

## NPT Prep Com 2019 - General Debate – Statement by Sweden

Mr Chair,

Let me congratulate you on assuming the important task of chairing the third and final Prep Com of this Review Cycle. I can assure you of the full support and cooperation of the Swedish delegation.

Sweden associates itself with the general statement of the European Union, as well as the one delivered on behalf of the Nordic countries. My statement today adds a national perspective.

Mr Chair, dear delegates,

The backdrop to this gathering is the most challenging global security environment since the height of the Cold War. Its most striking feature is the severe lack of mutual trust. In a world with a global nuclear arsenal of some 15 000 warheads, each one capable of causing unspeakable human suffering, the absence of confidence-building is an acute problem.

As disarmament regimes are replaced by the modernisation of arsenals; key international treaties are left hollow or without proper implementation. The common goal of a world free of nuclear weapons has rarely felt more relevant. Yet it remains frustratingly remote, a frustration often heard from civil society that struggles to raise awareness on this important issue. A world where security is dependent on nuclear weapons remains a fragile one where a single human mistake can cause a humanitarian disaster. Or in the words of Dag Hammarskjöld:

*"In this field, as we well know it, a standstill does not exist;*

*if you do not go forward, you go backwards."*

So why are we here? We are here to turn this around, we are here because we are willing to carry this responsibility and start making real change towards building trust and ensuring disarmament. It is our job to find ways to turn the so-called doomsday clock back from its current setting of two minutes to midnight.

Mr Chair,

Reversing this negative trend will be highly challenging. Yet there can be few more urgent tasks. For the Swedish Government, it will be a top foreign and security policy priority for years to come. Three overarching considerations will guide Swedish policy:

Firstly, the crucial platform is the NPT.

For 50 years, the treaty has served global security very well – eminently underpinned by the IAEA, whose board Sweden is proud to have been nominated to chair in 2019-2020. But with the Review Conference in 2015 ending without consensus, and in view of developments since then, the future of the NPT cannot be taken for granted.

Nuclear and non-nuclear weapon states alike must now engage urgently, fully and pragmatically – also at a political level – to identify the common ground necessary for a successful outcome in 2020.

A good point of departure would be universal recognition that the three pillars of the treaty are closely interlinked and mutually reinforcing. Progress will be difficult to achieve unless it is faithful to this logic at the heart of the NPT. To be clear: concrete disarmament commitments must be a central part of any consensus package.

To support such an endeavour, Sweden is hosting a ministerial-level meeting in Stockholm on 11 June. We have invited a number of countries with different security perspectives that can contribute in mobilising political support for an ambitious yet realistic agenda. From a Swedish perspective, this should include:

- a re-affirmation of the position of the NPT as the cornerstone of the global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime;
- a re-affirmation of the continued validity of previous commitments made within the NPT framework – there can be no backtracking;
- an unequivocal expression against the notion of any nuclear use – *“a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought”*
- a package of measures, covering all three pillars of the treaty, which include progress in implementation of outstanding Article VI-related commitments; and, finally,
- an improved NPT process which provides a framework for systematic follow-up in the years beyond 2020.

If NPT members can unite behind such a package, it would demonstrate that we are serious about breaking the vicious circle of recent years – that unlocking disarmament diplomacy is possible. That would be a very powerful political message, and my ambition is that the conference in Stockholm will contribute to this.

Secondly, we need to identify common ground, also on disarmament.

The traditional step-by-step approach contains several long-standing items, among them agreement on a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty, the entry-into-force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and a global and legally binding agreement on negative security assurances.

The realisation of any of these would be a landmark achievement and their continued relevance should be recalled in 2020.

The NPT community cannot come empty-handed next year. There is a need for “actionable” steps – or stepping stones, a concept which was the subject of a side-event yesterday organised by Sweden in collaboration with Basic and further elaborated on in a Swedish working paper.

Areas to explore in the search for stepping stones should include:

- reducing the role of nuclear weapons in policies and doctrines, including by strengthening negative security assurances;
- reviving habits of cooperation, building on the fruitful interaction between nuclear and non-nuclear weapon states on disarmament verification;
- ways of enhancing transparency on arsenals and fissile material stocks; and
- measures designed to reduce the risks of intentional or unintentional nuclear use.

All these areas are part of the NPT acquis, not least the outcome document from the 2000 Review Conference and the 2010 NPT Action Plan.

Thirdly, we must build trust!

The purpose of the stepping stones, in addition to addressing real short-term concerns, would be to build the trust and confidence lacking today. Such an approach could help to unlock current diplomatic blockages, in the process making the more substantial disarmament steps already on the diplomatic agenda a more realistic future possibility.

Disarmament as a discipline should not be reduced to playing the role of a passive observer awaiting the arrival of better times.

One issue of profound importance will be whether the crisis plaguing strategic arms control can be overcome and a nuclear arms race avoided. The United States and Russia should assume the special responsibilities that comes with their possession of the overwhelmingly largest arsenals. They should take immediate steps to rebuild a constructive arms control relationship. A crucial first step would be to save the INF Treaty, however slim the chances, by Russia verifiably demonstrating its full compliance. Further, I urge the United States and Russia to agree on a

five-year extension of the New START, a critical deliverable for the Review Conference. In the period leading up to 2026, negotiations should be conducted on a successor regime, encompassing not only strategic but also, crucially, non-strategic nuclear weapons.

Mr Chair,

In the coming two weeks, delegations must come together and constructively set the stage for the Review Conference. Everyone has a role to play in making that conference the success global security so clearly needs. Multilateralism needs to be at the center of our efforts. On this, and many other aspects the United Nations Secretary General's Agenda for Disarmament serves as an inspiration. Sweden is especially proud to be champion on gender in the disarmament machinery.

I remain convinced that a world free of nuclear weapons can only be achieved by building trust, delivering on commitments and brave political leadership. Turning this vision into reality is our joint responsibility and in the end the reason we are gathered here.

Thank you!