

Will You Listen? A Dialogue on Creating the Conditions for Nuclear Disarmament

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Responding directly to the invitation in the United States’ working paper presented to the states preparing to review the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (reprinted below), this paper aims to encourage governments, international experts, and civil society to undertake dialogue on Creating the Conditions for Nuclear Disarmament. As United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres and the Office for Disarmament Affairs have argued, “In order to bring the international community back to a common vision and path towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons, sincere, substantive and results-oriented dialogue must resume.”¹

Some argue that the obligation of nuclear-weapon states to disarm is unconditional—or should be—and therefore such dialogue is a diversion. History and recent performance do give reason to question the sincerity of nuclear-weapon states’ commitments to genuinely pursue nuclear disarmament. Nonetheless, the NPT and the final document of the 2010 NPT Review Conference posit that conditions of eased international tension and improved confidence are necessary to facilitate nuclear disarmament.²

Such conditions cannot be created without dialogue that identifies what various groups of states require in order to change their positions and cooperate in designing and implementing a nuclear disarmament regime. This text takes the perspective of an imaginary facilitator of such dialogue. It identifies points and raises questions that people with varying perspectives might find worth pursuing further in dialogue. It does not offer answers to such questions.

Creating conditions for nuclear disarmament will require aligning the interests of three categories of states: 1) “nuclear-armed states,” which include the five nuclear-weapon states recognized in the NPT, plus Israel, India, and Pakistan, which did not sign the NPT and did acquire nuclear weapons, and the Democratic Peoples’ Republic of Korea, the only state that signed the NPT and then violated it by acquiring nuclear weapons; 2) “non-nuclear-weapon states” under the NPT; 3) among the non-nuclear-weapon states, the thirty-plus “extended-deterrent states” that are allied with nuclear-weapon states. These categorizations—aside from non-nuclear-weapon states—are not defined or codified in international treaties, but they provide a succinct way to refer to the clusters of actors and interests that must be harmonized if nuclear weapons are ever to be effectively prohibited and eliminated.

The present paper does not presume to suggest in what forum or manner dialogue should be conducted. Rather, it seeks to elicit interest in the substance such a dialogue might address, in the belief that governments and civil society organizations that are strongly motivated to resolve substantive issues can create effective forums for doing so.

Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

The preamble to the NPT posits that the prospects of reducing and eliminating nuclear arsenals will be enhanced by the “easing of international tension and the strengthening of trust between States.” The Action Agenda produced by the 2010 NPT Review Conference, which affirms the obligation to pursue nuclear disarmament [in ways] that promote “international stability, peace and security...based on the principle of undiminished and increased security for all.”

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Creating the Conditions for Nuclear Disarmament (CCND)

Working paper submitted by the United States of America*

“Nations do not mistrust each other because they are armed; they are armed because they mistrust each other.”

— *President Ronald W. Reagan*

Introduction

1. The international community has struggled for decades with the problem of how to achieve the total elimination of nuclear weapons. While we have made great progress, the long-term goal — a goal which the United States continues to support — remains elusive. If we continue to focus on numerical reductions and the immediate abolition of nuclear weapons, without addressing the real underlying security concerns that led to their production in the first place, and to their retention, we will advance neither the cause of disarmament nor the cause of enhanced collective international security.
2. To get the international community past the sterility of such discourse, the United States seeks a more meaningful and realistic dialogue, one that has a genuine prospect of moving us toward the nuclear weapons-free world we collectively seek. Such a dialogue would address those underlying security concerns that have made the retention of nuclear weapons necessary to forestall major power conflict and maintain strategic stability. This engagement is very important, because continuing to focus on numbers of weapons apart from their underlying rationale risks states talking past each other even as nuclear arsenals remain or, in some cases, expand. Our goal is progress, not rhetoric or simply virtue-signalling; so for us, the choice of a constructive dialogue is clear.

Facilitator

2a.

In calling for “more meaningful and realistic dialogue,” would the United States (and other nuclear-armed states) be willing to seriously address what others think are meaningful and realistic dangers posed by nuclear weapons?

2b.

If the “retention of nuclear weapons [is] necessary,” under what conditions would their use be? Are nuclear-armed and extended-deterrent states willing to conduct dialogue with others on this question?

3. The United States previously has spoken in broad terms of the need to create the conditions conducive for further nuclear disarmament. This working paper seeks to lay out some of the discrete tasks that would need to be accomplished for such conditions to exist. It is not intended to be a “roadmap,” identifying a particular order for such tasks to be accomplished, nor is it meant to be an exhaustive list of all needed actions. Nor is it meant to suggest that no further movement toward disarmament could possibly occur before every issue raised herein has been fully and conclusively addressed. Rather, it is meant to foster a thematic dialogue of the improvements that all states must work together to accomplish if nuclear disarmament is to have a future. While this paper is intended to contribute to the NPT review process, the ideas it presents and the work it lays out do not apply solely to NPT Parties but also to the broader international system, including NPT non-Parties.

Facilitator

3a.
Which of the other eight nuclear-armed states are prepared to articulate “some of the discrete tasks” they see as priorities to enable significant advances in nuclear disarmament?

3b.
What existing venues can and should be used to discuss these and the broader issues raised in paragraph 2? Do new forums need to be created to include states that are not parties to the NPT? How could NPT Review Conferences be better utilized for such dialogue? Should dialogues with nuclear-armed states involve institutions and expertise beyond foreign ministries in order to reflect perspectives, capabilities, and national priorities that influence nuclear policy making?

3c.
What “further movement toward disarmament” could be most promising to pursue in the absence of conclusive progress on the issues raised in the U.S. working paper?

The International Security Environment

4. Most, if not all, nations aspire to live in a more peaceful, stable, and prosperous world — a world in which states feel secure within their borders, unthreatened by their neighbors. This would be a world in which the relationships between nations, especially major powers, are not driven by assumptions of zero-sum geopolitical competition, but are instead cooperative and free of conflict. This would be a world in which nuclear deterrence is no longer considered necessary as the ultimate guarantee of security.
5. But that world is not simply today’s troubled world absent nuclear weapons. It will only be possible when a fundamental shift in the geopolitical landscape has brought about security conditions in which all states conclude, based on their own sovereign threat perceptions, that nuclear weapons are no longer required. That will, of course, be a very long process. In the interim, progress in improving the international security environment can enable further progress on reducing the role and numbers of nuclear weapons throughout the world. That is the lesson of history.

Facilitator

5a.
Addressing paragraphs 4 and 5 together, what realistic threats, other than nuclear weapons, could not be deterred or defeated by non-nuclear means? If dialogue on these issues would not necessarily lead to agreement, would it enhance understanding of the key variables that cause differences?

5b.
Are nuclear-armed and extended-deterrent states actively engaging with each other to clarify misperceptions, identify mutual confidence-building measures, and resolve underlying potential causes of war?

6. All states base their national security decisions on perceptions of present or future geopolitical threats to themselves and their core interests. This basic principle of international relations applies in particular to nuclear disarmament more than in any other area. Disarmament does not and cannot take place in a vacuum; its availability, direction, and pace depend upon the prevailing international security environment. The ending of the nuclear arms race in the closing years of the Cold War was possible as a result of the shifting environment of that era; likewise, the reductions in the years following the Cold War were also made possible by significant improvement in that security environment. Both of these time periods yielded significant progress in reducing nuclear dangers precisely because leaders heeded and responded to improvements in the prevailing security conditions.

Facilitator

6a.
Some argue that internal factors and interests often shape the nuclear policies and postures of nuclear-armed states—for example, political and symbolic considerations of competing domestic factions; economic interests of weapons design and manufacture institutions and their political patrons; nuclear branches of military services; and so forth. If nuclear-armed states want others to respect or at least tolerate their positions and actions, should they acknowledge how and when their positions cannot persuasively be justified in terms of the collective benefit of deterring major warfare?

6b.
In the example cited in paragraph 6, domestic change in the Soviet Union in the mid-1980s significantly improved the security environment. Are major domestic changes necessary in the United States, China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, Israel, India, Pakistan, or North Korea in order to create conditions for reducing the role of nuclear weapons? Are such issues within the acceptable scope of dialogue on the conditions for nuclear disarmament?

Nuclear Deterrence and Strategic Stability

7. Nuclear deterrence, including extended nuclear deterrence, continues to play central role in ensuring the global stability and security from which all states benefit. And stability in all its forms — economic, social, strategic — contributes to confidence and security in ways that allow states to pursue disarmament. Each state's approach to deterrence and disarmament is shaped by all the factors that affect its perception of its interests and the threats to those interests. This does not mean that nuclear arsenals cannot be further reduced until all conditions are perfect. Rather, it means that states are more likely to conclude that disarming is consistent with their national security interests if they are confident that international tension is decreasing and that progress on disarmament will not be destabilizing. And, assuming there is no single miraculous leap from where we are today to some kind of nuclear “zero,” it also means that we will need to address how stability is maintained at very low numbers of nuclear weapons, a situation we have not dealt with since the period immediately following the Second World War — and one for which there is as yet no precedent for successfully preventing a full-fledged arms race between rival powers.

Facilitator

Two underlying assertions appear here: 1) that nuclear weapons “play a central role in ensuring global stability and security” and 2) that “all states benefit” from this. Each of these assertions is contested on various grounds, of course. Many states and civil society organizations, for example, argue that if deterrence

fails the consequences of nuclear use—including radioactive contamination and possible climatic disruption—could severely harm populations in nonbelligerent states, beyond what could be indiscriminate suffering among belligerent populations.

7a.

Are nuclear-armed and extended-deterrent states willing to support further scientific studies of the climatic and other potential transnational effects of nuclear war, and to participate in international dialogue on the results and their implications?

7b.

Is the virtue of defending the survival of one or a few states facing a threat of massive aggression obviously superior to the virtues of avoiding the massive harm that nuclear war could impose on innocent populations and the global environment on which all depend?

7c.

If political and security conditions preclude some states now from ending reliance on nuclear weapons, could nuclear forces and doctrines be modified so as to significantly reduce the scale and scope of nuclear war's effects on third parties if deterrence fails? For example, could lowering the numbers and explosive yields of weapons, and altering targeting plans, significantly reduce the risks of great harm to nonbelligerent populations?

The concern over “how stability is maintained at very low numbers of nuclear weapons” is interesting. Often commentators argue that stability at zero nuclear weapons would be extremely fragile, and that any crisis would then stimulate nuclear re-arming or fears of it. This could intensify incentives for preemptive military action. But, with low numbers—however that is defined—many of the problems perceived with verifying and enforcing nuclear abolition would not obtain.

7d.

Given the disparity in numbers among today's nuclear-armed states, how can different levels of stability be assigned to specific numbers? What “low numbers” would be more or less likely to lead to instability? What higher numbers eliminate or greatly reduce instability, and under what conditions? If these questions cannot be answered with significant confidence, then on what basis do nuclear-armed states decide what number of weapons is “necessary”?

7e.

Are there trade-offs to be considered between the potential instability effects of low numbers and the potential humanitarian and environmental consequences of high numbers being detonated?

7f.

What are some examples where progress on nuclear disarmament has been destabilizing?

Articulating a New Way Forward: The CCND Approach

8. All NPT Parties bear responsibility for working together to improve the geopolitical environment and create the conditions for nuclear disarmament — that is, to take the “CCND Approach,” as we have begun referring to it. This new approach to disarmament diplomacy envisions all NPT Parties contributing to efforts to ameliorate conflicts and rivalries that lead to the continued reliance on nuclear weapons and nuclear deterrence. This approach will require a new focus on the development of measures across the complete spectrum of commitments under the NPT and beyond that create the conditions for future nuclear disarmament negotiations. The Preamble of the NPT refers to the “easing of international tension and the strengthening of trust between states in order to facilitate” disarmament. This concept of easing tension between and among states, including through effective measures that build trust and confidence, is the necessary starting point for fostering the conditions for nuclear disarmament, in accordance with Article VI of the NPT. Accordingly, we offer below some international security conditions that we believe would likely

need to be achieved through specific actions and effective measures in order to facilitate the pursuit of a nuclear weapons-free world.

Facilitator

8a.
Does any state disagree that all NPT parties “bear responsibility” for creating “conditions for nuclear disarmament”? Does any state disagree that preventing further proliferation of nuclear weapons and that facilitating cooperation in purely peaceful applications of nuclear energy are also vital? How might non-NPT states be motivated to participate in achieving progress toward these objectives?

8b.
Which conflicts and rivalries that lead to continued reliance on nuclear weapons and nuclear deterrence can non-nuclear-weapon states help redress? How? In what forums?

Reducing Regional Tensions and Conflicts

9. In today’s world, the most pressing goal for the international community is North Korea’s complete, verifiable, and irreversible abandonment of its nuclear weapons program, including its production of fissile material, and the rolling back of its ballistic missile threats. It will also be necessary to ensure Iran’s verified compliance with its nuclear non-proliferation obligations and ensure that it is never again able to position itself dangerously close to nuclear weaponization. Without a renewed, demonstrated commitment by all states — and in particular certain nuclear-weapon States (NWS) — to respect the sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of their neighbors, other nations will continue to seek nuclear deterrence, either through their own nuclear arsenals or through a reliance on alliances with a NWS.

Facilitator

9a.
Are there possible contradictions between the stated objectives regarding North Korea and Iran, and the need to respect their and other states’ “sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity”? How can states best reassure each other that they do not “need” nuclear deterrence to protect their sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity?

9b.
Are the United States and others saying to North Korea, essentially, “disarm first, then we can deal with the causes of mistrust that led you to arm”? Is trust really necessary in order to improve security between unfriendly states: isn’t the vital issue whether certain kinds of weapons and behaviors are so threatening that it is in everyone’s interest to prohibit or otherwise control their use in ways that enhance international security? Is there any other way to succeed than through negotiations and reciprocal accommodations?

9c.
Regarding Iran, do any states disagree with the objectives stated in paragraph 9? Do any states disagree, too, that there should be consequences and costs for any party that violates terms of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action?

10. Importantly, states make determinations about their deterrence and defense requirements based on their perceptions of the regional security environment they face. Unfortunately, there are numerous, clear examples of regional conflict and tension that contribute to states’ perceptions that they require a nuclear deterrent. Failing to address these tensions will not advance prospects for universalization of the NPT. As

another vital improvement to the global security situation, all nations, without exception, should renounce terrorism as an instrument of their foreign policies, and recognize the State of Israel's right to exist. As another example, the achievement of a Middle East Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone remains a priority for many states, but it can only occur through direct dialog among all the states of the region and on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the states of the region.

Facilitator

10a.

Realistically, how could a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East be negotiated and implemented if all of the potential state parties do not recognize each other's existence?

10b.

In specifically calling for the renunciation of terrorism, in the context of creating conditions for nuclear disarmament, does the working paper mean to suggest that the possession or threat to use nuclear weapons is a justifiable response to terrorism?

Non-Proliferation

11. The NPT is the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime, and non-proliferation is the cornerstone of the NPT. Neither meaningful international nuclear cooperation nor disarmament could succeed in the absence of strong non proliferation guarantees. If we wish possessor states to conclude that they will remain secure without nuclear weapons, and thus disarmament is possible, they must have confidence that no other states will develop such weapons. Full compliance with IAEA safeguards, including adherence to the Additional Protocol as the de facto standard for verifying that NPT safeguards obligations are being met, also remains a critical component of global non-proliferation efforts and contributor to the likelihood of disarmament.

Facilitator

11a.

Does anyone disagree with the first two sentences, and if so, on what basis?

Disarmament

12. A moratorium on the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices by all countries possessing nuclear weapons is also an essential step. The international community has focused on the commencement of negotiations on a treaty banning production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons. However, those efforts have failed due to one fact alone — some particular states feel they need more such material, or at least, are not prepared to forego that option as they build their nuclear arsenals. An essential condition of any negotiation will be the willingness of all states to end such production; once that is achieved, concluding a treaty should be possible.

Facilitator

12a.

Which states refuse to cease producing unsafeguarded fissile material? What needs or potential targets, according to these states, require an additional margin of fissile materials for more weapons?

12b.

Should negotiations to end the unsafeguarded production of fissile materials proceed without those states?

12c.

Nuclear arms reductions and controls to date have focused on countable, like-for-like weapons such as long-range and intermediate-range ballistic missiles. If a state cites the potential need to add nuclear weapons in order to balance adversaries' current or potential advantages in non-nuclear weaponry—such as precise high-speed conventional strike weapons, ballistic missile defenses, anti-satellite weapons—then how should problems of cross-domain stability/balance be addressed?

13. Similarly, halting the further increase in nuclear arsenals of all states that possess such weapons would serve to create confidence that could lead to progress on the reduction of arsenals. Although the United States has reduced its nuclear arsenal by more than 88 percent since its Cold War peak, others have moved in the opposite direction. Russia, China, and North Korea are currently increasing their stockpiles and diversifying their capabilities, engaging in nuclear and ballistic missile testing, increasing the prominence of nuclear weapons in their security strategies, and — in some cases — pursuing the development of new nuclear capabilities to threaten other nations. Nuclear stockpiles and capabilities are also expanding elsewhere in Asia in ways hardly consistent with giving nuclear disarmament a viable future.

Facilitator

13a.

Does anyone disagree that halting further increases in nuclear weapons and their delivery systems would help build confidence that could lead to reductions of arsenals? If so, why? A number of nuclear-armed states are modernizing their nuclear forces—can this be done in ways that do not exacerbate international insecurity? If so, how?

13b.

In which cases of current nuclear-force buildups and modernization are the competing parties engaged in political/diplomatic processes to redress the causes of these increases?

13c.

What can other states do to motivate moves to help stabilize competitions and encourage reductions in nuclear forces?

14. Finally, improving transparency about nuclear policies, plans, and doctrines would be a critical confidence-building measure for further negotiated nuclear weapons reductions. As the 2018 U.S. Nuclear Posture Review notes, “Arms control efforts must now emphasize confidence and security building measures to rebuild trust and communication. We are prepared to consider arms control opportunities that return parties to predictability and transparency and remain receptive to future arms control negotiations if conditions permit and the potential outcome improves the security of the United States and its allies and partners.”

Facilitator

14a.

Some states perceive themselves to face adversaries with greater military capabilities and argue that transparency in nuclear-weapon holdings, policies, plans, and doctrines could exacerbate their vulnerabilities and enhance stronger adversaries' confidence in finding ways to attack the less-endowed states. Are there merits to such concerns? If so, how could they be addressed?

14b.

Governments and many experts occasionally argue that some ambiguity regarding scenarios in which they would use nuclear weapons augments deterrence and avoids creating “commitment traps”—situations in which a leadership may feel more pressure to use nuclear weapons because its articulated “red line” has been crossed. Others argue that ambiguity makes escalation more likely. How could the complicated issue of transparency best be addressed—by whom, when, where?

14c.

Some nuclear-armed states say that they abide by the Laws of Armed Conflict and International Humanitarian Laws. Are any nuclear-armed states willing to detail how their forces, doctrines, and targeting plans would conform to the principles of necessity, discrimination, proportionality, respect for neutrality, and the avoidance of unnecessary suffering? For states that are not willing to address these issues in detail, what conclusions should their own citizens and the rest of the world draw from this reticence?

14d.

The U.S. working paper does not mention the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, or the related verification and monitoring system. What present or future geopolitical threats to themselves or their core interests keep the United States and other states from bringing the CTBT into force? Or, as others suggest, would the political bargaining required to do this involve payoffs (such as increased spending on and production of new nuclear-weapon systems) whose negative effects exceed the benefits of a formally completed CTBT?

Verification

15. An essential element of efforts to create the conditions for future nuclear disarmament will be ensuring that we have the capability and capacity to verify any potential reductions. For eventual global nuclear disarmament to become a reality, all states, including nuclear weapons possessors, will be required to submit to credible, effective, and timely verification. We will need to work together to ensure that we have the technologies, capabilities, and experience to carry out the verification measures that would be necessary, as well as to ensure that the international community responds swiftly and decisively to any noncompliance.

Facilitator

15a.

What more can and should be done by various states, international bodies, and NGOs to develop model ways and means to verify reductions of the sort that would be required to move toward the elimination of nuclear arsenals?

15b.

Which states are highly interested in this challenge? Given the special expertise and classification issues involved, should this work be led by nuclear-weapon states? If so, which of them are prepared to cooperate among themselves and/or with NGOs in such an endeavor, and how and when?

Compliance

16. Compliance by the NWS with all of their existing and future treaty obligations — and the tools and political will to address instances of noncompliance — is a necessary foundation for nuclear disarmament, as is compliance by non-nuclear weapons states with their non-proliferation obligations. However, even a clear prohibition of nuclear weapons, coupled with a detailed plan for their elimination and robust verification provisions, may not be enough, unless the international community can reliably face the challenge of compliance enforcement. Indeed, this is not just a challenge at the point of abolition. Maintaining stability even at lower numbers of nuclear weapons will require high levels of confidence that all states are

complying with their commitments and that noncompliance will be addressed effectively. Recent violations of treaty obligations and the apparent lack of will to address concerns, however, undermines that confidence.

Facilitator

16a.

Does anyone disagree that compliance with treaties, agreements, and norms is vital to create confidence that would motivate citizens and governments of nuclear-deterrent states to relinquish nuclear weapons?

16b.

In addition to violations of treaties and agreements, how do withdrawals by one party from treaties and agreements affect international confidence in compliance?

16c.

Will it be possible to build confidence in the international community's capability and resolve to enforce compliance with international treaties and norms relating to nuclear weapons, as long as each nuclear-weapon state can veto UN action?

16d.

What alternatives to the UN Security Council can be feasibly imagined to enforce compliance with universal measures such as a nuclear-weapon prohibition or a global nuclear disarmament regime?

17. Today, compliance problems shadow the prospects for disarmament — and not merely because Russia continues to violate the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty. This is also a problem with regard to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). The CWC was designed to ban, eliminate, and verify the destruction of chemical weapons, all in one agreement — the first time the international community ever attempted to do all this with a category of weapons of mass destruction. Regrettably, however, we have seen an erosion of the international norm against chemical weapons use — largely with impunity — as well as concerted efforts by some states to undermine the efficacy and credibility of the institutions of transparency and accountability upon which the international community relies to ensure that such disarmament regimes succeed. If we are to achieve the goal of a world without nuclear weapons, the international community must rededicate itself to ensuring compliance, including through effective enforcement measures.

Facilitator

17a.

What are key differences in effects between violating an agreement—as Russia has done regarding the INF Treaty—and withdrawing from one—as the U.S. did with the JCPOA and the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty?

17b.

On what basis should citizens and leaders believe that enforcement of compliance with a treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons would be better than enforcement of the CWC has been? Conversely, isn't the world better off with a ban on chemical weapons, which is occasionally violated, than with no such ban? And if so, how would the situation be different with nuclear weapons?

Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy and Nuclear Security

18. Another challenge to the stability of a world without nuclear weapons is ensuring that nuclear technology transferred, acquired, or developed for peaceful purposes is not diverted or misused to produce or develop nuclear weapons. The NPT provides a foundation for cooperation in the field of peaceful nuclear energy, recognizing the potential for nuclear and non-nuclear applications to vastly improve quality of life around the world. However, in order to create conditions for nuclear disarmament negotiations, it is essential to manage and minimize the risk inherent to some degree in all nuclear technology. To this end, we have achieved broad consensus on constraining the most sensitive stages of the nuclear fuel cycle and minimizing the civilian use of weapons-usable nuclear material.

Facilitator

18a.

Does anyone disagree with the premises and objectives stated here that managing and minimizing the risk inherent in all nuclear technology, and especially in the nuclear fuel-cycle, is essential to creating conditions for nuclear disarmament? If so, what is the disagreement?

18b.

Are there differences or concerns regarding the means that have been developed or recommended to achieve these objectives? If so, what are they and what can be done to address them? For example, is the work of the Nuclear Suppliers Group vital, and, if so, how could it be enhanced? Presumably, answers to these questions can help address the points raised in paragraph 19.

19. However, that consensus is in danger of eroding. Since the NPT entered into force, the major suppliers of nuclear technology have adopted a set of standards for legitimate commerce that reduce this risk and facilitate legitimate nuclear trade by ensuring a level foundation of non-proliferation principles. This foundation is dependent, however, on the continued viability of a diverse and stable market for nuclear goods and services. As states pursue unconstrained access to nuclear technology, the pressure to disregard vital non-proliferation principles in connection with supply of the most sensitive aspects of the fuel cycle — and failure to insist upon the highest safeguards standards, including the IAEA Additional Protocol, in all civil nuclear cooperation projects — undermines the non-proliferation regime, eroding confidence that the Article IV nuclear cooperation architecture is capable of functioning in ways consistent with non-proliferation imperatives, and thus potentially threatening that architecture as well as making the eventual achievement of nuclear disarmament less likely.

Conclusion

20. All nations can and should work to create the conditions essential for nuclear disarmament. Doing so will help to fashion a world in which nuclear weapons are no longer necessary to deter aggression and maintain global strategic stability. As we seek this lofty objective, to which the NPT has made an immeasurable contribution over the last 50 years, the United States looks forward to engaging with all States Party on these important issues.

CONCLUSION

The United States has invited dialogue on many issues that will affect prospects of war and peace, the use or non-use of nuclear weapons, the proliferation or elimination of nuclear weapons, and the broader character of international relations. The present text, in seeking to encourage and facilitate such dialogue, might dismay those who believe that these issues can be treated more simply—for example, by focusing on building up nuclear arsenals to reinforce deterrence, or seeking ratifications of a treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons. If the international condition is too complicated and variable to allow for one-sided definitions of problems or solutions, then dialogue—genuine, open, sustained—is necessary to vest contending actors in a process of clarifying what are the most important questions and identifying possible answers on which international cooperation could be built. Governments and civil society organizations that find at least some of these

questions to be worthwhile may then take steps necessary to adapt the NPT review process or create new forums for conducting such dialogue.

Notes

¹ "Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament," UN Office for Disarmament Affairs, May 2018, <https://www.un.org/disarmament/publications/more/securing-our-common-future/>, page 18.

² The preamble to the NPT posits that the prospects of reducing and eliminating nuclear arsenals will be enhanced by the "easing of international tension and the strengthening of trust between States." The Action Agenda produced by the 2010 NPT Review Conference affirms the obligation to pursue nuclear disarmament in ways that promote "international stability, peace and security . . . based on the principle of undiminished and increased security for all."

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