



The Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference: Breakthrough or Bust in '05?

A BASIC/ORG project - Briefing 10

A Promise Not Realised: Nuclear Disarmament by the Nuclear Weapon States

Background

The five Nuclear Weapon States (NWS) – China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States – are committed under Article VI of the NPT to “pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament”.

As part of a package of decisions that allowed the NPT to be extended indefinitely without a vote at the 1995 Review Conference, States Parties agreed to a series of *Principles and Objectives for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament*. The NWS agreed to the “determined pursuit” of “systematic and progressive efforts to reduce nuclear weapons globally, with the ultimate goal of eliminating those weapons”. They also agreed that future Review Conferences should:

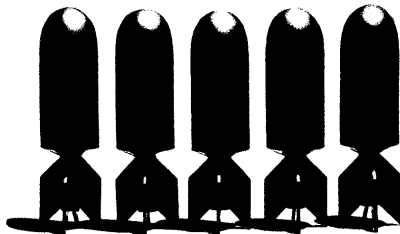
Evaluate the results of the period they are reviewing, including the implementation of undertakings of the States Parties under the Treaty, and identify the areas in which, and the means through which, further progress should be sought in the future.

In the 2000 NPT Review Conference Final Document States Parties agreed to 13 “practical steps for the systematic and progressive efforts to implement Article VI”, including an “unequivocal undertaking” by the NWS to “accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals”.

China

China claims to be contributing to nuclear disarmament through its long-standing policy of ‘no first use’ of nuclear weapons but it currently appears to be neither ready nor willing to enter the disarmament process itself. There have been no new initiatives to implement the 2000 Final Document and China has been pursuing modernisation of its nuclear forces to improving their accuracy and mobility.

Although China has submitted several working papers at recent NPT



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meetings, it is the least transparent of the NWS. It has provided little or no information about its nuclear weapons programme or steps it has taken to implement the 2000 Final Document. Instead, China has focused mainly on multilateral steps and the responsibilities of other parties to the Treaty. In a working paper to the 2004 PrepCom, it argues that:

States possessing the largest nuclear arsenals shoulder special responsibilities for nuclear disarmament and should take the lead to drastically reduce their nuclear arsenals, set their reduction promise in a legal form and destroy all the nuclear weapons reduced from their arsenals.

France



France regards nuclear deterrence as a “pillar” of its defence policy. In June 2001, far from endorsing any unequivocal commitment to eliminate France's nuclear weapons, President Jacques Chirac reaffirmed that nuclear deterrence is and will continue to be the “ultimate guarantee” of French security.

France claims to have “halved the number of nuclear delivery vehicles in its force”. However, much of these reductions have taken place as a result of removing from service older weapon systems, such as the Pluton, Hades and S3D ground launched missiles, and ending the Mirage IV's nuclear mission.

Although France cites a list of “significant decisions...regarding implementation of Article VI”, including ratification of the CTBT and the closure of its nuclear test sites in the Pacific, all these decisions were taken in the 1990s and it gives no examples of steps taken to implement the 2000 Final Document.

France is currently pursuing an extensive modernisation programme. It is deploying four new *Triomphant*-class nuclear submarines, armed with TN75 nuclear warheads and is developing a new submarine-launched missile, the M51, which will carry up to six nuclear warheads and will have a greater range and accuracy than the current M45 missile. In addition France is currently modernising its air-sol moyenne portée (ASMP), medium range air-launched missile for deployment on new Rafale aircraft.

Russia

In a press statement in February 2004, President Vladimir Putin committed Russia to a nuclear deterrent force “for some decades ahead”. During questions he announced that Russia has carried out tests of “new hypersound-speed, high-precision new weapons systems that can hit targets at intercontinental distance and can adjust their altitude and course as they travel”. Later that year, Russia's Minister for Defence, Sergey Ivanov, stated at a London conference:

Russia regards nuclear weapons and nuclear deterrence as the basis for global stability ... [and] ... Russian leaders regard the

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maintenance of fighting ability and readiness of strategic nuclear forces as their top priority task.

While Russia is committed to reducing its strategic nuclear forces to between 1,700 and 2,200 by 2012 under the 2003 Moscow Treaty, it continues to retain an unknown number of sub-strategic or 'tactical' nuclear warheads. It has shown little progress on transparency or reductions since the 2000 Final Document.



photo: US Navy

The US administration has been backtracking from its Article VI obligations

United Kingdom

Although the UK government states that it “continues to support the disarmament measures listed in the 2000 Final Document”, it has made little progress to implement them. With the exception of further verification work on the reduction and elimination of nuclear weapons, it has taken no new initiatives since the Strategic Defence Review of 1998.

The UK government cites removal of aging weapons such as Polaris, WE177 free-fall bombs and (US) Lance missile and artillery roles. However, it does not acknowledge that the current Trident system represents a significant enhancement in the UK's nuclear capability. Although Trident currently deploys the same number of warheads as its predecessor Polaris, it has a longer range, greater accuracy, and the warheads can be independently targeted, enabling Trident to reach a greater range of targets. Trident is also deployed in a sub-strategic role.

Rather than pursuing nuclear disarmament, the UK has announced that a decision on whether to replace Trident is likely to be taken after the next General Election. In 2004, the 1958 UK-US Mutual Defence Agreement was extended for a further 10 years, which will enable continued cooperation on Trident and development of any future UK nuclear weapon system.

United States

In recent months the US administration has been backtracking from its Article VI obligations and the 1995 and 2000 agreements. US Assistant Secretary of State for Arms Control Stephen Rademaker asserted in February 2005 that Article VI:

- does not refer specifically to the nuclear weapons states nor requires the conclusion of 'agreements' relating to disarmament;
- establishes no timetable or deadline for accomplishing these objectives; and
- contains no suggestion that nuclear disarmament is to be achieved before general and complete disarmament is achieved.

Rademaker claims that “it is indisputable” that the United States has “more than fulfilled our obligations”, and highlights the Moscow Treaty which requires reductions in US-Russian strategic nuclear warheads to between 1,700 and 2,200 by December 31, 2012.

Unfortunately, these reductions, while welcome, are neither irreversible nor verifiable – a step backwards from the earlier START treaties. The



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primary impact of the Moscow Treaty is to reduce the number of deployed warheads by downloading (into a 'nuclear hedge') rather than destroying them.

Little Progress since 2000

Since 2000 NWS have indicated that Article VI is important but not crucial to the NPT. While they see the need for a change in focus for the NPT in line with post-9/11 threat perceptions, the majority of States Parties continue to regard Article VI as the heart of the Treaty.

Rather than reducing the prominence of nuclear weapons in their security doctrines, several NWS have undertaken new weapons research programmes and introduced new targeting doctrines. All the NWS are embarking on modernisation programmes and remain committed to retaining nuclear weapons, indefinitely.

Recommendations

1. It is vital that the 2005 NPT Review Conference:

- undertakes a review of implementation of the 2000 NPT Final Document;
- reaffirms the disarmament commitments agreed in 2000; and
- makes progress on establishing criteria for monitoring compliance under Article VI.

2. The NWS must:

- accelerate implementation of their "unequivocal commitment" to nuclear disarmament; and
- provide full and transparent reporting, both on their implementation of the 2000 agreements and on future progress towards disarmament.

3. Russia and the United States must build on the Moscow Treaty by taking additional reciprocal measures, such as:

- abandoning the nuclear hedge (in effect, changing the Moscow Treaty from a downloading to a disarmament treaty);
- dismantling weapons in a transparent way;
- undertaking not to develop new nuclear weapons; and
- removing 'tactical' nuclear weapons from their stockpiles.

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