
Conference on Disarmament

11 September 2023

Original: English

Note Verbale dated 5 September 2023 from The Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the United Nations Office and Other International Organizations in Geneva transmitting the statement by Permanent Representative of Ukraine H.E. Ambassador Yevheniia Filipenko at the Conference on Disarmament thematic debates on the establishment of Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones, which was held on 31 January 2023

The Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations in Geneva presents its compliments to the Secretariat of the Conference on Disarmament and has the honour to submit the Statement by Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations in Geneva H.E. Ambassador Yevheniia Filipenko at the Conference on Disarmament thematic debates on the establishment of Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones, which was held on 31 January 2023.

The Permanent Mission of Ukraine requests the Secretariat of the Conference on Disarmament that this Statement be issued as an official document (and Working Paper) of the 2023 CD session and included in the Appendix to the Final Report of the CD, as well as uploaded on the Conference's website.

The Permanent Mission of Ukraine avails itself of the opportunity to renew to the Secretariat of the Conference on Disarmament the assurances of its highest consideration.

Annex

Statement by Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations in Geneva Yevheniia Filipenko (Conference on Disarmament Plenary Meeting, 31 January 2023)

Mr. President,

Ukraine aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union. At the same time, I would like to make the following remarks in my national capacity.

Mr. President,

The Delegation of Ukraine appreciates your efforts and welcomes your decision to convene thematic debates on the establishment of Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones (NWFZs). We consider this topic meaningful and recognize the importance of Nuclear-Weapon-Free zones in maintaining international peace and security.

Ukraine supports all international efforts towards strengthening the global nuclear non-proliferation regime, including the Treaty of Tlatelolco, Treaty of Rarotonga, Treaty of Bangkok, Treaty of Pelindaba, as well as the Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia. We further reaffirm our full support for the establishment of the Middle East Zone free of Nuclear Weapons and other Weapons of Mass Destruction and their delivery systems, as it was adopted by the respective General Assembly Resolutions.

Ukraine's own contribution into a global nuclear disarmament is unprecedented, as Ukraine abandoned the world's third largest nuclear arsenal and became non-nuclear weapon state.

However, the Ukrainian endeavours for non-proliferation were undermined in 2014, when Russia occupied and began to militarize Crimea peninsular, simultaneously launching the aggression in the east of Ukraine in a flagrant violation of the UN Charter and a number of international treaties and agreements, including the Budapest Memorandum on the Security assurances of 1994. As a result, the non-proliferation – one of the pillars of the NPT - became an illusion as Russia unlawfully expanded the geographic area of its nuclear arms deployment.

The situation has deteriorated drastically in 2022, during unprovoked and unjustified full-scale Russian aggression against Ukraine, when for the first time in history, civil nuclear facilities in Ukraine have been forcefully seized and turned by the Russian forces into military targets.

By establishing a military equipment and repair base at the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP) the Russian Federation has violated provisions of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons with regard to peaceful use of nuclear energy as well as broke nuclear safety and security norms and standards.

Moreover, Moscow has already shelled missiles, capable of delivering nuclear warheads, over the Ukrainian cities from the territory of Belarus, a non-nuclear weapon state according to the NPT.

By such actions Russia not only undermines the NPT, but also erodes the very concept of the NWFZs.

Distinguished delegates,

NWFZs are an instrument to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons. They complement the global regime of the NPT and are recognized in this capacity in Article VII of the NPT. There is an option that parties to a NWFZ may agree to accept obligations beyond those stipulated in the NPT, and therefore the existence of zones around the world provides a safety net in case someone, following Russia's pattern, decides to compromise the NPT.

The NWFZs with all their obligations, notably verification of the parties' undertakings, will still be in place.

The concept of NWFZs is closely interlinked with the idea of security assurances (the topic we are going to discuss at the next thematic debates), where many non-nuclear weapon states have previously placed particular emphasis on negative security assurances to protect themselves from nuclear conflict.

As of today, more than 100 non-nuclear weapon states rely on negative security assurances included in the protocols to Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones treaties.

If those are no longer deemed credible, as illustrated by Russia's unprovoked and unjustified aggression against Ukraine, and a state feels under existential threat, developing a domestic nuclear deterrent tools may appear more appealing in the future.

Distinguished delegates,

The Russian military aggression against Ukraine has provoked dangerous disbalance in the existing international security system, undermined the effectiveness and reliability of WMD non-proliferation regime. Russia has demonstrated that the legal obligations of a nuclear power to respect independence and sovereignty of a non-nuclear state as well as to refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity are worth nothing.

After Russia has breached every existing norm of international law by waging its war against Ukraine and by clear intentions to locate its nuclear arsenal on the territory of non-nuclear states, the future of the NPT and the very concept of NWFZ became blurred.

Nevertheless, we firmly believe that maintaining existent and establishing the new Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones, including the one in our region, is an important task for the non-proliferation regime.

Exploring the idea of the Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones in different regions of the world under the circumstances when the global security architecture is corroded by the Russian war or aggression against Ukraine, definitely requires thinking out of the box, which should lead to the decisive response. The robust joint actions are needed to prevent nuclear disaster at global scale. To ensure that the aggressor cannot remain utterly safe and unpunished because it possesses nuclear arms. To prove the international community is able to advance the aims of nuclear non-proliferation regime, including those related to maintaining the Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones.

I thank you.
