
Conference on Disarmament

22 September 2023

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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 the Delegation of Ukraine at the Conference on Disarmament thematic debates on cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament, which was held on 16 May 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 the Delegation of Ukraine at the Conference on Disarmament thematic debates on nuclear disarmament, which was held on 16 May 2023.

The Permanent Mission of Ukraine requests the Secretariat of the Conference on Disarmament (CD) 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 the Delegation of Ukraine at the thematic debates on cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament, 16 May 2023, Geneva

Madame President,

The Delegation of Ukraine appreciates your efforts and welcomes the decision to open the second part of the CD session by convening thematic debates on such a pivotal topic - the cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament.

Distinguished colleagues,

The High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Izumi Nakamitsu has recently addressed the Security Council by saying that “the risk of a nuclear weapon being used is currently higher than at any time since the depth of the cold war,” and that the war against Ukraine “represents the most acute example of that risk.”

Unfortunately, nuclear risks and threats stemming from Russia’s war against Ukraine could be real and we have to take them seriously to avert unimaginable nuclear consequences.

The Russian Federation has already provoked a dangerous misbalance in nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

Due to Russia’s reckless behaviour, the 10th Review of the NPT failed to adopt its final document; the Conference on Disarmament remains paralyzed, and it seems unlikely that this year things will get better unless prompt robust counteractions are undertaken.

The decision of the Russian Federation to suspend its participation in the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty - one of the pillars of arms control architecture, constitutes a major provocative step towards dismantling of the entire arms control architecture.

Russia’s threats to deploy nuclear weapons on the territory of Belarus is a reminder to the world of Russia’s arrogant contempt for the current nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation architecture as well as for the international security system as a whole. This speaks volumes about Russia’s readiness for a meaningful and responsible engagement in the de-escalation process and peace efforts.

Nuclear blackmail is one of the tools that Russia has exploited since the very beginning of the invasion. Encouraged by its longstanding impunity, the aggressor further proceeds with extreme nuclear rhetoric of threats and intimidation, with complete disregard for the tragic consequences it may lead to for the whole mankind.

In addition, the relentless shelling and seizure by the aggressor of the Ukrainian civilian nuclear facilities, despite numerous demands of the international community, have already disrupted their proper functioning, thus aggravating the nuclear threats at the global level.

Continuous occupation and militarization by Russia of the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant is a blatant violation of international law as well as norms of nuclear and radiological safety and security. The occupants resort to repression and harassment against the Ukrainian personnel at the ZNPP, including abductions and torture, and forcing them to sign new employment contracts, which give control over the ZNPP to Russia’s state nuclear energy company “Rosatom”.

Therefore, we once again call upon all Member States to consolidate the efforts and to act promptly and decisively to prevent any possibility of the use of any type of nuclear weapons by the terrorist state. First and foremost Russia must immediately stop its war of aggression and completely and unconditionally withdraw all its troops and military equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders. We also urge the belarusian authorities to cease their support for, and refrain from any further involvement in or facilitation of Russia's illegal war of aggression.

Madame President,

Distinguished colleagues,

Ukraine shares the view that the use of nuclear weapons is the most serious threat ever faced by humankind. For many years, Ukraine has been consistent in its call for fostering the international nuclear non-proliferation regime and step up efforts in nuclear disarmament.

Ukraine has always been a responsible member of the international community and made an unprecedented contribution to the field of nuclear disarmament by joining the NPT and abandoning the world's third-largest nuclear arsenal.

Unfortunately, the failure of the Budapest Memorandum to deter one of Ukraine's security guarantors from military aggression has opened an enormous rhetorical opportunity for proliferators to lobby for a nuclear deterrent. In this context, there is a need to rethink the relationship between the nuclear-armed states and the rest of the international community by launching and sustaining a global dialogue with the goal of developing a new regime of universal, unconditional negative security assurances as a first concrete step. This step would help dissuade states from acquiring nuclear weapons, and would improve mutual confidence and trust and positively contribute to future international nonproliferation and disarmament efforts.

Madame President,

Despite the ongoing erosion of the international security architecture, we continue to consider the NPT as a cornerstone of the global non-proliferation regime, the essential foundation to advance nuclear disarmament, in accordance with Article VI of the NPT and an important element in the development of nuclear energy applications for peaceful purposes in accordance with Article IV of the NPT. Today, there is no alternative to this Treaty. Ukraine strongly supports all three pillars of the NPT and will continue to work constructively on its further strengthening.

In this regard, Ukraine welcomes the successful adoption of the decisions relating to the dates and venue, chairing and documentation of the Working group on further strengthening the review process of the NPT. Ukraine looks forward to participating in the meeting of the Working Group in Vienna on 24-28 July 2023 under the chairmanship of the chair-designate of the First Preparatory Committee meeting, H.E. Ambassador Jarmo Viinanen of Finland.

Furthermore, Ukraine considers entering into force the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), which will establish a moratorium on nuclear tests, to be of crucial importance to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

Ukraine believes that we must persist with further measures to continue the process of nuclear disarmament, including in the framework of the Conference on Disarmament. Thus, beginning the negotiation on a Treaty banning the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons or other explosive devices (FMCT), will help set a legal instrument on effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon states against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.

The robust joint actions are needed to prevent arms race and nuclear disaster at a global scale. It is critically important for all responsible nations to act in a comprehensive, balanced and substantive way to ensure the world that non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament are not an illusion and can be achieved.

I thank you.
