



NPT NEWS IN REVIEW

Civil society perspectives on the 2014 nuclear Non-Proliferation
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IN THIS ISSUE

1 | Editorial

2 | News in Brief

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EDITORIAL: OVERCOMING INTRANSIGENCE

Ray Acheson | *Reaching Critical Will of WILPF*

After two weeks of discussion, the NPT PrepCom closed without adopting the Chair's draft recommendations to the Review Conference. There were some positive outcomes, however. There is clarity on where things stand with the nuclear-armed states and an emerging vision and determination about what to do about it. The logic of prohibiting nuclear weapons as a means to facilitate their elimination is hard to dismiss. Against the background of growing frustration with protracted deadlock and the continued refusal by the nuclear-armed states to meet their obligations, it is becoming an increasingly compelling way forward for many delegations.

It became clearer than ever during the course of this PrepCom that the nuclear-armed states have failed to meet their obligations from 2010; that they and some of their allies intend to push for an indefinite extension of the action plan containing those obligations; and that the nuclear-armed states will refuse to take on any new commitments related to nuclear disarmament. The nuclear-armed and nuclear-dependent countries continue to see value in nuclear weapons. This value stems from these states' dogmatic commitment to outmoded, irresponsibly risky, and obviously unsustainable, notions of "nuclear deterrence". These states' efforts at this PrepCom have chiefly been oriented toward preserving their dominance over the possession and status of these weapons. Putting forward a set of hollow commitments as "practical next steps," these countries have tried to close the space for pursuing effective measures for nuclear disarmament.

In reality, however, they may have done the opposite.

In 2009, at the third PrepCom in the 2010 review cycle, the Chair circulated a much stronger set of draft recommendations. Its strongest provisions dealt with moving the

disarmament agenda forward and even included consideration of a nuclear weapons convention. After several rounds of negotiations, the watered-down recommendations were not adopted. But in 2010, the Review Conference adopted the action plan.

This year, the Chair's recommendations fell far short of those initially proposed in 2009. Merely tweaking some of the language from the 2010 action plan in some places and repeating it verbatim in others, the 2014 recommendations did not provide the ambitious vision necessary to advance progress. Instead, their adoption would have risked locking states parties into minimalist positions.

Perhaps the biggest difference between the level of ambition in 2009 and 2014 can be attributed to the context surrounding these meetings. 2009 featured the reengagement of the United States in multilateral affairs after eight years of the Bush administration; Obama's Prague speech; and the op-eds of cold warriors calling for some semblance of nuclear disarmament. Five years later, the rhetorical visions of a nuclear weapons free world have faded. In their place are aggressive modernization; a failure to fulfill the minimalist measures agreed in 2010; and the refusal of the nuclear-armed states even to engage with the many initiatives and efforts non-nuclear-armed states have undertaken over the past few years.

By pushing back against any and all forward movement, nuclear-armed and nuclear-dependent states have created opportunity and incentive for non-nuclear-armed states to take the lead on nuclear disarmament. These states have the space now to build on the humanitarian reframing of nuclear weapons by working to prohibit them through an international treaty. This is a step that they can take, even in the face of continued stalling from the nuclear-armed states. Indeed it is a step that they must

continued on next page

REPORT: NEWS IN BRIEF

Gabriella Irsten | *Reaching Critical Will of WILPF*

Chair's working paper

- The Chair turned his draft recommendations into a working paper (WP.46).
- Brazil expressed regret about the failure of the 2014 PrepCom to adopt recommendations to the 2015 RevCon, as it is mandate to do.
- Argentina said that the NPT has a mandate to produce recommendations, but that states parties need to be flexible and look at medium- and long-term goals as well.
- Mexico believed that the Chair's paper does not reflect the concerns most states have voiced regarding the catastrophic humanitarian consequences, nor the Oslo and Nayarit conferences held on this topic.
- Mexico proposed that the New Agenda Coalition suggestion on a subsidiary body for nuclear disarmament should be reflected in the document.
- Switzerland highlighted that draft recommendations would have been a good basis on which to engage and that the chairs paper will serve as a reference point in preparing for next year RevCon.

2015 Review Conference

- US called for a comprehensive and balanced review across all three pillars at the RevCon.
- Cuba believes that the 2010 Action Plan should be the starting point at the RevCon.

- Cuba said that states parties cannot allow the step-by-step approach to be a pretext for maintaining the status quo and that nuclear disarmament cannot continue to be an ongoing postponed goal.
- Mexico stated that it is unacceptable to have a simple roll-over of the 2010 action plan in 2015.
- Mexico recommended that the 2015 RevCon focus on nuclear-armed states' noncompliance with their obligations and reducing the role of nuclear weapons in security doctrines.

Other

- Cuba called for a legally-binding ban on nuclear weapons with a specified timeframe.
- Cuba also highlighted the great distance between rhetoric of NWS and the commitments they are actually prepared to undertake.
- US and Russia emphasised their recent signing of the Central Asian nuclear weapons free zones (NWFZ) treaty.
- Russia also hoped that the same will happen to the Southeast Asian NWFZ, preferably before the 2015 RevCon.
- New Agenda Coalition, Mexico, and Switzerland welcomed the valuable contribution of civil society to deliberations at the 2014 PrepCom.
- The PrepCom adopted a procedural report.

Editorial, continued

take. It is an approach will help bridge the gap between the aspirations for nuclear disarmament and the seemingly intractable legal and political landscape that exists today. And while the nuclear-armed states should be encouraged to come along, such a course of action need not rely on overcoming their intransigence. Instead, a ban treaty might be just the thing to unlock it. •

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