
10th Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

July 2021

A Nuclear Risk Reduction Package

**Working paper by the Stockholm Initiative, supported by
Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Ethiopia,
Finland, Germany, Iceland, Indonesia, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan,
Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway,
the Republic of Korea, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland***

1. Averting the danger of nuclear war and taking measures to safeguard the security of peoples is the foundation of the NPT and prominently stated in the Treaty's preamble. Risks associated with nuclear weapons will persist as long as there are such weapons. Therefore, full implementation of the Treaty, including the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, remains the best way to eliminate nuclear risks.
2. International concern about nuclear risks has come to the forefront in recent years, and urgent action is needed to implement risk reduction measures. Various developments and trends substantiate this assessment, notably a deteriorated international security environment, great power strategic competition, stress on the nuclear arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation architecture, the emergence of regional tensions and the potentially destabilizing implications of several technological developments.
3. There now exists a broad range of research on nuclear risks. The humanitarian, economic, environmental and societal consequences of nuclear weapons detonations are better understood than before. Likewise, there is now greater awareness about concrete aspects of the risk of use of nuclear weapons – be it intentional, accidental, by miscalculation, misperception, or unauthorized use, including by non-state actors. This growing understanding only underlines the urgent need to address nuclear risks.

* This working paper remains open for Co-sponsorship. States Parties wishing to co-sponsor are encouraged to contact: pd-asp-abruestung@eda.admin.ch.

-
4. Previous NPT Review Conferences agreed by consensus on various elements relevant for nuclear risk reduction, for instance in the context of the 64-point Action Plan, including action 5i, adopted at the 2010 NPT Review Conference. The implementation of these commitments must be given greater priority, especially as risk reduction is part of nuclear disarmament and can further advance it.
 5. In view of this, risk reduction should be advanced as a priority at the Tenth NPT Review Conference. States parties should send a clear political signal of their commitment to address nuclear risks as a matter of priority and notably ensure that, in the interest of humanity, nuclear weapons will never be used again. The Review Conference should also take practical steps towards a reduction of nuclear risks as part of broader disarmament efforts, notably calling for regular, in-depth, structured dialogues among nuclear-weapon States as well as all States Parties on specific risk reduction measures, as well as a dedicated (multilateral or bilateral) process to address risk reduction-related issues.
 6. The Stockholm Initiative has adopted 22 ‘stepping stones’ for nuclear disarmament, including in the area of risk reduction. These represent concrete opportunities to reduce international tensions, improve global security, serve as confidence-building measures and pave the way for further progress in the years to come, with the aim of achieving our shared goal of a world free of nuclear weapons. With this as a base, **the Stockholm Initiative urges the Conference to adopt a package for nuclear risk reduction, comprising of 1) declaratory language, 2) clear commitments by the nuclear-weapon States and all other NPT States, including a reaffirmation of past commitments, and 3) decision(s) to establish a comprehensive process to allow for follow-up work within the NPT context.** To this effect, the Stockholm Initiative submits the following list of non-exhaustive proposals for the Conference’s consideration:

Declaratory commitments as a political signal

7. Expressing its deep concern at the continued risk for humanity represented by the possibility that these weapons could be used and the catastrophic humanitarian consequences that would result from the use of nuclear weapons, the Conference should:
 - (a) reaffirm the unequivocal undertaking of the nuclear-weapon States to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals leading to nuclear disarmament, and reaffirm measures agreed to this end at successive Review Conferences, in particular the Action Plan adopted at the 2010 NPT Review Conference.
 - (b) acknowledge that, as a necessary interim measure pending the total elimination of nuclear weapons, and given the disastrous consequences of any nuclear detonation, reducing the current level of risk of use of nuclear weapons is in the interest of humanity and in line with the NPT’s objectives and purpose.
 - (c) acknowledge that it is in the interest of humanity that nuclear weapons are never used again. Such a commitment could be developed on the basis of the 1985 statement by the leaders of the United States and the Soviet Union that “a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought”.

A renewed commitment by the nuclear-weapon States and expanded risk dialogue

8. Building on previous efforts in the NPT context to address various aspects of nuclear risks, the Conference should:
 - (a) encourage the nuclear-weapon States to take all necessary measures to address risks – unilaterally, bilaterally, plurilaterally and/or multilaterally.
 - (b) welcome the various transparency and reporting efforts to date by the nuclear-weapon States about their implementation of the 64-point Action Plan, including on their strategies and doctrines and encourage them to extend these and develop additional transparency and confidence building measures.
 - (c) welcome the ongoing dialogue among the nuclear-weapon States on strategic stability, and call on them to continue and expand on it, including to place the issue of “Nuclear Risk Reduction” as a standard item on the agenda of their meetings.
 - (d) Encourage further work by the nuclear-weapon States on nuclear risk reduction, in context of their (P5) dialogue, for instance in a working group, on issues such as:
 - i. Policies and doctrines that could reduce the role of nuclear weapons in security policies, prevent escalation leading to the use of nuclear weapons and lessen the danger of nuclear war, including transparency on nuclear doctrines and arsenals, political statements promoting restraint, providing robust negative security assurances including of a legally-binding nature, commitment not to develop/deploy certain categories of nuclear weapons or delivery systems, and reducing the operational status of nuclear weapons.
 - ii. Reducing the risk of miscalculation or misperception and accidental use of nuclear weapons, including through the establishment and enhancement of hotlines building on robust and trusted crisis communication technology, joint data centers, military-to-military dialogue, and other cooperative measures.
 - iii. Steps to reduce the likelihood of new technologies – notably in the digital realm (cyber, artificial intelligence, machine learning) and in the area of delivery systems – leading to new nuclear risks and exacerbating existing ones. Consider how certain technologies may lessen risks and contribute to improving the security environment.
 - iv. The impacts on nuclear risk of developments in defensive and offensive systems (such as new types of delivery vehicles or dual-capable long-range delivery systems), as well as counterspace capabilities.
 - (e) encourage the nuclear-weapons States to conduct such a risk reduction dialogue in an inclusive manner, taking into account the perspectives of non-nuclear-weapon States and including them in these efforts.
 - (f) Encourage the implementation of the disarmament commitments under the NPT at the earliest time in a in a full, irreversible, transparent and verifiable manner.

Supporting measures by all States parties

9. Recognizing that non-nuclear-weapon States play an important role in nuclear risk reduction, the Conference should call on all States parties to:
 - (a) participate in transparency and confidence-building measures and other appropriate measures that can, directly or indirectly, improve predictability in international relations and help reduce the risk of nuclear weapon use.
 - (b) contribute to the preservation and strengthening of the international disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation architecture and support regional initiatives in these areas.
 - (c) foster forms of dialogue that aim at easing international tensions, strengthening trust between States and creating an environment that contributes to the advancement of nuclear disarmament.

Research, Analysis, Education and Awareness

10. Building on solid, existing research and aiming to further improve understanding and awareness of nuclear risks, the Conference should
 - (a) encourage all States to support disarmament and non-proliferation education, including education on nuclear risks.
 - (b) encourage additional research and dialogue on nuclear risk reduction, including by applying a gender-based analysis, on issues such as:
 - i. Laying the groundwork for disarmament measures, including measures that would contribute to security in a world without nuclear weapons, as well as those that could assist the transition toward it while ensuring undiminished security for all.
 - ii. The links between nuclear risks and the role and significance of nuclear weapons in military and security concepts, doctrines and policies.
 - iii. The implications of emerging technologies on nuclear risks, including in the digital realm such as cyber offensive capabilities, and artificial intelligence including machine learning.
 - (c) consider encouraging a high-level international conference on nuclear risks, to allow for an inclusive, open-ended dialogue to foster information exchange.
 - (d) strengthen partnerships for disarmament initiatives, especially by encouraging the empowerment of the young generation, the equal, full and effective participation of women, as well as the participation of civil society.

Establishing a Process

11. The Conference should establish a comprehensive process to allow for follow-up work beyond the Tenth NPT Review Conference, recognizing the importance of taking a diverse and inclusive approach, with the full and equal participation of

women in decision-making, and encouraging the participation of youth and civil society in formal or informal initiatives.

- (a) The Conference should decide that strategic and nuclear risk reduction will be a standing item in the forthcoming NPT review cycle and establish Risk Reduction as a Cluster 1 Specific Issue (a sub-agenda item). Co-facilitators (from nuclear- and non-nuclear-weapon States) could serve as focal points to channel relevant developments and to conduct structured intersessional discussions. The co-facilitators would report to the session of the Preparatory Committee as well as to the 2025 Review Conference, which would take stock and consider next steps to address further nuclear risks.
- (b) The Conference should call on all States Parties, in particular the nuclear-weapon States, to include relevant developments in their national reports on their fulfilment of obligations and commitments under the NPT, including on risk reduction measures, throughout the next review cycle so that the 2025 Review Conference can take stock and consider possible next steps to address nuclear risks, including by leveraging the national reports submitted by the nuclear-weapon States.
- (c) The Conference could encourage consideration of the establishment of an appropriate UN body, such as a Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) or an Open-ended Working Group (OEWG), with a mandate to take the issue forward in a structured manner, with a view to identifying and elaborating effective nuclear risk reduction measures.

i Action 5 of the 2010 NPT Action Plan:

The nuclear-weapon States commit to accelerate concrete progress on the steps leading to nuclear disarmament, contained in the Final Document of the 2000 Review Conference, in a way that promotes international stability, peace and undiminished and increased security. To that end, they are called upon to promptly engage with a view to, inter alia:

- (a) Rapidly moving towards an overall reduction in the global stockpile of all types of nuclear weapons, as identified in action 3;
- (b) Address the question of all nuclear weapons regardless of their type or their location as an integral part of the general nuclear disarmament process;
- (c) To further diminish the role and significance of nuclear weapons in all military and security concepts, doctrines and policies;
- (d) Discuss policies that could prevent the use of nuclear weapons and eventually lead to their elimination, lessen the danger of nuclear war and contribute to the non-proliferation and disarmament of nuclear weapons;
- (e) Consider the legitimate interest of non-nuclear-weapon States in further reducing the operational status of nuclear weapons systems in ways that promote international stability and security;
- (f) Reduce the risk of accidental use of nuclear weapons; and
- (g) Further enhance transparency and increase mutual confidence.

The nuclear-weapon States are called upon to report the above undertakings to the Preparatory Committee at 2014. The 2015 Review Conference will take stock and consider the next steps for the full implementation of article VI.