FACT SHEET

TREATY ON THE NON-PROLIFERATION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is a landmark international treaty that seeks to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and weapons technology, to promote cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, and to further the goal of achieving nuclear disarmament and general and complete disarmament.

The Treaty entered into force in 1970 for an initial duration of 25 years and is reviewed every five years. In 1995, at the NPT Review and Extension Conference, States parties adopted a set of decisions, including on the indefinite extension of the Treaty, further strengthening the review process, and principles and objectives for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, as well as a Resolution on the Middle East. The 2000 NPT Review Conference followed up with the successful adoption of a substantive final document which notably included practical steps for systematic and progressive efforts for the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

“After a failure by States parties to reach any agreement in 2005, the 2010 NPT Review Conference adopted a 64-point action plan across the three pillars of the Treaty – disarmament, non-proliferation and peaceful uses of nuclear energy – as well as practical steps to implement the 1995 Resolution on the Middle East. Despite intensive consultations, the 2015 Review Conference was not able to reach agreement on the substantive part of the draft Final Document."

The third session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2020 NPT Review Conference took place in New York from 29 April to 10 May 2019, under the chairmanship of Ambassador Syed Md Hasrin Syed Hussin (Malaysia).

“Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, States Parties have postponed the Tenth Review Conference, originally scheduled to be held in New York from 27 April to 22 May 2020, to a later date, as soon as the circumstances permit, but no later than April 2021.”

Izumi Nakamitsu, Third Session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2020 NPT Review Conference, April 2019
Current Status of the NPT

The Tenth Review Conference is an opportunity to take stock of the Treaty’s achievements and look ahead to further advance its objectives and implementation. The NPT is one of the world’s most widely adhered-to treaties. A total of 191 States have joined the Treaty. Continuing challenges facing the Treaty include concerns over its lack of universality, the pace of nuclear disarmament, compliance concerns and progress implementing the 1995 Resolution on the Middle East aimed at establishing a Middle East zone free from nuclear and all other weapons of mass destruction. In recent years, States parties have also expressed growing concern regarding the humanitarian consequences that would result from any use of nuclear weapons.

The Role of the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs

The United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs functions as the de-facto secretariat for the NPT in cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and, as directed by the United Nations General Assembly, provides all necessary support – administrative and substantive – for the meetings of States parties, including the Review Conferences and their respective Preparatory Committee meetings. UNODA therefore serves as a central source of institutional knowledge regarding the operation and implementation of the Treaty.

Basic provisions of the Treaty

Under the Treaty, the nuclear-weapon States agree not to transfer a nuclear weapon or nuclear explosive device to any non-nuclear-weapon State nor to assist any non-nuclear-weapon State in manufacturing or acquiring such weapons or devices.

The non-nuclear-weapon States agree not to receive the transfer of a nuclear weapon or nuclear explosive device, not to manufacture or otherwise acquire such weapons or devices, and not to seek or receive any assistance in the manufacture of such weapons or devices. Towards the verification of their non-proliferation obligations, each non-nuclear-weapon State agrees to accept safeguards, to be administered by the IAEA, on all source or special fissionable material in all peaceful nuclear activities within the territory of the State, under its jurisdiction, or carried out under its control.

As a fundamental element of the bargain, all States parties undertake to pursue good faith negotiations on effective measures relating to nuclear disarmament. Further, the parties agree that nothing in the Treaty shall be interpreted as affecting the inalienable right of all the parties to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes without discrimination and in conformity with their basic non-proliferation undertakings.

NPT Facts

- The NPT contains the only legally-binding obligation for States to achieve nuclear disarmament.
- The nuclear-weapon States, as defined by the Treaty, are: China, France, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States.
- As of February 2020, 136 States and Euratom have brought into force additional protocols granting the IAEA greater verification access.
- As of May 2020, the IAEA has concluded comprehensive safeguards agreements with 175 States.
- Today, approximately 14,000 nuclear weapons remain in global stockpiles and hundreds remain on high alert.

For more information:  http://www.un.org/disarmament/WMD/Nuclear/NPT.shtml

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