



**United Nations Security Council Briefing:**

**Supporting the Non-Proliferation Treaty  
ahead of the 2020 Review Conference**

**Remarks by Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu  
High Representative for Disarmament Affairs**



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His Excellency Foreign Minister Heiko Maas, President of the Security Council,

Director-General Yukiya Amano,

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

I congratulate the German Presidency for convening today's briefing. The possible use of nuclear weapons, either intentionally, by accident, or through miscalculation, is one of the greatest threats to international peace and security. The potential consequences of a nuclear war would be global and affect all Member States.

Therefore, it is entirely appropriate that the Council discuss measures related to preventing such a catastrophic outcome and, in particular, the one instrument that has perhaps played the greatest role in doing so.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, or the NPT, has been an enduring feature of the international security landscape for nearly fifty years.

The NPT is widely acknowledged as the "cornerstone" of the international non-proliferation regime and the essential foundation of nuclear disarmament. Its role as a pillar of our collective security is likewise an accepted fact.

There are four key elements to the success of the Treaty:

First, it contains verifiable non-proliferation obligations in the form of safeguards on peaceful nuclear activities.

Second, it is the only treaty that contains legally-binding commitments to pursue nuclear disarmament.

Third, the treaty establishes a strategic balance between three pillars of nuclear disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation and access to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, in ways that seek to maximize their benefits for all States parties.

Fourth, its near universality provides a clear authority and ensures almost global subscription to its normative framework.

Throughout its long history, the NPT has provided tangible security benefits not just for its States parties but for all States.

That President Kennedy's dire prediction that there would be between ten and twenty nuclear-armed States by the 1970s did not come true can largely be laid at the feet of the NPT.

That in 2019, there are only four States with nuclear weapon capabilities, or suspected capabilities, outside the Treaty remains one of the greatest success stories of multilateral diplomacy.

We can all agree that the spread of nuclear weapons to greater numbers of States equates to greater possibility of their use. That this has not happened is because of the value States parties continue to place in their membership of the NPT and the non-proliferation benefits it provides.

We must today reconfirm that the security benefits that have been derived from the implementation of Article VI – those related to nuclear disarmament – have been equally important.

Under the leadership of the nuclear-weapon States, States parties' efforts to implement Article VI helped ease global tension, reduced great power conflict, and built confidence among nuclear-armed competitors.

Reductions in nuclear arsenals, frameworks to reduce nuclear risk, and efforts to drive forward multilateral nuclear disarmament are all "effective measures" under Article VI.

And all helped to create an environment conducive to broader international cooperation for various global challenges of our time, from peace and security to development and climate change.

The two pillars of the NPT – disarmament and non-proliferation – are two sides of the same coin. Backward movement on one will result in backward movement on the other.

Implementation of commitments made under both strengthens mutual trust and advances the cause of a world free of nuclear weapons.

As the Secretary-General has stressed: disarmament and non-proliferation are important mechanisms that help make the world safer and more secure. They are measures to help

prevent, mitigate and resolve conflict, and can and should be pursued in tandem with other peace-making and security processes.

Excellencies,

The NPT has proven remarkably durable. However, that durability should not be taken for granted.

Today we find ourselves in an international environment defined by competition over cooperation, and the acquisition of arms prioritized over the pursuit of diplomacy.

The disarmament success of the post-Cold War era has come to a halt. In its place there is dangerous rhetoric about the utility of nuclear weapons and an increased reliance on these weapons in security doctrines. Expensive modernization programmes that will make nuclear weapons faster, stealthier and more accurate have effectively announced the arrival of a qualitative nuclear arms race.

Rapid technological developments will begin to impact our international security environment in many different ways, including potentially lowering barriers to the acquisition of nuclear weapons. Last but not least, regional conflicts might heighten proliferation drivers.

The disarmament and arms control framework upon which the gains of the post-Cold War era were made is eroding, but we have nothing else yet with which to replace it.

As a result, the prospect of the use of nuclear weapons is higher than it has been in generations.

Together, these developments are placing the NPT under increasing stress and are exacerbating the fault lines that have been clearly evident between States parties for some time now.

In this context, the 2020 Review Conference will be a defining moment.

I do not believe that the failure to achieve consensus in 2020 necessarily signals the demise of the Treaty. But it would set a poor precedent and it would further highlight divisions between States parties. It would raise questions about willingness of states to seek collective

security for all, rather than narrow, short-term and eventually unsustainable security benefits for individual states.

I believe we should avoid this situation.

2020 – the fiftieth anniversary of the NPT’s entry into force and the twenty-fifth anniversary of its indefinite extension – presents a golden opportunity to make the practical gains that will ensure the Treaty’s continued viability. A strong, political level re-affirmation by all to the Treaty will be important.

In the short time remaining between now and 2020, I hope States parties will consider four things.

First, the need for demonstrated implementation by all States parties of commitments made during previous review cycles.

Past commitments cannot be arbitrarily abrogated or else they become no more valuable than the paper on which they are written. The failure of implementation undermines potential future gains across all three of the Treaty’s pillars.

Second, the need for genuine dialogue about our current predicament in international security, and how the NPT can be a vehicle to reduce nuclear risk and enhance stability in ways that also take concrete steps toward nuclear disarmament.

Third, the need to ensure the strategic balance between the pillars.

The NPT is often described as a ‘grand bargain’. I see it more as a series of bargains or, rather, commitments made. It is important to recognise that they are all mutually reinforcing.

Fourth, the need for creative thinking about what a successful outcome looks like in 2020.

Since 1995, Review Conferences have produced decisions, action plans, practical steps and measures to improve the effectiveness of the review process itself. In 2020, States parties need to consider what possible outcome can both ensure success and drive forward implementation of the Treaty.

Excellencies,

The security benefits provided by the NPT have been manifest in times of relative stability. They should be even more so in an era of international turbulence. The NPT should be a mechanism through which to help create a safer and more secure world. It should be a basis on which to build trust and confidence, to address emerging threats and challenges, and to lay the ground for future gains in the pursuit of our collective goal of a world free of nuclear weapons. Whatever new arms control and disarmament approaches in the 21<sup>st</sup> century might look like, one thing is clear: the NPT will still be at the centre of our collective security mechanism. It will have to stay fit for purpose.

I remain convinced that the 2020 Review Conference is an opportunity to make headway on all of these goals, and to make sure this linchpin of international security remains fit for purpose through the next twenty-five or even fifty years.

Thank you.