



NPT NEWS IN REVIEW

Civil society perspectives on the 2013 nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Preparatory Committee 22 April–3 May 2013



Reaching Critical Will

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A strategy for nuclear disarmament

Ray Acheson | *Reaching Critical Will of WILPF*

The scene of the final day of the second NPT PrepCom provided a snapshot of the NPT process itself. Marked by long waits and dissatisfied states parties (especially the non-nuclear weapon states), the final Friday was an anticlimactic finish to two weeks of discussions that largely went nowhere. This is a typical outcome of NPT meetings, because the review cycle is a process that favours the status quo by pitting possible forward momentum against maintaining the “stability” of the “regime”. But this status quo is seen as increasingly untenable to the majority of states parties.

The Chair’s factual summary, which will be submitted as a working paper to the PrepCom, reflects some of the NPT implementation challenges as well as positive developments. It does a fairly accurate job of reflecting the discussion in the room. Of course, not all states parties felt the document accurately reflects their priorities. The Non-Aligned Movement and the Arab League were particularly dissatisfied with some of the language in the summary related to the Middle East. The summary comprehensively covers the range of opinions on the failure to convene the 2012 conference on a WMD free zone in the Middle East. However, it does give space—perhaps in the NAM and Arab view, too much space—to the view that all has not been lost.

The difficulty in balancing opinions in the Chair’s summary led the Iranian delegation to suggest that these summaries not be issued in the future. Iran’s delegation felt that states parties would be better served by a document that simply compiles a few lines of each state’s priorities as submitted by states, rather than as “interpreted” by the Chair’s team.

This was but one of many suggestions made this year related to NPT reform. On Thursday, delegations had a (relatively) free-flowing discussion about institutional reform, with suggestions for changing up the venues of NPT meetings, shortening the first two PrepComs; webcasting NPT meetings; enforcing focused and limited

discussions; fostering interactive debates; and engaging better with civil society. Any and all of these reforms would be welcome, particularly those aimed at increasing the level of interactivity among governments and with civil society actors.

But regardless of such reforms, the underlying challenge to the NPT regime remains: there is a growing discord between the P5 nuclear weapon possessors and their nuclear sharing or nuclear umbrella allies on the one hand, and everyone else on the other. While most governments are adjusting their strategies and politics to the 21st century, the P5 and their nuclear allies lag behind, increasing global insecurities.

This tension could be clearly seen with the joint statement on the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of the use of nuclear weapons. 80 countries signed that statement, yet it was ignored by the P5 and looked upon with trepidation—or suspicion—by some nuclear sharing and umbrella countries. Japan refused to sign because it stated that nuclear weapons should not be used under any circumstances. Some NATO countries refused to sign because they saw it as “contradictory” to their NATO obligations—an interesting position, given that it is not a perspective shared by several of their NATO allies that did sign the statement. While the humanitarian dimension was given more space in the Chair’s summary than last year, the paragraph did not make reference to the joint statement nor convey the urgency of this issue.

At the same time, the views of the nuclear weapon possessors—only five countries in the NPT—were well reflected throughout the summary. However, their perspectives seemed oriented to defend against some of the critiques and criticisms from the rest of the states parties. Where many states called for significant reductions to be undertaken during the current review cycle and for negotiations on a nuclear weapons convention, “certain” states reaffirmed the contribution of the “pragmatic, step-by-step process to nuclear disarmament”.

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Editorial, continued

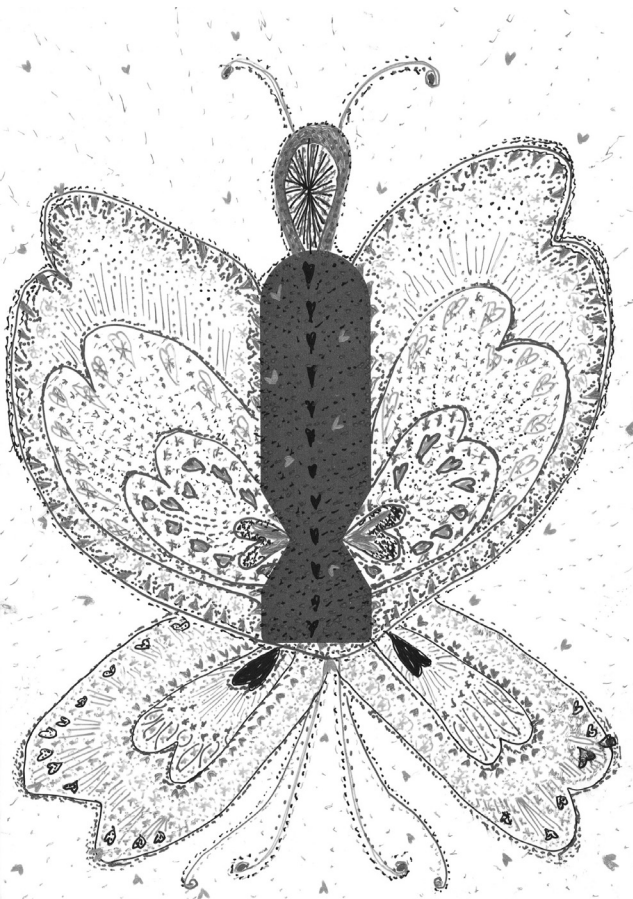
While many states expressed concern about nuclear weapon modernization, certain states noted they are “not pursuing new missions or capabilities for their nuclear weapons”. Many states argued that the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons would be inconsistent with international humanitarian law (IHL), while “some nuclear-weapons States” argued that “under their respective national policies any use of nuclear would only be considered in extreme circumstances in accordance with applicable [IHL].”

In these and other circumstances, the view of the nuclear weapon possessors can be seen as standing in contrast to the views of the majority of states parties. This is the problem with the NPT regime writ large: it has become a stand-off between those with nuclear weapons and those without; between those who purport that nuclear weapons have strategic or security value and those who see them as a liability for human survival.

“Nobody should assume that any regime structured on a have/have-not principle can be sustained forever,”

argued Angela Kane, UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, at the Annual NATO Conference on WMD Arms Control, Disarmament, and Non-Proliferation on 6 May 2013. She urged NATO to consider adopting a Strategic Concept paper devoted just to nuclear disarmament. “A world free of nuclear weapons is in fact not just a normative goal—it must also be a strategic goal, in the highest national security interests of each member of this alliance, and each member of the world community.”

The same could—and should—be said of the NPT. Instead of perpetuating the status quo, which is undermining the regime’s stability, states parties must develop a strategic goal for nuclear disarmament. “To be meaningful, a strategic goal requires the articulation of concrete measures to achieve it, a plan of action, and a process for reviewing progress made in implementing it and for responding to setbacks along the way,” described Ms. Kane. This must be the primary task of the 2015 NPT review conference, or states parties risk facing walk-outs from more than one delegation. •


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News in Brief

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Procedural report

- Paragraph 5 was orally amended to include a reference to the Egyptian delegation's decision on 29 April 2013 to not participate in the rest of the second session of the preparatory committee.
- Paragraph 10 (a) was orally amended to add a note that the next PrepCom chair is from Peru.
- The third preparatory committee of the NPT will be held from 28 April to 9 May 2014 in New York.
- The committee adopted the draft procedural report as a whole.

Chair's factual summary

- The Chair presented his factual summary as an accurate reflection of discussions aimed at preventing increasing divisions among states.
- The Arab Group, NAM, Lebanon, and Tunisia, highlighted problems with paragraphs 8 and 73, saying they suggested consensus where it didn't exist.

- ASEAN drew attention to paragraph 67 on the SEANWFZ treaty.
- South Africa underlined that humanitarian consequences should be at the core of NPT discussions and the only way to prevent the use of nuclear weapons is their total elimination. Mexico endorsed the South African statement.
- Australia, China, EU, France, ROK, UK, and US welcomed the Chair's summary as a balanced and accurate summary of what had been discussed.
- Iran suggested not continuing the practice of Chair's summaries as they could not be complete and would miss things.
- The draft Chair's factual summary will be submitted as a working paper.

Civil Society

- South Africa thanked civil society for the support of the humanitarian initiative and recognized its crucial role in creating awareness.
- Switzerland welcomed civil society's contributions to the discussions. •

