



News In Review

A collection of NGO views on the NPT PrepCom 2003

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Extra Helpings, Please

Ambassador David Boucher of the United Kingdom opened up the second day of the NPT PrepCom. In contrast with the statement made Monday by New Zealand, the UK's position could be categorised as 'Disarmament Lite'. We can but anticipate, but not hear, the UK's more detailed statement about its contribution to nuclear disarmament in Cluster 1 "as part of our commitment to report to states parties on our activities in this area." Contrary to claims of its imminent demise, Mr. Boucher said that the NPT remains the cornerstone of the nuclear non-proliferation regime. We recall hearing something similar with regard to the ABM Treaty - now abrogated.

Having acknowledged recent heightened concern about security assurances, Mr. Boucher reiterated that the UK "remains committed to them". It has already been stated by others that merely paying lip service to security assurance obligations will not suffice.

The Moscow Treaty was referred to as "substantive reductions in US-Russian strategic arsenals" and an "important contribution to strategic stability and nuclear disarmament."

We beg to differ.

If the UK is "disarmament lite," then Cuba's inaugural speech was disarmament with an extra helping, please. Cuba echoed some of the concerns of civil society, specifically, they noted the need for multilateral compliance within the disarmament arm of the NPT. Ambassador Godoy framed the inequity of the Treaty by

noting that it gave the privilege of "Nuclear Weapon State" status to a mere 2.7% of the countries; it was this gross inequity, he noted, that had dissuaded Cuba all of these years from acceding to the Treaty. Attaching particular importance to the hypocrisy surrounding article VI, they have now chosen to advocate for nuclear disarmament as a State Party to the Treaty.

The NPT's newest member provided a colorful critique on the U.S — NATO military alliance, and its preventative strategic doctrine, with nuclear weapons playing a central role.

Aside from the multitude of panels, workshops, and other events organized by the NGOs, we are busy finalizing our preparations for the NGO opportunity to address the Plenary today. More important than the presentations themselves, we are hoping for a productive, interactive session between civil society and the States Parties, immediately following the presentations. We are to deliver these short statements at the close of the open sessions, and we hope that they will infuse the delegates with a sense of duty and determination, and give them food for thought as they move into the next phase of their work.

*Reaching Critical Will,
With the generous assistance of the
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NGO Presentations Today!

Beginning at 10 am, in Conference room XXIV, NGOs will give their presentations to the Prepcom Plenary.

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1. What are your hopes or expectations for the Nuclear Non-Proliferation 2003 PrepCom?

I would hope that some of the intransigents that I see on both sides those states that are wedded to verifiability and compliance above all else and those states that are wedded to disarmament above all else will be able to find some common ground and perhaps exercise a little bit of flexibility in their positions.

2. What topics do you work on most or find the most interesting in this forum?

With BASIC the project that I was hired to do was as a consequence of the war with Iraq, so tangentially that involves disarmament particularly, WMD and nuclear. I also work with the WMD analysts, Nigel Chamberlain and Kathy Crandall, writing briefings research reports basic notes that are posted on our web site and sent out with email updates.

3. What led you to be doing the work that you are doing now?

I was accepted to law school at McGill, in Canada, and decided to take a year and do a masters degree in International Security Studies before returning to law school. At the end of that year I had taken a course with Professor William Walker on nuclear non-proliferation. I really enjoyed it and wanted to learn more, so I decided to indefinitely postpone law school and do a PHD on the history of the nuclear non-proliferation regime and the effect of shocks on regime development, which led to a brief stint working for the acronym institute, monitoring the 1st committee in NY this last October. Then immediately after that working at BASIC.



Quote of the Day

NGOs have been the wind under my wings, while others might have wished to have clipped my wings. NGOs will be the true custodians of whatever may have been accomplished over the past five years.

-Jayantha Dhanapala, Under-Secretary General for Disarmament Affairs, April 29, 2003.

Breaking the Dangerous Spiral of Nuclear Proliferation

President Bush invaded Iraq to find the weapons of mass destruction the UN inspectors did not find. His decision to attack Saddam Hussein brought an abrupt end to the global debate over whether US military intervention or UN inspections are better suited to disarm a suspected proliferator. But not for long. Several other countries — notably North Korea, Iran, Syria and Libya — are still believed to develop nuclear weapons. The administration's aggressive counterproliferation policy is likely to stimulate their efforts, rather than curb them. And with the Iraq war nearing its conclusion, yet no nuclear weapons found, the world seems to go back to square one.

Today's two competing paradigms to stop the spread of nuclear weapons are missing the point. Though military intervention and intrusive inspections may represent appropriate short-term responses to proliferation concerns, they are an inadequate long-term mechanism to thwart nuclear ambitions.

The current security system is not working properly. With China, France, Russia, the UK and the US clinging on to nuclear deterrence, there will always be some countries among those left in the cold that will try to emulate them. Only universal nuclear disarmament can bring the dangerous spiral of nuclear proliferation to an end.

But despite a thirty year old commitment to eliminate their deadly arsenals, the P-5 continue to lag behind in fulfilling their treaty obligations. Nothing stimulates nuclear proliferation more than this failure.

Over 30,000 nuclear warheads remain in the hands of the P-5, with a destructive power of tens of thousands of Hiroshimas. More than 90 percent of these horrific weapons are stationed in the US and Russia. Nearly half of them are operational and can be launched within minutes.

Wary of the catastrophic outcome of a nuclear exchange, the international community in 1968 adopted the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) with the goal to create a nuclear-weapon-free world. Over the past three decades, all but three countries joined the NPT, making it the most successful treaty in history. But while the 184 signatory states not possessing nuclear weapons have largely complied with their obligation not to acquire them, the P-5 have done too little to fulfill their part of the bargain — namely, moving toward zero.

It is based on the NPT's legal prohibition of acquiring nuclear weapons that the international community is able to call upon Iraq and North Korea to disarm. Yet this norm is ringing increasingly hollow if

contrasted with the failure of the nuclear-weapon states to live up to their "unequivocal undertaking" to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals — a promise they made at the NPT Review Conference in 2000.

In that Conference's final document, the P-5 committed to over a dozen practical disarmament steps. These steps include the irreversible reduction of strategic and tactical nuclear arms; a moratorium on nuclear testing pending the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty; the negotiation of a Fissile Material Treaty; the reduction of the operational status and role of nuclear weapons in security policies; the preserving of the ABM Treaty; and an overall strengthening of IAEA capabilities.

Three years into this deal, none of these goals have been met.

The Moscow Treaty, unanimously approved by the US Senate in March, requires both Russia and the US to cut their deployed arsenals to below 2,200 warheads each over the next 10 years. However, the pact fails to make these cuts permanent. Worse, last year's US nuclear posture seriously challenges the universal taboo against the use of nuclear arms by advocating the development and testing of "usable" mini-nukes. The new posture, besides violating the NPT, dangerously lowers the nuclear threshold and encourages other countries to follow suit.

Last week, North Korea became the first country ever to effectively withdraw its signature from the NPT, amid indications that it is stepping up preparations to produce nuclear bombs. Only the possession of nuclear weapons, the reclusive regime argued, will save it from being next on President Bush's list.

Be it counterproliferation by force or intrusive inspections — the measures currently promoted as possible ways out of the nuclear proliferation impasse are deficient. To effectively stop countries like North Korea or Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons, the proliferation problem must be taken by its roots. The US and its fellow nuclear-weapon countries must overcome current divisions and fully deliver upon their "unequivocal undertaking." Absent such unity in purpose, neither the US nor any other country will succeed in bringing about the moral and legal coherence necessary for curbing the spread of these weapons of terror. The consequences of such a failure could be devastating.

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Six Tests for the Nuclear Weapon States

See if you can work out which nuclear weapon states have fulfilled their commitments under the NPT.

1. WHICH WORLD LEADER HAS MADE AN UNEQUIVOCAL UNDERTAKING TO ACCOMPLISH THE ELIMINATION OF THEIR COUNTRY'S NUCLEAR ARSENAL?

- a. Tony Blair b. George Bush c. Jacques Chirac
- d. Vladimir Putin e. Jiang Zemin f. None of the Above

2. WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING DEMONSTRATES ENGAGEMENT IN THE PROCESS LEADING TO COMPLETE ELIMINATION OF THEIR NUCLEAR WEAPONS?

- a. The US New Triad of strategic forces.
- b. Russia's deployment of the SS-27 (Topol-M) missile.
- c. China's plan for modernised nuclear forces with 75-100 more warheads.
- d. UK deployment of Trident with the option to produce new nuclear weapons in future.
- e. French deployment of the Triumphant class submarine with a new M51 nuclear missile.
- f. None of the above.

3. WHICH COUNTRIES HAVE SIGNED AND RATIFIED THE COMPREHENSIVE TEST BAN TREATY?

- a. All nuclear weapon states except for the US and China.
- b. 31 out of 44 required for the treaty to enter into force.
- c. 98 out of 166 member states.
- d. Only rogue states haven't ratified.
- e. All of the above.

4. SPOT THE IRREVERSIBLE REDUCTION IN NUCLEAR FORCES:

- a. The Moscow Treaty of 2002.
- b. All those announcements the nuclear weapon states made in 1995.
- c. Tricky isn't it?

5. WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING DEMONSTRATES A DIMINISHED ROLE FOR NUCLEAR WEAPONS IN SECURITY POLICIES?

- a. The US Nuclear Posture Review.
- b. The US and Britain's refusal to rule out the use of nuclear weapons against Iraq.
- c. NATO's Strategic Concept.
- d. Failure by the nuclear-weapon states to agree to a legally binding negative security assurance.
- e. None of the above.

6. WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING IS A USEFUL STRATEGY FOR DEALING WITH FISSILE MATERIALS?

- a. Turn it into MOX.
- b. Threaten to cut Cooperative Threat Reduction Programmes.
- c. Ship it around the world in and out of areas of proliferation concern.
- d. Build more nuclear power stations.
- e. Doh.

Six Tests for the Nuclear Weapon States: Answers.

1(f) None of the Above

Have you seen Tony Blair, George Bush, Jacques Chirac, Vladimir Putin or Jiang Zemin make an unequivocal commitment to get rid of their nuclear weapons recently?

2(f) None of the Above.

The US is not disarming. Although old weapons will be withdrawn from service, the New Triad will include enhanced nuclear capabilities such as bunker busting nuclear weapons and modernised strike forces.

Even though its nuclear forces are crumbling, Russia still finds resources to deploy a new intercontinental missile, the SS-27 (Topol-M).

China is currently believed to be modernising its nuclear forces to give it new capabilities and as many as 75-100 additional warheads.

The UK insists on maintaining the option to deploy new nuclear weapons in future.

France is deploying the Triumphant Class submarine with plans for new missiles and warheads.

3(e) All of the above.

The UK, France and Russia have signed and ratified the CTBT. However, the US is completely opposed to the treaty and China also has not ratified. Could it be that the US and China would like to do some more nuclear tests?

Although 166 countries have signed the CTBT and 98 have ratified, the treaty is still not in force. Action must be taken to bring it into force soon, before countries resume testing.

Only a rogue state would want to allow testing of weapons of mass destruction.

4(d) Tricky isn't it.

Although the Moscow Treaty envisages a reduction of US and Russian nuclear forces down to 1700-2200 each by 2012, it does not require dismantlement of any particular warheads or delivery vehicles. The US intends to keep a reserve force of nuclear warheads that could be redeployed at any time.

The UK, France and China have never joined any nuclear disarmament negotiations. None of the cuts they have made are verified or irreversible.

Tricky isn't it, to have irreversible cuts in nuclear forces when countries tear up treaties such as START II and the ABM Treaty.

5(e) None of the Above

The US Nuclear Posture Review indicates that the US plans to be able to use nuclear weapons against 7 countries: Russia, China, North Korea, Iraq, Iran, Syria, and Libya.

According to NATO's Strategic Concept, US nuclear forces in Europe remain "vital" to the security of the Alliance.

The US and Britain have repeatedly refused to rule out the use of nuclear weapons against Iraq.

6(e) Doh

Converting fissile material to MOX is an ineffective way of dealing with it as it just perpetuates the dangerous nuclear fuel cycle and its proliferation risks.

Cooperative Threat Reduction Programmes could be helpful to reduce the risk from loose nukes, but the programme is under constant threat of cuts and much of the money is allocated to MOX facilities in the US.

France and Britain continue to ship nuclear waste and plutonium MOX around the world, posing a terrorist risk. Continuing to promote nuclear power makes no economic sense and is a proliferation risk.