

1 April 2013

Original: English

Disarmament Commission

2013 substantive session

New York, 1-19 April 2013

Agenda item 1

Preventing the use of nuclear weapons

Working paper submitted by the United States of America

I speak of peace because of the new face of war. Total war makes no sense in an age when great powers can maintain large and relatively invulnerable nuclear forces and refuse to surrender without resort to those forces. It makes no sense in an age when a single nuclear weapon contains almost ten times the explosive force delivered by all the allied air forces in the Second World War. It makes no sense in an age when the deadly poisons produced by a nuclear exchange would be carried by wind and water and soil and seed to the far corners of the globe and to generations yet unborn.

(President John F. Kennedy, 10 June 1963)

1. Since the darkest days of the cold war, the United States has fully understood the potential serious consequences that would result from the use of nuclear weapons. We continue to accord the highest priority to avoiding such use. As President Ronald W. Reagan said in April 1984, "A nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought."

2. In April 2009 in Prague, President Barack Obama clearly articulated the United States commitment to seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons. He outlined the continuation of a practical, step-by-step United States approach to disarmament, an approach that has proved over time to be the most effective means to increase stability, reduce nuclear dangers, fulfil our commitments under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and strengthen the global nuclear non-proliferation regime.

Responsibly forging ahead on our disarmament commitments

3. President Obama's 2009 Prague speech was not a call to unilaterally disarm, nor did it assume that the world would change overnight. It was a road map to the

* Reissued for technical reasons.



future — a step-by-step, measured strategy that takes into account the changed and changing security landscape of the twenty-first century. The 2010 United States Nuclear Posture Review rightly emphasized that today, our greatest nuclear threat is no longer a large-scale nuclear exchange, but the danger that terrorists could acquire nuclear materials or, worse, a nuclear weapon.

4. In addition to working on the prevention of nuclear proliferation and nuclear terrorism, we have taken steps to reduce the number and role of nuclear weapons in the United States national security strategy. We are not developing nor are we planning to develop new nuclear weapons. Moreover, the life extension programmes for our nuclear weapons will not support new military missions. We have committed not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States that are party to the Non-Proliferation Treaty and are in compliance with their nuclear non-proliferation obligations. And, we have clearly stated that it is in the United States interest and that of all other nations that the nearly seven-decade record of non-use of nuclear weapons be extended forever.

5. The step-by-step approach that the Obama Administration is pursuing is suited for our security needs and tailored to address twenty-first century global security threats. By maintaining and supporting a safe, secure and effective stockpile — sufficient to deter potential adversaries and reassure United States non-nuclear allies and partners — at the same time that we pursue responsible reductions through arms control and work to stem and prevent nuclear proliferation, we will make this world a safer place.

New START and next steps

6. The New START Treaty between the United States and the Russian Federation entered into force in February 2011. It is the most comprehensive nuclear arms control agreement in almost 20 years. As of 1 September 2012, the number of deployed strategic warheads for the United States stood at 1,722. For the Russian Federation, the figure was even lower — 1,499. By any measure, this represents significant, demonstrable disarmament progress. When the New START Treaty is fully implemented, the United States and the Russian Federation will each have no more than 1,550 deployed strategic warheads — the lowest levels since the 1950s. The implementation of the New START Treaty is going very well, and its robust verification system is providing the predictability and mutual confidence that will be essential to any future nuclear reduction plans.

7. When President Obama signed the New START Treaty in Prague in 2010, he stressed his intention to pursue further reductions in strategic, non-strategic, deployed, and non-deployed nuclear weapons. The United States and the Russian Federation are engaged in a bilateral dialogue to promote strategic stability and increase transparency on a reciprocal basis. We are hopeful that our dialogue will lead to greater reciprocal transparency and negotiation of further nuclear weapons reductions.

8. One of the specific priorities in this arena is controlling non-strategic nuclear weapons. Consistent with the United States Senate stipulation in its Resolution of Ratification of New START, the United States seeks discussions with Russia to address the disparity between the non-strategic nuclear weapons stockpiles of Russia and the United States.

9. In the NATO May 2012 Deterrence and Defence Posture Review, the United States and our NATO allies also made clear that NATO is prepared to consider further reducing its requirement for non-strategic nuclear weapons in the context of reciprocal steps by Russia, taking into account the disparity between Russian and United States non-strategic nuclear weapons stockpiles in Europe and the broader security environment. The Review also stated that the allies look forward to discussing transparency and confidence-building ideas that can be developed and agreed cooperatively with the Russian Federation in the NATO-Russia Council. Such dialogue would advance our shared goal of enhancing European security and stability through increased mutual understanding of the non-strategic nuclear force postures in Europe of NATO and the Russian Federation.

10. In this regard, the United States expresses its appreciation to the Governments of Poland and Norway for supporting the 7 and 8 February 2013 “Warsaw workshop: prospects for information-sharing and confidence-building on non-strategic nuclear weapons in Europe”, which was jointly hosted by the Polish Institute of International Affairs, the Norwegian Institute for Defence Studies and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. This excellent workshop examined the prospects for information-sharing and confidence-building on non-strategic nuclear weapons in Europe. The event was attended by representatives from 18 NATO Governments, including eight Ministry of Foreign Affairs Security Directors, as well as experts from think tanks in France, Italy, Germany, Norway, Poland, Russia, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The discussions were a useful, initial look at the opportunities and challenges we face in this complex, but important area.

11. The United States is also working to update the legal framework for cooperative threat reduction activities with the Russian Federation. We have been working closely with Russia over the past year to continue our cooperation under an updated legal framework that reflects our maturing bilateral partnership and allows us to build on the achievements made under the expiring cooperative threat reduction agreement.

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and the path before us

12. With the second (22 April-3 May) Non-Proliferation Treaty Preparatory Committee meeting for the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons fast approaching, the United States reaffirms its commitment to the shared goal of nuclear disarmament. We continue to implement the 2010 Review Conference action plan across all three pillars of the Non-Proliferation Treaty — disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. The grand bargain of the Treaty, where nuclear weapon States pursue disarmament, non-nuclear weapon States abstain from the pursuit of nuclear weapons, and all countries are able to access the benefits of peaceful nuclear energy, sets an enduring standard that is as relevant today as it was at the Treaty’s inception.

13. Despite our past successes, there are very pressing challenges before us. Most critically, the United States is gravely concerned about the actions of a few countries. North Korea, Iran, and Syria have violated their Non-Proliferation Treaty obligations and have failed to take the steps necessary to rectify these violations. These transgressions threaten international security and undermine confidence in the non-proliferation regime. They also stand directly in the way of our shared

disarmament goals. We will work with all Non-Proliferation Treaty States parties to appropriately address these violations.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and a fissile material cut-off treaty: essential multilateral steps for nuclear disarmament

14. The United States fully supports the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Ratification of the Treaty remains a top priority for the United States. In the interim, robust United States support for completion of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization's International Monitoring System will continue. The last United States test of a nuclear explosive device was conducted in September 1992. Since then, the United States has maintained a voluntary moratorium on the explosive testing of nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. The United States remains committed to this moratorium, and calls upon all States to refrain from nuclear explosive testing. The 2010 Nuclear Posture Review reiterated that the United States no longer requires nuclear explosive testing to ensure the safety and effectiveness of its remaining nuclear weapons, relying instead on its long-standing stockpile stewardship programme. The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty will hinder States that do not have nuclear weapons expertise and experience from advancing their nuclear weapons capabilities, impede States with more established nuclear weapons capabilities from confirming the performance of advanced nuclear weapon designs that they have not tested successfully in the past and constrain regional arms races in the years ahead.

15. Regarding a fissile material cut-off treaty, the 2010 Review Conference action plan reaffirms that such a treaty is the logical and essential next multilateral step on the path towards global nuclear disarmament. The United States stresses the importance of commencing negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty without further delay. A non-discriminatory and internationally verifiable fissile material cut-off treaty that halts the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices would be an important international achievement, both for non-proliferation and disarmament. The longer production is not banned, the more stocks will accrue in countries, unlike the United States, that have not imposed a moratorium on production. A fissile material cut-off treaty would effectively cap the fissile materials available for use in nuclear weapons. In tandem with the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, a fissile material cut-off treaty would establish additional constraining measures on the technological sophistication and size of nuclear arsenals. It would also place additional enrichment and reprocessing facilities under international monitoring and verification. A fissile material cut-off treaty would help to consolidate the advancements made in arms control since the end of the cold war, and provide the basis for further, deeper reductions in nuclear arsenals globally. Consistent with the 1995 Shannon report and the mandate contained therein (CD/1299), the ultimate scope of a fissile material cut-off treaty will be an issue for negotiations. The United States position on the scope — in keeping with a practical, step-by-step approach — is that treaty obligations, including verification obligations, should cover new production of fissile material.

16. The Conference on Disarmament remains our preferred venue for negotiating a fissile material cut-off treaty, since it includes every major nuclear-capable State and operates by consensus, ensuring that the national security concerns of Conference on Disarmament member States are protected. The United States remains

disappointed that the Conference continues to be prevented from agreeing on a comprehensive programme of work, including work on a legally binding, verifiable fissile material cut-off treaty. In 2011, the United States initiated consultations among the permanent five and other relevant States on unblocking negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty in the Conference on Disarmament and on preparing our own countries for what we expect would be a challenging negotiation. The “permanent five plus” group has the potential to move the treaty forward. We will continue to try to convince others that commencement of Conference on Disarmament negotiations is not something to fear.

17. In considering whether to support Canada’s 2012 resolution on a fissile material cut-off treaty (see General Assembly resolution 67/53) to establish a United Nations group of governmental experts, the United States assessed that the resolution was balanced, consensus-based, and was supportive of future negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty in the Conference on Disarmament. We consider the group of governmental experts to be a vehicle to foster, and not substitute for, negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty in the Conference on Disarmament. On this basis, we intend to actively participate in the work of the group if invited, and encourage other countries that would be directly affected by a fissile material cut-off treaty to do the same.

Dealing with existing stocks of fissile material

18. Existing stockpiles of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices can and should be dealt with separately, through other agreements and through voluntary measures, and that is why the United States has chosen to address existing stocks by other means. Bilateral and other voluntary measures have been effective and should continue, since attempts to address existing stocks multilaterally and link them to a ban on new production for weapons purposes will only complicate consensus in the Conference on Disarmament on beginning a negotiation on a fissile material cut-off treaty. The United States has not produced highly enriched uranium for weapons since 1964 or produced plutonium for weapons since 1988. The United States has also acted unilaterally and in cooperation with Russia for a number of years to remove from United States defence stocks fissile material in excess of its military needs that could be used in nuclear warheads. In 1994, 174 tons of highly enriched uranium were removed, of which 135 tons have been downblended. In 2005, the United States announced that an additional 200 tons would be removed from the weapons programme, which would be enough for more than 11,000 nuclear weapons. Of that amount, 160 tons were designated for use as naval reactor fuel, 20 tons were designated for research and space reactor requirements, and an additional 20 tons were designated for downblending to low enriched uranium.

19. Under the 1993 United States-Russian Federation Highly Enriched Uranium Purchase Agreement, 472 tons of weapon-origin Russian highly enriched uranium has been downblended into low enriched uranium for use as commercial reactor fuel in the United States. Based on current schedules, United States transparency monitoring at four nuclear material processing facilities in Russia will continue until October 2013. By the end of calendar year 2013, it is anticipated that the 500-ton highly enriched uranium downblending goal of the 1993 Agreement will be met. Five hundred tons of highly enriched uranium is equivalent to the material necessary for roughly 20,000 nuclear weapons.

20. In addition, more than 60 tons of plutonium were removed from United States defence stocks, of which 34 tons were included in the Plutonium Management and Disposition Agreement between the United States and Russia. In July 2011, the United States and Russia brought the Agreement and its 2006 and 2010 Protocols into force. The amended Agreement commits each country to dispose of at least 34 tons of excess weapon-grade plutonium, enough in total for approximately 17,000 nuclear weapons. Disposition will be subject to International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) monitoring and will transform the material into forms that are unattractive for use in nuclear weapons.

Nuclear security summits help to avoid nuclear dangers

21. The United States has accompanied this steady drawdown of fissile material stocks with an accelerated, high-level, international focus on securing fissile material worldwide — initiated at the Nuclear Security Summit held in Washington, D.C., in 2010, followed by the 2012 Nuclear Security Summit in Seoul. We look forward to the next summit in 2014 in The Hague.

22. In anticipation of The Hague Summit, we will continue to build on pledges that are resulting in more nuclear material being secured, removed and eliminated. These are real and durable achievements that help to protect nations against the threat of nuclear terrorism. We will continue to use the Summits to strengthen the global architecture — the treaties, institutions, norms and rules — that governs nuclear security, and to promote the concept of “assurance”, that is, States executing their sovereign security responsibilities in ways that assure neighbours, allies and rivals that they are doing so effectively.

The permanent five process

23. The five Non-Proliferation Treaty nuclear weapon States are engaged in a high-priority, regularized dialogue that is breaking new ground. Through this process, the five States are engaging in discussions of issues related to nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation, transparency and confidence-building, along with the associated verification challenges, while contributing to our collective progress on the 2010 Review Conference action plan. The process is promoting political dialogue and new forms of cooperation on nuclear weapons issues to an extent unseen in prior years.

24. The first conference of the permanent five was hosted by the United Kingdom in 2009, followed by a second in 2011 hosted by France. The United States hosted the third in Washington, D.C., in June 2012. We look forward to continuing these discussions at the next conference, to be hosted by the Russian Federation in Geneva on 18 and 19 April 2013.

25. In addition to providing a senior-level policy forum for discussion and coordination among the permanent five on a number of issues, this process has spawned a series of discussions during the “intersessional period” among policy and expert levels. China is leading a permanent five working group on nuclear definitions and terminology. The permanent five are discussing our national approaches to Non-Proliferation Treaty reporting, and we are also beginning to engage at expert levels on some important verification and transparency issues. In the future, the United States would like the permanent five conferences and

intersessional meetings to expand and to develop practical transparency measures that build confidence and predictability.

Nuclear-weapon-free zones make an important contribution

26. Building on the United States pledge in the 2010 Nuclear Posture Review to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in our national security strategy, we continue to make strong efforts to support nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties. In 2011, the Obama Administration sent the Protocols to the African and South Pacific nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties, which we have signed, to the United States Senate for its advice and consent to their ratification.

27. The permanent five and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations have developed a revised Protocol to the Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone that resolved outstanding differences. We hope that the Protocol signing can take place as soon as possible. The United States also remains committed to consulting with the parties to the Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia to resolve differences that would then allow the United States — along with the rest of the permanent five — to sign the Protocol to that treaty.

28. A longer-term goal is achievement of a Middle East zone free of all weapons of mass destruction. The United States supports this goal and stands ready to help facilitate discussions among States in the region at the proposed Helsinki conference. But we do so recognizing that the mandate for a zone can only come from within the region; it cannot be imposed from outside or without the consent of all concerned States. We regret that the Helsinki conference could not be convened in 2012 but remain committed to working with our partners to create conditions for a successful event.

Strong United States support for the International Atomic Energy Agency and peaceful uses of nuclear energy

29. We also support new frameworks for enhancing civil nuclear cooperation while assisting States in pursuing the benefits of peaceful nuclear energy in accordance with the highest standards of safety, security and safeguards. The 2010 decision to establish an IAEA fuel bank, along with other international and national fuel assurance mechanisms, represent important steps forward, as they can help to assure the reliability of nuclear fuel supply and avoid the unnecessary investment in indigenous enrichment. We also strongly support the peaceful application of the non-power aspects of nuclear energy to foster global development in the areas of human health, water resource management, food security and environmental stewardship. Support for the IAEA peaceful uses initiative is one of our primary efforts in this area.

Developing new arms control tools for a new era

30. The United States remains committed to innovation, and the arms control and non-proliferation arenas are no exception. To respond to the challenges we face, we are thinking about creative ways to use technologies — including open-source technologies — to tackle long-standing verification and monitoring problems.

The step-by-step approach works

31. United States arms control, non-proliferation, and disarmament policies are predicated on preventing the use of nuclear weapons ever again. Thanks to the important role that civil society plays in providing information to national Governments and publics alike, the United States record of accomplishment on this score is well known. The United States remains committed to achieving the safety and security of a world without nuclear weapons. But the only practical path is a careful, step-by-step approach to verifiably reach this objective.

32. The United States will continue to use existing multilateral mechanisms to inform the international community on the progress we are making and to build support for continued successes. There is no “quick fix” to achieving nuclear disarmament. As the 2010 Nuclear Posture Review states:

The conditions that would ultimately permit the United States and others to give up their nuclear weapons without risking greater international instability and insecurity are very demanding. Among those conditions are success in halting the proliferation of nuclear weapons, much greater transparency into the programs and capabilities of key countries of concern, verification methods and technologies capable of detecting violations of disarmament obligations, enforcement measures strong and credible enough to deter such violations, and ultimately the resolution of regional disputes that can motivate rival states to acquire and maintain nuclear weapons. Clearly, such conditions do not exist today.

(2010 Nuclear Posture Review, p. xv.)

33. The United States is devoting its time, efforts, resources and attention to creating the conditions for the further reduction and eventual elimination of nuclear weapons. While we have made significant progress, more hard work remains. In this step-by-step endeavour, the United States values its partnerships with committed States and civil society. Even if we may differ from time to time on the most appropriate road map for moving towards the goal of a world without nuclear weapons, we all share the same vision.
