Nuclear Disarmament Summits:
A Proposal for Rejuvenating Progress Toward a World Free of Nuclear Weapons

By Kelsey Davenport

An Arms Control Association Report

September 2024

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COVER PHOTO: Flags are pictured outside the Palais des Nations, home of the Conference on Disarmament and the United Nations Office in Geneva, Switzerland. (REUTERS/Denis Balibouse)

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About the Author

Kelsey Davenport is the Director for Nonproliferation Policy at the Arms Control Association, where she focuses on the nuclear and missile programs in Iran and North Korea and on international efforts to prevent proliferation and nuclear terrorism. She is the co-author of a series of reports documenting the work of the biannual nuclear security summits from 2010 to 2016 and leads the Arms Control Association's project assessing the impact of voluntary multilateral initiatives to prevent proliferation. Kelsey is a leading expert on the negotiations, implementation, and prospects of the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. She received a Master of Arts degree in peace studies from the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies at the University of Notre Dame and a Bachelor of Arts degree summa cum laude in international studies and political science from Butler University.

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Executive Summary

The failure to abolish nuclear weapons is due in part to the limitations of the current nuclear disarmament architecture. The complex array of treaties, voluntary multilateral initiatives, and negotiating forums dedicated to fostering action toward the verifiable elimination of nuclear weapons has produced many important initiatives and agreements designed to reduce nuclear risks, curb proliferation, and slow nuclear arms competition. In recent years, however, these instruments have proven to be inadequate in facilitating the progress and actions necessary to address new challenges to disarmament, which include more competitive and less cooperative relations between major nuclear-armed states and a lack of political will to pursue bold, creative steps to reduce nuclear risk and reverse the buildup of nuclear weapons capabilities.

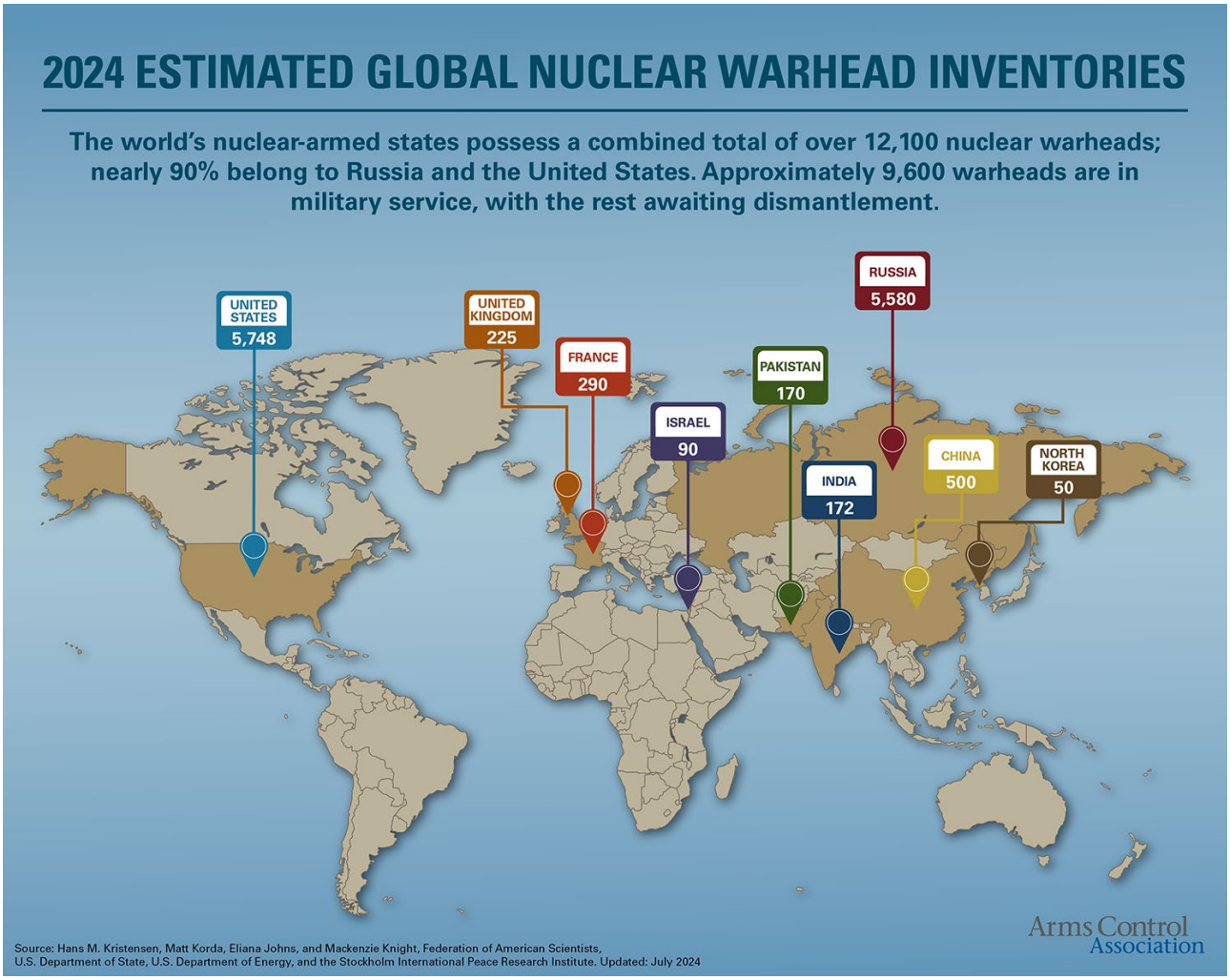
Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 and President Vladimir Putin's irresponsible nuclear saber-rattling further exacerbate the challenges of making progress on the elimination of nuclear weapons. Russia's actions over the past two years, such as its decision to block the adoption of the nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) review conference final document in August 2022, demonstrate how one state can exploit structures and processes in existing forums to hold hostage progress on disarmament and nonproliferation. Moscow's actions underscore the necessity of new strategies to reduce nuclear risk and advance disarmament in the short term.

Additionally, the existing architecture is not well suited to integrate the three states that possess nuclear weapons that are not party to the NPT (India, Israel, and Pakistan) with multilateral nuclear disarmament efforts. Although some forums that focus on disarmament include these states, the structures and processes of these bodies do not offer the flexibility and creativity necessary to make progress in the current geopolitical environment.

A new series of disarmament summits modeled after the highly successful nuclear security summit (NSS) process could inject much-needed momentum and creativity into the existing architecture. A carefully calibrated disarmament summit process could bypass some of the structural and political factors that have slowed progress on efforts to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons. Given the geopolitical rifts exacerbated by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, this new approach emphasizing voluntary national and multilateral commitments would mitigate the extent to which one state can block progress on disarmament. Additionally, disarmament summits could generate political pressure to push states to take bolder actions to reduce nuclear risk.

This report makes several assessments.

- Structural factors in the existing array of organizations and treaty bodies focused on disarmament have prevented bold, creative action to advance the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons. These factors include inadequate or overly broad membership, overreliance on consensus-based decision-making, and limited high-level political engagement. Recent events demonstrate how a single state can exploit these structural factors to paralyze progress across the broader regime.
- The NSS process offers a model for creating a new series of disarmament summits designed to inject momentum into current efforts to reduce the risk posed by nuclear weapons and eliminate nuclear arsenals. Certain characteristics of the NSS process contributed to its success. These factors include a select list of participating states, engagement by heads of state, voluntary commitment-making at the national and multilateral levels, and self-reporting at each summit. This combination of elements led to the creation of new norms



in nuclear security and catalyzed participating states to take bold actions to strengthen nuclear security beyond the status quo consensus.

- A nuclear disarmament summit process modeled off the NSS process could provide a forum better suited to address new challenges that the existing forums have struggled to tackle in the current geopolitical environment. Like the NSS process, states would be encouraged to make national commitments ("house gifts") and work in partnership to make multinational commitments ("gift baskets") that exceed least-common denominator, consensus-based decision-making. Reporting within the summit process could drive accountability, and high-level political participation could create pressure for leaders to make ambitious but achievable commitments that advance disarmament.

This report also argues how a high-level disarmament summit process would complement, not replace, existing initiatives and treaties that form the disarmament architecture. It proposes that the summits should seek to build on commitments and proposals made within the regime and produce outcomes that support the goals of the broader architecture and could later be absorbed into existing forums. Relatedly, the summits could serve as a platform for voluntary, multilateral initiatives addressing certain elements of the disarmament enterprise, such as verification activities, to showcase their efforts and gain further support.

Introduction:
The Disarmament Deficit and the Need for New Approaches

Since the first nuclear weapon test explosion in 1945 and the devastating atomic attacks on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki nearly 80 years ago, national leaders, scientists, politicians, and people from around the world have collectively sought to advance measures to reduce and eliminate the threats posed by nuclear weapons. The first resolution of the UN General Assembly First Committee on Disarmament and International Security, which was adopted in 1946, established a commission to make proposals for "the elimination from national armaments of atomic weapons and of all other major weapons adaptable to mass destruction." Since then, UN member states have pushed and prodded the world's nuclear-armed states to take concrete, irreversible action to address the threats posed by nuclear weapons.

Over the decades, leaders of key governments, often responding to pressure from civil society and the international community, have pursued practical measures to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons and sensitive technology to additional states, slow and reverse the accumulation of weapons by the nuclear-armed states, prohibit nuclear testing, and develop plans and pathways to negotiating and implementing effective measures to achieve the complete elimination of all nuclear weapons. Among other measures, these efforts have produced

- multiple bilateral U.S. and Russian arms control agreements that have significantly reduced stockpiles of nuclear weapons from their height during the Cold War;
- risk reduction and crisis communications agreements between nuclear-armed adversaries to guard against miscalculation and catastrophe;
- the elimination of many destabilizing, nuclear war-fighting weapons and the adoption of policies that have narrowed the circumstances under which nuclear weapons could be used;
- nonproliferation initiatives and agreements, including the 1968 nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) and nuclear-weapon-free-zone treaties, that have helped contain the spread of nuclear weapons;
- the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), which has not yet entered into force but has effectively led to a de facto global halt to nuclear test explosions; and
- the 2017 Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), which has further reinforced the taboo against nuclear weapons and further developed the legal framework for the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons.

In the context of the negotiation and review of these agreements, nearly all states and most of the nuclear-armed states have taken on legal and political commitments to achieve the complete elimination of all nuclear weapons. Article VI of the NPT commits states-parties, including the five nuclear-armed states recognized by that treaty, to "pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control."

At the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference, the world came together and endorsed specific disarmament actions that led to the indefinite extension of this bedrock agreement to reduce nuclear danger.[1] Additional commitments were made at the 2000 and 2010 review conferences to advance implementation and compliance with all three pillars of the treaty.

Yet, many of these disarmament commitments remain unfulfilled, and there is far more that can and must be done to realize progress toward the elimination of nuclear weapons. Nuclear weapons continue to pose an existential threat to humanity and will continue to do so until complete and total nuclear disarmament is achieved.

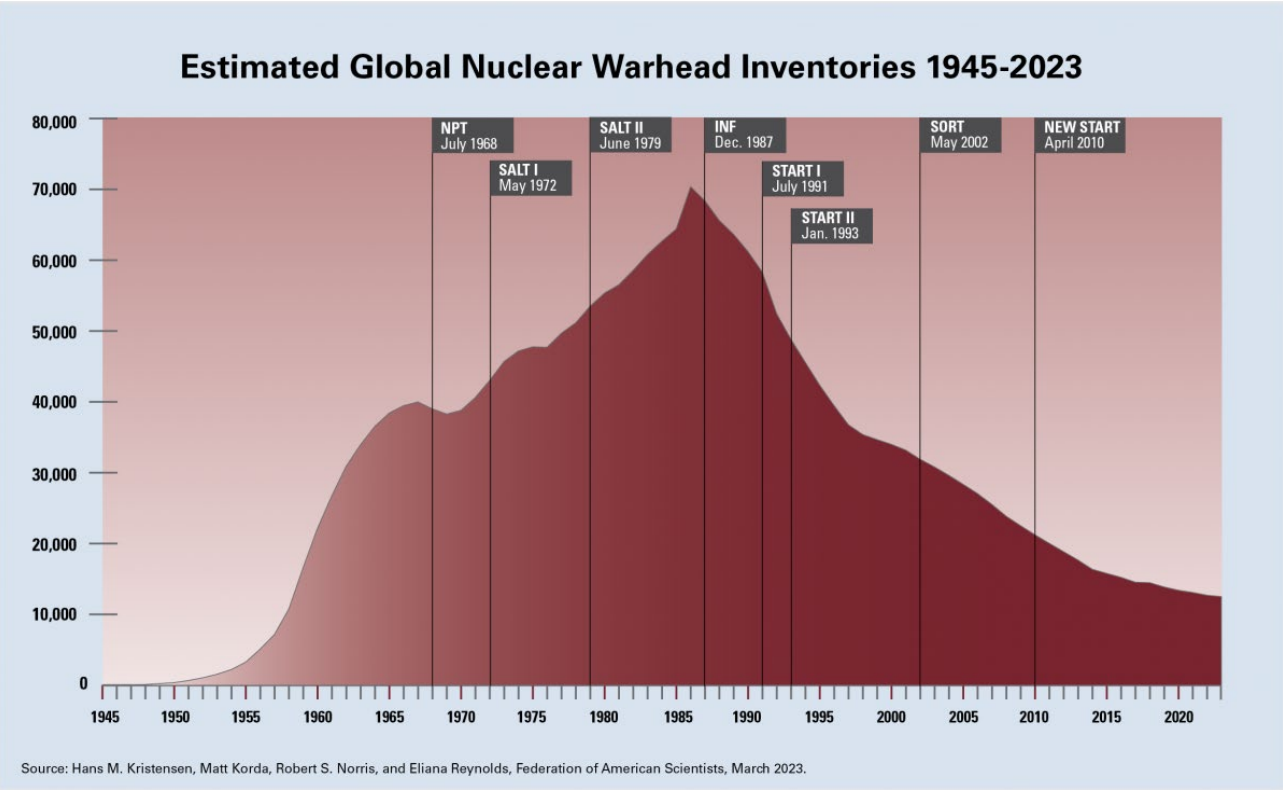
The total number of nuclear weapons today may be lower than the peak numbers during the height of the U.S.-Soviet Cold War nuclear arms race, but there still are approximately 12,100 nuclear weapons and nine nuclear-armed states, according to independent estimates from the Federation of American Scientists.[2] New types of nuclear weapons and delivery systems are still being developed and deployed. Relations between many nuclear weapons possessor states continue to deteriorate, the risk of nuclear competition and conflict is growing, and the nine nuclear-armed states are collectively spending hundreds of billions of dollars each year to modernize and upgrade their deadly nuclear arsenals.

Although the United States and Russia have a long history of bilateral negotiations to regulate and reduce their nuclear arsenals, they have barely discussed nuclear arms control ideas for the better part of a decade. There are currently no active negotiations to further regulate, cap, or reduce the stockpiles of any of the world's other nuclear-armed states.

Shortly after the 2010 New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) was concluded, progress on nuclear disarmament diplomacy stalled. In 2013, Russia rebuffed a U.S. proposal to negotiate a further cut of their strategic arsenals of one-third below New START levels, from 1,550 to 1,000 deployed warheads. Since then, the two sides have aggressively pursued rival nuclear weapons modernization programs. Today, each possesses some 4,000 warheads of all types and they deploy some 1,700 nuclear weapons each.

In early 2023, just two years after agreeing to extend New START by five years, Russian President Vladimir Putin announced that Russia would suspend implementation of the pact but continue to observe its limits. With New START set to expire on February 5, 2026, U.S. President Joe Biden has proposed renewing the dialogue with Russia on a new nuclear arms control framework and a separate nuclear risk reduction dialogue with China "without preconditions."

Russian leaders, however, have said they will not engage in arms control talks until the White House softens its support for the defense of Ukraine against Russia's brutal war of aggression. Complicating



matters, China has embarked on a major buildup of its relatively small but still deadly nuclear arsenal and has not agreed to a series of bilateral talks with the United States on nuclear risk reduction and arms control. According to independent estimates, China currently possesses some 500 nuclear warheads, including about 300 on long-range delivery systems. The Pentagon estimates China could potentially increase its total stockpile to 1,000 warheads by 2030.

Representatives from the five NPT nuclear-armed states (China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States) have convened a series of discussions on nuclear postures, terms, and confidence-building measures since 2007. However, the meetings, known as the P5 process, have not stimulated concrete actions toward the fulfillment of the five states' NPT Article VI-related disarmament commitments.

After producing a detailed action plan on disarmament and nonproliferation at the 2010 NPT Review Conference, the states-parties at the 2015 NPT Review Conference failed to reach agreement on an updated, meaningful set of steps toward disarmament that built on previous disarmament commitments. In the wake of Russia's 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the pandemic-delayed 10th NPT Review Conference, held in 2022, also failed to produce an updated, meaningful plan of action as a result of Russian objections to proposed language regarding the protection and sovereignty of Ukrainian civilian nuclear reactor sites that have been seized illegally by Russian military forces.

Future progress on bilateral and multilateral disarmament will become even more complicated if other nuclear-armed states are not engaged more actively in the nuclear disarmament enterprise and if there are no restrictions on the further growth and diversification of nuclear weapons in the seven other possessor states.

Involving all nuclear-armed states in the disarmament enterprise, including three nuclear-armed states—India, Israel, and Pakistan—that have never been part of the NPT, is more urgent than ever. Unfortunately, the existing forums designed to advance nuclear disarmament negotiations on a multilateral basis are hampered by ineffective procedures and do not all include the necessary states.

For instance, it has been 28 years since the Conference on Disarmament (CD), which now involves 65 member states, has negotiated a multilateral nuclear agreement. Since the conclusion of negotiations on the CTBT in 1996, countries at the CD have been unable to reach the necessary consensus on a work program that would even allow the start of negotiations on a fissile material cutoff treaty or legally binding assurances to nonnuclear weapon states against nuclear weapons attack, let alone start broader discussions on cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament altogether.

Partly in response to the slow pace of progress on disarmament since 2010, more than 120 non-nuclear-weapon states approved a UN General Assembly resolution to launch negotiations on a treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons. The result was the TPNW.

Although the new treaty is a positive and necessary step toward building a legal framework to realize a world without nuclear weapons, by itself it will not change today's dangerous nuclear doctrines or eliminate the nuclear arsenals of the world's nine nuclear-armed states, which refuse to acknowledge the value of the TPNW as a contribution to the common goal of a world free of nuclear weapons. As a result, at least for the foreseeable future, the TPNW cannot substitute for the difficult bilateral or multilateral diplomacy and bold leadership from the major nuclear-weapon states that are necessary to reduce nuclear risks and to negotiate progressive, verifiable cuts in the arsenals of the world's nuclear-armed states.

During earlier periods of inaction on nuclear disarmament, UN members have agreed through the General Assembly to convene week-long Special Sessions devoted to Disarmament (SSODs) to build the political consensus and high-level attention necessary to achieve meaningful action. The first was SSOD-I in 1978, followed by SSOD-II in 1982, and the last was SSOD-III in 1988. Only SSOD-I succeeded in producing a final document. Since 1995, the General Assembly has been calling for a fourth session on disarmament, but designated working groups have been unable to agree by consensus on recommendations on objectives and an agenda for a fourth SSOD.[3]

Over the years, other leaders have argued that the task of achieving effective nuclear disarmament is a global enterprise that requires bold solutions and high-level engagement. In 2008, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon suggested that the UN Security Council should convene a summit on nuclear disarmament. As part of his five-point plan for a nuclear weapons-free world, he said, "[T]he Security Council's permanent members should begin discussions on security issues in the nuclear disarmament process" and suggested that "the council could also convene

In light of the growing nuclear danger, we believe that now is the time … to seriously explore, develop, and pursue bold new approaches that can break the impasse on nuclear disarmament.

a summit on nuclear disarmament. Non-NPT states should freeze their own nuclear-weapon capabilities and make their own disarmament commitments."[4]

Four years later, former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, former Senator Sam Nunn (D-Ga.), former Secretary of Defense William Perry, and former Secretary of State George Shultz argued in a 2013 op-ed published in *The Wall Street Journal* that a new multilateral effort for nuclear disarmament dialogue is needed. "Practical steps toward the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons," they wrote, "will involve many nations, not just those currently in possession of nuclear weapons. Progress will require greater cooperation. The U.S. must work with other key states to establish a joint enterprise with common objectives to achieve near-term results."

Those four authors also suggested that the nuclear security summits "could provide a model for leaders working together to create a joint enterprise that would generate a coalition of willing states to establish priorities and achieve progress on specific steps. A timetable for meetings between heads of government would help build a diplomatic structure for engagement, within which foreign ministers, defense ministers, and others can work together between the meetings of government leaders."[5]

Beginning in 2015, the Arms Control Association began to research, write, and speak about the nuclear disarmament summit concept through various forums and publications.[6] Since then, the dangers posed by nuclear weapons have grown and political divisions on whether and how to advance disarmament have become more complex, underscoring even further the need for creative new approaches to break the impasse.

In light of the growing nuclear danger, we believe that now is the time for visionary government leaders, diplomats, and disarmament experts and advocates to seriously explore, develop, and pursue bold new approaches that can break the impasse on nuclear disarmament.

As this new report by Kelsey Davenport explains, key leaders could convene a high-level summit that includes all states with nuclear weapons and a representative group of non-nuclear-weapon states to establish core principles, goals, and objectives for movement toward the common goal of the peace and security of a world free of nuclear weapons. This high-level meeting could be a starting point for ongoing, regular disarmament discussions at the expert and ministerial levels, to be capped off with additional high-level summit meetings.

To be effective and sustainable, the disarmament summit process would need to be based on a common set of core principles and objectives. As Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida suggested in 2017, when he served as Japan's foreign minister, the dialogue on disarmament should be based on a clear understanding of the devastating impacts of nuclear weapons use and an objective assessment of the security concerns of states.[7]

Such a process would be ambitious but not without some precedent. This report further develops the concept of a nuclear disarmament summit process that is based on the positive lessons of the ambitious, very successful 2010-2016 nuclear security summit (NSS) process, which was spearheaded by the United States and involved more than 50 states.

As this report makes clear, any nuclear disarmament and risk reduction summit effort should be designed to augment and complement ongoing efforts, such as the modest P5 process dialogue on nuclear terms and concepts, as well as the action plans supporting full implementation of the NPT and TPNW.

A nuclear disarmament summits initiative would be a challenging undertaking by any measure. Then again, history has shown that effective measures to reduce nuclear dangers are seldom easily achieved. Nuclear disarmament summits could spur new ideas and create much-needed momentum to break through old barriers that have blocked progress.

—Daryl G. Kimball, Executive Director, September 2024

Chapter 1:

The International Disarmament Architecture

More than seven decades have elapsed since the adoption of the UN General Assembly resolution in 1946 that first embraced the goal of eliminating nuclear weapons. More than five decades have passed since the NPT committed the five nuclear-weapon states (China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States) to general and complete disarmament. Despite these efforts, states have failed to deliver on the promise of a world free of nuclear weapons.

The NPT, its review conferences, and other disarmament forums have spurred bilateral treaties and unilateral actions that have reduced the global stockpile of nuclear warheads by 85 percent since the height of the Cold War, but most of these reductions took place from the late 1980s to the early 2000s. With progress on nuclear disarmament stalled and the return to great-power competition, a new nuclear arms race is accelerating: The nine states that possess nuclear weapons are competing to modernize their nuclear arsenals and deploy nuclear weapons on new, more destabilizing delivery systems. Several of these states also are expanding the circumstances for nuclear weapons use. These developments, which have been underway for more than a decade in some states,[8] have increased the risk of nuclear conflict and put the current disarmament architecture under greater stress. This trajectory demonstrates how existing forums are currently insufficient for countering challenges to disarmament progress and impede innovative thinking.

Structural and political factors have contributed to the failure of the existing architecture to help deliver more dramatic results on nuclear disarmament. The structural limitations derive primarily from the composition of these forums and their operation. On the political side, inertia and a lack of will among leaders, particularly from those states that possess nuclear weapons, have stymied creative thinking and prevented reforms to existing forums that may have made bodies more effective in advancing disarmament. Diminishing public awareness of the nuclear threat and a decline in civil society pressure for action on nuclear disarmament further contribute to the lack of high-level political attention that is necessary to make the existing disarmament architecture more effective and productive.

Although each forum is unique in scope and composition, several overarching structural and political factors appear to consistently impede agreement on bold actions to advance disarmament across the regime. Below are three of the most notable elements.

1. **Inadequate or overly broad membership.** Reducing nuclear risk and achieving global nuclear disarmament require action by all nine nuclear-armed states. Yet, many existing initiatives designed to facilitate concrete progress toward disarmament have exclusive or limited membership that does not include all of these states; nor do they adequately reflect input from key states, such as those benefiting from extended nuclear deterrence policies or impacted by nuclear weapons production and testing, who must be engaged in the disarmament enterprise. Several initiatives, for instance, include only the five recognized nuclear-weapon states and not the four other possessor states (India, Israel, North Korea, and Pakistan). In forums where all nine nuclear possessor states are represented, such as the UN General Assembly First Committee, overly broad membership often stymies progress on

disarmament. Factionalism in these forums allows states to hold progress hostage over narrow or unrelated issues, particularly if the body requires consensus to adopt recommendations. Furthermore, universal or overly broad participation can prevent the in-depth discussion and debate necessary to facilitate progress.

2. **Consensus-based decision-making.** Several of the most important disarmament initiatives and forums require consensus to adopt recommendations, agendas, or expand membership. Although relying on consensus ensures universal support and buy-in from all participants, it can inhibit progress by watering down recommendations or avoiding contentious issues to prevent any single state from objecting. This type of least-common-denominator thinking discourages bold action. Consensus decision-making also gives one state the power to disrupt the adoption of broadly agreed recommendations. In the NPT review conferences, for instance, a single state can prevent the adoption of recommendations to strengthen the treaty by objecting to the final document. Similarly, work at the CD has been held up for years because one state—Pakistan—continues to object to the agenda for the initiative's work. Failing to adopt recommendations by consensus does not necessarily prevent states from taking actions unilaterally, but such action may lack the same political impetus and accountability that can come from making a commitment in a multilateral forum.
3. **Limited high-level political engagement.** Regular meetings and forums where nuclear disarmament is discussed rarely attract high-level political attention and engagement, which otherwise could catalyze action. Even the NPT review conferences, which occur only once every five years, do not generally include heads of state or high-level political participation. High-level political attention is not a substitute for the detailed, innovative thinking that is necessary to address complex issues such as disarmament, but it sends a signal about a state's commitment and can demonstrate the urgency of an issue. Buy-in and bold leadership from certain heads of state also can put pressure on other states to act and can build norms over time. Leaders may not wish to appear out of sync with their peers or be perceived as failing to adequately contribute to a multilateral effort to address a global issue.

In combination, these factors can be more likely to hinder progress. For example, overly broad membership combined with consensus-based decision-making creates a greater risk of one state or a small group objecting or watering down commitments to least-common-denominator thinking.

The extent to which these factors are limiting is not static. Geopolitics and the priorities of key leaders can amplify or mitigate the extent to which these characteristics impede disarmament efforts. For instance, the current environment, characterized by accelerating investments in new nuclear-capable delivery systems and Russia's rejection of nuclear norms and treaties, demonstrates how a single state or small group of states can exploit these factors to prevent meaningful action on disarmament.

This chapter briefly reviews the roles of the existing set of treaties, negotiating bodies, and initiatives that comprise the global disarmament architecture, as well as their limitations. The limitations and characteristics of the existing forums and the willingness of some states to manipulate the rules to slow or block progress underscore why new approaches, such as a new series of high-level nuclear disarmament summits, should be seriously considered to jump-start progress on more concrete, effective measures that advance toward a world free of nuclear weapons.

The disarmament summits, as outlined in this report, should not supplant existing efforts, many of which are crucial for long-term progress and could become more effective in advancing disarmament goals when geopolitical conditions shift. Rather, by establishing a new, high-level, high-profile, time-bound initiative focused exclusively on the nuclear disarmament challenge, the summits could help inject much-needed political momentum and public attention into the disarmament process, help integrate disparate existing initiatives, regularly engage more nuclear-armed states in the disarmament enterprise, and perhaps spur changes in existing forums to address their limitations.

The first set of initiatives discussed in this chapter is bodies that fall under the umbrella of the United Nations. The second set includes disarmament treaties and related initiatives that were created to support treaty implementation. This chapter does not include all multilateral initiatives that have supported disarmament over the past decades, but rather focuses

on some of the more current efforts to highlight how supporting initiatives attempt to spur progress and the challenges these bodies face.

Not included in this discussion are the treaties and treaty bodies that contribute to global disarmament efforts but have a more narrowly defined scope or mandate, such as the CTBT. Entry into force of the CTBT is important for disarmament efforts and the treaty and the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization will continue to play a critical role in verifying the absence of nuclear testing, but the limited scope and mandate preclude them from acting as a forum for negotiations or discussions on further disarmament efforts.

UN Disarmament Bodies

General Assembly First Committee

The First Committee provides an opportunity for all UN member states to debate nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation and pass nonbinding resolutions on related topics. The committee's work includes the consideration of "principles governing disarmament and the regulation of armaments."

First Committee proceedings occur in the fall of each year, after the UN General Assembly General Debate. During the proceedings, any UN member state can recommend relevant resolutions to be adopted by the General Assembly, which, although not legally binding, can establish a baseline for further discussion or spur actions on a particular issue area. First Committee resolutions adopted by the General Assembly, for instance, have informed the program of work at the CD.

First Committee resolutions also have served as the basis for concrete action that advances critical elements of the nonproliferation and disarmament regime. For example, committee resolutions in the late 1950s and early 1960s helped pave the way for negotiations on the NPT and a First Committee resolution in 2015 established the negotiating mandate for the TPNW.

Despite these significant contributions, discussions within the First Committee are largely static, and there is often very little discussion between key stakeholders to bridge differences over contentious issue areas. Most of the resolutions adopted merely reiterate long-standing policy positions, such as

Chaired by U.S. President Barack Obama, the Security Council Summit on nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament unanimously adopted resolution 1887 (2009), September 24, 2009. (UN photo by Mark Garten)

the regular resolutions expressing support for the CTBT and nuclear-weapon-free zones. Because these nonbinding resolutions are adopted by either consensus or a majority vote,[9] they may not have the necessary support from all relevant stakeholders to facilitate real progress.

For example, during a First Committee debate in 2018 over a resolution requiring the UN Secretary-General to convene a regular meeting on establishing a zone free of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in the Middle East, states opined a range of divergent views regarding the next steps toward the establishment of the zone. Members of the Arab group expressed their view that Israel's nuclear weapons program and its refusal to adopt the other WMD-prohibiting treaties, including the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention, are central roadblocks to the achievement of the zone and voiced support for the initiative.[10] The United States, as one of Israel's closest allies, argued at the First Committee that the process should be formed in a "cooperative and consensus-based manner" rather than a process run by the secretary-general.

The resolution still passed the First Committee by an overwhelming majority vote but without backing from the United States and Israel.[11] The regular meetings convened by the secretary-general could spur progress that supports efforts to establish the zone, but embarking on a process without all key regional stakeholders involved limits its effectiveness and ability to resolve critical areas of dispute.

Security Council

Although nuclear disarmament is not the primary focus of the Security Council, the 15-member body, which includes the five nuclear-weapon states recognized under the NPT, periodically contributes to global efforts to reduce nuclear threats through the passage of legally binding resolutions. The five nuclear-weapon states all possess veto power over any resolution, so any measure passed by the council ensures the support of these states. At the same time, however, any one of the five states can prevent the adoption of a resolution or statement, irrespective of its support from a majority of council members and the broader international community.

The Security Council has adopted several legally binding resolutions that advance global nuclear disarmament efforts. For example, Resolution 984, passed in 1995, affirms that the council, specifically the five permanent members, will act immediately to protect non-nuclear-weapon states party to the NPT facing nuclear attack or threats of nuclear aggression.[12] Resolution 984 also recognized negative security assurances issued by each of the five nuclear-weapon states. Although nonbinding, the security assurances outlined each state's declaratory policies and provided some reassurances that non-nuclear-weapon states would not be subject to nuclear attack, barring certain circumstances.

In September 2009, the United States convened a special meeting of the Security Council on nuclear disarmament that was chaired by President Barack Obama and that produced Resolution 1887. Most of the provisions were nonbinding, but the resolution was viewed as critical in helping facilitate a successful 2010 NPT Review Conference. The resolution reiterated key commitments in the NPT and called on states to meet their obligations under the treaty and advance other elements of the disarmament architecture, such as bringing into force the CTBT and beginning negotiations on a fissile material cutoff treaty (FMCT). The resolution was unanimously adopted, and of the 15 member states, 14 were represented at the meeting by heads of state. The direct involvement of Obama and other world leaders at the council meeting highlights how political attention from the highest levels can be an important catalyst for action.

In 2016 the Security Council adopted Resolution 2310, codifying support for the CTBT. Although the CTBT requires eight more ratifications by specific countries, including the United States and China, to enter into force, the council's backing of the treaty demonstrated strong international support in favor of the global norm against nuclear testing.[13]

More recently, the Security Council has held briefings on nuclear disarmament issues but without tangible outcomes. The last such meetings were in August 2022, when China organized a meeting on promoting common security through dialogue in the context of escalating tensions among major nuclear powers; in March 2023, when Mozambique chaired a discussion on threats to international peace and security, including nuclear dangers; and in March 2024, when Japan organized a briefing on nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation. Following the 2024 meeting, the Japanese Foreign Ministry said the session "provided an opportunity to accelerate substantive discussion between nuclear-weapon states and non-nuclear-weapon states" ahead of the NPT review conference in 2026.[14]

Despite the legally binding nature of Security Council resolutions, the breadth of the body's

mandate and the lack of regular inclusion of the four states that possess nuclear weapons outside of the NPT highlight its limitations in systematically advancing disarmament efforts.

Conference on Disarmament

The CD was formed in 1979 after the first General Assembly Special Session on Disarmament in 1978 agreed on the "continuing requirement for a single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum of limited size taking decisions on the basis of consensus." The CD expanded on earlier multilateral negotiating bodies, including the Ten-Nation Committee on Disarmament and the Eighteen-Nation Committee on Disarmament, which negotiated the NPT.

The five nuclear-weapon states agreed to participate in the new initiative during the special session. Initially called the Committee on Disarmament, the remaining 32 to 35 states were chosen in consultation with the president of the General Assembly. The special session's final document determined that the CD would operate by consensus, adopt its own rules of procedure, and set its own agenda, while taking into account recommendations from the General Assembly. The CD's secretary is appointed by the Secretary-General, and its findings are reported to the General Assembly. The committee was renamed in 1984. It was expanded in 1995 and now comprises 65 participating states, including the three states that developed nuclear weapons outside of the NPT and North Korea.

The permanent CD agenda includes a comprehensive program of disarmament, the negotiation of confidence-building measures and effective verification measures appropriate to disarmament, and nuclear weapons transparency. In 2013, several other issues were added to the CD's scope of work, including prevention of an arms race in outer space, cessation of the nuclear arms race, and prevention of nuclear war.

Despite the breadth of the CD's mandate and the participation of all nine states that possess nuclear weapons, the last nuclear disarmament-

The Conference on Disarmament High-Level Segment 2019, Palais des Nations, February 25, 2019. (UN Photo by Antoine Tardy.)

The Prime Minister Shri Rajiv Gandhi addressing the Special Session of the United Nations on Disarmament, in New York in June, 1988. (Photo credit: Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, Government of India)

related treaty negotiated by the body was the CTBT, finalized in 1996.[15] Although the negotiation of the CTBT through the CD is widely considered a critical contribution to disarmament efforts, it also illustrates the challenges of negotiating under a consensus decision-making process. During the last phase of the negotiations, several states, including China and the UK, insisted that the entry into force provision should be designed to require that India and all other nuclear weapons-capable states join the treaty before it entered into force. In response, India rejected the treaty and blocked consensus approval of the treaty text at the CD. As a result, the CTBT text was brought to the General Assembly to invite states to sign.

Since the mid-1990s, efforts to use the CD as a negotiating body for other disarmament agreements have been stalled by its consensus-based operating structure, which applies even to certain procedural matters. Pakistan, for instance, has repeatedly blocked the adoption of the agenda over its concerns about the CD's approach to an FMCT. For nearly 25 years, the lack of consensus on programmatic work has impeded substantive discussions toward additional disarmament treaties, underscoring how a single state can exploit consensus-based decision-making to prevent progress.[16]

Special Sessions on Disarmament

UN special sessions may be convened at the request of member states or the UN Secretary-General. SSODs have been held in 1978, 1982, and 1988.

Only the special session in 1978 produced a final draft document. That document referenced the central role of the United Nations in disarmament efforts and contained numerous guidelines and proposals, including a recommendation to form the CD. The document also reiterated that "significant progress in disarmament, including nuclear disarmament, would be facilitated by parallel measures to strengthen the security of States and to improve the international situation in general."[17]

The special session in 1982 was convened primarily to establish a comprehensive program on disarmament and to launch a World Disarmament Campaign to increase awareness of nuclear disarmament issues.

Work on the comprehensive program was abandoned in 1989 over disagreements on approaches to disarmament. One primary point of divergence that prevented consensus on the comprehensive program was the inclusion of specific timelines for achieving certain disarmament goals. The Non-Aligned Movement pushed for concrete deadlines whereas the Western block of states argued that fixed time frames for action would impede negotiations.[18] The session did reach an agreement on a text outlining the World Disarmament Campaign, which was to be carried out in a "balanced, factual, and objective manner" in "all regions of the world" to facilitate debate and discussion on disarmament issues.[19]

The special session in 1988 failed to adopt a final document to guide the proposed next steps to advance disarmament. Working groups were established in 2003 and 2007 to draft an agenda for an eventual fourth session, which has not been held.[20] Although the special sessions proved useful in channeling political attention to the issue of nuclear disarmament, consensus operating principles and the ad hoc nature of the mechanism have prevented progress.

Disarmament Commission

The Disarmament Commission was created in 1952 to develop proposals on a treaty for the regulation and reduction of all arms, including nuclear weapons. In 1978 the Special Session on Disarmament restructured the commission and expanded it to include all member states. Now, the commission is tasked with considering and making recommendations on disarmament to the General Assembly.

The General Assembly decided in 2000 that the commission agenda would comprise two substantive disarmament issues, one of which is focused on nuclear weapons, which are often discussed for multiple consecutive years during the commission's annual three-week conference.[21] The chair of the commission rotates between five geographical groups.

The commission is credited with contributing recommendations that advance multilateral disarmament initiatives, such as its 1999 document titled "Establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned," which promoted nuclear-weapon-free zones as a step toward "achieving the ultimate goal of freeing the entire world from all nuclear weapons."[22]

The commission has not offered any recommendations on nuclear disarmament to the General Assembly for the last two decades.[23] The broad membership and consensus-based decision-making appear to contribute to the body's stalemated efforts to provide concrete recommendations.

Treaties and Treaty-Based Initiatives

Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty

The NPT remains the cornerstone of disarmament efforts, and its review cycles are the primary platform for disarmament-related discussions. It recognizes the five states that had tested nuclear weapons prior to finalizing the treaty text in 1967 (China, France, Russia, the UK, and the United States) and commits those states to disarmament. Specifically, Article VI of the NPT says that member states must "pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control."

States that did not possess nuclear weapons before 1967 joined the treaty as non-nuclear-weapon states and agreed to forgo their development or acquisition. The treaty also acknowledged the right of non-nuclear-weapon states to pursue peaceful nuclear programs under international safeguards.

The treaty entered into force in 1970 and currently has 191 states-parties. Three states—India, Israel, and Pakistan—elected not to join the NPT and later developed nuclear weapons programs. To join the NPT, they would need to dismantle their nuclear arsenals and accede as non-nuclear-weapon states. North Korea joined the NPT, but says it withdrew from the treaty in 2003, a claim that is disputed because of the process Pyongyang used. North Korea would also need to dismantle its nuclear arsenal to return to compliance with the treaty.

States meet every five years to review progress on the NPT's implementation. The review conferences also seek to produce a final document outlining actions for states to take to fulfill commitments under the NPT. The final document is not the only measure of a review conference's success, but it does play a key role in articulating steps for states to take to advance and strengthen the treaty.

Adoption of the final document is subject to a consensus-based decision-making process. As a result, an objection from a single state to a single provision can block the final document. For instance, Russia blocked consensus in August 2022 (the 2020 review conference was delayed until 2022 due to the COVID-19 pandemic) over references in the

BOX: Leveraging Action on Disarmament at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference

Article X of the nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) called for a conference of states-parties to be held 25 years after the treaty entered into force in order "to decide whether the [t]reaty shall continue in force indefinitely or shall be extended for an additional fixed period or periods." Although the treaty provided that the extension would be determined by a majority vote, the parties felt that such a key decision should be reached by consensus if possible. States-parties considered the question of extending the treaty during the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference.

That conference began with considerable uncertainty regarding the nature of any extension. Non-nuclear-weapon states, particularly developing countries belonging to the Non-Aligned Movement, expressed disappointment with the lack of progress toward nuclear disarmament and feared that a decision to extend the treaty indefinitely would enable the nuclear-armed states by default to retain their nuclear arsenals in perpetuity and avoid any accountability in eliminating them.

At the conference, Indonesia and South Africa proposed tying the treaty's indefinite extension to a decision to strengthen the treaty review process. They also linked it to the establishment of a set of principles and objectives on nuclear nonproliferation and disarmament to hold NPT states-parties, particularly the nuclear-weapon states, accountable to their commitments. Although only a simple majority of states-parties were required to approve the indefinite extension, the agreed package of decisions and resolution obtained enough support that such a vote was not required.

The integrated nature of the package deal gave the review process a sharper focus and clarified its ends. Certain positive steps by the nuclear-weapon states before the conference likely contributed to the successful outcome.

Decision 1—Strengthening the Review Process

This decision provided for five-year review conferences that would be preceded by an annual preparatory meeting in the three years leading up to the review conference. These conferences would have three main committees (disarmament, nonproliferation, and peaceful nuclear uses), which could establish subsidiary bodies on specific issues. The decision also clarified that, in the future, the review process would examine "principles, objectives, and ways" to strengthen implementation of the NPT, including those principles and objectives in Decision 2, and would "look forward as well as back."

Decision 2—Principles and Objectives

The second decision set forth some "principles and objectives" for assessing progress in the following areas: universality, nonproliferation, disarmament, nuclear-weapon-free zones, security assurances, safeguards, and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. For example, the decision laid out a program of action for disarmament, including

- the completion of negotiations on the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty by September 1996,
- negotiations on a fissile material cutoff treaty,
- the "determined pursuit" by the nuclear-weapon states of "systematic and progressive efforts" to reduce nuclear arsenals, and
- "further steps" to assure non-nuclear-weapon states-parties against the threat of nuclear attack.

Five years later, at the 2000 NPT Review Conference, states-parties went a few steps further, setting forth 13 "practical steps" relating to disarmament. The 2010 NPT Review Conference adopted a consensus final document that identified 22 agreed actions to pursue nuclear disarmament.

Decision 3—Indefinite Extension

The crucial third decision declared that "as a majority exists" among the parties to extend the treaty indefinitely, the treaty shall continue in force indefinitely. The decision's preamble contained language "emphasizing" the other decisions, which further affirmed the linkages in the package deal.

Resolution on the Middle East

The last key component of the package deal was a resolution that endorsed the creation of a Middle Eastern "zone free of nuclear weapons as well as other weapons of mass destruction," including delivery systems. The NPT's indefinite extension without a vote would not have been possible without addressing this issue—a long-standing goal of the Arab states and many other parties.

document to nuclear safety stemming from Moscow's illegal occupation of the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant in Ukraine. In 2015 the United States, the UK, and Canada objected to the adoption of the final document over the timeline set for making progress on a Middle Eastern WMD-free zone. Since the first NPT review conference, in 1975, only about half of the review conferences have produced a final document.

The specificity and substance of the recommendations contained in NPT review conference documents vary. Although the consensus-based process waters down commitments and recommendations, final documents have resulted in states taking concrete steps to advance disarmament. For instance, the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference helped push negotiations on the CTBT to their conclusion in 1996. NPT review conference outcomes have supported efforts to establish nuclear-weapon-free zones and the negotiation of bilateral treaties between the United States and the Soviet Union, and later Russia, on arms reductions.

Additionally, the NPT review conference process now includes reporting requirements for the five recognized nuclear-weapon states. This commitment was made during the 2010 review conference to provide greater transparency into their nuclear weapons stockpiles and programs. The reports were first submitted at the 2014 preparatory committee meeting ahead of the 2015 review conference. Although the five states described the reports as a "common reporting framework," there are significant differences in the substance, detail, and structure of the reports.[24] The shortfalls have led to non-nuclear-weapon states calling for an improved, more detailed reporting process.

Despite these accomplishments, final documents often paper over or avoid critical issues and dilute recommendations to ensure universal support among NPT members. States may also hold off on supporting a particular action over concern about another issue. For instance, several non-nuclear-weapon states continue to object to universalizing the additional protocol to the comprehensive safeguards agreement, despite its clear nonproliferation value, over concerns about the pace of disarmament.

As a result, when and if the review conference does produce a final document, the recommendations and action steps are often a product of least-common-denominator thinking. The final document seldom encourages bold action and specific measures, with target deadlines, that push disarmament-related activities beyond the status quo.

Perhaps the most salient shortcomings of the NPT review conference are the lack of follow-through by states on key commitments and the view among some nuclear-weapon states that past review conference commitments on specific disarmament measures are not politically binding if international security conditions change. The latter argument has been used to justify the lack of follow-up on actions agreed in final documents.[25]

Furthermore, the NPT review conferences do not include all the countries that possess nuclear weapons. India, Israel, and Pakistan are not obligated to abide by the agreed commitments in a final document, and North Korea does not view itself as bound by NPT proceedings. The absence of these four states in the NPT process further limits the role of the NPT meetings as a venue for states to discuss and agree on measures to achieve global nuclear disarmament.

Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones

While negotiations over the NPT were ongoing, Latin American countries were pursuing a concept originally introduced by Brazil in 1962: the creation of a region free of nuclear weapons. This was not the first time that a treaty was used to ban nuclear weapons from a geographically defined space. The 1961 Antarctic Treaty declared that continent a nuclear-weapon-free zone. The Latin American endeavor, however, was the first negotiated treaty to establish a zone free of nuclear weapons concluded by states, some with civil nuclear programs, to cover their respective territories.

The Brazilian nuclear-weapon-free zone proposal, which was offered just weeks before the Cuban missile crisis, garnered support from the Organization of American States, which passed a resolution supporting efforts to create such a zone. The UN General Assembly shortly followed with a resolution endorsing the concept in November 1963, which called for the creation of a drafting committee. The committee met for four main sessions between 1965 and 1967 before opening the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean, or the Treaty of Tlatelolco, as it is widely known today, for signature in February 1967. Negotiations on the treaty influenced the inclusion of Article VII of the NPT, which states that nothing in the NPT affects the rights of states to conclude regional treaties prohibiting nuclear weapons.[26]

Since the conclusion of the Treaty of Tlatelolco, four additional nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties have been negotiated: the 1985 Treaty of Rarotonga, covering the South Pacific; the 1995 Treaty of Bangkok, covering Southeast Asia; the 1996 Treaty of

Pelindaba, covering Africa; and the 2006 Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia.

Although the scopes of these treaties vary, all generally include a prohibition of nuclear weapons in the territories covered by the treaty and contain one or more protocols for the recognized nuclear-weapon states to ratify, codifying their commitment to respecting the zones. These zones free of nuclear weapons now span the majority of the Southern Hemisphere and can be a useful model for future disarmament initiatives, given their regional focus and coalition-based structure. The zones also are an example of a minilateral framework that is devoted to achieving nuclear abolition among a small number of dedicated states.

As part of the NPT extension in 1995, states adopted a resolution supporting the establishment of a WMD-free zone in the Middle East. Unlike other nuclear-weapon-free zones, this resolution called for the prohibition and elimination of all WMDs and their means of delivery. Various efforts over the years have attempted to advance the zone and develop an agenda for the proceedings, but negotiations have yet to commence. The 2010 NPT Review Conference final document stipulated that a conference on the zone be held by the end of 2012. That conference was canceled, given the lack of consensus between states in the region over the agenda, but it did spur a series of consultations that included Israel regarding the zone. The consultations lapsed after a disagreement over setting a deadline for a new conference prevented consensus on the 2015 final document.[27]

Another process, established by a UN General Assembly resolution passed in 2018, requires the secretary-general to hold an annual meeting on advancing the zone. The effectiveness of this process, however, which is not supported or attended by Israel, will likely be limited if it cannot address the deep divides between certain Arab states and Israel on this issue.

Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons

After the 2015 NPT Review Conference failed to produce a final document, a group of non-nuclear-weapon states sponsored a resolution in the UN First Committee calling for an open-ended working group to take forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations. A similar working group would have been created under the 2015 review conference final document had it been adopted. The resolution passed the General Assembly in 2016.

States supporting the resolution cited stalled progress on the implementation of NPT Article VI commitments as an impetus for pursuing the open-ended working group. Another motivating factor was a series of conferences held in 2012-2014 that underscored the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons and the need to reinforce the taboo against nuclear weapons use.

Three sessions of the open-ended working group were convened in 2016. Subsequently, the First Committee adopted a resolution to begin negotiations in 2017, which the General Assembly approved 113-35, with 13 abstentions.

After two negotiating sessions at UN Headquarters in New York in March and June-July of 2017 involving representatives from 124 states and civil society, the participants produced the text of the TPNW. At the conclusion of the negotiations on July 7, the treaty was approved 122-1-1.

The treaty prohibits the use, threat of use, development, acquisition, and possession of nuclear weapons. The treaty requires that states, at a minimum, conclude and implement a comprehensive safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). If a state with nuclear weapons joins the treaty, it must either dismantle its nuclear program before accession or cooperate with an international authority to verify dismantlement. The treaty also contains provisions obligating states-parties to provide aid to victims and assistance in environmental efforts in the event of nuclear weapons use.[28]

None of the nuclear-armed states participated in the negotiating conference, and the nuclear-weapon states actively opposed the process. Despite this opposition, the treaty entered into force on January 22, 2021, after 50 states ratified the document.

The TPNW, like the NPT, holds regular meetings of states-parties to assess and advance implementation of the treaty's requirements. The first meeting of states-parties took place in 2022 and produced a 50-point action plan to strengthen implementation.

Treaty-Related Initiatives

In addition to the NPT review conferences, several multilateral initiatives and coalitions were created under the auspices of the NPT to advance the treaty's goals. Some of these processes are more formal than others, with specific agendas and membership. Others have evolved and adapted over time to help implement the NPT and respond to newly identified challenges to the disarmament landscape. Still other initiatives seek to build bridges between states to increase the likelihood of consensus at a review conference. The illustrations below demonstrate the

TABLE: Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones

The Treaty of Tlatelolco (Latin America and the Caribbean)

Antigua and Barbuda
Argentina
Bahamas
Barbados
Belize
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)
Brazil
Chile
Colombia
Costa Rica
Cuba
Dominica
Dominican Republic
Ecuador
El Salvador
Grenada
Guatemala
Guyana
Haiti
Honduras
Jamaica
Mexico
Nicaragua
Panama
Paraguay
Peru
Saint Kitts and Nevis
Saint Lucia
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
Suriname
Trinidad and Tobago
Uruguay
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

The Treaty of Rarotonga (South Pacific)

Australia
Cook Islands
Fiji
Kiribati
Nauru
New Zealand
Niue
Papua New Guinea
Samoa
Solomon Islands
Tonga
Tuvalu
Vanuatu

The Treaty of Bangkok (Southeast Asia)

Brunei Darussalam
Cambodia
Indonesia
Lao People's Democratic Republic
Malaysia
Myanmar
Philippines
Singapore
Thailand
Vietnam

The Treaty of Pelindaba (Africa)

Algeria
Angola
Benin
Botswana
Burkina Faso
Burundi
Cameroon
Cape Verde
Central African Republic
Chad
Comoros
Congo
Cote D'Ivoire
Democratic Republic of the Congo
Djibouti
Egypt
Equatorial Guinea
Eritrea
Ethiopia
Gabon
Gambia
Ghana
Guinea
Guinea-Bissau
Kenya
Lesotho
Liberia
Libya
Madagascar
Malawi
Mali
Mauritania
Mauritius
Mozambique
Namibia
Niger
Nigeria
Rwanda
Sao Tome & Principe
Senegal
Seychelles
Sierra Leone
Somalia
South Africa
Sudan
Swaziland
Togo
Tunisia
Uganda
United Republic of Tanzania
Zambia
Zimbabwe

Central Asian Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty

Kazakhstan
Kyrgyzstan
Tajikistan
Turkmenistan
Uzbekistan

The five Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) nuclear-weapon states held a press briefing at the United Nations Office at Geneva on April 19, 2013 following a two-day P5 meeting in Geneva under the chairmanship of the Russian Federation.
(U.S. Mission Geneva photo by Eric Bridiers)

types of multilateral initiatives that have sprung from the NPT and some of the more current, relevant efforts to support it.

P5 Process

To reinvigorate disarmament efforts, the five nuclear-weapon states recognized by the NPT began meeting in 2007 to discuss confidence-building measures to reduce nuclear risk, actions to increase transparency, and verification. The initiative was formalized at a high-level conference in September 2009 and is now known as the P5 process. The chair of the process, which rotates annually, determines the topics for discussion, but the general aim is to support disarmament efforts.[29]

Throughout its tenure, the P5 process has had limited successes in adopting measures that support disarmament. Participating states, for instance, collaborated to create a glossary of terms designed to help support future negotiations.[30] More recently, during meetings in 2020, the nuclear-weapon states engaged in discussions about their national nuclear doctrines to increase transparency about the circumstances under which each country would use a nuclear weapon, and, conversely, the conditions that may be best suited for disarmament. Other recent agenda items include discussions to broaden the glossary of terms to ensure common understanding, support negotiations on an FMCT, ensure access to peaceful nuclear uses, and sign the annexed protocol to the 1997 Bangkok Treaty, which establishes a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Southeast Asia.[31]

Although it has achieved modest accomplishments, the P5 process has been criticized for being a political body used by the nuclear-weapon states to solidify their positions, including opposition to the TPNW, and to fend off pressure from non-nuclear-weapon states to accelerate disarmament efforts. The inclusion of all five nuclear-weapon states also makes it a less-than-ideal forum for more sensitive bilateral discussions on force structure and verification that might be necessary to advance arms reduction agreements, for instance. The potential for expanding the process to other states is limited. The process's membership and informal structure insulate the initiative from the pressures of non-nuclear-weapon states. In addition, the infrequent pace of the meetings and relatively low level of diplomatic representation (the level of undersecretary of state

and deputy foreign ministerial) make it a poor venue for sustained negotiations on difficult disarmament agreements and an unlikely forum for bold progress.

Representatives of all five countries have continued to meet in this format despite Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, but the last senior political-level meeting was held in 2021 when the group agreed to issue a joint statement reiterating the Reagan-Gorbachev maxim that "a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought."[32] It is positive that representatives of the nuclear weapon states continue to meet through this format, but the geopolitical rift caused by the invasion and structural limitations cast doubt on the ability of the process to deliver tangible results that advance disarmament in the short term.

The Stepping Stones Approach

The Stepping Stones Approach, which was launched ahead of the 10th NPT Review Conference, aims to mediate some of the issues that impede nuclear disarmament, including addressing possessor states' security doctrines, increasing transparency surrounding fissile material and nuclear arsenals, and taking steps to reduce the risk of nuclear use. Created through a partnership between the Swedish Foreign Ministry and the British American Security Information Council, a London-based think tank, the Stepping Stones Approach has been described by its founders as "an attempt to engage all shades of opinion in a pragmatic and inclusive agenda of action, focused on achievable objectives."[33] It has also been lauded as a tool to strengthen the NPT and focuses on pursuing nuclear disarmament in accordance with Article VI of the treaty.[34]

A 2019 report on its work concludes that although the process is "not limited to the [nuclear-weapon states], nor the diplomatic community…the NPT is an appropriate place for review and accountability."[35] The Stepping Stones Approach importantly incorporates perspectives from nuclear- and non-nuclear-weapon NPT states-parties, but is limited by its membership. Like the NPT, this initiative does not include the states that have developed nuclear weapons programs outside of the treaty regime.

With an emphasis on strengthening the global norm against nuclear use, working toward no-first-use policies, supporting ratification of protocols to all five nuclear-weapon-free zones, and developing risk reduction protocols and with buy-in from many NPT states-parties, the Stepping Stones Approach is well equipped to facilitate important dialogue leading up to the next NPT review conference, bridge gaps between factions, and bring concrete recommendations to inform the final document. It is not clear whether or how decisions made by the Stepping Stones Approach will lead to actionable disarmament policy in the current environment and incorporate nuclear-armed states outside of the treaty, underscoring the limitations of initiatives that are primarily focused on the NPT review process.

Creating the Environment for Nuclear Disarmament

In 2018, during a NPT preparatory committee meeting, the United States launched a broader initiative titled Creating the Environment for Nuclear Disarmament (CEND) to address what it called the "deteriorating security conditions [that] have made near-term prospects for progress on disarmament bleak."[36] The CEND initiative aimed to address the geopolitical conditions that impede productive multilateral conversations on disarmament by bringing together experts and representatives from nuclear-armed states and non-nuclear-weapon states with a strong track record of engagement on nuclear disarmament, nonproliferation, and international security issues. The initiative seeks to "bring security conditions to the point where disarmament will finally be achievable—and how to move forward toward that objective as best we can in a still highly imperfect security environment."[37]

CEND's establishment marked an unprecedented approach to state-led multilateral disarmament efforts in that, for the first time, a process outside of the UN incorporated the NPT-recognized nuclear-weapon states and states that possess nuclear weapons outside of the treaty. The inclusion of eight of the nine states that possess nuclear weapons in a dedicated, multilateral disarmament initiative lays the groundwork for demonstrating that discussions on nuclear weapons-related issues can occur with states that developed weapons programs outside of the NPT without recognizing the legitimacy of their weapons programs—a common concern that has prevented the inclusion of those states in other initiatives in the past.

In addition to inviting nuclear possessor states, several non-nuclear-weapon states were also invited to participate in CEND. The attendance of non-nuclear-weapon states varied during the two years that the initiative met and did not appear to be fixed. More than 40 countries participated in a 2019 meeting establishing an initial CEND framework, but that dropped to 31 during the January 2020 meeting.

The initiative's program of work was subdivided into working groups: reducing perceived incentives

for states to acquire or increase their nuclear stockpiles, improving the effectiveness of existing nuclear disarmament mechanisms and institutions, and developing potential interim measures to reduce risks related to nuclear weapons.[38] The three working groups were expected to provide deliverables to the broader group within two years.

It is unclear what role the CEND initiative may continue to play within the global disarmament architecture. Addressing security issues that are used to justify the possession of nuclear weapons could contribute to disarmament efforts, but it is too soon to say if the initiative, which has so far involved relatively lower-level government representatives, can help produce concrete actions on nuclear disarmament and nuclear risk reduction.

Ahead of the originally scheduled review in 2020, some non-nuclear-weapon states expressed concern that CEND may be an effort by the United States to divert attention from the lack of concrete progress on disarmament. Following the election of U.S. President Joe Biden, senior administration officials pledged to continue with the initiative, and some CEND working groups have continued to meet. It is unclear whether states still active in the initiative will seek to make any changes to its objectives and scope or to sustain the initiative over time.

International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification

The International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification (IPNDV) was established in 2014 by the United States in partnership with the Nuclear Threat Initiative, a nongovernmental organization, as a multilateral effort to identify, develop, and evaluate mechanisms for credibly verifying nuclear disarmament.[39] The IPNDV's membership is more than 30 states, including three possessor states: France, the UK, and the United States.

IPNDV working groups have already produced recommendations to guide future nuclear disarmament verification. In 2017, for example, IPNDV released a report from the first phase of its work that assessed how to technically verify the absence of nuclear material in a presented warhead without revealing sensitive design information.[40] A 2020 report focused on methods for verifying the total number of nuclear warheads a state possesses.[41]

Not all nuclear-armed states participate in the IPNDV, which could be a barrier to implementation and support for the initiative's work. On a technical level, given the sensitivity of warhead design, the nine possessor states may be more inclined to allow invasive warhead dismantlement practices if such processes are jointly developed and agreed.

Additionally, the IPNDV is not designed to address the political considerations that prevent states that possess nuclear weapons from deciding to reduce and eventually eliminate nuclear weapons. Yet, the IPNDV is unique in its innovative and technical focus, and a disarmament summit process could support and expand on its efforts.

Conclusion

Each of the aforementioned initiatives plays an important role in promoting global nuclear disarmament. Their limitations in advancing disarmament in the current environment, however, suggest that a new initiative designed to mitigate the three structural conditions—membership limitations, consensus-based decision-making, and lack of high-level political attention—that impede progress in the existing architecture could jump-start progress on concrete actions to advance disarmament. A new forum could grant smaller coalitions of states a greater opportunity to take actionable steps toward disarmament and could invite more difficult conversations on issues raised by other states that may otherwise be papered over in existing consensus-based initiatives. Such an initiative would not be designed to replace existing efforts, but rather could complement the work of current initiatives and provide a space to coordinate those efforts better.

Chapter 2:
The Nuclear Security Summit Process

The NSS process, a biannual series of high-level meetings from 2010 to 2016 focused on preventing nuclear terrorism and securing weapons-usable materials, provides a model for reinvigorating disarmament efforts in a minilateral format designed to mitigate the factionalism, procedural hurdles, membership issues, and political apathy that stymie progress in existing disarmament forums.

The NSS process was an initiative of Obama, who, during an April 2009 speech in Prague, said that the most immediate and extreme threat to global security is the acquisition of a nuclear weapon by a terrorist group. He noted that the threat is substantially compounded by unsecured nuclear material across the globe and that, "to protect our people, we must act with a sense of purpose without delay."[42] Obama proceeded to declare an international effort to secure all vulnerable civilian nuclear material around the world within four years and called on the international community to begin to address this matter "by having a global summit on nuclear security that the United States will host within the next year."[43]

At the first nuclear security summit, in Washington in April 2010, Obama emphasized the necessity of bringing "high-level attention to the global threat posed by nuclear terrorism and advance a common approach to strengthening nuclear security."[44] Of the 47 states that participated in 2010, 38 were represented by heads of state.

Over the course of four summits, this select group of states took significant steps to secure weapons-usable nuclear materials and raise awareness of the risk of nuclear terrorism. At the end of the summit process, states reflected on the accomplishments of the unique process as a catalyst for action and pledged in a consensus communique to make nuclear security "an enduring priority."[45] Although the work of the summit process remains unfinished, both its successes and its shortcomings offer important lessons for pursuing nuclear policy objectives in a minilateral format and should be taken into account in designing a future summit process aimed at advancing arms control and disarmament.

Characteristics of the NSS Process

Several key elements contributed to the success of the NSS process in advancing nuclear security. The summits demonstrated that a smaller, specifically selected group of states, represented primarily at the head-of-state level, can facilitate significant progress when there is general agreement on the goals and scope of the process and states are encouraged to commit to actions that go beyond consensus recommendations. The summit process also emphasized voluntary reporting by participating states on actions taken since the last summit, driving accountability.

Despite the considerable successes of the summit process in advancing nuclear security and spurring tangible actions that reduced the threat of nuclear terrorism, several limitations hindered the process. The selective nature of the summits politicized the process. States that participated have struggled to universalize the activities of the process after it ended and to embed the practices in existing organizations due in large part to politicization and the fragmented legacy of the process. Maintaining momentum without the same high-level political attention is also a challenge in ensuring that the nuclear security agenda remains a priority issue. Both the shortcomings and the unique characteristics of the process that contributed to its successes offer some valuable lessons for applying a minilateral summit model to disarmament.

Leaders meet during the final Nuclear Security Summit in Washington D.C., April 1, 2016.
Photo by Ben Solomon/U.S. Department of State)

Feasible National Commitments and Reporting

A consensus communique for each summit focused high-level political attention on nuclear security and outlined broad goals for the process and areas of focus. These documents guided more ambitious and tailored national and multilateral pledges to strengthen nuclear security and prevented mission creep.

The tradition of commitment-making began at the first summit in 2010, when the Obama administration encouraged participating states to bring specific pledges of action, or "house gifts," that advanced the shared nuclear security agenda and announce them at the meeting. Leaders responded positively to the Obama administration's call to action, and in national statements at the first summit, states pledged more than 60 specific commitments. The commitments covered a wide area of actions, including pledges to dispose of nuclear and radiological materials, strengthen security at facilities containing nuclear materials, conduct trainings, enhance nuclear security culture, set standards for nuclear security, adhere to best practices, and ratify relevant nuclear security treaties.

By the second summit, in 2012, more than 80 percent of the commitments made in 2010 were completed, and an additional 10 percent were in the process of being completed.[46] South Korea and the Netherlands, the hosts of the second (2012) and third (2014) summits, respectively, continued the tradition of house gifts. By the end of the summit process, all 53 participating states had made at least eight commitments and some states as many as 30. In total, throughout the six-year summit process, more than 935 commitments were made.[47] Unsurprisingly, some states were more ambitious than others in the substance and volume of their commitments, particularly the nine summit participants that eliminated their highly enriched uranium (HEU) stockpiles during the summit process.

Several states also individually pledged to make similar commitments, resulting in the strengthening or creation of new norms. For instance, IAEA International Physical Protection Advisory Service (IPPAS) missions, which compare a state's nuclear security practices to international instruments and guidance documents developed by the agency, were generally viewed as a service for states with poor nuclear security before the summit process. Because of the emphasis put on IPPAS missions during the

summits, however, these missions are no longer viewed as a stigma but rather a best practice for responsible states committed to nuclear security. Several states even committed to sharing the results of their IPPAS mission to provide assurances about their nuclear security practices.

The national commitment process catalyzed action on the entry into force of the 2005 amendment to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material (CPPNM). The original 1979 treaty text set legally binding security regulations for nuclear material in international transit; the 2005 amendment expanded the regulations to domestic storage and transport, creating the first legal requirements for domestic nuclear security. At the 2016 summit, Obama announced that enough states had ratified the 2005 amendment to bring it into force. The United States was one of the 30 NSS participants that ratified the amendment during the summit process.

The summits were built on the expectation that states not only make new national commitments during each summit but also report back on progress made toward commitments from prior summits. States did not agree to a common reporting form, and the detail and specificity of the reports varied by state, but the act of peer accountability appeared to be an important driver toward fulfilling prior pledges.

This emphasis on transparency and accountability contributed to states generally making commitments that were achievable rather than aspirational. Open-source research confirmed that states self-reported honestly.[48]

Given the evolution of some commitments throughout the process and the ad hoc nature of reporting, it is difficult to determine exactly what percentage of the more than 935 national commitments made were fulfilled. An in-depth analysis of the national commitments using open sources suggests that nearly all were completed or progress was made toward completion by early 2018.[49]

Multilateral Commitments

At the summit in 2012, states built on the house-gift concept by introducing multilateral commitments known as "gift baskets," whereby groups of states committed to take specific actions to enhance nuclear security. This multilateral commitment-making allowed states with complementary expertise or shared concerns to work collaboratively. The gift baskets covered a range of issues, including cooperative work to strengthen information security at nuclear sites and transport security for nuclear materials, more technical projects such as the development of alternative fuels for producing medical isotopes to minimize the use of HEU, and cooperative training and education to enhance nuclear security culture.

Throughout the summits, 51 of the 53 participating states signed on to at least one gift basket. Furthermore, states initially skeptical of multilateral commitment-making began to support these projects as the process progressed. Notably, at the 2016 summit, China and India signed onto a 2014 gift basket pledging to integrate nuclear security best practices designed by the IAEA into their nuclear security regulations and to take steps, such as IPPAS missions, designed to provide further assurance of nuclear security best practices. Overcoming the initial reluctance of these states to support more standard, universal practices on nuclear security demonstrates the success of the summit process in creating momentum and building norms.

Similar to the house gifts, the gift-basket commitments generally contained specific

HEU-FREE COUNTRIES

- GHANA (Aug. 2017)
- POLAND* (Sept. 2016)
- INDONESIA* (Aug. 2016)
- ARGENTINA* (Apr. 2016)
- SWITZERLAND* (Sept. 2015)
- UZBEKISTAN (Sept. 2015)
- JAMAICA (Sept. 2015)
- HUNGARY* (Nov. 2013)
- VIETNAM* (July 2013)
- CZECH REPUBLIC* (Apr. 2013)
- AUSTRIA (Dec. 2012)
- UKRAINE* (Mar. 2012)
- MEXICO* (Mar. 2012)
- SERBIA (Dec. 2010)

*** Summit Participant**

Highly-enriched uranium is removed from Hungary, November 2013. (Photo by Sandor Tozser / IAEA)

commitments rather than aspirational goals. The most successful of the gift baskets included time-bound actions and specific reporting requirements.[50] For example, the joint statement on counter-nuclear smuggling required states to report on what actions they had taken to advance the goals of the gift basket since the previous summit. The organizers of the statement also published a consolidated list of what country took what action. This transparent reporting appeared to spur states to meet their obligations because all participating states reported specific actions to advance the intent of the gift basket.

Similarly, the joint statement on information security required participating states to indicate which of the 13 voluntary actions listed in the gift basket they implemented. An annex to the statement prepared by the organizers of the gift basket indicated which states completed actions and what actions were ongoing. Again, this transparent accounting appeared to have contributed to a high completion rate. In a disarmament summit process, states looking to lead gift baskets should consider these factors that contributed to more effective multilateral commitments.

Limited Membership

The summits were a minilateral process by design, meaning that a select group of states was chosen to participate. Initially, 47 states attended the first summit, in 2010. That number was expanded to 53 in 2012. The same 53 states attended the 2014 summit, and all but Russia attended in 2016. Four international organizations were also represented in the summit process.

Although preventing nuclear terrorism requires commitment and action by all states, the summits

demonstrated that a smaller, select group of states can be more conducive to generating concrete action, particularly if prior barriers to progress rest in the organizational makeup and structures of existing international forums. The idea of preventing nuclear terrorism and strengthening nuclear security was broadly supported as a concept before the 2010 summit, but there did not exist a forum in which it received dedicated political attention and support. The IAEA had a nuclear security office, but it did not enjoy the same priority among member states as technical cooperation and safeguards. Nuclear security also falls within the parameters of discussion at the NPT review conferences, but the topic is generally overshadowed by disarmament, nonproliferation, and technical cooperation, particularly before the summit process. Creating a dedicated initiative focused political attention on the issue of nuclear security and the prevention of nuclear terrorism.

Several factors appear to have influenced which states were invited to participate in the summits. Most states that possessed weapons-usable nuclear material in civil programs, of which securing and minimizing were key goals for the summits, participated in the process. Similarly, many states with nuclear power programs were invited to attend, as well as those that had supported nuclear security efforts in the past. Regional and political blocks were represented in the summit process, as well as states at the forefront of illicit nuclear trafficking efforts.

Limiting membership to states with a particularly strong connection to the issue helped ensure that the summit stayed focused on the goal of nuclear security and limited the possibility of spoilers. It also prevented the process from being bogged down by challenges inherent to a larger group; negotiating a consensus communique, for instance, would have been more difficult as the number of participants increased.

A smaller number of states also helped facilitate the head-of-state level participation that Obama saw as important for catalyzing action. Limited participation, combined with the high-level political attention, spurred states to commit to concrete action because many leaders did not want to be perceived as failing to contribute to the NSS goals. The summits demonstrated that, even for recalcitrant states, participation in an event with high-level political prestige is attractive and peer pressure can generate positive momentum.

A selective membership list had certain advantages to facilitating progress during the summit process, but the exclusivity of the initiative has hindered post summit efforts by politicizing the process. States that were not invited to attend, for instance, appear reluctant to participate in any activities perceived as originating from the summit process, even those that were made more universal after the process.

For instance, 11 of the gift baskets from the NSS process were distributed among IAEA member states as informational circulars (INFCIRCs), allowing any of the 173 IAEA member states to join. Yet, as of mid-2021, 10 of the 11 gift baskets that have become INFCIRCs have seen only one to three states sign. In most cases, these new signatories are other NSS participating states joining a statement that they had not joined during the summit process. Notable exceptions are Luxembourg and Slovenia, non-NSS participants who each signed multiple statements.

The only gift basket that garnered significant interest from non-NSS states when it became an IAEA INFCIRC was the Nuclear Security Contact Group, one of the successor bodies to the summit process designed to continue communications about the changing nuclear security environment. Of the eight states that joined after the gift basket was adopted by the IAEA, five were non-NSS states.

In some cases, the lack of broader support at the IAEA for NSS gift baskets-turned-INFCIRCs is understandable. Several deal with specialized topics and require actions that are less applicable to a broad number of states, such as the INFCIRCs on nuclear material transport security and minimizing the use of HEU. Others, however, are widely applicable, and more universal implementation of those gift baskets would strengthen nuclear security. These topics include nuclear detection, nuclear forensics, and radioactive source security. Despite broad applicability and demonstrable benefits to strengthening nuclear security, these gift baskets did not attract much support among non-NSS states.

The failure of the INFCIRCs to garner greater support has been directly linked to the perceived politicization of the summit process. In 2016, Rafael Mariano Grossi, IAEA assistant director-general for policy, said that "it's a problem" to mention the NSS process because "you will have one or the other delegation that is not invited to the club object" over receiving "instructions from a club of 53 nations."[51]

Working With Existing Organizations and Initiatives

States were the primary drivers of progress in the NSS process, but the summits included participation of existing international organizations and initiatives with nuclear security mandates. The relationship

between the summit's mandate and legacy and these multilateral initiatives that remain involved in nuclear security efforts offer some lessons on best practices for continued engagement after the summit process ends.

The IAEA, UN, European Union, and Interpol, for instance, participated in the summits. Several less-formal initiatives associated with nuclear security, such as the Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons of Mass Destruction and the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism (GICNT), offered gift baskets during the summit process aligning their activities with summit priorities. Five of these entities—the IAEA, UN, Interpol, the Global Partnership, and GICNT—received action plans at the 2016 summit. These action plans, endorsed by summit participants, laid out specific goals and activities for the initiatives that would continue the work of the summit process.

The action plans have had varying degrees of success post-NSS process. The UN action plan, for instance, which focuses on strengthening the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1540, has done relatively little. Interpol, however, has taken some significant steps to build state capacities to counter nuclear smuggling in line with its action plan.[52]

The IAEA arguably had the most extensive action plan, unsurprisingly given the key role the agency plays in global nuclear security efforts. Yet, its progress on nuclear security, particularly actions directly linked to the summit, has been stymied at times by competing agency priorities, limited funding, and the politicization of the NSS process. The United States, for instance, sought to continue the tradition of offering house gifts at the high-level nuclear security conferences held by the IAEA every three years. Few other states have followed the U.S. example.

The idea to engage with other relevant initiatives engaged in nuclear security efforts and attempt to ensure that critical nuclear security work endured after the NSS process ended was a good one, but the politicization of the limited membership and a lack of accountability and reporting on post-NSS progress for these initiatives limited the effectiveness of the action plans. Proactively considering those implications in a series of disarmament summits could mitigate some of these negative effects.

Chapter 3:

Disarmament Summits: Breaking the Current Stalemate

Given the plethora of existing multilateral forums and initiatives designed to facilitate progress toward the elimination of nuclear weapons, states may be hesitant to add an additional process or set of meetings to the already complicated international disarmament architecture. Furthermore, a head-of-state process entails significant planning, groundwork, and political capital.

The existing architecture, however, has proven inadequate in advancing disarmament, particularly in the last decade. Russia's rejection of its nuclear obligations underscores the challenge of making progress within existing forums given the geopolitical environment. Moscow's decision to block consensus on the NPT review conference final document in August 2022 demonstrates how a single state can inhibit progress toward disarmament and manipulate existing institutions to shield itself from reprisal and criticism. The NPT architecture also is not well suited to integrate states that possess nuclear weapons outside of the NPT (India, Israel, and Pakistan) and North Korea into multilateral efforts and has been unable to quell the rapid modernization of delivery systems that further complicates progress on disarmament. New factors, such as the devolution of state authority to nonstate actors and institutions and emerging technologies that threaten understanding of the current strategic environment, put additional stress on existing institutions that do not have the structures or processes necessary to address them.

Given these barriers to progress, the international community must encourage bold, creative thinking to advance disarmament efforts. A series of time-bound disarmament summits could inject a new dynamic and much-needed momentum into current nuclear disarmament discussions.

Key Considerations for Organizing Disarmament Summits

For a series of disarmament summits to be successful, the process should be designed to prevent replication of the existing procedural and political impediments that stymie progress in the existing disarmament forums. This includes overreliance on consensus-based decision-making, membership challenges, and the lack of high-level political attention.

Literature assessing the value of minilateral initiatives suggests that the successes of these efforts depend in part on the type of barriers that hinder progress in larger, multilateral formats. For instance, if progress is stalled because of transactional costs or process-related barriers, then the flexibility provided by minilateral formats may bypass those structural hurdles.[53]

The success of the NSS process generally supports the assessment that minilateral formats can bypass institutional and structural impediments to progress. Before the NSS process, there was general agreement that nuclear security is important and steps to prevent nuclear terrorism are advantageous to the global community. Yet, bargaining costs, procedural hurdles, and greater political attention on issues of disarmament and nonproliferation within existing nuclear spaces prevented the sustained, meaningful political attention and commitment garnered by a dedicated summit process focused solely on nuclear security. Creating a new process that eliminated or reduced those barriers and focused action on nuclear security helped facilitate greater success.

Minilateral processes tend to be less successful if they replicate the factions or procedures that prevent progress in larger, multilateral forums. Concern about duplicating existing divisions in a summit process is legitimate. Certainly, there are risks that any new process would reproduce the factions and divisions over Article VI that stymie progress within the NPT. The more flexible format of a summit process, however, should allow participants to focus on areas of shared concern and create space for new, creative approaches for groups of like-minded states to advance. A more select membership also can exclude states that are disinclined to participate in good faith. The NSS example suggests that, over time, such a process can build norms and create peer pressure to act where broader multilateral processes or direct engagement between states has struggled to make progress.

Scope and Core Goals and Objectives

The scoping and organizing principles of the summit will be critical for avoiding the replication of existing factionalism and minimizing great-power divergences from disrupting progress. A scope that is too narrow may make the work of the summits appear less relevant to states that do not possess nuclear weapons and may lead states with differing views about how to address certain challenges to reject participating. Making clear, for instance, that the summit's agenda would be broader than discussions on numerical reductions and cover other topics critical to the disarmament agenda, such as verifiable dismantlement, nuclear doctrines, delivery systems, and security conditions, would make the process more relevant to non-nuclear-weapon states and nuclear possessor states that have arsenals far smaller than the United States and Russia. On the other hand, a scope that is too wide may be subject to mission creep. A common criticism within the NPT review conferences is that nuclear-weapon states prioritize nonproliferation actions over concrete steps toward disarmament and access to nuclear technology for peaceful purposes. A narrower, defined disarmament agenda could help mitigate concerns that a summit process would turn into another forum for nonproliferation or is meant to deflect criticism regarding the lack of progress on disarmament.

Borrowing from the NSS experience, organizing a consensus communique around a broader, universally accepted set of principles would help ensure that the summit stays focused on advancing a disarmament agenda. The shared uncontroversial goal of the NSS process—preventing nuclear terrorism and securing weapons-usable nuclear material—and the acknowledgment that an act of nuclear terrorism would have global consequences were instrumental in generating buy-in from participating states and to the success of the summit process. Increasing the focus on radiological source security—an applicable issue to every state—throughout the NSS process also helped ensure that there were areas where all participants could take relevant, concrete action.

Reiterating a commitment to complete, verifiable nuclear disarmament and measures to reduce the risk of nuclear use could be the basis of the common organizing principles. A disarmament summit communique could build off the famous Reagan-Gorbachev statement that a "nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought." Including risk reduction measures would emphasize the scope for action beyond reducing nuclear weapons stockpiles and the importance of building norms that decrease the likelihood of use, demonstrating the applicability to all states that possess nuclear weapons, irrespective of arsenal size. Risk reduction also helps demonstrate the active role that non-nuclear-weapon states must play in the disarmament process. Like an act of nuclear terrorism, an intentional or accidental use of nuclear weapons would have global consequences. The ultimate responsibility for disarmament and nonuse rests in the possessor state, but a broader range of countries that claim security benefits from nuclear weapons share the responsibility of nuclear risk reduction.

Similar to the NSS process, disarmament summit communiques could include some modest goals and encourage agreed action items. The 2012 NSS communique, for instance, urged states to ratify the 2005 amendment to the CPPNM and to announce specific action to minimize the use of HEU within a year. A disarmament summit communique could encourage action consistent with past joint commitments or statements that enjoyed broad support, such as measures from the adopted 2010 NPT Action Plan, to ensure consensus in the communique. Establishing this common set of organizing principles alongside shared goals and objectives would help sustain the process and keep key states actively involved.

Organizing the summit process around well-established broad goals and objectives should be relatively uncontroversial for most governments. Nuclear-weapon-state members of the NPT already have committed legally to nuclear disarmament and states with nuclear weapons outside of the NPT have

A U.S. Air Force F-16 F takes part in NATO's annual nuclear exercise, Steadfast Noon, in October 2023.
(Photo by NATO)

pledged, in principle, support for nuclear disarmament. Israel may be the most ambiguous case, having never publicly acknowledged possessing nuclear weapons. Various Israeli statements expressing support for the concept of a nuclear-weapon-free and WMD-free zone in the Middle East demonstrate a general commitment to the principle of nuclear disarmament.

Similarly, there is likely to be little objection to a general statement of support for nuclear risk reduction. Although the circumstances under which states would be willing to use nuclear weapons differ significantly among the nine possessors, there is a general acknowledgment that any intentional or accidental use of nuclear weapons would have devastating, global consequences and that steps to minimize use benefit global security and stability. A broad, consensus-based communique organized around these shared principles also would provide guidance for states to make more specific national and multilateral commitments in line with that document.

To spur more specific commitment-making within the disarmament summit process, states should prepare and pursue in advance specific national pledges, or house gifts as they were known in the NSS process, and multilateral commitments, or gift baskets, that fall into the broad parameters of the communique's agreed goals. Similar to the NSS process, the expectation should be established from the onset that states will report on progress made toward fulfilling national and multilateral commitments at subsequent summits. A common reporting form would provide greater transparency and accountability, although even a voluntary reporting expectation would have a positive effect on motivating states to follow through on pledges.

Several areas are ripe for consideration at national and multilateral levels. These options are illustrative of the types of actions states could pursue. Some of the suggested actions are more ambitious than others and may be more suitable for subsequent summits as the process generates momentum. In the NSS process, house gifts and gift baskets generally became more ambitious and far-reaching at each subsequent summit.

There are several options for house gifts that states could consider.

- **Transparency on fissile material stockpiles.** There is significant uncertainty regarding the size of military holdings for most of the states that possess nuclear weapons. Individual commitments by these states to

provide greater openness and transparency would address a gap in the P5 national reports submitted through the NPT process. States could agree on a common reporting form to detail the size of their stockpiles and any current production capacities. Even if not all states that possess nuclear weapons are willing to take such steps at the onset, pressure may build throughout the disarmament summit process and lead to more robust, transparent reporting on fissile material stockpile size. Relatedly, all states with fissile material stockpiles and production capabilities for civil nuclear programs could commit to common, regular reporting on the size of their stockpiles. Some states already do this, but the summit process could be used to expand this process and further develop the norm of fissile material transparency.

- **Declarations of nuclear warhead stocks.** State declarations of warhead numbers would be useful in providing greater transparency into the size of the nuclear-weapon states' programs. Not all countries that possess nuclear weapons currently provide information about the number of deployed, reserve, and, in some cases, dismantled nuclear warheads. If several states commit to greater transparency regarding warhead numbers in the summit process, it could generate pressure on other possessor states to make similar pledges. Regular state declarations on the number of warheads would be useful for preventing further arms racing and providing an accurate baseline for further multilateral arms control or disarmament talks. Although it is highly unlikely that states would be willing to negotiate at the onset any verification measures to check accuracy, self-reporting sets a baseline for transparency and accountability that can contribute to disarmament efforts. The reports from Russia and the United States under New START could be used as a model.
- **Freeze warhead numbers.** While Russia and the United States possess 90 percent of the global stockpile of nuclear warheads, the slow pace of arms control agreements to further reduce the number of warheads in these two states should not be an excuse for others to continue expanding their nuclear arsenals. States could commit to a quantitative freeze or a warhead ceiling. Given that Putin suspended Russia's obligations under New START in February 2023 and that the treaty expires in 2026, this could be beneficial in providing assurance that the United States and Russia do not intend to expand stockpiles of nuclear warheads. Even if the United States were to make such a commitment alone, it would put pressure on Russia to reciprocate and demonstrate that buildups are not necessary to remain in parity with the U.S. nuclear arsenal.
- **Reinvigorate Hague Code of Conduct declarations.** Both nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon states with ballistic missile programs could agree to reinvigorate efforts surrounding missile transparency. One such step could be a commitment to fulfill the required declarations for the 2002 Hague Code of Conduct, which includes ballistic missile policies and missile test data. The 145 code of conduct members voluntarily commit to prelaunch notifications and submit annual reports detailing national policies on ballistic missiles, but not all states meet their obligations. As part of the process, states could commit to comply with their obligations and perhaps go a step further by detailing the types of ballistic missiles deployed and under development, as well as if they are conventional, nuclear, or dual-use systems. This type of transparency may be useful in stemming missile proliferation, which is occurring among nuclear possessor and nonpossessor states. Greater clarity over the nuclear or conventional status of systems could mitigate the challenge of discriminating between nuclear and conventional payloads, which increases the risk of miscalculation. This commitment could be made in gift basket form, with a group of states agreeing to fulfill their code of conduct obligations and developing a common reporting form for types of missiles.
- **Environmental, health, and social restoration.** Disarmament efforts should include not only nuclear risk reduction and elimination of nuclear weapons, but also efforts to restore the environmental, health, and social damage done by the development and testing of nuclear weapons. States could commit to take certain steps to remediate these damages by pledging to take action to clean up and secure legacy testing sites and provide robust compensation for health and environmental

damage. Several states already have programs in place addressing some of these issues, although the effectiveness and comprehensiveness of the activities vary significantly. The summits could be an opportunity to review existing practices and generate pressure for more systemic and holistic restoration efforts. States could even pledge to work together to address certain elements, such as the trilateral project among Kazakhstan, Russia, and the United States to secure the former Soviet test site at Semipalatinsk that was completed as part of the NSS process.

- **Strengthen the nuclear testing taboo.** A disarmament summit process could bring high-level political attention and momentum to treaties that support disarmament efforts, namely the CTBT, that have not entered into force. The summits could spur additional ratifications, better understanding of the treaty and its provisions, and strengthen the International Monitoring System. Nuclear-armed states that have conducted nuclear explosive tests in the past could formally recommit, through a joint statement or statements or through an updated version of UN Security Council Resolution 2310, to maintain the de facto global nuclear test moratorium, not take actions contrary to the purpose or intent of the CTBT, and actively pursue ratification and entry into force of the treaty. Given Russia's "deratification" of the CTBT in late 2023, as well as concerns about the nature of ongoing nuclear experiments at the Chinese, Russian, and U.S. nuclear test sites, these states could commit to developing a regime that would allow reciprocal observation with radiation detection equipment at the site of each other's subcritical experiments to allow confirmation that the experiment was consistent with the CTBT prohibition on nuclear explosions that produce a self-sustaining nuclear chain reaction.
- **Pledges of funding.** Several states made specific contributions to the IAEA nuclear security fund during the NSS process. As part of a disarmament summit process, states could be encouraged to pledge financial support for disarmament-related initiatives such as the multilateral verification work being done in initiatives such as the IPNDV and the Quad Nuclear Verification Partnership. States also could pledge funds to help with specific summit initiatives. States that have benefited from extended nuclear deterrence, for instance, could consider contributions to health and environmental restoration efforts.
- **Strengthen security assurances.** Some of the states that possess nuclear weapons reserve the right to use nuclear weapons first and against non-nuclear-weapon states under certain conditions. Commitments to study or strengthen the saliency of nuclear weapons in defense postures could provide greater assurance to non-nuclear-weapon states that the states in possession of nuclear weapons are looking to decrease reliance on their nuclear arsenals and further limit scenarios under which a non-nuclear state might be subject to a nuclear attack. States possessing nuclear weapons also could commit to strengthening negative security assurances individually or in a gift basket format.
- **Advance nuclear-weapon-free-zone protocols.** Ratification of the protocols for nuclear-weapon-free zones vary among nuclear-weapon states. States that have not ratified the protocols for these zones—primarily the United States—could commit to doing so during the summit process. Given that none of the nuclear-weapon states have ratified the Bangkok Treaty protocol, they could commit to that in a gift basket.
- **Study modernization plans.** As part of a summit process, states might commit to establishing an independent scientific review commission to evaluate the effects of ongoing programs of the nuclear-armed states to modernize or upgrade their nuclear weapons arsenals on their nuclear disarmament obligations. Studies also could examine the risks to strategic stability posed by these systems. Such studies could help inform efforts to press states to negotiate limits on or forgo the development of new systems.

There are several options for gift baskets.

- **Limitations on certain nuclear-capable delivery systems.** All nine states that possess nuclear weapons are engaged in efforts to recapitalize nuclear weapons delivery systems, and the majority are developing nuclear-capable cruise missiles and hypersonic systems. Cruise

missiles are uniquely destabilizing given the challenges of distinguishing between systems tipped with nuclear warheads and those carrying conventional warheads. Banning particular types of cruise missiles or pledging to pursue only conventional capacities for certain systems might be an option for involving a greater number of nuclear-armed states in disarmament talks despite the absence of numerical parity. At the very least, discussions among all states that possess nuclear weapons about the negative impacts of deploying cruise missiles and hypersonic vehicles would be a step in the right direction. Given that several non-nuclear-weapon states are also engaged in cruise missile development, involving those states in discussions of limitations and verification options to ensure the conventional capabilities of deployed cruise missiles could create opportunities for nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon states to work together.

- **Developing and strengthening verification tools and processes.** There are several existing initiatives related to nuclear disarmament verification. The IPNDV, for instance, includes nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon states in its verification work. The Quad Nuclear Verification Partnership is engaged in verification work and has conducted nuclear disarmament verification exercises. The disarmament summits could be a place for these and other initiatives to continue to align their work with consensus priorities and expand support for their projects. In the NSS process, multilateral initiatives such as the GICNT and Global Partnership offered gift baskets that advanced the nuclear security agenda, consistent with their missions. These existing multilateral verification initiatives could take a similar approach and support key areas of work identified during the summit process. Other areas of verification could be ripe for gift-basket status. Verifying fissile material stockpiles and the non-nuclear status of certain delivery systems, for instance, could be other areas that bring together expertise between nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon states.
- **Discussing the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons use.** A series of conferences beginning in Oslo in 2013 brought together states to discuss the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons use. Many of the states possessing nuclear weapons, however, did not participate in these conferences. Groups of states could commit to building on the work of the humanitarian conferences to better understand the implications of accidental or intentional weapons use and how to mitigate and respond to these scenarios. One or more states could agree to organize an additional international conference on the humanitarian impacts of nuclear weapons that builds on the earlier series of conferences. States could also agree to hold exercises and develop best practices for responding to nuclear weapons use and to share information and technical expertise on the mitigation of environmental contamination and monitoring and assisting persons affected by nuclear weapons production and testing activities.
- **Advancing implementation of nuclear-weapon-free zones.** A gift basket could commit the five nuclear-weapon states to work toward ratification of the Southeast Asian Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone protocol, in keeping with the P5 process agenda. Those states and states from the region could commit to accelerate efforts to resolve any issues preventing progress and accelerate ratification efforts. Similarly, states that possess nuclear weapons outside of the NPT could commit to respect the zones as a gift basket.
- **Updating and codifying negative security assurances.** UN Security Council Resolution 984 recognized the nonbinding negative security assurances issued by the five nuclear-weapon states. As a summit gift basket, states could agree to update and strengthen their negative security assurances. More ambitiously, nuclear-armed states could agree to pursue a joint, legally binding instrument that codifies their political assurances.
- **Clarifying nuclear doctrines and further limiting nuclear weapons use.** As part of the P5 process, the nuclear-weapon states engaged in a series of discussions to present and clarify their nuclear doctrines. A summit gift basket could expand those talks to include other states that possess nuclear weapons. Relatedly, states could commit to studying and modifying their doctrines in a way that reduces the likelihood of nuclear weapons use,

such as no-first-use policies or "sole purpose" nuclear use doctrines. Some states that possess nuclear weapons have already made no-first-use declarations, including China and India. Reaffirming it as part of a disarmament summit process could strengthen those commitments and pressure other states toward that more restrictive doctrine. Such a gift basket could be an opportunity for non-nuclear-weapon states to express support for no-first-use policies. Support from these states, particularly those that believe they benefit from extended nuclear deterrence, could contribute additional political pressure on states reluctant to commit to no-first-use policies.

- **Agreements on limiting the role of artificial intelligence in nuclear command and control.** One development of increasing concern is the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into nuclear command-and-control and early-warning systems, which potentially risk unintended conflict escalation and crisis instability as the result of machines or humans misperceiving signals or actions or human decision-makers becoming too reliant on information and response being generated by AI-enabled systems. To begin to address the problem, nuclear-armed states could declare publicly that decisions to authorize the use of nuclear weapons must be made only by humans, not by an AI-enabled or autonomous system. In February 2023, the United States proposed a political statement that included such a pledge in its original versions. Nuclear-armed states could also agree to regularly consult with one another on the escalatory dangers of excessive reliance on automated nuclear command-and-control systems as part of an ongoing strategic stability dialogue.

Many of the recommended areas for house gifts and gift baskets have been raised in other forums. The UN First Committee and past NPT review conference final documents, for instance, have encouraged strengthening negative security assurances. How to verify a halt to fissile material production has been the subject of expert groups under the auspices of the CD.

Pursuing some of these topics in a disarmament summit format, however, may pressure recalcitrant states to take bolder action and allow greater flexibility for states interested in accelerating disarmament efforts to make progress free of the consensus requirements in other forums. Given the voluntary nature of the commitments, states initially also may feel more comfortable pursuing certain actions voluntarily rather than as part of a legally binding initiative. Encouraging groups of states to advance disarmament efforts beyond least-common-denominator thinking that slow existing forums could generate momentum. As demonstrated in the NSS process, states initially skeptical of multilateral efforts to advance nuclear security ultimately joined some of the more ambitious commitments as the process continued. The same could be true during a summit process focused on disarmament efforts.

Leadership and Participants

Securing high-level political engagement and the active involvement of participating states would significantly improve the chances of the disarmament summits producing tangible commitments. Obama's personal commitment to the NSS process was critical to garnering political momentum and encouraging engagement at the level of heads of state. This level of engagement can also spur and direct civil society efforts, which can play a key role in creating further pressure on states to make specific, measurable commitments. Although replicating that same high level of political engagement would be beneficial for spurring momentum for a disarmament summit, determining who should convene and lead the process is more challenging. U.S. leadership may garner significant interest among certain key stakeholders and incentivize head-of-state participation, but there may be drawbacks if Washington or a close ally leads this process.

Current tensions between the United States and Russia and the United States and China could replicate existing great-power tensions that have negatively impacted existing disarmament forums. Furthermore, if the initiative appears driven by Washington, Beijing or Moscow may use that as an excuse to distance themselves from the effort due to the current geopolitical environment.

Before Russia openly invaded Ukraine in 2022, one option may have been for the leaders of those three states to agree to host a series of three summits, one in each country. That would increase buy-in by the three countries with the largest nuclear arsenals and create some political pressure for each state to deliver a successful summit that achieves a tangible process. Such an approach is less feasible now, given Moscow's rejection of the established nuclear order and its adversarial relationship with Washington.

Because of these tensions and the recalcitrance of the nuclear-weapon states to take bold steps to reduce nuclear risks and roll back arsenals over the past decade, a non-nuclear-weapon state or high-level political leader may be better positioned to set up a disarmament summit process that is perceived as credible. A forum that appears driven by the interests of the nuclear-weapon states may initially appear to non-nuclear-weapon states as a symbolic initiative that allows nuclear-weapon states to argue that they are engaged in actions that promote disarmament without necessarily leading to concrete change. Getting buy-in from these states at the onset could be a challenge if the process is perceived as performative.

A high-level political figure, such as the UN secretary-general, could be an option for a convenor that would mitigate the factional politics between nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon states that have hindered progress in other forums. The Security Council or General Assembly could request that the secretary-general take such action, which would signify political support. If the secretary-general could secure commitments from all the states that possess nuclear weapons to participate at the head-of-state level, it could prevent politicization at the outset of the initiative.

Another option would be for a well-regarded non-nuclear-weapon state or geographically representative group of non-nuclear-weapon states, with relationships with the United States, China, and Russia, to launch and lead a disarmament summit process. Leadership from key non-nuclear-weapon states or a high-level political figure could mitigate concerns that the summit process was an effort by nuclear-weapon states to deflect criticism about the slow pace of disarmament in existing forums, such as the NPT review conference process.

As demonstrated with the NSS process, there are benefits and risks to inviting a smaller, select group of states to participate. Minilateral frameworks that invite participation by a select number of states run the risk of being criticized as exclusive or polarizing. The aftermath of the NSS process demonstrated that states that felt ostracized by the initiative were reluctant to engage in anything related to the summit process, even after elements were universalized under IAEA governance. The NSS process highlights the importance of considering carefully when and how states outside of the process are kept abreast of developments and provided opportunities to engage down the road.

Nuclear security and the prevention of nuclear terrorism is a universal process that requires action by all states, but disarmament is a more limited enterprise. Thus, disarmament summits may not face the same challenges in embedding ideas and progress back into the broader, existing architecture. Still, non-nuclear-weapon states have a critical role in generating the political pressure to support disarmament, as well as contributing expertise and committing to take actions that help advance disarmament. Non-nuclear-weapon states are at risk if nuclear deterrence fails and nuclear war breaks out anywhere. Even if they are not directly involved in a nuclear disarmament summit process, these states have a stake and an important role in helping to create the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons, so it is vital to create buy-in and support for concepts derived as part of a disarmament summit process among nonparticipants.

A disarmament summit process ideally would be inclusive of all nuclear-armed states, which are the five NPT-recognized nuclear possessors and the four states not party to or in adherence with the treaty. Delegates from China, France, India, Israel, Pakistan, Russia, the UK, and the United States can each offer their unique perspectives on the pathways and conditions that would help facilitate actions to reduce the role, number, and spread of nuclear weapons; the actions, policies, and security-related measures that would help reduce the risk of nuclear use; and the political and technical agreements that would facilitate the eventual elimination of their arsenals.

Yet, Russia's willful neglect of international law and established norms regarding nuclear weapons calls into question whether Moscow's inclusion would be a benefit or hindrance in the near term. Russia's actions to disrupt the adoption of the final document at the 10th NPT Review Conference and its refusal to engage with the United States on follow-on talks on nuclear arms control suggest Moscow's leaders are disinterested in substantively contributing to nuclear risk reduction. Providing Russia with an additional platform to disrupt and challenge nuclear norms could distract from the opportunities for progress. On the other hand, including Russia could provide opportunities to engage Moscow on risk reduction in a space that may be less politicized than bilateral talks with the United States or an NPT review conference and more amenable to creative, flexible options. One option could be for participating states to negotiate a consensus communique and invite Russia if it is willing to endorse that document. North Korea's participation could be conditioned on its agreement to refrain from further nuclear and missile tests that violate UN Security Council resolutions.

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida hosted the Group of Seven leaders' summit at Hiroshima in May 2023 with the intent of focusing global attention on the need to reduce the danger of nuclear war.
(Photo by Stefan Rousseau - WPA Pool/Getty Images)

It is also important to include states that consider themselves to be part of the extended nuclear deterrence security framework and are engaged in nuclear sharing arrangements, such as NATO states and U.S. allies Japan and South Korea that are under the so-called U.S. nuclear umbrella. Their participation is important in part because they view nuclear weapons as part of their national security strategy and can slow progress on disarmament efforts by pressuring nuclear-armed allies not to take steps they view as destabilizing. U.S. allies, for instance, raised concerns about the United States moving to a no-first-use policy, influencing debates in Washington about the advisability of the doctrine. It is critical to ensure that these states feel like their security needs can be met with alternative arrangements and prevent the perception of changes to the alliance from driving states to develop their own nuclear weapons.[54]

In addition to the nuclear possessors and their beneficiaries, there is value to be gained from inviting delegates from each of the regional nuclear-weapon-free zones. These zones span most of the Southern Hemisphere and have codified the absence of nuclear weapons in Latin America, the South Pacific, Southeast Asia, Africa, and Central Asia. In a disarmament summit process, participation by delegates from each of these zones can lend useful insight from regions of the world where nuclear abolition is a reality.

Along that same vein, the disarmament summit process would be further strengthened by ensuring that existing informal disarmament initiatives such as the Stepping Stones Approach and IPNDV are represented by some of their non-nuclear-weapon state participants. Although the disarmament summit process is a new initiative, it is intended to support, not detract from or replace, those that are already tackling the challenges of nuclear disarmament. Like the NSS process, where the Global Partnership and GICNT offered gift baskets aligning their work with summit priorities, these initiatives could use the disarmament summits as an opportunity to further advance their niche areas of expertise, gain further support, and commit to further action aligned with commitments made by other states or groups of states by offering gift baskets.

Lastly, the process should include the IAEA, as well as the UN secretary-general and the head of the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs, with the latter potentially serving in the role of secretariat. The IAEA's expertise can help support more technical gift-basket offerings throughout the summit process. The IAEA may also have some role to play in future verification efforts, making buy-in and input from the agency important for advancing disarmament efforts.

To mitigate some of the exclusionary dynamics that have challenged the universalization of the postsummit NSS agenda, the disarmament summit participants could commit to robust outreach to nonparticipating states. Some of the gift baskets could include specific goals for engaging nonparticipants and opening certain activities to those states. Workshops and exercises to demonstrate verification

practices, for instance, might be of interest to a broad number of states.

Agreeing at the outset that the disarmament summits would be time-bound could help mitigate concerns of exclusion and demonstrate that the summits are designed to jump-start progress, not replace existing bodies. Thus, holding three high-level summits every two to three years would likely prevent summit fatigue while ensuring an appropriately lengthy process to build new norms, advance disarmament through concrete actions, and take the steps necessary to integrate the successes of the summit into the larger disarmament architecture. Between summits, representatives of the participating states would continue to meet to discuss and negotiate the following summit's communique and gift baskets. These intercessional meetings also would help build relationships and foster accountability toward meeting national and multilateral pledges.

Relationship to the NPT and the TPNW

A disarmament summit process would advance goals that are mutual to the NPT and the TPNW, but the process should be independent of the review processes of these two treaties in part to prevent the summit process from replicating factional politics within and between the two treaty regimes. At the same time, reflection of the summits in the treaties' review conferences could help legitimize and universalize the summit process and could serve the interests of states parties to both multilateral agreements.

To recognize the significance of the nuclear disarmament summit process, NPT member states participating in the summits could report on the effort at the NPT review conferences, portions of which could be included in the final conference document. That section could outline the work of the disarmament summit process as it relates to the fulfillment of Article VI without including any binding or divisive language. This approach could help the nuclear possessors stay accountable to their Article VI commitments while recognizing the important work of the new initiative.

As with the NPT review conference process, TPNW member states that participate in the nuclear disarmament summit process could deliver a report at regular meetings of the TPNW states-parties. A disarmament summits initiative that demands joint recognition of the value of the TPNW, however, risks replicating the divisions that have emerged between nuclear weapons possessor states who largely view the ban treaty as premature and as a direct challenge to their current nuclear weapons policies and the majority of the world's non-nuclear-weapon states that view the TPNW as a contribution to the realization of a world without nuclear weapons. Although the TPNW plays an important role in strengthening the global taboo against nuclear weapons, none of the nine nuclear weapons possessor states have yet to recognize the value of the treaty, and none have agreed to attend its meetings of states-parties as observers.

To sidestep these divisions, the nuclear disarmament summit process ideally should be based on a common, balanced set of principles and objectives derived from earlier NPT review conferences to set the stage for productive multilateral discussions involving the nuclear-armed states and many non-nuclear-weapon states. As Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida suggested in 2017, the dialogue on disarmament should be based on a clear understanding of the devastating impacts of nuclear weapons use and an objective assessment of the security concerns of states.

A Concept to Improve On

The purpose of this report is to begin a deeper, broader conversation about bold and creative new approaches to inject much-needed movement and creativity into the existing nuclear disarmament process. If pursued in the next several years, a well-designed, carefully calibrated disarmament summit process could bypass many of the structural and political factors that have slowed progress on efforts to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons. This report attempts to outline many of the considerations that would have to go into such an effort, and constructive criticism, suggestions, and input that would improve the proposal and address challenges that may arise in the future are welcome.

Many may consider the concept to be impractical at this particular juncture in the long journey to reduce the number and spread of nuclear weapons. A nuclear disarmament summit initiative would be a challenging undertaking by any measure. History has shown, however, that effective measures to reduce nuclear dangers are seldom easily achieved.

The time has come, especially as the dangers of nuclear arms racing and nuclear war are on the rise, for all states to consider how to move beyond the current obstacles that continue to block progress and how to construct a durable new approach to achieve nuclear disarmament that renews attention, widens engagement, and stimulates new leadership to address one of the existential dangers to humanity.

Appendix I.

Nuclear Security Summit Gift Baskets

In 2012, 13 gift baskets were offered, and approximately 80 percent of the 53 summit participants signed at least one gift basket. These gift baskets garnered as few as three signatories and as many as 35.[55] In 2014, 14 gift baskets were offered, of which about half were based on 2012 gift baskets, and 87 percent of countries were signatories to at least one—a solid increase from the Seoul summit participation rate. In 2016, 18 gift baskets were offered, of which nine were updates to gift baskets offered in 2012 or 2014.

After the summit process ended in 2016, 11 of the summit gift baskets were circulated among International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) member states as Information Circulars, as part of the effort to universalize the summit's goals and reach states that did not participate in the process. IAEA member states were invited and encouraged to join these initiatives, but few states outside of the summit process have done so.

High-Density LEU Fuel Production (2012, 2014, and 2016)

This gift basket focused on developing high-density, low-enriched uranium (LEU) fuel, to contribute to the ongoing effort to reduce the civil use of highly enriched uranium (HEU). Each state was assigned a specific function within the four-step action plan, and it was specified that the results of the final project would be shared with the international community.

Securing of Radioactive Sources and Ensuring Radiological Security (2012, 2014, and 2016)

This gift basket focused on ensuring the effective security of radiological sources that are widely utilized in industrial, medical, and research applications. The signatory states would implement the IAEA Code of Conduct on the Safety and Security of Radioactive Sources and outline their recommendations for Nuclear Security Series, No. 14 and 15. The statement also encourages the IAEA to assess if the existing framework for radiological source security is adequate, calls for sharing of information and best practices, and encourages states to develop alternatives to high-activity radioactive sources and guidelines for long-term management of disused sources.

HEU Minimization and Medical Isotopes (2012)

The central objective of this joint statement was the minimization of HEU used for producing medical isotopes without disrupting manufacturing and distribution. The four signatories—Belgium, France, the Netherlands, and the United States—committed to "supporting the conversion of medical isotope production industries in Europe to non-HEU based processes by 2015."[56]

Semipalatinsk (2012)

Trilateral cooperation among Kazakhstan, Russia, and the United States on efforts to secure the vulnerable site commenced in the early 1990s and was formalized in an agreement in 1999. At the 2010 summit, the three states announced that the effort to secure Semipalatinsk would be completed by the 2012 summit.

Countries Free of Highly Enriched Uranium (2014)

This statement acknowledged the efforts of those countries that have managed to achieve progress toward the objective of eliminating HEU production, use and stocks and encouraged others to follow suit.

Minimizing and Eliminating the Use of HEU in Civilian Applications (2016)

This gift basket was built on efforts in the 2012 and 2014 communiques encouraging states to share their

plans to minimize the use of HEU. The 22 states that subscribed to this statement committed to convert or shut down any remaining research rectors still using HEU and share the development of LEU alternatives. Additionally, states committed to repatriating or down-blending HEU and supporting the efforts of other states engaged in similar processes.

Cyber Security (2016)

This gift basket reflected the increased recognition at the 2014 and 2016 summits that inadequate cybersecurity poses a serious risk to nuclear security. The 29 states that signed this statement agreed to participate in two international workshops designed to assess threats and vulnerabilities, discuss options for incident response and recovery, and explore the impact of different types of cyber incidents on facilities.

LEU Fuel Bank (2016)

The 18 states that signed the gift basket noted the significance of the creation of the LEU fuel bank in Kazakhstan in preventing supply disruptions and noted that it should operate safely and securely.

Counter Nuclear Smuggling (2012, 2014, and 2016)

This gift basket organized action on nuclear smuggling thematically by increasing information sharing, building national capacities, and strengthening relevant national laws. It included more detailed reporting from participating states. It required signatories to determine what action they had taken in the past regarding counter-nuclear smuggling and what they intended to achieve before the next summit.

Transport Security (2012, 2014, and 2016)

This gift basket stated that the five signatories—France, Japan, the Republic of Korea, the United Kingdom, and the United States—would establish a multilateral working group to develop practices that enhance the security of radioactive materials in transit.

Maritime Supply Chain Security (2014 and 2016)

The gift basket notes the importance of strong maritime security in detecting and responding to the illicit trafficking of nuclear and radiological materials inside the international supply chain and the necessity to permanently eradicate harmful radioactive materials that may exist outside regulatory control. Signatories "committed to maintaining existing radiation detection systems at their large container seaports and to assisting others that are pursuing similar capabilities."[57]

Nuclear Security Forensics (2014 and 2016)

At the 2010 summit, states declared that efforts to enhance nuclear forensics were a high-priority issue. In the event of a nuclear or radiological incident, it is imperative that accurate attribution can occur efficiently to determine the origin of the material and potential perpetrators.

National Nuclear Detection Architecture (2016)

The 24 states that joined the national nuclear detection architecture recognized that nuclear detection architecture plays a critical role in combatting illicit trafficking. The states committed to developing and implementing effective nuclear security detection strategies, which included a nuclear security culture component.

Nuclear Information Security (2012 and 2014)

Led by the UK, this gift basket was one of the most popular produced by the summit process, garnering 31 signatories when it was introduced in 2012. It aims to promote and develop international guidance and best practices on information security as it relates to nuclear issues. The statement was specific in its language and the obligations it expected signatories to meet. It encouraged further work in strengthening national measures, enhancing national security culture, engaging stakeholders to develop best practices, and engaging with key international organizations. Additionally, the statement outlined 13 voluntary actions that participants could pursue to assist in strengthening information security.

Training and Support Centers (2012, 2014, and 2016)

This joint statement outlines plans to promote a network of centers across borders, provide opportunities for cross-boundary communication, and ensure streamlined coordination between the centers.

NSS Outreach Efforts (2012)

This gift basket signed by Chile, Morocco, Poland, the Republic of Korea, Thailand, and the United States explicitly aimed to engage countries outside the summit process on the principles and responsibilities of nuclear security. To achieve this, several states conducted information-sharing sessions on the

nuclear security summit (NSS) with nonsummit states, and outreach meetings were conducted on several continents and through the IAEA.

Comprehensive Approach to Nuclear Security (2014 and 2016)

The statement calls for greater transparency regarding military nuclear material and for the NSS process to be considerate of international obligations of disarmament, nonproliferation, and peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Additionally, the statement requested that security procedures for nuclear weapons arsenals be made increasingly transparent and that states possessing nuclear weapons take further steps toward disarmament.

Certified Training (2016)

Twelve states offered this gift basket, which aims to ensure demonstrable competency for management and personnel responsible for nuclear security. The motivation behind this gift basket was to realize a commitment in a gift basket offered in 2014, titled Strengthening Nuclear Security Implementation, which called for effective management and personnel training. As part of the gift basket, the states supported the creation of the WINS Academy nuclear security certification program in 2014. The states further committed to promoting collaboration between WINS and other organizations, including the IAEA Nuclear Security Education Network.

Mitigating Insider Threat (2016)

The 27 states that signed this gift basket committed to putting in place measures to rigorously assess and continually monitor human reliability and deter insider threats. The states agreed to work with the IAEA to develop a training course on preventative and protective measures. Participating states also agreed to take national steps, such as establishing trustworthiness programs, material accounting and control programs, and procedures for security and transport that are designed to protect against insider threats.

National Legislation Implementation Kit (2012 and 2014)

This gift basket was led by Indonesia and introduced in 2012. The kit rests on the understanding that nuclear security is primarily a sovereign concern and an effective way to address it is by strengthening national legal and regulatory guidelines. Initially supported by 18 states, the kit outlines guidance for how countries can embed IAEA recommendations into their domestic legal structures and provides a comprehensive model law.

Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism (GICNT) (2012 and 2014)

Participants of GICNT committed to implementing the group's statement of principles, which aims to increase global nuclear security through measures such as deterrence, prevention, detection, and response.

Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction (2012)

Established by the Group of Eight industrialized nations in 2002, the Global Partnership committed to raising $20 billion over 10 years to fund nonproliferation projects in Russia and other nations.[58] An updated statement was not provided in 2014 due to geopolitical developments involving Russia. The Global Partnership was another institution selected to continue NSS work after the summit process concluded in 2016.

Nuclear Terrorism (2012)

Signed by France, the UK, and the United States, the gift basket reaffirms that the central mandate of the NSS is to strengthen global nuclear security to prevent any act of nuclear or radiological terrorism.

Promoting the Full and Universal Implementation of UNSCR 1540 (2014 and 2016)

Thirty-two states declared their support for the full and universal implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1540 and implored signatories to consider supplementary actions to strengthen this process. Several signatory states have since submitted new national updates to the 1540 Committee, while others hosted capacity-building events or contributed best practice guides for states.[59]

Strengthening Nuclear Security Implementation (2014)

The initiative was introduced by the NSS host countries—the United States, the Republic of Korea, and the Netherlands. It was signed by 35 states, which represents more than two-thirds of the summit participants, giving it equal first place for the most popular statement. This initiative committed states to concrete steps "aimed at enhancing the legal and regulatory framework, with a view to ensuring sustainability of nuclear security efforts."[60]

This gift basket encouraged states to integrate the IAEA Nuclear Security Fundamentals and relevant recommendations into domestic legal and regulatory structures, to periodically host peer reviews, and to ensure demonstrable competence of personnel. The initiative shifts commitments from a voluntary nature to a political pledge, underscores that nuclear security is an international responsibility, and encourages signatories to "assess new ideas to improve nuclear security regimes."[61]

Consolidated Reporting (2016)

The gift basket sought to streamline and simplify the process of providing voluntary and required information set forth by treaties and international legal obligations, such as UN Security Council Resolution 1540, the 2005 amendment to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material, and the IAEA Code of Conduct on the Safety and Security of Radioactive Sources. The 17 states that collaborated on this gift basket produced a template for meeting reporting requirements in a simplified, consolidated document.

Nuclear Terrorism Preparedness and Response (2016)

This gift basket focused on preparations to respond to an act of nuclear terrorism. The 24 subscribing states called attention to the devastating consequences of an act of nuclear terrorism and called for states to meet the 2014 communique pledge to "maintain effective emergency preparedness, response, and mitigation capabilities." To work toward that goal, the states committed to developing national response plans and mechanisms to provide international assistance, sharing best practices to strengthen global response capabilities, and working with organizations that are developing international preparedness and resilience objectives. The states committed to sharing lessons learned from incidents and conducting tabletop exercises to simulate responses.

Sustaining Action to Strengthen Global Nuclear Security (2016)

In the lead-up to the 2016 summit, states recognized that although continuing head-of-state-level summits to address nuclear security was not feasible, the nuclear terrorism threat would continue to evolve, and sustained action would be necessary to address future challenges and maintain the global nuclear security architecture. To that end, 40 of the participating states agreed to establish national point people for nuclear security and form a contact group. The group convenes at least once a year to review the current state of global nuclear security and identify emerging trends that might require more focus.

Annex I.

2010 NPT Review Conference "Recommendations for Follow-On Actions on Nuclear Disarmament"[62]

Past disarmament commitments, such as those made in the 2010 Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty Review Conference Final Document included below, could serve as a basis for national and multilateral commitment-making.

I. Nuclear disarmament

In pursuit of the full, effective and urgent implementation of article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and paragraphs 3 and 4 (c) of the 1995 decision entitled "Principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament", and building upon the practical steps agreed to in the Final Document of the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Conference agrees on the following action plan on nuclear disarmament which includes concrete steps for the total elimination of nuclear weapons:

A. Principles and objectives

i. The Conference resolves to seek a safer world for all and to achieve the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons, in accordance with the objectives of the Treaty.

ii. The Conference reaffirms the unequivocal undertaking of the nuclear-weapon States to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals leading to nuclear disarmament, to which all States parties are committed under article VI.

iii. The Conference reaffirms the continued validity of the practical steps agreed to in the Final Document of the 2000 Review Conference.

iv. The Conference reaffirms that significant steps by all the nuclear-weapon States leading to nuclear disarmament should promote international stability, peace and security, and be based on the principle of increased and undiminished security for all.

v. The Conference expresses its deep concern at the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons and reaffirms the need for all States at all times to comply with applicable international law, including international humanitarian law.

vi. The Conference affirms the vital importance of universality of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and calls on all States not parties to the Treaty to accede as non-nuclear-weapon States to the Treaty promptly and without any conditions and to commit to achieving the complete elimination of all nuclear weapons, and calls upon States to promote universal adherence to the Treaty and not to undertake any actions that can negatively affect prospects for the universality of the Treaty.

The Conference resolves that:

- Action 1: All States parties commit to pursue policies that are fully compatible with the Treaty and the objective of achieving a world without nuclear weapons.
- Action 2: All States parties commit to apply

the principles of irreversibility, verifiability and transparency in relation to the implementation of their treaty obligations.

B. Disarmament of nuclear weapons

i. The Conference reaffirms the urgent need for the nuclear-weapon States to implement the steps leading to nuclear disarmament agreed to in the Final Document of the 2000 Review Conference, in a way that promotes international stability, peace and security, and based on the principle of undiminished and increased security for all.

ii. The Conference affirms the need for the nuclear-weapon States to reduce and eliminate all types of their nuclear weapons and encourages, in particular, those States with the largest nuclear arsenals to lead efforts in this regard.

iii. The Conference calls on all nuclear-weapon States to undertake concrete disarmament efforts and affirms that all States need to make special efforts to establish the necessary framework to achieve and maintain a world without nuclear weapons. The Conference notes the five-point proposal for nuclear disarmament of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, which proposes, inter alia, consideration of negotiations on a nuclear weapons convention or agreement on a framework of separate mutually reinforcing instruments, backed by a strong system of verification.

iv. The Conference recognizes the legitimate interests of non-nuclear-weapon States in the constraining by the nuclear-weapon States of the development and qualitative improvement of nuclear weapons and ending the development of advanced new types of nuclear weapons.

The Conference resolves that:

- Action 3: In implementing the unequivocal undertaking by the nuclear-weapon States to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals, the nuclear-weapon States commit to undertake further efforts to reduce and ultimately eliminate all types of nuclear weapons, deployed and non-deployed, including through unilateral, bilateral, regional, and multilateral measures.
- Action 4: The Russian Federation and the United States of America commit to seek the early entry into force and full implementation of the Treaty on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms and are encouraged to continue discussions on follow-on measures in order to achieve deeper reductions in their nuclear arsenals.
- Action 5: 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.
- Action 6: All States agree that the Conference on Disarmament should immediately establish a subsidiary body to deal with nuclear disarmament,

within the context of an agreed, comprehensive, and balanced programme of work.

C. Security assurances

i. The Conference reaffirms and recognizes that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons and the legitimate interest of non-nuclear-weapon States in receiving unequivocal and legally binding security assurances from nuclear-weapon States which could strengthen the nuclear non-proliferation regime.

ii. The Conference recalls United Nations Security Council resolution 984 (1995) noting the unilateral statements by each of the nuclear-weapon States, in which they give conditional or unconditional security assurances against the use and the threat of use of nuclear weapons to non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the Treaty and the relevant protocols established pursuant to nuclear-weapon-free zones, recognizing that the treaty-based security assurances are available to such zones.

Without prejudice to efforts within the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Conference resolves that:

- Action 7: All States agree that the Conference on Disarmament should, within the context of an agreed, comprehensive and balanced programme of work, immediately begin discussion of effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, to discuss substantively, without limitation, with a view to elaborating recommendations dealing with all aspects of this issue, not excluding an internationally legally binding instrument. The Review Conference invites the Secretary-General of the United Nations to convene a high-level meeting in September 2010 in support of the work of the Conference on Disarmament.
- Action 8: All nuclear-weapon States commit to fully respect their existing commitments with regard to security assurances. Those nuclear-weapon States that have not yet done so are encouraged to extend security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the Treaty.
- Action 9: The establishment of further nuclear-weapon-free zones, where appropriate, on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among States of the region concerned, and in accordance with the 1999 Guidelines of the United Nations Disarmament Commission, is encouraged. All concerned States are encouraged to ratify the nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties and their relevant protocols, and to constructively consult and cooperate to bring about the entry into force of the relevant legally binding protocols of all such nuclear-weapon-free zones treaties, which include negative security assurances. The concerned States are encouraged to review any related reservations.

D. Nuclear testing

i. The Conference recognizes that the cessation of all nuclear test explosions and all other nuclear explosions, by constraining the development and qualitative improvement of nuclear weapons and ending the development of advanced new types of nuclear weapons, constitutes an effective measure of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation in all its aspects.

ii. The Conference reaffirms the vital importance of the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty as a core element of the international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime, as well as the determination of the nuclear-weapon States to abide by their respective moratoriums on nuclear test explosions pending the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

The Conference resolves that:

- Action 10: All nuclear-weapon States undertake to ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty with all expediency, noting that positive decisions by nuclear-weapon States would have the beneficial impact towards the ratification of that Treaty, and that nuclear-weapon States have the special responsibility to encourage Annex 2 countries, in particular those which have not acceded to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and continue to operate unsafeguarded nuclear facilities, to sign and ratify.
- Action 11: Pending the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, all States commit to refrain from nuclear-weapon test explosions or any other nuclear explosions,

the use of new nuclear weapons technologies and from any action that would defeat the object and purpose of that Treaty, and all existing moratoriums on nuclear-weapon test explosions should be maintained.

- Action 12: All States that have ratified the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty recognize the contribution of the conferences on facilitating the entry into force of that Treaty and of the measures adopted by consensus at the Sixth Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, held in September 2009, and commit to report at the 2011 Conference on progress made towards the urgent entry into force of that Treaty.
- Action 13: All States that have ratified the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty undertake to promote the entry into force and implementation of that Treaty at the national, regional, and global levels
- Action 14: The Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization is to be encouraged to fully develop the verification regime for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, including early completion and provisional operationalization of the international monitoring system in accordance with the mandate of the Preparatory Commission, which should, upon entry into force of that Treaty, serve as an effective, reliable, participatory and non-discriminatory verification system with global reach, and provide assurance of compliance with that Treaty.

E. Fissile materials

i. The Conference reaffirms the urgent necessity of negotiating and bringing to a conclusion a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

The Conference resolves that:

- Action 15: All States agree that the Conference on Disarmament should, within the context of an agreed, comprehensive, and balanced programme of work,immediately begin negotiation of a treaty banning the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices in accordance with the report of the Special Coordinator of 1995 (CD/1299) and the mandate contained therein. Also in this respect, the Review Conference invites the Secretary-General of the United Nations to convene a high-level meeting in September 2010 in support of the work of the Conference on Disarmament.
- Action 16: The nuclear-weapon States are encouraged to commit to declare, as appropriate, to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) all fissile material designated by each of them as no longer required for military purposes and to place such material as soon as practicable under IAEA or other relevant international verification and arrangements for the disposition of such material for peaceful purposes, to ensure that such material remains permanently outside military programmes. • Action 17: In the context of action 16, all States are encouraged to support the development of appropriate legally binding verification arrangements, within the context of IAEA, to ensure the irreversible removal of fissile material designated by each nuclear-weapon State as no longer required for military purposes.
- Action 18: All States that have not yet done so are encouraged to initiate a process towards the dismantling or conversion for peaceful uses of facilities for the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

F. Other measures in support of nuclear disarmament

i. The Conference recognizes that nuclear disarmament and achieving the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons will require openness and cooperation and affirms the importance of enhanced confidence through increased transparency and effective verification.

The Conference resolves that:

- Action 19: All States agree on the importance of supporting cooperation among Governments, the United Nations, other international and regional organizations and civil society aimed at increasing confidence, improving transparency and developing efficient verification capabilities related to nuclear disarmament.
- Action 20: States parties should submit regular reports, within the framework of the

strengthened review process for the Treaty, on the implementation of the present action plan, as well as of article VI, paragraph 4 (c), of the 1995 decision entitled "Principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament", and the practical steps agreed to in the Final Document of the 2000 Review Conference, and recalling the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice of 8 July 1996.

- Action 21: As a confidence-building measure, all the nuclear-weapon States are encouraged to agree as soon as possible on a standard reporting form and to determine appropriate reporting intervals for the purpose of voluntarily providing standard information without prejudice to national security. The Secretary-General of the United Nations is invited to establish a publicly accessible repository, which shall include the information provided by the nuclear-weapon States.
- Action 22: All States are encouraged to implement the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations (A/57/124) regarding the United Nations study on disarmament and non-proliferation education, in order to advance the goals of the Treaty in support of achieving a world without nuclear weapons.

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The time has come, especially as the dangers of nuclear arms racing and nuclear war are on the rise, for all states to consider how to move beyond the current obstacles that continue to block progress and how to construct a durable new approach to achieve nuclear disarmament that renews attention, widens engagement, and stimulates new leadership to address one of the existential dangers to humanity.

With nuclear weapons dangers rising and progress on nuclear disarmament stalled, a new series of disarmament summits modeled after the highly successful nuclear security summit process could inject much-needed momentum and creativity into the existing architecture. A carefully calibrated disarmament summit process could help bypass some of the structural and political factors that have slowed progress on nuclear disarmament in recent years. This report describes how a series of high-level summits involving top leaders of states possessing nuclear weapons and a representative group of non-nuclear-weapon states, could facilitate renewed action toward achieving the common goal of a world free of nuclear weapons.

Arms Control Association

1200 18th Street NW, Suite 1175
Washington, D.C. 20036
www.armscontrol.org