



**Opening Remarks by High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Ms. Izumi  
Nakamitsu at the United Nations General Assembly First Committee  
ODA/UNIDIR Side Event on “Reducing Nuclear Risks”**



New York  
16 October 2018

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to be able to speak at this event. The topics you are addressing today are, sadly, very timely.

As I hope all of you know, in his disarmament agenda, Secretary-General Guterres reaffirmed nuclear disarmament as the highest disarmament priority for the United Nations.

It is a priority underscored by a commitment to the web of multilateral, plurilateral, bilateral and even unilateral instruments that make up the disarmament and non-proliferation regime.

From the NPT to the CTBT and TPNW, treaties create, build and reinforce the norms necessary for the pursuit of a world free of nuclear weapons, including the essential norm against the use of nuclear weapons.

However, throughout the nuclear age and especially during the Cold War, these norms have been undergirded by a range of measures to reduce the risk of nuclear use, especially in times of crisis. Those measures, largely developed between the United States and the former Soviet Union, helped lessen the dangers of nuclear war. They were essential to building the confidence required to bring that protracted conflict to an end.

It is an unfortunate fact that the deteriorating international security environment and diminished relations between nuclear powers have heightened the risk of a nuclear detonation – either intentionally, through miscalculation or by accident – to levels not seen in more than three decades.

While the only way to eliminate the risks posed by nuclear weapons is the total elimination of the weapons themselves, these times of heightened tension and global anxiety require, as the Secretary-General said in his agenda, that “risk reduction measures . . . be pursued with a new sense of urgency.”

Increased prominence for nuclear weapons in national security strategies coupled with ongoing modernization programmes to improve the lethality of arsenals and the emergence of new risks emanating from technological developments, all underscore the need for urgent steps to place an immediate brake on any prospect of nuclear weapon use.

But I do want to make something clear – risk reduction measures should not replace broader and more far-reaching disarmament measures, they should be actions that advance the cause of a world free of nuclear weapons.

Likewise, risk reduction measures should always take into account all States’ national security considerations. To not do so would, as the Secretary-General’s agenda makes clear, undermine the purpose of such measures in “enhancing stability and increasing security for all”.

The agenda outlines multiple risk reduction options, including transparency in nuclear-weapon programmes, further reductions in all types of nuclear weapons, commitments not to introduce new and destabilizing types of nuclear weapons, reciprocal commitments for the non-use of nuclear weapons and reducing of the role of nuclear weapons in security doctrines.

In addition to these measures that can be broadly applied, it is also worth considering whether in an increasingly multipolar world order there is need for specific risk reduction approaches to regional flashpoints.

After all, in regional conflicts with nuclear dimensions there are a variety of factors at play, including historical regional relationships, the relative maturity of political dialogue and the technological sophistication of arsenals, that can influence nuclear risk.

In the same vein, the world has moved on from the Cold War. Today's world is far more technologically advanced and connected. The potential risks that innovations in, for example, cyber technologies or artificial intelligence, could pose should be examined.

I want to thank all of today's panelists for giving up their time to join us and I hope that you will make the most of their expert views to transform this topic into a broader debate, including within the disarmament machinery.

Let me stress again that our goal is a world free of nuclear weapons and taking immediate steps to reduce the unacceptable risks posed by these weapons is an important element to achieve it.

Thank you.