UNODA-IAEA webinar - The 10th NPT Review Conference: Peaceful Applications of Nuclear Technology and the Sustainable Development Goals

Opening remarks by Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu
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Thank you, Marjolijn.

Ambassador Zlauvinen,

Deputy Director-General Mokhtar,

Distinguished Panellists,

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

It is really a pleasure to welcome you to this webinar that we are conducting with our partners from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

This is the second such event that we have held since the COVID-19 pandemic forced the postponement of the Tenth Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, or NPT.

I cannot stress enough the importance of using this hiatus to hold virtual events such as this one. The months we have between now and whenever the Review Conference is held are a valuable opportunity. States Parties and other stakeholders should step up their engagement to explore pathways to a Conference outcome that strengthens the NPT across all three of its pillars: disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

This balance is one of the most important keys to success. It should never be forgotten that the NPT’s historic accomplishments are built upon a bargain. This was instrumental to both its negotiation fifty years ago and to its indefinite extension twenty-five years ago. It is a bargain that will be critical to ensuring its future health and vitality.

The inalienable right to, and the undertaking to facilitate, the peaceful uses of nuclear energy are central to this bargain. As the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, whose focus is mostly on the other two pillars of the Treaty, I must admit that the contribution Article IV has made to the Treaty is often taken for granted.
This is unfortunate, as it overlooks the importance that many States Parties, especially those in the developing world, place on the numerous and varied applications of nuclear energy.

Although it is not my current role, I have had some experience with development issues from my time as the Assistant Administrator of the Crisis Response Unit at the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). I have seen first-hand how important it is to utilize today’s cutting-edge technologies to provide a hopeful future for all of our planet’s inhabitants.

The IAEA has a proven and outstanding track record of doing just that. Its work in health, environmental protection, water management and agriculture, contributes directly to the achievement of many of the Sustainable Development Goals and has provided aid and assistance to people around the world.

The link between sustainable development and international peace and security is increasingly clear and has underscored the need for a more human-centred approach to disarmament. The sustainable development that the IAEA’s programmes help to create is integral to building a more peaceful society.

One of the NPT’s strengths is that it houses a diverse community of states. But it also contains a diversity of expertise. This is nowhere more apparent than in the scientific and technological applications of nuclear energy.

What I am hopeful we will hear today is how to strengthen two sides of the NPT’s grand bargain: how the Review Conference can better facilitate the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and how the NPT’s third pillar can help produce a successful conclusion to the Review Conference and, in turn, help ensure the Treaty’s future health and relevance.

I thank you very much.