

The United Nations General Assembly High-Level Meeting on Nuclear Disarmament

The High-level Meeting of the United Nations General Assembly on Nuclear Disarmament of 26 September 2013 is convened in accordance with resolution 67/39 of 3 December 2012. It is the result of an initiative of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries. It complements other resolutions expressing frustration at the absence of substantial progress in nuclear disarmament and the stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament (CD), which has not yielded any substantive outputs since 1996. The objective of such initiatives is to create new momentum towards nuclear disarmament, in particular at the High-level Meeting, by attracting world attention to the issue and mobilizing the international community, including civil society organizations. This paper will examine how such an event could effectively contribute to achieving the goal of nuclear disarmament.

Genesis of the High-Level Meeting on Nuclear Disarmament

In view of the protracted stagnation of the Conference on Disarmament (CD), many states have been searching for ways and means to break this deadlock and allow for multilateral negotiations on nuclear disarmament to commence. At the initiative of the United Nations Secretary-General, the General Assembly met on 24 September 2010 for a high-level meeting devoted to “revitalizing the work of the Conference on Disarmament and taking forward multilateral disarmament negotiations”. At that meeting, 68 delegates spoke, including 37 ministers of foreign affairs and representatives of specialized organizations; the Secretary-General issued a summary of the meeting.¹

In 2011, at the request of 49 Member States, the General Assembly convened three plenary meetings on 27–29 July 2011 under agenda item 162, entitled “Follow-up to the high-level meeting held on 24 September 2010: revitalizing the work of the Conference on Disarmament and taking forward multilateral disarmament negotiations”. Fifty-five national and group statements were made. In 2012, feeling that previous efforts had not resulted in sufficient progress, the Group of Non-Aligned Countries proposed a new high-level meeting of the General Assembly.

The General Assembly is not the only organ that occasionally meets at a high level on the topic of disarmament. The **Security Council** also met twice at the level of heads of state or government—on 31 January 1992, marking the end of the Cold War, a Presidential Statement issued after such a meeting² considered

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- 1 General Assembly, *Letter Dated 5 October from the Secretary-General Addressed to the President of the General Assembly*, UN document A/65/496, 14 October 2010.
 - 2 Security Council, *Note by the President of the Security Council*, UN document S/23500, 31 January 1992.

that “The proliferation of all weapons of mass destruction constitutes a threat to international peace and security” and underlined “the need for all Member States to fulfil their obligations in relation to arms control and disarmament”; and on 24 September 2009, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 1887, which expressed the resolve “to seek a safer world for all and to create the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons, in accordance with the goals of the Treaty on the NonProliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), in a way that promotes international stability, and based on the principle of undiminished security for all”, and called upon “all States that are not Parties to the NPT to accede to the Treaty as non-nuclear-weapon States so as to achieve its universality at an early date”.

At its 16th Ministerial Meeting in Bali in May 2011, the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) issued a statement in which:

The Ministers, in the framework of the 50th Anniversary of the Non-Aligned Movement, declared their firm commitment to work for convening a high-level international conference to identify ways and means of eliminating nuclear weapons at the earlier possible date, with the objective of an agreement on a phased programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons with a specified framework of time, to prohibit their development, production, acquisition, testing, stockpiling, transfer, use or threat of use, and to provide for their destruction.

Consequently, at the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly, **Indonesia**, on behalf of the Members States that are part of the NAM, introduced to the First Committee draft resolution A/C.1/67/L.19 on 18 October 2012. The draft resolution, which was initiated by Cuba, called for a high-level meeting of the General Assembly on nuclear disarmament to be held as a one-day plenary meeting on 26 September 2013. The First Committee approved the draft by a vote of **165 to none, with 5 abstentions** (France, Israel, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States).

At that meeting of the First Committee, according to the Department of Public Information, the representative of **Cuba** fully supported the draft resolution, which was a new initiative, in concert with the NAM’s position. The aim of ensuring the complete elimination of nuclear weapons was a position that Cuba believed in both in its national capacity and as a member of the Movement. The new draft resolution proposed to focus on the issue of nuclear disarmament in a one-day plenary meeting in 2013, in order to facilitate broad participation. The meeting would be an opportunity to exchange views on the matter and send a political message indicating the commitment of states to a world free of nuclear weapons. Cuba believed that the meeting would be an opportunity to further promote the efforts made by the international community. The representative of **Australia**, speaking on behalf of numerous co-sponsors of the draft resolution, said that a world without nuclear weapons was a goal worthy of high-level attention. The representative supported the idea that disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation were mutually reinforcing.

On 3 December 2013, the Plenary of the General Assembly of United Nations adopted the draft resolution as A/RES/67/39 by **179 votes to none, with 4 abstentions** (Israel, France, United Kingdom, United States). The operative paragraphs of that resolution provide that the General Assembly:

1. Decides to convene a high-level meeting of the General Assembly on nuclear disarmament that will be held as a one-day plenary meeting on 26 September 2013, to contribute to achieving the goal of nuclear disarmament;
2. Encourages Member States to participate in the meeting at the highest level;
3. Requests the President of the General Assembly, in collaboration with Member States, to make all the necessary arrangements for the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on nuclear disarmament;
4. Requests the President of the General Assembly to draw up a list of representatives of non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council which will participate in the high-level meeting;
5. Also requests the President of the General Assembly to prepare a summary of the outcome of the high-level meeting, which will be issued as a document of the General Assembly.

According to the Department of Public Information, the **United Kingdom** questioned holding a high-level meeting of this kind when there were already venues for such discussions. The delegation was puzzled by how such a meeting might further the goals of the Action Plan of the 2010 Review Conference of the NPT. In the opinion of the United Kingdom, the roadmap agreed in the Action Plan was the best way to further the agenda. The **United States** delegation explained its abstention on that draft for the same substantive reasons and because of the magnitude of potential increases to the 2012–2013 regular budget. The delegation of **France** said that it had abstained because it questioned the added value of convening a high-level meeting given that there already were appropriate venues, such as the First Committee, Disarmament Commission, and Conference on Disarmament. France was not convinced that such a meeting might make progress on the NPT Action Plan, and considered that the roadmap already presented the best path possible. It stated that nuclear proliferation continued to pose a most serious threat to peace and security, but felt that a high-level meeting would not address disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation in a balanced manner.

The Current Political Context

The resolution convening the High-level Meeting was not the only resolution adopted at the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly with a view to promoting progress in multilateral negotiations on nuclear disarmament. There were also resolution 67/56 of 4 January 2013 (adopted by 179 votes to 4, with 4 abstentions) for the convening of an **Open-ended Working Group** (OEWG) on nuclear disarmament in Geneva, resolution 67/53 of 4 January 2013 (adopted by 166 votes to 1, with 21 abstentions) on a **Group of Governmental Experts** (GGE) on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices; and decision A/67/518 of 1 November 2012 (adopted by 181 votes to none, with 4 abstentions) on the Open-ended Working Group on the **Fourth Special Session of the General Assembly devoted to Disarmament** (SSOD IV), also proposed by the NAM.

In the area of nuclear disarmament, and in particular multilateral negotiations towards nuclear disarmament, the frustration expressed in the above-mentioned initiatives, and

especially the decision to hold a High-level Meeting, is proportional to the expectations that were raised by the substantial commitments enshrined in the **2010 NPT Review Conference** Final Document, particularly its Plan of Action. Similarly, while the **CD** had finally agreed on a programme of work in 2009 after many years of unsuccessful attempts, a breakthrough never materialized, and no negotiations were actually begun at the CD. (However, its decision on 16 August 2013 to establish an informal working group “with a mandate to produce a programme of work robust in substance and progressive over time in implementation” may offer some potential for progress.)

The **OEWG**, which met for 15 days in Geneva over three sessions (May, June, August 2013), offered an opportunity for in-depth discussion of proposals on various aspects of nuclear disarmament. This framework was particularly useful since it allowed not only dialogue among Member States (including two nuclear-armed states), but also dialogue between governments and representatives of civil society and research centres. This approach will be equally applied at the High-level Meeting—indeed, according to its mandate, the President of the General Assembly will “draw up a list of representatives of **non-governmental organizations** in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council that will participate in the high-level meeting” (emphasis added). The Report of the OEWG to the General Assembly has been made available and describes the content and scope of the proposals discussed during its sessions. No doubt many of these proposals will be raised again at the High-level Meeting and later during the session of the First Committee of the General Assembly.

In 2014, there will be the third meeting of the **Preparatory Committee** (PrepCom) of the 2015 NPT Review Conference. According to Action 5 of the Final Document of the 2010 Review Conference (NPT/CONF.2010/50 (Vol. I)), the nuclear-weapon states are called upon to report to the 2014 PrepCom about the state of implementation of their commitment to “accelerate concrete progress on the steps [the “Thirteen Steps”] leading to nuclear disarmament, contained in the Final Document of the 2000 Review Conference”, and in particular are called upon to engage with a view to:

- (a) Rapidly moving towards an overall reduction in the global stockpile of all types of nuclear weapons ... ;
- (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 High-level Meeting thus offers a chance to all Member States to discuss those crucial undertakings and their state of implementation. It can only be hoped that, in advance of the 2014 PrepCom, the nuclear-weapon states will provide the international community with relevant information about the actions they have taken in this regard.

Possible Avenues for the High-Level Meeting and Beyond

It is no secret that, while there is broad consensus on the goal of a world without nuclear weapons, the positions of Member States on the ways and means of achieving this objective are diverse and at times radically opposed. This diversity of views will no doubt be expressed again during the High-level Meeting. Considering the format of the event and its limited duration, no detailed dialogue can be expected among the proponents of various positions. However, the following approaches might be taken in order for the High-level Meeting to fulfil its mandate “to contribute to achieving the goal of nuclear disarmament”.

Raising Political Attention to Nuclear Disarmament

The main purpose and likely result of the High-level Meeting should be to **raise awareness in the international community**, and in particular at the level of governments and also within civil society, about the importance, necessity, and urgency of nuclear disarmament. This objective can be attained if there is a sufficient number of high-level participants and consequent media attention on the event. Each Member State thus has an opportunity to contribute to this aim by sending to the General Assembly a high-level representative and encouraging national and international media coverage of their statement.

As noted above, the important and unprecedented feature of the High-level Meeting is that it will be open to representatives of **civil society organizations**, which will have an opportunity to participate in and contribute to the proceedings. This follows a practice that was inaugurated at the OEWG in Geneva, which has demonstrated the useful role to be played by civil society organizations and academic institutions.

Just as civil society organizations have succeeded in initiating and influencing negotiations that have led to important international treaties (those prohibiting anti-personnel landmines and cluster munitions, as well as regulating the arms trade), they have a crucial role to play in shaping the nuclear disarmament agenda by mandating governments to negotiate on behalf of humanity. Modern technologies, including social media, empower them to promote the cause of nuclear disarmament throughout the world, particularly among the populations of all nuclear-armed states, which need to have a voice in order to express their support for governments’ decisions to pursue nuclear disarmament or to encourage them to do so.

Recalling Strong Commitments and Obligations

The High-level Meeting will provide an opportunity for the expression of the determination of the international community to make significant progress towards the shared goal

of a world without nuclear weapons. While merely repeating previous statements or arguments may not necessarily yield results, some key commitments and obligations deserve to be recalled, as discussions in the OEWG in Geneva have shown:

- All states have indicated, in the 2000 **United Nations Millennium Declaration** (A/55/2), their resolve to “strive for the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, and to keep all options open for achieving this aim, including the possibility of convening an international conference to identify ways of eliminating nuclear dangers”.
- All states party to the NPT, whether nuclear-weapon states or non-nuclear-weapon states, are bound by the obligation, under article VI of the 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”. The force of this obligation was underlined by the 1996 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice³ according to which “the obligation involved here is an obligation to achieve a precise result—nuclear disarmament in all its aspects—by adopting a particular course of conduct, namely, the pursuit of negotiations on the matter in good faith.”
- The Action Plan contained in the Final Document of the 2010 NPT Review Conference “reaffirmed 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” (emphasis added).
- Also, as an important and innovative approach to nuclear disarmament, the 2010 NPT Review Conference Final Document expressed “its deep concern at the catastrophic **humanitarian consequences** of any use of nuclear weapons and reaffirmed the need for all States at all time to comply with applicable international law, in particular international humanitarian law”. This approach may be considered by many states as providing the legal basis for a total prohibition of nuclear weapons, since, in their view, any use of nuclear weapons would be contrary to international humanitarian law. As stated by the International Court of Justice in its 1996 advisory opinion, several principles are enshrined in IHL:

The first is aimed at the protection of the civilian population and civilian objects and establishes the distinction between combatants and non-combatants; States must never make civilians the object of attack and must consequently never use weapons that are incapable of distinguishing between civilian and military targets. According to the second principle, it is prohibited to cause unnecessary suffering to combatants: it is accordingly prohibited to use weapons causing them such harm or uselessly aggravating their suffering. In application of that second principle, States do not have unlimited freedom of choice of means in the weapons they use.

3 International Court of Justice, *Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons*, advisory opinion, 8 July 1996, p. 226.

The Court considered that, “In view of the unique characteristics of nuclear weapons ... the use of such weapons in fact seems scarcely reconcilable with respect for such requirements”.

Demonstrating to the Nuclear-Armed States the Interests of the International Community in Nuclear Disarmament

The views repeatedly expressed by the overwhelming majority of the Member States of the United Nations about the necessity and urgency of nuclear disarmament must be addressed by all Member States, whether party to the NPT or not. The body of *soft law* represented by dozens of resolutions of the General Assembly, even without the same legal force as international treaties, does have a legal value and represents the opinion of many states and societies. The final report of the OEWG adds even more value to these by incorporating the views and proposals of civil society organizations.

As recognized by the International Court of Justice in its 1996 advisory opinion, it is true that “several ... resolutions [on nuclear disarmament] have been adopted with substantial numbers of negative votes and abstentions; thus, although those resolutions are a clear sign of deep concern regarding the problem of nuclear weapons, they still fall short of establishing the existence of an *opinio juris* on the illegality of the use” of nuclear weapons. Consequently, “The emergence, as *lex lata*, of a customary rule specifically prohibiting the use of nuclear weapons as such is hampered by the continuing tensions between the nascent *opinio juris* on the one hand, and the still strong adherence to the practice of deterrence on the other”. This means that, in order to promote progress in the achievement of the goal of a world without nuclear weapons, it would seem more productive either to focus on those resolutions that attract the largest majorities or even consensus, or to exert effort to reduce the “strong adherence to the practice of deterrence”.

On the occasion of events such as the High-level Meeting, the non-nuclear-weapon states and civil society organizations representing world public opinion should reaffirm their view that national and international security are threatened by the potential use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, as well as their very existence. For their part, nuclear-weapon states should respond to the international expression of concern and provide credible evidence that they are progressing towards the goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world. In order to do so, they could use the following measurable benchmarks:

- Demonstrate their readiness to engage in further **stockpile reductions** for those that have started them, and begin such a process for those that have not. Most of the actual nuclear disarmament thus far has occurred either on a unilateral or bilateral basis (specifically, by the United States and the Russian Federation). The benchmark would be the numbers of warheads and delivery vehicles dismantled, which is quantifiable, as opposed to simply a framework for reductions.
- Negotiate on some aspects of nuclear disarmament **multilaterally** in accordance with article VI of the NPT, which does not specify any framework for negotiation but, as a multilateral treaty, implies a preference for that type of framework. It is true that all aspects of nuclear disarmament may not be appropriate for a multilateral framework, such as the CD. In particular, in accordance with article I of the NPT, nuclear-weapon states are prohibited to spread any sensitive information

that may assist “any recipient whatsoever” in manufacturing a nuclear weapon. But there is an important precedent, the **Trilateral Initiative** (of the United States, the Russian Federation, and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)) regarding the technical, legal, and financial issues associated with IAEA verification of weapon-origin fissile material in the Russian Federation and the United States between 1996 and 2000.⁴ The completion of the initiative is one of the “Thirteen Steps”, one of the few to have been fully implemented. It could serve as a basis for exploring, in a multilateral framework, some aspects of **verification** of nuclear disarmament. It is also important to underline that, in all previous disarmament or arms control negotiations, whether on weapons of mass destruction (biological and chemical) or conventional armaments (landmines, cluster munitions), the participants included both possessor and non-possessor states and that distinction did not prevent finding commonly agreed solutions

- Regarding other multilateral instruments on nuclear weapons, either put them into force (the **Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty**, by ratification of the eight so-called Annex II states⁵) or negotiate them in a multilateral framework, ideally the CD (the prohibition of **production of fissile material** for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices). However, both of those instruments fall more in the category of non-proliferation agreements, and therefore do not take the place of nuclear disarmament agreements, but rather only complement them.
- Adopt **interim measures** pending total nuclear disarmament in order to strengthen international security and reassure non-nuclear weapon states:
 - **Negative security assurances:** while individual nuclear-armed states have given unilateral, often conditional, assurances of non-use or threat of use of nuclear weapons to non-nuclear-weapon states, they should not forget that there remains the potential for harmonizing such assurances in a legally binding instrument. Most of the current conditionalities are remnants of the Cold War, in which nuclear deterrence was envisaged as a means of preventing large-scale conventional conflict. Given the security context of today, nuclear-armed states should declare that, pending elimination, nuclear weapons would serve only to deter the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.
 - **Review of the alert status of nuclear weapons:** while several nuclear-weapon states have already declared a reduced alert status and the non-targeting of specific countries, a joint or harmonized position of all nuclear-weapon states would constitute a powerful confidence-building measure, notwithstanding that such declaratory measures are difficult to verify and easily reversed.
 - **Increase in transparency about nuclear arsenals:** according to Action 21 of the 2010 NPT Review Conference Final Document, “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

4 T.E. Shea, “Report on the Trilateral Initiative: IAEA verification of weapon-origin material in the Russian Federation and the United States”, *IAEA Bulletin*, no. 43, no. 1, 2001.

5 These being China, Egypt, Islamic Republic of Iran, Israel, and the United States, which have signed the treaty, and Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, India, and Pakistan, which have not signed.

prejudice to national security”.⁶ The five NPT nuclear-weapon states have announced that they are working together towards the implementation of this commitment. It would be useful if those states and the non-NPT nuclear-armed states could provide more information to the High-level Meeting on their current arsenals and the reductions that they envisage or have undertaken.

- **Clarification of the “conditions for a world without nuclear weapons”:** this phrase is the key element of Security Council resolution 1887. It is sometimes interpreted by some nuclear-weapon states as meaning that some *preconditions* must be met before the elimination of nuclear weapons can occur—the absolute guarantee of non-proliferation; general and complete disarmament, including conventional, chemical, and biological; resolution of major international conflicts, and so forth. It would be helpful for the international community if the nuclear-weapon states declared their readiness to pursue or initiate the process of nuclear disarmament even while some of those conditions are not met, and that they are determined to support and contribute to all international efforts aimed at achieving those conditions in parallel with nuclear disarmament.

Facilitating Nuclear Disarmament by Addressing Related Issues

Although, as noted above, “creating the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons” should not mean waiting until some other issues have been solved before engaging in a process of nuclear disarmament, reality shows that unless some other, closely related issues are addressed, nuclear disarmament will be more difficult if not impossible to achieve. As is often stated in United Nations, NPT, and CD meetings, disarmament is not an end in itself—rather disarmament must strengthen national and international security—and it does not happen in a political vacuum. Therefore, in order to convince nuclear-armed states to start reducing their arsenals or continue to reduce them up to their final elimination, several key issues must be addressed by the whole of the international community:

- **National security doctrines and policies of nuclear-armed states:** although, as noted above, there is a potential for harmonized positions and actions on the part of the nuclear-armed states, one has to recognize that their respective decisions basing their national security on nuclear weapons were made based on considerations of history, security environment, and threat perception. Moreover, the situation and status of all nuclear-armed states cannot be considered as similar—in terms of the size of arsenals, the United States and the Russian Federation have a special responsibility, since they hold more than 90 per cent of the world’s nuclear weapons. Analysing the considerations of these two states should be a starting point for examining whether the *possession* of nuclear weapons still has a place in national security decisions given a global environment that has changed dramatically since the advent of these weapons. This reappraisal of security doctrines should be encouraged by the international community, but most importantly by the citizens of the nuclear-armed states, with the support of civil society organizations and elected representatives (parliamentarians, local government, and so forth). **Only when a majority of a given country’s population**

⁶ For study examining a concrete approach to how this could be undertaken, see, T. Patton, P. Podvig, and P. Schell, *A New START Model for Transparency in Nuclear Disarmament*, UNIDIR, 2013.

is convinced that nuclear weapons are no longer required to ensure its security, and may indeed decrease it rather than increase it, will the government of that country be encouraged to begin to adapt its security doctrine. It should be relatively easy to convince people in most countries that, in a globalized world, the main threats come from transnational challenges (global financial crises, climate change, disease, organized crime, cyberattack, violent extremism and terrorism, arms proliferation, and so on) that cannot be deterred by nuclear weapons and which demand multilateral approaches for collective security.

- **The role of non-nuclear-weapon states benefiting from extended nuclear deterrence:** here also, the states that do not possess nuclear weapons but benefit from nuclear deterrence in the framework of a plurilateral or bilateral military alliance (a “nuclear umbrella”), yet at the same time campaign for nuclear disarmament, could reconsider their security doctrine, which is often a remnant of the Cold War. Such a re-examination of national security doctrines would necessitate national debates involving parliaments and civil society, but if all of those states declared that they renounced the protection of nuclear umbrellas, no doubt this would create new momentum and incentive for nuclear disarmament.
- **The link between nuclear deterrence and regional conflicts:** some states have acquired or are seeking nuclear weapons because they feel that such weapons will protect them in a conflict. It would be difficult if not impossible to convince them to renounce the possession or pursuit of such weapons while they continue to perceive the threat of conflict. It is not surprising that the three major nuclear proliferation crises have occurred and persist in three major conflict areas (the Middle East, South Asia, and the Korean Peninsula), where the four non-NPT nuclear-armed states are located. Unless those conflict situations are adequately addressed by the international community, these nuclear-armed or aspiring states will continue to rely on nuclear weapons for their national security and refuse to join international efforts towards nuclear disarmament. The example of nuclear-weapon-free zones in other regions of the world should be promoted in the conflict regions, and parallel negotiations could take place both on peace processes and denuclearization processes.
- **The nexus between disarmament and non-proliferation:** some nuclear-weapon states may hesitate to pursue nuclear disarmament with greater intensity if they fear that, while they are disarming, other states are seeking to acquire nuclear weapons to achieve some strategic advantage. This is why it is crucial to reject any priority of nuclear disarmament over nuclear non-proliferation, and vice versa—both are equally important and must be addressed in a balanced way. Ensuring compliance with non-proliferation commitments, and adopting appropriate measures in cases of non-compliance, should not be excluded or disregarded under the pretext that progress in nuclear disarmament is insufficient.
- **The nexus between nuclear weapons and other weapons or areas:** historically, several nuclear-armed states have acquired nuclear weapons as a means of deterring large-scale conventional attacks. Today, this risk has largely disappeared, at least in Europe, but some nuclear-armed states continue to justify their nuclear weapons by such a risk. As noted above, conventional disarmament cannot become a prerequisite for nuclear disarmament, but in regions where excessive and destabilizing conventional arms build-ups are occurring, addressing such a

phenomenon could have a positive impact on nuclear-armed states' acceptance of nuclear disarmament. Even in Europe, where much conventional disarmament was achieved thanks to the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, relaunching such a process could influence the Russian Federation's position regarding sub-strategic nuclear weapons. The linkages between nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction (chemical and biological) have no serious ground for being maintained in view of the quasi-elimination of such weapons (despite the recent abhorrent use of chemical weapons in Syria). In addition, as is well known, the Russian Federation establishes some linkages between further reductions of strategic deployed nuclear weapons and possible developments of future conventional weapons as well as the deployment of anti-ballistic missile defence systems and space-based interceptors. It would seem an illusion to expect substantial progress in US–Russian nuclear weapon reductions unless the above-mentioned issues are seriously addressed and compromise solutions found. Similarly, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction-capable ballistic and cruise missiles, and the possible use of space-launcher technology for the development of missiles,⁷ will need to be curtailed if progress in nuclear disarmament is to be expected.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The High-level Meeting on Nuclear Disarmament may contribute to progress in addressing nuclear disarmament and the issues that complicate it by:

- Expressing the strong views of the international community, including civil society, for urgent and substantial decisions giving new impetus to nuclear disarmament.
- Sending to the nuclear-armed states the message of the majority of the international community that international peace and security, a common good, will only be strengthened and not diminished by the elimination of nuclear weapons.
- Urging the nuclear-armed states and the non-nuclear-armed states under nuclear umbrellas to accept a transparent dialogue with the international community and their own civil society on redefining national security doctrines and shaping them to be more in line with the requirements of a globalized world where most challenges are transnational and cannot be deterred by nuclear weapons, but rather demand collective action and multilateral cooperation.
- Recognizing that there are no immediate and easy solutions to a set of complex issues involving regional conflicts, or relationships between nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, or between nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction or conventional weapons, as well as anti-ballistic missile defence and space-based interceptors, while nevertheless encouraging the relevant states to engage seriously in parallel negotiations in those areas in order to facilitate nuclear disarmament.
- Recommending that the process initiated by the 2010 and 2013 High-level Meetings be continued and followed-up by regular review meetings and new high-level meetings to assess the progress achieved.

⁷ See General Assembly, *The Issue Of Missiles In All Its Aspects: Report of the Secretary General*, UN document A/63/176, 28 July 2008.

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