

Nuclear-Weapon States Discuss NPT Issues

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Senior officials from the five nuclear-weapon-state members of the nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) met in London last month for discussions on “the mutual confidence and transparency...that [are] essential to make progress towards multilateral nuclear disarmament,” according to a joint statement issued on Feb. 6.

The meeting, which involved officials from China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States, is the sixth of its kind since 2009. The effort began in 2008 when UK Defence Secretary Des Browne suggested a technical conference on verification of disarmament among the five states.

According to the joint statement, the London meeting covered disarmament verification, a glossary of disarmament-related terms, efforts to start talks on a fissile material cutoff treaty, and the states’ common reporting framework for the upcoming NPT review conference. The group discussed the challenges in bringing the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty into force and “decided to continue regular technical meetings aimed at enhancing the [treaty’s] verification regime and to hold a workshop on data quality objectives for radionuclide measurements for on-site inspections.” For the first time, parts of the meeting included representatives from some non-nuclear-weapon states.

In their statement, the five states reaffirmed “their commitment towards achieving a world without nuclear weapons in accordance with the goals of the NPT.” They argued that “a step-by-step approach to nuclear disarmament that promotes international stability, peace and undiminished and increased security for all remains the only realistic and practical route to achieving a world without nuclear weapons. To this end, the [group] discussed issues related to international security and strategic stability and their nuclear doctrines in order to enhance mutual understanding in these areas.”

The joint statement did not define the elements of that step-by-step process, and it is not clear if there is agreement among the group about what those steps are and how or when they should be pursued.

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