



**Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons: Third  
Preparatory Committee Session of the 2020 Review Cycle**

**Side event: “Nuclear Risk Reduction: The State of Ideas”**

**Ms Izumi Nakamitsu  
High Representative for Disarmament Affairs**



New York  
30 April 2019

Ambassador Dallafior,

Ambassador Liddle,

Ambassador Viinanen,

Distinguished panelists, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

I want to thank the Government of Switzerland for hosting today's event, which builds on a similar event that took place during the First Committee. I also want to thank them for their continued commitment to keeping this issue at the forefront of States' thinking.

There seems to be an emerging consensus that the risk of the use of nuclear weapons, either intentionally, by accident or through miscalculation, is higher than it has been in decades. This is due to a variety of interconnected factors – chief amongst them being current geostrategic tensions and the emergence of technological innovations with strategic implications.

Moreover, these interconnected factors have added new nuclear risks that were not present during the Cold War's bipolar world.

Brakes on nuclear weapons use are progressively being removed, through the demise of transparency and confidence-building measures, through the use of dangerous rhetoric related to the utility of nuclear weapons, and above all through the lack of dialogue between States possessing nuclear weapons and the erosion of communication mechanisms.

For this reason, in his Agenda for Disarmament, Secretary-General Guterres stated that "In our current time of heightened tensions and global anxiety, risk-reduction measures should be pursued with a new sense of urgency pending the total elimination of nuclear weapons."

As developed throughout the Cold War and its aftermath, risk reduction comprises a spectrum of measures. They include political and doctrinal measures such as "no first use" or "sole purpose" declarations, technical measures, such as exchanges of data, transparency measures, such as information about deployments, and prohibitory measures such as the banning of particularly destabilizing weapons.

The concept of risk reduction is clearly a broad one. It is also a subjective one. Risk reduction means different things to different States. In some cases, what is obviously risk reduction to one could be seen as inherently destabilizing to another.

For this reason, I support wholeheartedly the project currently being undertaken by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research. This project seeks to take more systematic approach and to achieve a common understanding of what can constitute mutually-agreeable risk reduction. Given the increasingly multipolar nature of the world, the project also helpfully aims to identify how risk reduction measures can be applied in different nuclear contexts, including regional dimensions.

In the current environment, the need for States, and especially those States possessing nuclear weapons, to come to agreement on a set of practical, forward-looking risk reduction measures should be of the utmost priority in order to increase predictability and transparency and, therefore, confidence.

As I noted earlier, the application of new technologies has had a particular impact on nuclear risk. I therefore strongly encourage States to take the opportunity to include measures relating to the nexus between nuclear weapons and recent technological developments. This is an area that is in need of much greater study and analysis. When it comes to this nexus there is much we do not know or understand, and yet these developments could open serious vulnerabilities that heighten nuclear risk.

Risk reduction should be an urgent priority. However, there is a reason why the Secretary-General included risk reduction under the heading of “preparing for a nuclear weapon-free world” in his agenda. That is because preventing the use of nuclear weapons should not be seen in isolation from our overarching imperative – the achievement of a world free of nuclear weapons. Measures that reduce the risk of nuclear weapons should also help us take forward steps in this direction.

I look forward to hearing your views on these topics.

Thank you.