

2005 Review Conference to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT RevCon)

May 2 –27, 2005

"[There has been a] persistent and serious situation of erosion of confidence in the mechanisms of the NPT and on the ability of the instrument to survive the tests it has been put through. This situation is not new, but it seems to have grown more complex since the indefinite extension in 1995."

(Ambassador Sergio de Queiroz Duarte (Brazil)
President-designate of the 2005 NPT Rev Con)

Background

Greenpeace has played an active role in the NPT Preparatory Committee Meetings (PrepCom) and Review Conferences (RevCon) for the past 25 years. Greenpeace was one of the few organisations to recommend a rolling fixed term for future NPT's at the 1995 conference, opposing the indefinite extension of the NPT since that time. Greenpeace continues to maintain as it did then, that the NPT ought to be enforcing checks and balances that required that parties to it justify their position every five years. In its current state of indefinite extension, the NPT increasingly only exists in name without regulatory teeth.

Greenpeace's position has since been universally vindicated: the permanent extension has fallen heavily in favour of the Nuclear Weapon States (NWS), providing them with increasingly less incentive to meet their obligations under the NPT - namely to get rid of their nuclear arsenals.

Consequently this year's NPT will take place in a position of crisis. The crucial Practical 13 Steps for Nuclear Disarmament agreed at the 2000 Review Conference has all but been ignored by the NWS and the US Government has withdrawn its support for a large number of them. North Korea has become the first state to withdraw from the NPT. The US and China have refused to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.

Concern around Iran's nuclear programme, revelations about Libyan, Egyptian and South Korean secret nuclear programmes have also cast doubt on the effectiveness of the NPT.

Crucially, the 2004 Preparatory Committee Meeting failed to agree to a report containing recommendations for this year's Review Conference, nor could it agree on an agenda. Instead, the NWS, led by the United States, focused on

claimed violations of the NPT by Iran and North Korea. Further, a number of Non Nuclear Weapon States (NNWS) focused on claims of non-compliance by the NWS in their failure to make any progress on nuclear disarmament.

Led by the US delegation, the refusal by some member States to have any reference made to landmark decisions taken at the two previous review conferences in the consensus report has led to an unacceptable stalemate within the NPT itself.

The Way Ahead

"The only reasonable conclusion is that the control of technology is not, in itself, a sufficient barrier against further proliferation. For an increasing number of countries with a highly developed industrial infrastructure — and in some cases access to highly enriched uranium or plutonium — the international community must rely primarily on a continuing perception of security as the basis for the adherence of these countries to their non-proliferation commitments."

(Mohamed ElBaradei, IAEA Director General, 4 November 2004, Stanford University, California, USA)

Nuclear proliferation can only be dealt with if all nations are treated equally, and that there is an end to the provision in the NPT that all nations have the right of access to nuclear technology. The acquisition of nuclear technology (legally or on the black market) can lead to the nuclear bomb, as India, Pakistan and Israel operating outside of the NPT and North Korea operating within, have displayed.

Only with an end to the promotion of nuclear technology (even to an elite few nations) and a serious programme of verifiable, transparent and irreversible steps to abolish the more than thirty thousand nuclear weapons in the world today, will the NPT survive and the world be able to finally step back from nuclear abyss.

Recommendations

Greenpeace is calling for the implementations of four major recommendations that it believes are essential to achieve the purposes of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament under the NPT:

"Like many of you, I am convinced that efforts to prevent nuclear proliferation must go hand in hand with progress in nuclear disarmament."

(UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, 23 February 2005)

1. The States Party to the NPT should reaffirm their unequivocal support for the decisions taken at the 1995 and 2000 Review Conferences and further strengthen them at the 2005 NPT RevCon.

The 'thirteen steps for nuclear disarmament' agreed to unanimously at the 2000 NPT RevCon were a landmark achievement for States Party to the NPT.

It provided a roadmap towards achieving a world free of nuclear weapons. Yet at its 2003 meeting the US delegation shattered the consensus by making it quite clear that it no longer supported the majority of the 13 steps. The UN High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change has recognised that the 13 steps "were all but renounced" by the NWS and acknowledged the damage that has been caused by such a move and called for them to take several steps to restart disarmament.

If the crisis of confidence in the NPT and its supporting regime is to be reversed, then the decisions taken at the 2000 and 2005 Review Conferences must be reaffirmed and strengthened. Greenpeace has made some amendments to the 13 steps which it believes are necessary to strengthen and improve upon them.

"...the nuclear-non-proliferation regime is now at risk... We are approaching a point at which the erosion of the non-proliferation regime could become irreversible and result in a cascade of proliferation."

(Report of the UN High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, para. 111, December 2004)

2. The States Party to the NPT should agree to an immediate moratorium on and a timetable for the complete phase out of uranium enrichment and nuclear reprocessing for civil and military purposes.

In addition to large amounts of military plutonium due to enter the commercial fuel cycle over the coming decades, the amount of separated weapons-usable plutonium in civilian stocks (230 tons) now rivals or exceeds the amount of plutonium held in military programs. Civilian reprocessing and plutonium-based MOX fuel fabrication and use presents a growing proliferation risk that must be addressed. There are believed to be more than 215 metric tons of weapons-usable plutonium being held by less than 20% of countries involved in reprocessing. As it would take as little as five kilograms of this commercial plutonium to build a nuclear bomb, the threat posed by the mere existence of plutonium must be addressed by the global community.

While these plutonium programmes are a threat to global peace and security, they are driven by a relatively small number of advanced industrialised states, specifically France, the UK, Japan and Russia, along with client countries in Europe. Given the scale of the threat posed by fissile materials, it is even more appropriate therefore that these nations and their industrial/commercial entities should be challenged over their misguided nuclear policies.

Greenpeace believes one of the most effective ways to address nuclear proliferation is to stop the further reprocessing of plutonium, and to treat existing stocks as nuclear waste.

"Preventing the spread and use of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons is essential if we are to have a more secure world. This means doing better at reducing demand for these weapons and curbing the supply of weapons materials. It means living up to existing treaty commitments, including for negotiations towards nuclear disarmament."

(Executive Summary of the Report of
the UN High Level Panel on Threats,
Challenges and Change, December 2004)

3. The States Party to the NPT should agree to start negotiations immediately on a comprehensive and verifiable fissile material treaty at the Conference on Disarmament with the aim of ending all production, stockpiling and use, and in particular to reject the recommendations of the IAEA Expert Working Group on Multilateral Approaches to the Nuclear Fuel Cycle and proposals by the US Department of Energy.

As noted by the seven foreign Ministers of the "New Agenda Coalition", in banning the production of key components of nuclear weapons, enriched uranium and plutonium, the Treaty would "form a cornerstone in the nuclear disarmament process. It would impose restraints on India, Israel and Pakistan, the three states still outside the non-proliferation treaty. Together with the test-ban treaty, it would go a long way to uphold the non-proliferation treaty and strengthen the norm on nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament."

"For the five countries recognized as nuclear-weapon States under the NPT, their nuclear arsenals are increasingly becoming either a focal point for resentment or cynicism among the nuclear "have-nots", or, worse, a target for emulation for States that wish to pursue clandestine WMD programmes."

(Mohamed ElBaradei,
IAEA Director General,
4 November 2004,
Stanford University,
California, USA)

4. The States Party to the NPT should decide on a moratorium on all shipments of plutonium until the discriminatory nature of the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) can be remedied.

The PSI is flawed in that it does not address either the ships or the cargoes of material themselves, or, in practice, the proliferating state sending the materials.

The PSI risks being approached as a substitute for a nuclear non-proliferation policy, and as replacing or undermining, rather than supplementing, existing strategies and policies.

It is also inconsistent with Security Council Resolution 1540 in its restrictive ambit and discriminatory approach.

Greenpeace Contacts on site at 2005 RevCon:

Michael Kessler, Greenpeace International Media Officer, +34 660 637 053

William Peden, Greenpeace International Nuclear Disarmament Researcher
+31 653 504 731

Shaun Burnie, Greenpeace International Nuclear campaigner
(Asia/plutonium) +31 629 001 133

Tom Clements, Greenpeace International nuclear campaigner (plutonium/
proliferation) +1 202 415 6158

Duncan Currie, Greenpeace International legal and nuclear policy advisor
+ 44 (21) 632 335

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Greenpeace is an independent campaigning organisation that uses non-violent creative confrontation to expose global environmental problems to force solutions that are essential to a green and peaceful future.

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10th July 2005
20th anniversary of the
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