



Fulfil the NPT: From nuclear threats to human security

An Open Letter to the States Parties of the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty

Dear Representatives of China, France, Russia, the UK the USA and other States Parties to the NPT,

Nuclear weapons threaten current and future generations. The security they may have provided in the 20th Century has no place in the world of today and tomorrow, which is struggling to address the COVID pandemic, stabilise the climate, resolve national and international conflicts in peaceful ways, protect cyberspace, and advance human security and the sustainable development goals.

It is time to start phasing out the role of nuclear weapons in security doctrines and develop a practical plan to achieve the peace and security of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

At the Tenth Review Conference of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT-X) in January 2022, we call on you to:

- a) Start the process to permanently end arms racing and phase out the role of nuclear weapons in security doctrines by supporting the adoption of no-first-use policies and cessation of the production of nuclear weapons no later than the 11th NPT Review Conference in 2025;
- b) Commit to a timeframe of no later than 2045 to fulfil the Article VI obligation to achieve the global elimination of nuclear weapons;
- c) Agree to adopt a concrete plan to implement this commitment, including through the systematic and progressive reduction of nuclear arsenals, at the Conference on Disarmament or the 11th NPT Review Conference;
- d) Agree to shift budgets and public investments from the nuclear weapons industry to instead support public health, climate stabilization and sustainable development.

The NPT was adopted in 1970 for a fixed timeframe of 25 years, after which it was expected that it would be replaced by a more comprehensive nuclear disarmament regime. This did not happen.

In 1995 the NPT was extended on the basis of three near-term (incremental) commitments – to achieve a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) by 1996, to negotiate a fissile materials treaty and to establish additional nuclear-weapon-free zones especially in the Middle East - and a more comprehensive commitment by the nuclear armed States to reduce nuclear weapons in a process leading to their total elimination. Of these, only the CTBT has been negotiated, and it has yet to enter-into-force.

There can be no excuse for not achieving the three incremental commitments in the near future, and the more comprehensive commitment - the global elimination of nuclear weapons - within the next 25 years, if not sooner.

A key measure to reduce the risk of a nuclear war and to start phasing out the role of nuclear weapons in security doctrines while maintaining strategic stability, is to commit to never initiate nuclear warfare by adopting no-first-use (or sole purpose) policies and related operational controls.

Options to use nuclear weapons first in a conflict, and preparations to enable such a first-use, escalate tensions and risks, stimulate counter measures such as launch-on-warning, justify nuclear modernisation programs and prevent negotiations on nuclear disarmament. First-use options are literally playing with fire in very combustible situations, and have nearly led to a nuclear war being initiated by mistake or miscalculation.

Unilateral no-first-use declarations, bilateral no-first-use agreements and/or a multilateral no-first-use agreement can reduce these risks. We commend China and India for already adopting unilateral no-first-use policies and we commend China and Russia for adopting a bilateral no-first-use agreement. These can be followed by nuclear force restructuring and operational controls to implement no-first-use policies, and to build credibility and confidence in the policies to further reduce nuclear risks.

And most importantly, the adoption of no-first-use or sole purpose policies could open the door to the nuclear armed states and their allies joining negotiations for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons.

If nuclear weapons are required to deter against a range of threats - not only nuclear weapons - then countries relying on nuclear deterrence will most likely not agree to eliminate the weapons while these other threats still exist. However, if the only purpose of a country's nuclear weapons is to deter against the nuclear weapons of others, then the country can agree to join a verified nuclear disarmament process as long as all other nuclear armed countries participate. For this reason, the States Parties to the NPT also need to engage with the states which are not parties (India, Israel, North Korea and Pakistan) in the nuclear disarmament process.

We thank the governments of China, France, Russia, the UK the USA and other States Parties to the NPT for considering this letter, and we look forward to supporting and engaging with you as you adopt these policies and as we jointly establish the peace and security of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

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Thomas Westheimer (United States)

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Loren Wieland (United States)

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Monica Willard (United States)

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Dr (med) Andrew Winnington (New Zealand)

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Uta Zapf (Germany)

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Founder, Trident Ploughshares

Susan Zipp (Switzerland)

Association of World Citizens