

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

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## Third session

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### Improving gender equality and diversity in the Non-Proliferation Treaty review process

**Working paper submitted by Australia, Canada, Ireland,  
Namibia, Sweden and the United Nations Institute for  
Disarmament Research**

#### *Summary*

1. The present paper suggests that the Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Review Conference, at its third session, in 2019, recommend practical ways to improve gender equality in terms of participation in the Non-Proliferation Treaty review process. It brings to the attention of all delegates to the Review Conference and to the session of the Preparatory Committee, especially those assuming leadership positions, the “Gender and disarmament resource pack for multilateral practitioners”, developed by the International Gender Champions Disarmament Impact Group and the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR). It encourages all States parties to consider practical ways to improve the equal, full and effective participation and leadership of men and women in the Treaty review process, thus enhancing the effectiveness of Non-Proliferation Treaty processes and outcomes.

#### **Why do gender equality and diversity matter in the Non-Proliferation Treaty review process?**

2. Improving gender equality in terms of participation in the Non-Proliferation Treaty review process is highly desirable. It has the potential to enhance the effectiveness of Treaty processes and their outcomes. Diverse teams are more innovative, take more sustainable decisions and are more effective in resolving impasses. It is also a question of fairness and equality. Women as well as men should be able to take part in decisions that affect their lives.

3. The General Assembly has recognized the need to facilitate women’s participation in our field, urging Member States, the United Nations and others to “promote equal opportunities for the representation of women in all decision-making processes with regard to matters related to disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control”.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See for example General Assembly resolution [73/46](#), as well as actions 36 and 37 in the Secretary-General’s agenda for disarmament, “Securing Our Common Future: an Agenda for Disarmament”.



4. Several countries from diverse regions raised the issue of gender and the Non-Proliferation Treaty at the first and second sessions of the Preparatory Committee of the current Non-Proliferation Treaty review cycle. In 2018, in the factual summary by the Preparatory Committee Chair, it was stated that “States Parties endorsed the fundamental importance of promoting the equal, full and effective participation and leadership of both women and men in nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation, and the peaceful use of nuclear energy”.

5. The questions are: how can equal participation and leadership be achieved? What works, what does not work, and how can we measure the results? What are the most effective practical tools for creating real and measurable change? How can we ensure that participation is meaningful, and that delegates have agency and influence? To a certain extent, these issues have been discussed in side events at past meetings relating to the Non-Proliferation Treaty. However, in order to effect real change, we need to bring the issue more fully into our meeting discussions among States parties. We also need to base our actions on accurate data.

#### **What are the numbers?**

6. What proportion of participants in meetings as part of the Non-Proliferation Treaty review process are women? Overall, the share of women participating in meetings of the Treaty review process has followed a similar pattern to the number of women participating in meetings of the First Committee of the General Assembly and the Conference on Disarmament – from less than 10 per cent of participants in 1980 to approximately 30 per cent in 2015.<sup>2</sup> However, given that women are 50 per cent of society at large, we still have some work to do.

7. At the 2015 Review Conference, 26 per cent of delegates were women, and women headed 19 per cent of delegations; in addition, 2 per cent of delegations were made up entirely of women, while 36 per cent of delegations were made up entirely of men.

8. At the second session of the Preparatory Committee, in 2018, 33 per cent of delegates were women and women headed 20 per cent of delegations; 4 per cent of delegations were all female and 29 per cent were all male. In 2017, 34 per cent of delegates were women, a woman headed 19 per cent of delegations, 6 per cent of delegations were made up entirely of women and 24 per cent were made up entirely of men.

9. Between 1975 and 2015 there have been 40 Chairs of the sessions of the Preparatory Committee and of the Review Conferences, 38 of whom were men and 2 were women.

10. The above-mentioned statistics were collected by the Office for Disarmament Affairs and UNIDIR. It is important for States parties to ensure the collection and monitoring of relevant statistics over time, so as to inform future decision-making.

#### **How can we do better?**

11. At the forthcoming third session of the Preparatory Committee for the current review cycle, States parties are tasked with making recommendations to the Review Conference. Such recommendations could include recommendations to improve gender diversity in Non-Proliferation Treaty processes and encouraging States parties to integrate gender analysis in policymaking related to nuclear disarmament and

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<sup>2</sup> See Renata Hessmann Dalaqua, Kjølsv Egeland and Torbjørn Graff Hugo, “Still behind the curve: gender balance in arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament diplomacy”, figure 4 (forthcoming).

non-proliferation, and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy – as proposed by Australia, Canada, Ireland, Namibia, Sweden and UNIDIR, in a separate working paper.

12. The present paper recommends a number of ways in which we can strengthen the Non-Proliferation Treaty process by building gender diversity and working towards the equal participation of men and women. It draws on useful work by UNIDIR and the International Gender Champions Disarmament Impact Group on a “Gender and disarmament resource pack for multilateral practitioners” (available at <http://unidir.ch/files/publications/pdfs/gender-disarmament-resource-pack-en-735.pdf>).

13. It would be helpful to provide a resource pack on gender issues to all future Chairs of Preparatory Committees, Presidents of the Review Conferences and Chairs of the Main Committees of the Review Conferences. The toolkit could include many of the suggestions from part 3 of the above-mentioned “Gender and disarmament resource pack”.

14. The suggestions set out below, which are not exhaustive, are directed (as applicable) towards presiding officers, States parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the Office for Disarmament Affairs. It is hoped that the present paper will encourage other practical suggestions, in addition to the following:

- (a) Raise awareness of unconscious bias;
- (b) Hold participants accountable for behaviour that doesn't support gender equality;
- (c) Show commitment by raising issues related to gender early and consistently, and encouraging the increased and full participation of women;
- (d) Be inclusive in informal discussions and also in more formal settings;
- (e) The Chairs of meetings should organize briefings to solicit ideas on how to improve gender equality, including the full and equal participation of women and men, and explain why it matters; and should include these issues in outreach and communication documents;
- (f) Ensure efforts are made towards a gender-balanced bureau in the review cycle;
- (g) Encourage delegations to set targets to strive towards gender-equal delegations and the full and effective participation of women and men in 2019 and into the future;
- (h) Mentor and provide speaking opportunities to delegates at all levels;
- (i) Encourage those organizing side events relating to the Treaty to consider gender balance on panels – the template for booking side events could include this suggestion; encourage colleagues who are men to attend Non-Proliferation Treaty events focused on these issues, bearing in mind that spreading knowledge about challenges to gender equality and to equal and full participation is a key measure towards achieving gender equality;
- (j) To the extent practicable at sessions of the Preparatory Committee and Review Conferences, try to run family-friendly meetings, which allow delegates to meet family commitments, such as picking up children;
- (k) Pay attention to images and language – visuals distributed through social media in relation to meetings relating to the Non-Proliferation Treaty should include images of women and men;
- (l) Ensure that women and men are equally represented in support functions, such as note-taking and secretariat duties;

(m) Engage with delegations that have a majority of men among their delegates, to encourage them to redress the situation;

(n) Collect, track and publish gender-disaggregated data and statistics on gender balance in delegations and panels;

(o) Track the participation of women speakers and make the data available;

(p) Recognize where progress has been made, and highlight such examples.

15. While the present paper focuses on gender equality, it would also enhance the effectiveness of the Non-Proliferation Treaty review process if we could cultivate greater inclusivity and effective participation in other areas beyond gender (e.g., youth, expertise, geographic diversity, civil society, diversity of ideas), so as to ensure that we have access to the widest available pool of talent and skills.

16. The process for the 2020 Review Conference has, to date, featured a consistent discussion of gender equality and diversity through working papers, statements by delegations and the reports of the Chairs. We look forward to concrete changes in delegation composition and the participation of women at the Review Conference.

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