

**The NPT: Pathfinder to
a Nuclear Weapons-Free World**

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Opening Address to Article VI Forum Meeting

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On behalf of my colleagues in the Middle Powers Initiative, I welcome all who have traveled to the Emerald Isle, which, I hasten to add, is the land of my ancestors! They lived at a time of harsh poverty and also a simpler time – before the threats that emerged with the nuclear age and also before the challenges and possibilities of a globalised world.

I wish to thank the Government of Ireland for the tremendous support we have received in convening this fifth meeting of the Article VI Forum. Ireland has been an inspiring and consistent leader in the long effort to free the world of the menace of nuclear weapons.

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If there is one word that describes the crisis of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, it is “credibility.”

After 38 years of the existence of the Treaty, after the start of a second nuclear age with 25,000 nuclear weapons still in existence, after repeated calls by U.N. Secretaries-General for action to negotiate nuclear disarmament, after more than a decade of ignoring the ruling of the International Court of Justice that negotiations for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons must be concluded – we must honestly face the question: Are the goals set out within the NPT still credible? And is the NPT a credible instrument to achieve them?

The Preamble to the Treaty sets out those goals, starting with the averting of nuclear war and measures to safeguard the security of peoples. The Preamble declares the intention “to achieve at the earliest possible date the cessation of the nuclear arms race and to undertake effective measures in the direction of nuclear disarmament.” It also states, “The establishment and maintenance of international peace and security are to be promoted with the least diversion for armaments of the world’s human and economic resources.”

How do NPT goals square with the \$12 trillion that has so far been spent by the nuclear weapons states on the development and maintenance of nuclear weapons? At a time when the Millennium Development Goals desperately require sufficient funding, it is reasonable to ask when the spending on nuclear weapons -- weapons that have lost all credibility for existing -- will stop.

The lack of success in achieving NPT goals is obvious, as the failed 2005 NPT Review Conference made clear. We should not be surprised that a 2007 world poll by the Simons Foundation of Canada showed that three-quarters of the public in half a dozen diverse countries think the NPT is ineffective or are unsure about its usefulness.

At the same time, the great majority of the public either strongly agree or moderately agree that countries not currently pursuing nuclear weapons should be prevented from developing them. When asked whether they would support or oppose eliminating all nuclear weapons in the world through an enforceable agreement, a huge majority would support such a move.

Another poll in 2007, conducted in the United States and Russia by World Public Opinion in conjunction with the University of Maryland, finds robust support for a series of cooperative steps to reduce nuclear dangers and move towards the global elimination of nuclear weapons. Large majorities of Americans and Russians favor taking nuclear weapons off high alert, sharply cutting the numbers of nuclear weapons, banning the production of weapons-grade nuclear material, and, once advanced methods of international verification are established, undertaking the complete elimination of nuclear weapons.

These steps correspond to key elements of a plan for “A World Free of Nuclear Weapons,” developed by a bipartisan group that includes two U.S. former secretaries of state (George Schultz and Henry Kissinger), a former defence secretary (William Perry) and the former chairman of the

Senate Armed Services Committee (Sam Nunn) sometimes called the “Reykjavik Revisited” plan.

Despite the differences between countries, support for concrete steps to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons remains an important foreign policy goal across the board. Public support to move towards the elimination of nuclear weapons is solid. It is clear that public opinion is running far ahead of governmental action. In short, people everywhere want an end to the specter of nuclear devastation. This is what the NPT promises.

The goals of the Non-Proliferation Treaty are indeed credible. The Treaty is credible. What is not credible in the age of the global commons is the resistance of some states in not living up to the Treaty. It is the responsibility of all governments to demonstrate their commitment to the NPT through its full implementation. Nuclear proliferation must be stopped. Disarmament must occur.

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Another word can be used to describe the manner of moving forward. That word is “confidence.” The potential for eliminating nuclear weapons and the steps towards achieving this have been made very clear through the 13 Steps agreed to in 2000, the recommendations of the Weapons of Mass

Destruction Commission, the Model Nuclear Weapons Convention and other influential initiatives.

We must demonstrate confidence in the near consensus that already exists among states on the practical ways to move forward. That near consensus is reflected in the resolutions advanced in the U.N. First Committee by the New Agenda Coalition and Japan and in the Conference on Disarmament A5 proposed agenda. Despite resistance, we are not that far from achieving measurable progress forward.

That is why the Middle Powers Initiative created the Article VI Forum. In four meetings so far, involving some 30 states, we have identified seven priorities for action to enhance the prospects of a successful 2010 NPT Review. The seven priorities are:

- verified reduction of nuclear forces
- standing down of nuclear forces (de-alerting)
- negotiation of a Fissile Materials Cut-off Treaty
- bringing the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty into force
- strengthened negative security assurances
- regulation of nuclear fuel production and supply
- improved NPT governance

This work gives us the confidence to move, with this meeting in Dublin, into a second phase of our work. We want to link the priority steps to the vision of a nuclear weapons-free world. We believe it is necessary to reaffirm the vision in order to activate the steps. The steps and the vision go together. The “value added” to our discussion about the steps is the vision and the commitment to achieve a nuclear weapons-free world. High Representative Sergio Duarte, in a recent speech in Oslo, called for “some sign that the states possessing nuclear weapons are at least considering, individually or collectively, the outlines of what a Nuclear Weapons Convention would have to contain.” This subject is on the agenda of our meeting.

In bringing credibility and confidence together, the Article VI Forum projects the NPT as the Pathfinder to a Nuclear Weapons-Free World. The NPT must succeed in 2010 in order to allow the world to move forward with the vision. It is to this end that MPI dedicates the Dublin meeting.