Virtual Event organized by UNODA, CNS & CENESS

“The Tenth NPT Review Conference: Challenges & Opportunities”

Opening Remarks by Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu
High Representative for Disarmament Affairs

New York (Online Event)
28 May 2020
Distinguished Panellists and Speakers,

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to welcome all of you to this virtual event. I am so pleased we could partner with our colleagues and friends at the Center for Non-Proliferation Studies (CNS) and the Center for Energy and Security Studies (CENESS) to arrange this panel.

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced all of us into various forms of isolation, but it is indeed heartening to see how people are working on innovative solutions to keep the world moving and to keep other important issues on the agenda, including the NPT.

The postponement of the Tenth NPT Review Conference was, of course, disappointing. But it is also an opportunity – one that NPT States Parties should use wisely – to help seed the ground for success whenever the Review Conference is held.

Because we must be frank – heading into the original dates for the RevCon, there were more questions than certainties.

Those questions continue to circle above preparations for the Conference and it is now up to States to get down to the business of resolving them. Of course, this is not to say that there have not been wholehearted efforts to date, just that those efforts to need to be redoubled.

I hope that the P5 will continue their ongoing dialogue and come to the Conference with a unified position on how to achieve progress on Article VI. I hope that the cross-regional and other groups of States are busy preparing innovative ideas for how to cross entrenched divides and plot areas of convergence.

Above all, I hope that all States Parties are preparing to approach the Review Conference in a spirit of compromise, flexibility and with an understanding of the collective nature of the threats we face.
Even in the time of COVID-19, nuclear dangers are worsening. As nuclear sabres rattle the arms control regime disintegrates, and as new proliferation challenges emerge, the NPT remains a bulwark of international peace and security and a common means of finding our way back to common sense and the path to a world free of these potentially catastrophic weapons.

The Review Conference is, therefore, an opportunity to reverse course. I see five key areas in which States initiate this process.

First, they can reaffirm their commitment to the NPT and the commitments they have assumed as parties. Second, they can reaffirm the norm of nuclear non-use – that these weapons are in a class of their own and must never be used again. Third, they can agree on risk reduction measures and confidence-building mechanisms. Fourth, they can agree that challenges to the non-proliferation regime necessitate its adaptation to meet evolving threats. Fifth, the Review Conference should set the scene for discussion on how to pursue disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control in a complex strategic environment where old nuclear problems are exacerbated by new challenges.

The pandemic is teaching us that international crises can only be resolved through solidarity, compassion and strong institutions. Surely these are lessons that can translate to the NPT and its critical mission.

I really look forward to hearing the discussion and engagement through these wonderful virtual means.

Thank you very much.