



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

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His Excellency Ambassador Henk Cor van der Kwast  
Excellencies, Distinguished delegates  
Ladies and gentlemen, Dear colleagues

Thank you so much for this opportunity to address the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

At the outset, I wish to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, on your election as Chair of the Preparatory Committee. I also wish to commend you for your considerable efforts to ensure that the work of the States parties takes place in a constructive and positive atmosphere. This is a critical factor for success, as the first session of the Preparatory Committee can set the tone for the remainder of the review cycle. Congratulations and thank you again.

This is my very first opportunity to address the disarmament community since I assumed my responsibilities as High Representative for Disarmament Affairs exactly one week ago. I very much look forward to getting to know you, to understanding your visions and positions for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, and to working very closely with all of you in the months and years ahead towards our joint objective.

With your indulgence, I would like to share with you a few general observations as a new comer to this community.

The achievement of nuclear-weapon-free world has been an intergenerational cause, since the first use of atomic bombs over Hiroshima and Nagasaki. My first observation is that we now stand at a critical juncture in our shared objective. After decades of slowing progress, long-standing consensus has recently frayed on how best to achieve and maintain a world free of nuclear weapons.

Many States have decided to take a historic step to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons as an interim step. I am aware that there are various views on this, but it is encouraging that all States gathered here remain in agreement that all measures to advance disarmament should be fully compatible with the NPT and should strengthen and complement the nuclear non-proliferation regime. The NPT has been and will have to remain the cornerstone of the international nuclear disarmament regime.

My second observation relates to the international security environment and how it might affect us in disarmament efforts.

In some parts of the world, growing tensions have been accompanied with new nuclear threats. Perpetual efforts to improve nuclear weapons are making international disputes more dangerous. The unconstrained development of advanced new military capabilities is breeding mistrust. The failure to consolidate emerging norms will give breathing space for proliferation. If unchecked, these trends will only lead to dire consequences.

As the Secretary-General recognized in his message to this year's Conference on Disarmament, the security environment is increasingly complex, but the complexity cannot be an excuse for inaction and cynicism. Two concrete cases demonstrate on the one hand the increased security risks, and on the other hand what we can do to address them through sincere dialogue and mutual respect.

There has, of course, been no starker example of the heightened risk and tension than the situation regarding the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Over the past eighteen months, the Security Council has met a dozen times to address the DPRK's unacceptable and destabilizing nuclear tests and ballistic missile activities.

There has also been an important achievement. The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on the nuclear programme of Iran was made possible based upon a commitment to dialogue and the principle of the peaceful resolution of disputes.

This brings me to my third and final observation.

There seems to be a widespread view that we must wait for the right international environment before we can expect progress on nuclear disarmament. In my view, part of this argument misses the central role that nuclear arms play in fuelling the deterioration of the international security situation.

For many decades, measures for arms control and disarmament have served to ease international tension and to strengthen mutual trust. It is no coincidence that major reductions in nuclear arsenals were achieved during the most dangerous days of the Cold War.

Those States that possess and continue to rely on nuclear weapons bear the largest burden for ensuring progress. And those States with the largest nuclear arsenals are rightly expected to lead. But the NPT's disarmament obligation is shared amongst all the parties and so every State has a duty to make a contribution.

Distinguished delegates, Dear colleagues,

The outset of a new NPT review cycle and this near-universal setting should therefore be seen as a major opportunity for constructive and pragmatic re-engagement by all the parties to this Treaty.

A priority task for the Preparatory Committee will be the formulation of recommendations to ensure the full implementation of past commitments. I am encouraged that all parties seem to agree that the outcomes reached in 1995, 2000 and 2010 remain fully valid.

In this regard, measures to promote accountability, transparency and mutual trust could be essential and could build upon the accomplishments of the previous cycle. The Committee should also seek to identify as early as possible a new common vision for the implementation of the 1995 Resolution on the Middle East. This should include the early restart of inclusive dialogue among the States of the region.

I hope that the positive start to your session endures and facilitates your efforts to reach consensus on the acceleration of all outstanding commitments, leading to the full implementation of the Treaty. Let me conclude by assuring you of my and my team's full commitment to support you in your important work.

I wish you success for all your remaining meetings this week and at the subsequent sessions of the Preparatory Committee towards the 2020 Review Conference.

I thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.