



Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty: 2026 Review Conference General Debate Statement

**New Zealand Statement delivered by Permanent
Representative to the United Nations, H.E. Carolyn
Schwalger**

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Thank you, President.

You have my delegation's full support.

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty has been enormously successful in underpinning the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime and contributing to international peace and security.

The global nuclear safeguards system, developed to ensure all States are meeting their non-proliferation obligations under the NPT, is pivotal. It has built mutual confidence for more than five decades and is enabling States to benefit from the peaceful uses of nuclear technology and energy.

But the NPT faces mounting challenges. Progress on nuclear disarmament consistent with the NPT's Article VI obligation is being eroded and, in some cases, reversed.

We see some nuclear-armed States building up their nuclear arsenals. Others are giving nuclear weapons more prominence in their security policies and increasing nuclear and related war readiness. They justify these actions on the basis that increasing strategic mistrust makes these changes necessary. But such steps also contribute to further mistrust and strategic competition. And they increase the risks that nuclear weapons could be used.

There are also troubling indications that, in the face of nuclear threats or coercion, at least a few non-nuclear weapon States are starting to ask whether nuclear weapons might be their only guarantee against aggression.

Meanwhile, the demise of nuclear arms control-related agreements has removed important guardrails against falling into the nuclear abyss, and there are gaps emerging in strategic dialogue among the States with the largest nuclear arsenals.

We can't expect to solve some of our largest collective challenges without first engaging in dialogue. In this regard, we expect greater responsible leadership from the nuclear-weapon States, including at this Review Conference.

Effective implementation of Article VI remains a central priority for my delegation, something we will pursue at this Review Conference both nationally and as a member of the New Agenda Coalition.

New Zealand, along with Ireland and Switzerland, has also developed a proposal aimed at achieving consensus on nuclear weapon States' reporting and more interactive consideration of these reports. This would benefit NPT review practically and improve mutual confidence on Article VI implementation at a challenging time for this Treaty. Our full recommendations are included in Working Paper 7.

Nevertheless, New Zealand also recognises that the Treaty's credibility and staying power depends on full, balanced, and faithful implementation across all three pillars. We want this Review Conference to strengthen non-proliferation, enhance nuclear safety and security, and appropriately advance the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

Military activities in multiple armed conflicts around nuclear facilities are elevating serious nuclear safety and security risks. It is a problem no longer isolated to one conflict or region and underlines the importance of upholding the prohibition of strikes on peaceful nuclear facilities. For this reason, New Zealand will co-sponsor a Working Paper on this important topic.

As a member of the Vienna Group of ten countries, New Zealand also has co-sponsored papers on a range of nuclear non-proliferation, safety and security issues.

In closing, we should all reflect that the explosive power of nuclear weapons is so overwhelming that it's difficult to comprehend the scale of the devastation stemming from their use.

But we do know they are weapons that can destroy entire cities. Cities that house civilians.

We know that no State or international authority has the capacity to respond adequately to nuclear weapon detonations.

We know the effects of nuclear weapons are indiscriminate and take no account of borders. They cause long-term, intergenerational harm – as we have seen in the Pacific.

The drafters of the NPT understood this when they determined that the devastation of nuclear war would affect all humankind, and that every effort must be made to avert such a danger.

They understood that despite their destructive power, nuclear weapons are not a force of nature; they stem from human choices.

As States Parties to the NPT, we should draw strength from this. We will have to make choices at this Review Conference – hard ones, in some cases – to help to sustain and reinforce the nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime. My government is convinced that, despite States Parties' many differences on individual issues, it is in all our interests to do so.

I thank you.