

**Statement by the Deputy Head of the Delegation of the Russian Federation,  
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the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation Konstantin Vorontsov  
at the Thematic Debate on Cluster I “Nuclear Weapons”  
in the First Committee of the 80<sup>th</sup> Session  
of the United Nations General Assembly  
(New York, October 21, 2025)**

Mr. Chair,

On September 22, President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin put forward an important and timely initiative to maintain at this turbulent time the status quo established under New START in relation to strategic offensive weapons in the arsenals of Russia and the United States. It is envisaged that after the New START Treaty expires in February 2026, both parties could continue observing its central quantitative limits at least for one year. This step is designed to prevent strategic arms race and to preserve an acceptable degree of predictability and restraint in this sphere, as well as to promote the objectives of the NPT.

The implementation of the Russia’s initiative could buy time, which, depending on the circumstances and the political will of the parties, could be used wisely to further stabilize relations between Russia and the United States, which are the two largest nuclear powers. In particular, it could make a substantial contribution to creating the conditions necessary for a constructive Russian-American dialogue encompassing comprehensive consideration of strategic stability issues if proper conditions for its full-scale resumption are ripe.

The Russian initiative is only viable if the United States demonstrates reciprocity, and refrains from steps that would undermine the existing balance of deterrence capabilities. In this context we will continue following closely US activities in strategic sphere.

An undesired alternative to Russia's proposal would be the onset of a total vacuum with regard to restrictions of nuclear capabilities, as well as heightened tensions and growing nuclear danger.

At the same time, a huge tangle of closely intertwined problems has already been formed in the strategic sphere. We associate them with the extremely destabilizing doctrinal postures and military-technical programs of Western countries aimed at achieving overwhelming military superiority. Among the relevant negative factors, we particularly highlight the hostile policy of NATO countries, which could lead to a head-on collision between nuclear powers; the development by this self-proclaimed "nuclear alliance" of schemes and means of "nuclear sharing," including the expansion of the geography of the US "nuclear presence" in Europe and the circle of countries to which the delivery of American special ammunition to targets is delegated; the establishment of a global and multi-domain US missile defense system and anti-missile "domes" of other Western countries integrated with it; the West's build-up of high-precision long-range capabilities for so-called "preemptive" disarming strikes, including the forward deployment of ground-launched intermediate-range and shorter-range missiles; plans by the US and a number of its allies to deploy weapons in space, turning it into an arena for armed confrontation. This list is far from complete.

As a result of the destructive steps taken earlier by Western countries, the foundation for constructive relations and practical cooperation between nuclear powers has been significantly undermined. Consequently, against the backdrop of heightened tensions between them and aggravated strategic risks stemming therefrom, the foundations for a fruitful dialogue in bilateral and multilateral formats, including the Russian-American track and "Nuclear Five", have been substantially eroded. As a consequence, considerable efforts will be required to restore the basis for such interaction. They must be based on a refusal to encroach on each other's core interests, acknowledgment of and respect for the concerns of the other side, and willingness to address the root causes of fundamental contradictions in line with the principle of equal and indivisible security. Only then

will there be a reliable and long-term basis for guaranteed avoidance of armed confrontation between nuclear powers, which is a priori fraught with catastrophic consequences. This is how the postulate that nuclear war must never be fought should be put into practice.

We are convinced that addressing the above challenges and problems is a priority task in the context of efforts aimed at making headway in nuclear disarmament. Without cleaning up this “mess”, we will not be able to make real progress on this path. When considering the issue of disarmament, it is impossible to ignore military-political and strategic realities, and any far-reaching initiatives in this area should be realistically checked against the international security environment. Previous generations of disarmament professionals recognized this objective and inseparable interconnection, enshrining the relevant understandings in such landmark documents as the final document of the 1978 First Special Session of the UN General Assembly devoted to Disarmament.

For us, the ideals of building a nuclear-free and safer world for all as the ultimate goal of the nuclear disarmament process are unshakable. At the same time, the fundamental approach requiring that such efforts be placed in the context of general and complete disarmament, as provided for in the NPT and other relevant international documents, must remain equally unshakable. We stand for the comprehensive implementation of this complex algorithm on the basis of carefully calibrated, step-by-step measures that do not diminish anyone's security and contribute to strengthening global stability.

Ideas about a “shortcut” to “nuclear zero,” which call for the immediate and unconditional abandonment of nuclear weapons and their outlawing, are unrealistic and counterproductive. Attempts to artificially set deadlines for disarmament are equally unfeasible, especially in the current highly turbulent and unpredictable international environment.

The NPT remains for us the only international legal benchmark and foundation for efforts toward nuclear disarmament. The entirety of the three pillars of the Treaty, which also include the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and the

peaceful uses of nuclear energy, remains a cornerstone of the architecture of international security. Maintaining a carefully calibrated balance between these components, without creating artificial imbalances, is the key to stability and predictability in relations between States.

As we approach the end of another NPT review cycle, we regret to note that the complex problems and contradictions that have accumulated in the context of the Treaty not only remain unresolved, but they are also multiplying. The NPT is being seriously tested. There is a high risk that the debates at the upcoming Review Conference may once again fail to produce an agreed final document that could once again fall hostage to exaggerated expectations and political ambitions.

It is important to prevent the use of dishonest non-proliferation rhetoric as a pretext and tool for exerting pressure, especially forceful pressure, on undesirable countries. Manipulation of the Treaty's verification mechanism – the IAEA safeguards system – is undoubtedly detrimental to the integrity and authority of the NPT. This becomes clearly evident in attempts to impose intrusive inspections on certain States for political reasons, including artificially restricting their rights to access civilian nuclear technologies, while at the same time taking a rather permissive attitude towards other countries.

It is necessary to recreate atmosphere for mutual respect and dialogue on an equal basis within the NPT framework. The willingness to refrain from over-politicising discussions and to take into account and embrace alternative points of view is the minimum requirement for creating the conditions for the preparation of review cycle outcomes that are acceptable to all parties.

Assurances against the use or the threat of use of nuclear weapons to non-nuclear States remain an important way to strengthen the non-proliferation regime. To date, the most effective and feasible tool in this area is the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones (NWFZs). Russia has signed and ratified protocols to four existing treaties on such zones, thereby providing negative security assurances (NSAs) to more than one hundred non-nuclear-weapon States. When acceding to such protocols, Russia traditionally makes reservations that set scope of the

viability of such guarantees, which does not affect the interests of States that follow the “letter and the spirit” of the NWFZ agreements in good faith. These reservations are justified, in particular, by the troublesome situation surrounding the AUKUS partnership, which envisages the transfer to a non-nuclear State party to the Rarotonga Treaty of strategic platforms for which future nuclear weapons system is being purposefully developed.

We understand the desire of many non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the NPT to negotiate, together with the nuclear-weapon States, a separate universal agreement containing legally binding NSAs. At the same time, we cannot “universally” consider all non-nuclear States as countries that have grounds to “legitimately” claim such assurances. In particular, Russia sees no compelling reasons to include in this category those formally non-nuclear-weapon States that are directly or indirectly involved in the deeply destabilizing practice of NATO's so-called “nuclear sharing.”

Thank you.