

Parliamentary and UN High Level Event engagement to enhance the NPT Review Process

PRESENTATION TO THE WORKING GROUP ON FURTHER STRENGTHENING THE REVIEW PROCESS
OF THE NON-PROLIFERATION TREATY

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AS DELIVERED

Mr Chair, Your excellencies,

Thank you for the opportunity to address this important working group on further strengthening the review process of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). I am speaking on behalf of the World Future Council on the topic of **Parliamentary and UN High Level Event engagement to enhance the NPT Review Process**.

World Future Council is an international organization of effective policy-makers and advocates, which cooperates with the Inter-Parliamentary Union, OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament, Parliamentarians for Global Action, the Parliamentary Network on Small Arms and Light Weapons, *Global Renewables* Congress and other networks of legislators in order to advance effective policies and legislative action for peace, disarmament and sustainable development.

We note that key elements to ensure success of NPT Review Conferences and their preparatory committee meetings include:

1. A high level of political capital and commitment to the NPT and its review process;
2. General State compliance with obligations under the NPT and implementation of commitments made in previous NPT Review Conferences;
3. Flexibility and innovation in negotiations at NPT Prep Coms and Review Conferences in order to incorporate, manage or resolve differences between States Parties and achieve agreed decisions/outcomes;
4. Public awareness and support for NPT outcomes.

Our first group of proposals relate to the important roles of parliamentarians in all four areas indicated above.

Parliamentarians decide on budgets to invest in diplomacy, nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. They provide oversight of and support for national implementation of international commitments, and are instrumental in national policy development. And they have a strong presence in media - combined with broad public constituencies - through which they influence public perception and political priorities.

For these reasons, enhancing parliamentary engagement in the NPT Review Process would significantly strengthen the process and support the efforts of States Parties. We make the following recommendations in this regard:

1. **States Parties are encouraged to include parliamentarians on their delegations to the NPT Prep Coms and Review Conferences.**

Such participation helps parliamentarians become better informed about NPT issues and diplomatic processes and better able to support governments in implementation of NPT Review Conference decisions/outcomes.

2. **We encourage parliamentary debates prior to each NPT Prep Com and Review Conference and government briefings to parliament after each NPT Prep Com and Review Conference.**

Parliamentary debates (possibly including adoption of resolutions) help elevate public and political attention to the upcoming NPT meetings and build political support for States Parties engagement in the NPT meetings and for a successful outcome. Government briefings to parliaments after each NPT meeting help inform the parliaments on the political dynamics surrounding the non-proliferation and disarmament issues, and on key NPT decisions or proposals that have traction in the NPT meetings. This helps parliamentarians and parliaments to act more effectively in implementation of non-proliferation and disarmament obligations and commitments.

3. **We propose that a level of inter-action be added to the NPT plenary sessions devoted to presentations from civil society including parliamentarians.**

We commend States Parties for allocating a plenary session of the NPT Prep Coms and Review Conferences to presentations from civil society including parliamentarians. However, we have witnessed that these sessions have very little interaction between the States Parties and the civil society representatives. Such interaction is very important in order to give an indication of how civil society and parliamentary recommendations are being received, which of the recommendations might find some traction amongst States Parties (and which ones have little possibility to do so) and to provide opportunity for questions from States Parties to the civil society and parliamentary presenters. **We recommend that the plenary session be extended by an additional hour for such responses and questions from States Parties.**

4. **Provide financial support for parliamentary resources supporting the NPT.**

We heard from the previous speaker about the lack of funding to support youth engagement in the nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament arenas including the NPT Review process. This situation is also true for the wider peace and disarmament community. The lack of funding in the non-profit peace and disarmament world means that civil society and parliamentary organizations engaging in the peace and disarmament field are run primarily by unpaid volunteers. This limits the capacity of these organizations to educate and engage parliamentarians and civil society in NPT issues and outcomes.

Our second group of proposals relate to building cooperation between the NPT and UN High Level Events and other processes in order to strengthen political support for NPT Review Conferences and implementation of the outcome documents.

Nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament generally hold a very low priority in governments, media and civil society in general, which hampers the level of political will required to ensure successful NPT Review conferences and implementation of their outcome documents.

Mainstream media, for example, actively covers the Climate Conferences of Parties (COP) meetings, but is mostly silent on the NPT Review Conferences. One way to elevate public attention and political will is

through the establishment of ministerial positions on the issue. Most governments in the world have now established cabinet level ministers for the Climate. Where-as, as far as we know, only one country in the world (New Zealand) has established a cabinet-level Minister for Disarmament and Arms Control. **We recommend that other States Parties to the NPT establish such cabinet-level ministerial positions for arms control and disarmament.**

Another way to elevate public attention and political will on the NPT is to broaden the community engaged in nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. The connections between nuclear disarmament, peace, climate protection, human rights and sustainable development are now well chronicled and will be the subject of civil society statements and side-events at the NPT Prep Com.

Presidents of NPT Prep Coms and Review Conferences, along with States Parties to the NPT, could use these connections to speak about NPT outcome goals and objectives at UN High Level Events including the Climate Conferences (COPs), the 2023 Sustainable Development Summit and the 2024 Summit of the Future.

In addition, Presidents of NPT Prep Coms and Review Conferences, along with States Parties to the NPT, could recommend that the issue of nuclear disarmament and the goal of the comprehensive elimination of nuclear weapons be included in the post-2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

Finally, since the UN Human Rights Committee adopted General Comment 36 in 2018 affirming that nuclear weapons violate the Right to Life as codified in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, there is an opportunity for **Presidents of NPT Prep Coms and Review Conferences, along with States Parties to the NPT, to engage in the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) under the Human Rights Council in order to advance NPT goals in the broader human rights environment.** The fact that the Human Rights Council room in the Palais de Nations is right next to the Conference on Disarmament room makes it very easy for disarmament delegates to pop across the hall into the Human Rights Council to participate in the UPRs.

I conclude by thanking the Chair for this opportunity to make some comments and recommendations on Parliamentary and UN High Level Event engagement to enhance the NPT Review Process, and I thank the delegations here for your attention.