

NPT Review Conference Preparatory Committee

Third Session

General Debate

Statement by Finland
H.E. Ambassador Jarmo Viinanen
Head of Delegation

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(check against delivery)



Permanent Mission of Finland
to the United Nations

Mr Chairman,

Allow me to congratulate you on assuming the chair of the third Preparatory Committee meeting of the 2020 NPT Review Conference. I want to assure you of my delegation's full support to you in your demanding task.

In addition to the statements by the European Union, and by Norway on behalf of the Nordic States, I am honoured to deliver our national statement.

Mr Chairman,

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty is a major achievement of the international community. It is a cornerstone of international peace and security. The UN Security Council highlighted this fact on 2 April 2019 at its meeting on the NPT.

However, dark clouds are gathering on the horizon – for international relations, and for the NPT. Big power competition is on the rise. Some nuclear weapon states increasingly emphasise the role of nuclear weapons in their security doctrines. New nuclear weapons are developed. Nuclear proliferation remains a persistent problem. Arms control and other treaties are violated. The rules-based international order is challenged on all fronts.

This is not the time for ignorance or complacency. This is the time for action. Action to strengthen the international arms control architecture. Action to fully comply with and implement all three pillars of the NPT. When each State Party fulfils its obligations, all can enjoy the full benefits of the treaty.

The 50th anniversary of the NPT in 2020 deserves to be a celebration of the success of the treaty. We look forward to high-level political participation in the Review Conference, and remain open to the option of a political declaration reaffirming our commitments under the NPT. A possible high-level declaration would in no way substitute for or prejudice any other outcome of the Review Conference.

At this third and final Preparatory Committee, our task is clear: Building on the outcomes of the two previous Preparatory Committee meetings, and the Action Plan adopted in 2010, we should seek to identify areas where progress is possible over the coming year. As a practical step, the Committee is required to adopt the agenda of the Review Conference. To ensure a robust preparatory process, we would also like to see the Committee confirming the nomination of the President of the Review Conference.

Mr Chairman,

For Finland, all three pillars of the NPT are equally important. They are mutually enabling and reinforcing. Strengthening any one of them will strengthen the whole.

Today, proliferation of nuclear weapons and other nuclear devices poses the most acute nuclear threat. The nuclear weapons and missile programmes of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea remain a significant concern. While we welcome the ongoing diplomatic efforts, we continue to urge the DPRK to fully comply with its international obligations, in line with relevant UN Security Council Resolutions.

Finland has provided substantive support to the implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, the agreement on the Iranian nuclear programme, and remains committed to Security Council resolution 2231. We deeply regret the US withdrawal from this landmark agreement. It is our firm belief that the continued implementation of the JCPOA also serves to strengthen the NPT.

Preventing nuclear terrorism is also a challenge we need to tackle together. In this, the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism is an important tool. Having served as international coordinator of the initiative for the past two years, we are more convinced than ever of the value of the type of hands-on, practical cooperation it promotes. We encourage all countries, not yet members, to join the initiative.

Mr Chairman,

In disarmament and non-proliferation, compliance and confidence are everything. Every actor and every action can contribute to increasing mutual trust – or to corroding it.

The Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF) has contributed greatly to European and global security for over three decades. Its demise would be a tremendous loss for all. We urge Russia to return to compliance with its obligations under the treaty, to enable continued implementation of the treaty.

Further reductions by the two biggest nuclear weapon states in their arsenals are key to building confidence and gradually advancing our ultimate goal, a world free of nuclear weapons.

The New START Treaty increases predictability and stability, thus contributing greatly to international peace and security. In addition, Treaty's implementation contributes to reducing the risk of strategic surprise, mistrust, and miscalculations that can result from excessive secrecy or decisions based on worst-case assumptions. We call on the United States and the Russian Federation to show leadership and extend the New START. An early extension would provide the time needed to consider possible new arms control agreements, with further limitations and a wider coverage.

In this context, it is important to take into account non-strategic nuclear weapons, which are currently not covered by any legally binding arrangement. Addressing the normative gap for non-strategic nuclear weapons would be a logical next step in nuclear arms control.

Further, Finland is of the view that non-nuclear weapon states that are committed to the NPT have a legitimate right to receive legally binding negative security assurances from nuclear weapon states. Strengthening these commitments would be an important outcome of the current review process.

Finland supports a pragmatic approach with concrete steps in nuclear disarmament. One important step is creating a multilateral verification mechanism. Finland has contributed actively to both the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification (IPNDV), including by hosting an IPNDV Joint Working Group meeting in Helsinki, and the Group of Governmental Experts on nuclear disarmament verification. We welcome the report of the GGE and look forward to further work on this topic.

We also welcome the increased attention given to nuclear risk reduction. Finland has supported UNIDIR's research on risk reduction and we are pleased to host a side event on the topic with UNIDIR and Switzerland tomorrow, Tuesday. We hope the research project will spur further, fruitful discussions on practical ways to promote risk reduction. Risk reduction, evidently, cannot substitute for nuclear disarmament, but can serve as a building block in nuclear disarmament efforts.

Let me also reiterate our strong support for a treaty banning weapons-grade fissile material production (FMCT) and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT).

Mr Chairman,

I am proud to say that Finland was the first country to sign the Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement with the IAEA. We also promptly signed and ratified the Additional Protocol. We urge all States to do the same, to show their commitment to non-proliferation with full transparency.

Finland has a long tradition of close cooperation with the IAEA. Developing national expertise has been central in ensuring the safety and security of our national nuclear programme. Through our bilateral support programme, we have lent our national expertise to the Agency to develop the safeguards system and train international inspectors – already for over 30 years.

Peaceful applications of nuclear energy and other nuclear technologies can bring enormous benefits to and raise the quality of life of millions of people, and make an important contribution to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Full gains from peaceful applications require the highest standards of nuclear safety and security – and full commitment to non-proliferation in line with NPT obligations.

Mr Chairman,

The NPT is our common achievement, one that we all have benefited from tremendously. Now it is our joint responsibility, as States Parties, to ensure that these achievements are preserved and built upon, for the benefit of future generations.

Focusing on our shared interests, narrowing down differences, and seeking compromise where necessary, we can pave the way towards a successful Review Conference next year. My delegation looks forward to working with you, Mr Chairman, and with all delegations, towards that aim.

Thank you, Mr Chairman.