



Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty: 2026 Review Conference Main Committee 1 Statement

New Zealand Statement delivered by Dr. John Borrie

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Thank you, Chair.

New Zealand associates itself with previous joint statements in this Main Committee, including those delivered by Ireland on behalf of the New Agenda Coalition, and on transparency with Ireland and Switzerland.

In view of time today, I wish to focus on a few key points rather than repeat those statements.

I offer this in awareness that a long era of the stabilising US-Russian bilateral arms control cooperation appears to have ended, with the demise of the New START agreement, and with nothing to succeed it.

The five nuclear weapon States are modernising their nuclear arsenals and related capabilities, and there are indications, some of them opaque, of the build up of nuclear stockpiles.

Nuclear weapons remain central to the strategic doctrines of all the nuclear weapon States, and their allies.

Thinly veiled nuclear threats and bellicose rhetoric from some nuclear-armed States have become more frequent.

Even the norm against nuclear testing, symbolised by the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, and which holds special importance for the Pacific including New Zealand, is under pressure in new ways.

Novel strategic technologies are complicating nuclear escalation and crisis management and contributing to nuclear risk.

In the face of these and other developments, implementation of NPT Article VI is not only stalled. In key respects, it is moving backwards.

In the face of current tensions and this deteriorated situation, what can we do?

First, we need to recognise that sustained failure to deliver progress on nuclear disarmament by those in a position to do so will result in the weakening of confidence in, and credibility of, the NPT, which hurts all our interests. This weakening would extend to the NPT's non-proliferation pillar. It means the Treaty must be fully implemented, including Article VI.

Frankly, as a collective, we have very little – if any – tangible progress to show on implementing Article VI over this eleventh review cycle. Modest progress on enhancing transparency in their reporting by the five nuclear weapon States and more interactive debate would show good faith and build confidence.

Recognising this, New Zealand, both in the New Agenda Coalition and the Ad Hoc Group on Transparency and Accountability, has contributed to specific proposals for this Review Conference contained in Working Papers 17 and 7, respectively.

As a collective, NPT States Parties urgently need to respond to the increasing danger of nuclear weapons being used. Early steps should involve more strategic dialogue between competing nuclear weapon States. We are aware the 'P3' talk frequently, and even Russia and the United States have longstanding communications channels. We urge China and the United States to move beyond stand-offs over formats and agenda and take steps to ensure they can communicate in crisis and on which guardrails they should work toward to prevent such crises from arising.

Strategic dialogue and mutual confidence building are necessary elements if we expect multilateral nuclear arms control arrangements to emerge and achieve any success. Mr Chair, it's New Zealand's expectation and that of many other NPT States Parties that the nuclear-weapon States should ensure such progress, not least to substantiate their claims to being "responsible" or concerned with ensuring "strategic stability".

This is because the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapon use would be catastrophic and affect us all.

Consistent with this, there is a general need to tone down belligerent nuclear rhetoric, including statements that could be interpreted as nuclear threats. Such language undermines nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament since it creates anxiety and fuels the desire to acquire nuclear weapons.

Ideally, we could agree on these elements and capture them within an outcome to this Review Conference. In sum, at a substantive minimum, an outcome of our work on nuclear disarmament should:

- Recommit, without qualification, to our shared goal of a nuclear weapon free world based on the belief that nuclear weapons must never be used again;
- Re-affirm the validity of this Treaty's obligations and its related commitments;
- Express States's concern about nuclear threats, as well as the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of use of nuclear weapons;
- Enhance transparency and accountability measures;
- Reinforce the importance of the norm against nuclear testing; and
- Spare no effort in the achievement of the Treaty's full universalisation.

My delegation looks forward to working with other States Parties towards this end.

I thank you.