



**Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey James Martin
Center for Nonproliferation Studies (CNS) Diplomatic Virtual Workshop**

“(Still) Preparing for the Tenth NPT Review Conference”

**Statement by Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu
High Representative for Disarmament Affairs**

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Virtual Event

10 June 2021

Professor Potter,

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you, Professor Potter and the team at CNS for inviting me to speak today. CNS' NPT workshops are a highlight of the disarmament calendar. Even in a virtual format, they provide an excellent opportunity for key stakeholders and other experts to engage in dialogue on the issues facing the Treaty.

As States Parties continue to discuss final dates for the Review Conference, due to the ongoing global effects of the dreadful COVID-19 pandemic, it is important not to lose focus on the substance. One of the few advantages of the Conference's postponement has been the extended time for dialogue on what the Conference can achieve and how it can achieve it.

Due to the postponement, it is no longer the fiftieth anniversary of the entry into force, nor the twenty-fifth anniversary of the indefinite extension. But this should not detract from the Conference's actual significance.

First of all, it is taking place when there is a level of uncertainty and risk around nuclear weapons not seen since the early days of the Cold War. Tension between nuclear-weapon States continues to rise in an increasingly multipolar nuclear order. A dearth of trust is met with an absence of transparency and dialogue. While the fate of the arms control framework hangs in the balance, the role of nuclear weapons is expanding, and nuclear-weapon States are engaged in what has been aptly described as a qualitative nuclear arms race.

The nexus between emerging technologies and nuclear weapons has exposed potential new vulnerabilities and risks. So too has the increasingly blurred line between conventional and strategic capabilities.

In Northeast Asia and the Middle East, proliferation crises continue to simmer. The 1995 resolution on the Middle East remains unfulfilled.

Disagreements persist over safeguards standards, despite the emergence of technological, political and regional factors that could drive proliferation.

At the same time, divergences over the pace and scale of nuclear disarmament continue to widen. While not the only driving factor, frustration at the slow pace of disarmament and implementation of commitments was a *raison d'être* for the negotiation of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

Not to put too fine a point on it, but the Review Conference has a lot to consider.

Failure to secure a successful outcome at the Review Conference will not doom the NPT or the nonproliferation regime. It would, however, serve to undermine the value so many States place on it and, in turn, devalue the review cycle as a way to not only strengthen the implementation of the NPT, but the regime as a whole. It could further entrench the divides within the Treaty with long-term ramifications.

Part of the NPT's enduring success is its ability to adapt. But the environment today is unique in the nuclear age. The situation has changed markedly, even since 2015.

The significance of the Tenth Review Conference is, therefore, how it can grapple with the current circumstances and ensure that the NPT remains fit for purpose.

Since 1995, the NPT has acted as the *de facto* multilateral forum for disarmament and non-proliferation. It now needs to live up to its billing and take this moment to re-orient the world away from nuclear risk and back on to the path to nuclear elimination.

I welcome ideas to strengthen consultations between States Parties. This is an opportunity to engage in real dialogue to narrow divergences and build on common ground. But States Parties have to take advantage of that opportunity and engage substantively.

From my perspective as High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, I think there are several areas that States Parties need to focus on in the lead up to the Review Conference with a view to achieving a consensus outcome.

First, the implementation of outstanding commitments. States Parties need to have a frank dialogue on this issue and consider how best to strengthen implementation, including through established frameworks for accountability.

Second, they should consider how to reinforce the norm against the use of nuclear weapons, reaffirm the understanding that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought, and recommit to the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons.

Third, each successful Review Conference has required leadership from the nuclear-weapon States. I hope they are using this time to work in unison on how to demonstrate their commitment to the NPT's full implementation. Given recent events, I hope they will agree to increased transparency and refurbished confidence-building measures. I encourage them to lay out the next steps in arms control and disarmament, including for further reductions, but also how to address the growing risk of nuclear weapons use.

Fourth, in this vein, all States should consider how to develop measures to reduce the risk of nuclear war that can also act as springboards to nuclear disarmament. This should include the nexus between nuclear weapons and emerging technologies.

Fifth, States Parties should seek to reinforce the complementarity between nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. They are two sides of the same coin and should be treated as such. Success in one begets success in the other.

I wish you all the best in your discussions over the next two days and I hope that you will use this time to think beyond the margins and explore the innovative ideas that will produce success at the Review Conference.

I thank you very much for your attention.