-proliferation focuses on goods and materials, not money. Moreover proliferators are skillful in identifying weak points in the system. In 2008, the Financial Action Task Force published 20 indicators of possible proliferation financing, the most comprehensive information to date. More information has since been made available, particularly in relation to the proliferation programmes of Iran and the DPRK. The United States should play a greater role to help address this, given its strong record of enforcement, investigative prowess and dominance as the global financial rule maker. The private sector can better support government by specifically seeking to identify transactions relating to financing and proliferation. Where banks do not report proliferation financing, regulators need to put requirements in place.
20. On sanctions, a greater attempt should be made to identify and address the underlying strategic rationales for the potential pursuit of nuclear weapons. Evidently, it may prove impossible to shift the DPRK's security calculations now, and sanctions on India, Pakistan and the DPRK may have strengthened their national resolve. Moreover, the DPRK's security dilemma may be worsened by sanctions and the US's bellicose rhetoric, making it less likely to relinquish its weapons programme. Sanctions also have a limited effect given how little revenue the regime needs and because the DPRK's extreme economic isolation and black-market activities mean it is adept at avoiding sanctions control. A shift in approach was recommended that targets elite goods, such as ski equipment. Even where successfully implemented, it is difficult to credit proliferation prevention to the application of sanctions. However, sanctions are most effective when there is an integrated international approach, such as coordinated European Union and the United States sanctions against Russia. The application of sanctions also necessarily needs to be heavy handed because of underperformance from the international community.

### **The CTBT and FMCT**

21. Entry into force of the CTBT is still an ambition for the international community. The moratorium on testing has stood the test of time and the CTBTO International Monitoring System has demonstrated its capacity to detect nuclear testing in the case of North Korea in the last two years. This demonstrated capability may reinvigorate states to bring the treaty into force. So far, the CTBTO has been relatively shielded from cuts, but before the publication of the Nuclear Posture Review there has been speculation that the United States may look to reduce the time it would take to return to testing in the future. The signature and ratification by those states that haven't yet signed is dependent on all doing the same. A renewed push must be made for entry into force of the treaty to reinforce the non-testing norm.

22. States are engaged in a renewed push to conclude a future non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, or FMCT, both inside and outside the CD. The FMCT Group of Governmental Experts (GGE), concluded in 2015, explored recommendations on possible aspects outside of negotiations that could contribute to successful process going forwards. The FMCT Expert Preparatory Group, chaired by Canada, is mandated by UN GA Resolution 71/259 to examine the GGE report and other documents, and to consider and make recommendations on substantial elements of a treaty. The group's first meeting in summer 2017 was described as very constructive; the second will be held in spring/summer 2018, after which the group's findings will be taken back to Geneva. Neither process was or is intended to be a replacement for formal negotiations at the CD, but instead to minimise outstanding obstacles to allow states to focus on solving their political divergences. An FMCT enjoys wide support, but without substantial progress in the coming years the CD could continue to atrophy. A concluded treaty would bring some degree of transparency to possessor stocks, bring non-NPT possessor states closer to the non-proliferation mainstream (thereby strengthening the NPT from without), halt production races and further lay the groundwork for verifiable nuclear disarmament. States were encouraged to muster their energies and explore compromise to break the body's political deadlock, without which real questions may be asked of relevance of FMCT after such a protracted negotiation period.

### **Advancing Nuclear Disarmament Verification**

23. "NDV stands for Nuclear Disarmament Verification. It's a new acronym. Learn it." The emerging body of NDV knowledge, increasingly developed by initiatives such as the UK-Norway Initiative (UKNI); the Quad Nuclear Verification Partnership (QNVP) consisting of the UK, US, Norway and Sweden; and the International Partnership on Nuclear Disarmament Verification (IPNDV), gives scientific and technical assurances to the political goals of further reductions and ultimately global zero. This systematic preparatory work, which strategic adversaries have a shared interest in developing, will facilitate disarmament negotiations in an improved global security environment, as well as contribute to enhanced confidence itself and demonstrate a meaningful commitment to Article IV. The new NDV GGE, following on from GA resolution 71/67, will meet in Geneva for three five-day sessions over 2018 and 2019 to further develop paths forward. In initial consultations, the 25 member group noted a number of key principles: that nuclear disarmament is based upon transparency, irreversibility and verifiability; that NDV research must be sensitive to proliferation risks where NNWS are involved; and that although it may be possible to develop a general purpose tool kit or a number of NDV models, it is likely that each NDV process will need to be adapted to specific contexts and treaty regimes.
24. There is a significant amount more work to be done on NDV so continued resources and active political support to the research, education, and training provided by these initiatives is necessary. States should give consideration to important questions such as what might follow these initiatives, how capacity can be built and whether institutions like the IAEA might play a role in future NDV work. There is a need for standard definitions of terms such as 'verification', 'transparency', 'assurance' and 'confidence', which are often used interchangeably. The so called 'P5 Process' could develop practical steps among the nuclear weapon states and this might be a way to restore activity in the group. Finally, although technical bridges may be easier to build in the current security climate, they cannot stand in for political bridges in and of themselves, and are best pursued in parallel.

## The NPT review cycle 2020

25. The nuclear weapon states' failure to make adequate progress on the pledges in the 2010 Action Plan along with previously agreed consensus documents and the failure of the 2015 RevCon were argued as evidence of the stagnation of the NPT's disarmament pillar. The historic resilience of the treaty should not be taken for granted and states must show a good faith effort towards making a success of the 2020 RevCon. While some hope could be drawn from the absence of significant disharmony at the 2017 PrepCom, partly credited to the balanced chairing of Ambassador Henk Cor van der Kwast, more substantive discussions on contentious issues, such as the WMDFZME, in the coming meetings could (re)surface underlying disagreements. There was caution against measuring success by the achievement of a consensus document, in case it is not achieved.
26. There was a sense that the impacts of the TPNW on the NPT regime are yet to be felt. On the one hand, the increased global profile of the issue of nuclear disarmament, bolstered by ICAN's 2017 Nobel Peace Prize, for instance, could increase pressure on the democratic nuclear weapon states to contribute to a successful outcome in 2020, though this relies on the political momentum being channelled into productive contributions to the NPT process. One recommendation was that the nuclear weapon states should initiate dialogue on tightening negative security assurances. On the other, there was widespread concern that the limited bandwidth at this review cycle could be taken up by advocacy for and against the TPNW, in which past positions are restated and time lost that could be spent resolving other issues. This led to the recommendation that a respectful voluntary firewall be maintained by all sides between these two treaty regimes, but this did not entirely alleviate the fear that a refusal to discuss the TPNW or find acceptable wording in the draft outcome document could lead to a walk out.
27. States under extended deterrence guarantees are unified in their resolve to make 2020 work and much discussion focused on how to improve atmospherics in and around the conference. The improvement of bilateral relations between the United States and Russia would have wider positive effects for trust and confidence, with concrete actions including resolving outstanding issues on the INF and Open Skies treaties, negotiating an extension to New START, and continuing strategic stability talks. The entry into force of major treaties such as the CTBT and FMCT would also improve atmospherics, and it was recognised that the CTBTO and the FMCT Expert Preparatory Group already appear to be having a positive influence on morale. Likewise, progress on NDV would add further credibility to the proposition that disarmament verification is achievable. Progress on atmospherics cannot substitute for tangible outcomes directly related to the NPT pillars however, and measurable (if modest) progress on the non-proliferation and disarmament pillars especially would be needed to demonstrate that the step by step process is still breathing. On the DPRK, two avenues could be pursued within the review process. First, reaffirm the policy emphasized by previous UN Security Council Resolutions, with an annual resolution of the IAEA General Conference whilst continuing to apply severe sanctions. Second, revert to the discussion on Article 10 of the NPT to keep DPRK accountable and to raise the bar for possible defectors.

## Looking ahead to the 2018 PrepCom

28. The task of the NPT Preparatory Committees (PrepCom) is to discuss specific matters in relation to the implementation of the treaty. In practice, however, no consensus document is passed to the next PrepCom Chair. There is also no obligation to go into a detailed account of what was discussed. For this year's PrepCom, in spite of the difficult context, there are no major tasks to achieve as consensus recommendations fall to the third PrepCom. This provides the Chair considerable leeway and some breathing space. The PrepCom must be seen as an opportunity to take a practical step towards the 2020 Review Conference (RevCon). The main challenge for the 2018 PrepCom is to maintain civility between all state parties. However, the PrepCom should also be a 'safe space' for parties to disagree and an opportunity to review commitments stemming from the last consensual document, namely the 64 Point Action Plan of 2010. Commitments need to be respected and adhering to them is the best way to ensure the vitality of the NPT and its review process. Although the past substantive commitments of Review Conferences from 1995, 2000 and 2010 still remain valid, some past decisions are no longer valid on substantive grounds. For example, in the 13 Steps there is still language on the ABM treaty, now redundant. At this year's PrepCom, the promotion of and elaboration on the eight principles from the Dutch working paper will be explored. That document, endorsed by States Parties of the NPT, remains valid and still constitutes a key point of reference for work.
29. To avoid each RevCon being approached in 'crisis mode' it would be useful to engage with key countries earlier, namely during preceding PrepComs and other events. There is an acute need for bridge builders to start finding initiatives that all parties can unite on. PrepComs are the only format where the P5 can meet ban treaty proponents. There is a potentially useful role for the EU to form a bridge building group with its composition of nuclear-armed, nuclear umbrella and non-nuclear weapon states. The NPDI is also a good example of cooperation between countries that are not like minded but nonetheless can discuss, negotiate and find solutions on difficult issues. For the 2020 RevCon states could consider an Action Plan Plus, where the 'Plus' could be discussed and fleshed out during the next two PrepComs. The RevCon process should be more interactive with further opportunities for substantive discussion and debates under the three clusters, such as panel discussions with experts on risk reduction and disarmament verification, the coexistence of ban treaty and NSAs, national reports on transparency or 'vision statements' on the future state of the NPT that outline where would we like to get to and how we would get there.
30. There are a number of states who still firmly believe in a step by step approach. The first meeting of UN Experts Preparatory Group in Geneva offers prospects for continued discussions with a promising outcome. The quick establishment of the NPT RevCon Bureau will strengthen the review process in real terms and will raise the chances of positive outcome of the 2020 deliberations. Parties could consider various models for conference outcomes, for example, the 1995 model of different decisions. Despite efforts there is still no clear vision on the way forward for the WMD/FZME. Diverging interests make it difficult to find common ground and dynamics in the region make it even more complicated. The initial step should be made by the countries of the region. However, co-conveners, some international organizations or other facilitators can have a subsidiary role as well. The 2018 PrepCom needs to be seen both as an opportunity and a platform to advance on work that was initiated in Vienna and to test out new ideas, in order to make the fullest contribution to the 2020 review cycle.

## Conclusion

It is clear that there are significant threats to the health of the global non-proliferation regime. Fears over the collapse of the Iran Deal or conflict on the Korean Peninsula are likely to pervade this NPT review cycle. Implementation of counter-proliferation finance initiatives remains patchy and a concerted effort will be needed to train or regulate the private sector to play a stronger role. Relations between the United States and Russia continue to be tested and without efforts to restore mutual trust and confidence in the near term, the future of bilateral arms control remains in question. Strategic competition in South Asia is generating arms racing and numerous risks that need basic mitigation. The nuclear weapon states will need to put in the work to build bridges and demonstrate to states behind the TPNW that they can collaborate to make meaningful progress on the disarmament pillar at the 2020 Review Conference, including on tricky issues such as the Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone in the Middle East. Without this, frustration about the pace of disarmament among the non-nuclear weapon states is likely to grow and risk further fracturing in the regime.

Yet, there are some signs of hope. There is now a coordinated international effort through the IPNDV and other initiatives to make progress on technical verification. Although progress in this field alone may not be deemed by many as representing sufficient progress on Article VI, it will nevertheless be a prerequisite for any future disarmament agreements. While the nuclear security agenda has slowed considerably and cannot be taken for granted, practices are becoming more normalised and implementation is improving. The IAEA evidently needs greater support and funding, but the number of states under Comprehensive Safeguards Agreements and the Additional Protocol is growing. Though there are fears of a resumption, each year that goes by without a nuclear test (excepting North Korea) brings the voluntary moratorium on testing closer to a de facto norm and lowers the barriers to bringing the CTBT into force. A sufficient diplomatic push at the Conference at Disarmament may yet yield an FMCT. These advances cannot ultimately stand in for actual verifiable reductions, but they represent opportunities for hope in an otherwise downcast global strategic context. Forecasts that predict the failure of cooperation are sometimes self-fulfilling; as we work together to make the RevCon 2020 a success, it is important to remember that losing hope is perhaps the greatest risk.

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