



United Nations Conference to negotiate a legally-binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons leading to their total elimination

General exchange of views: Principles and objectives and preambular elements

Statement by H. E. Ambassador Guilherme de Aguiar Patriota

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Madam President,

The States and civil society organizations participating in this conference are here to seek a solution to one of the most serious threats to the present and future of human race: the continuing existence of nuclear weapons.

The great danger that these weapons pose to life on earth and the need to make "every effort to avert the danger of nuclear" war and to take measures to "safeguard the security of peoples" are recognized by the "Non-Proliferation Treaty of Nuclear Weapons" (NPT).

Although there is general agreement that these weapons, far from helping to strengthen international security, on the contrary weaken it, the international community has not been, until now, able to take effective measures in relation to nuclear disarmament. Paralyzed for over twenty years, the Conference on Disarmament has manifestly failed in bringing us closer to a world free of nuclear weapons.

The unequivocal undertaking to accomplish the total elimination of nuclear arsenals, on the other hand, has received a rather equivocal interpretation according to which

nuclear disarmament obligations are perceived as a voluntary endeavor to be carried out at a pace, in a manner, and on the terms decided by a few.

Unfortunately, there are no credible indications that nuclear-weapon States are moving towards fulfilling their nuclear disarmament obligations and commitments. On the contrary, what we see is a reiteration of policies that only confirm their flagrant determination to continue with such weapons for the coming decades, if not forever, in a self-interested interpretation of the 1995 decision to extend the NPT indefinitely.

Madam President,

In spite of this profound diplomatic deadlock, recent discussions on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons have confronted us with the urgency of taking action to ensure that such weapons will never be used again.

The Conferences on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, held in Oslo, Nayarit, and Vienna, have deepened our collective realization of the grave immediate, mid- and long-term consequences of a nuclear weapon explosion, which would not be constrained by national borders, but would have regional and even global effects, threatening the survival of our planet.

The future treaty should recognize the complexity of and interrelationship between these consequences on health, environment, infrastructure, food security, climate, development, social cohesion and the global economy, which are systemic and potentially irreversible.

Our concerns have been amplified by the ongoing modernization of nuclear weapon arsenals in nuclear weapon possessing states, the role attributed to nuclear weapons in the nuclear doctrines of possessor states, and the emergence of a rhetoric that values nuclear weapons, which increase significantly the risk of a nuclear weapon explosion, either by intent or accident.

Aware that the risk of nuclear weapons use can only be avoided when all nuclear weapons have been eliminated, and convinced that all States must make special efforts to establish the necessary framework to achieve and maintain a world without nuclear weapons, Brazil considers that the negotiation of a legally binding instrument is a long-overdue moral and legal duty of the international community.

Madam President,

The ultimate aim of a future treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons is to contribute to the realization of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, in particular the objectives of saving succeeding generations from the scourge of war and reaffirming the fundamental dignity and worth of the human person.

More than seventy years ago, the very first Resolution approved by the UN General Assembly focused precisely on what was then, as it is now, the greatest challenge before the international community: the need to prohibit and eliminate all atomic weapons from national armaments.

The humanitarian consequences of the use of nuclear weapons not only assail the conscience of humankind, but are also contrary to the rules of international law, including humanitarian law and international human rights law.

In particular, international humanitarian law principles establish that the right of parties to an armed conflict to choose methods or means of warfare is not unlimited. In addition, there are rules which determine that the parties to a conflict shall at all times distinguish between the civilian population and combatants, and between civilian objects and military ones, and accordingly direct their operations against military objectives only.

Finally, in the conduct of military operations, constant care shall be taken to spare the civilian population and individual civilians must enjoy general protection against dangers arising from military operations.

Madam President,

This humanitarian concern was a motivating factor in establishing the NPT, and remains a motivating factor for those who support the negotiation of a legally binding treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination.

In this regard, the future treaty should reaffirm the object and the purposes of the NPT, and note that without the requisite progress on nuclear disarmament, the objectives of the Treaty will never be realized.

It should thus be emphasized the urgent need to make progress on Article VI of the NPT. This would most certainly help restoring the Treaty's credibility and, with the nuclear ban in place, give its principles and objectives additional normative support.

Madam President,

Against this background, Brazil believes that the preamble of the future treaty should include the reiteration of the determination of the States Parties to act with a view to achieving effective progress towards general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control, including the prohibition and elimination of all types of weapons of mass destruction.

The preamble should recognize the contribution of civil society and all those who spoke out and mobilized to make this Conference and the treaty a reality, thereby sustaining positive momentum for the international community to fulfill our shared commitment towards a world free of nuclear weapons.

The preamble should also recognize the fundamental and historical contribution of the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Bangkok, Pelindaba and Semipalatinsk, which created the nuclear-weapon-free zones, as effective legally binding measures to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons.

Madam President,

As emphasized by the Declaration of the Tenth Special Session of the General Assembly, the first special session devoted to disarmament, measures of disarmament must be consistent with the inalienable right of all States, without discrimination, to develop, acquire and use nuclear technology, equipment and materials for the peaceful use of nuclear energy and to design their peaceful nuclear programmes in accordance with their national priorities, needs and interests, bearing in mind the need to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Thank you.