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ON NUCLEAR ISSUES

ESTONIA

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Estonia is a member of the EU, NATO, and relevant non-proliferation and disarmament regimes. The country is a vocal participant of the NPT process and advocates for a gradual approach to nuclear disarmament. Estonia has publically stressed the importance of NATO's nuclear deterrence policy and called for arms control talks on non-strategic nuclear weapons in Europe.

NUCLEAR

Estonia does not possess, produce or host nuclear weapons on its territory. Estonia is a party to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), ratified the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), and has an Additional Protocol with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). The country is a member of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) and a participating state of the Wassenaar Arrangement.

NUCLEAR DETERRENCE, DISARMAMENT AND POSITION REGARDING NATO'S NUCLEAR POLICY

Estonia joined NATO in 2004, seven years after the signing of the NATO–Russia Founding Act, in which the Alliance declared that it had “no intention, no plan and no reason to deploy nuclear weapons on the territory of new members.” This declaration precluded Estonia’s direct involvement in nuclear-sharing arrangements, although the country could potentially play non-nuclear supportive roles in possible nuclear operations of the Alliance.¹ Estonia also participates in the works of the Nuclear Planning Group and political debates on NATO’s nuclear posture.² During the discussions on NATO’s 2010 new Strategic Concept and 2012 Deterrence and Defence Posture Review (DDPR), Estonia opposed radical changes in NATO’s nuclear policy and publically argued for the continued basing of U.S. non-strategic nuclear weapons (NSNWs) in Europe. Estonia’s foreign minister, Urmas Paet, stated at a NATO foreign ministers’

¹ The scope of such potential participation would, however, be further limited by the fact that Estonia does not possess combat aircraft.

² L. Kulesa, “The New NATO Member States,” in: P. Foradori (ed.), *Tactical Nuclear Weapons and Euro-Atlantic Security*, Routledge, Abingdon, 2013, pp. 143–144.

meeting in Tallinn in April 2010 that: “although the use of nuclear weapons is unlikely, nuclear deterrence based in Europe must remain, as it preserves close transatlantic ties and allows for greater flexibility in deterrence.”³ Earlier the same month, Paet also noted that “the predictability of the global security environment has decreased, and the need for reliable deterrence remains great.”⁴

No particular countries have been openly depicted by Estonian officials as present threats, but they have expressed their concerns about Russian actions, including possible deployments of Russian nuclear-capable systems in Estonia’s vicinity.⁵ Studies based on interviews with Estonian and regional experts and officials, conducted before the adoption of the 2012 DDPR, also indicated that Estonia, along with two other Baltic states, valued U.S. NSNWs based in Europe primarily as a measure that strengthens Allied cohesion and as an instrument of deterrence with Russia in mind.⁶ Nonetheless, these countries reportedly also hinted at the utility

of such weapons in deterring other potential threats to NATO, such as a nuclear-armed Iran.⁷

Even though the Baltic States, as well as the other Central and Eastern European countries, have opposed the total withdrawal of U.S. NSNWs, they have been willing to accept partial reductions of these weapons, provided that such cuts are reciprocated by Russia.⁸ In February 2011, the Estonian president, Toomas Hendrik Ilves, hinted at the quantitative imbalance between NATO and Russian NSNW arsenals, and stressed that such arms should be a subject of further arms control talks.⁹

Estonia has avoided direct references to NATO’s nuclear deterrence policy in the wake of the conflict in Ukraine and growing tensions between Russia and the Alliance. However, in April 2015, Ilves made some remarks with respect to the British debate on the future of that country’s nuclear arsenal, stating that Britain should “maintain its nuclear capability in whatever form it wishes to.”¹⁰

³ “Foreign Minister Paet and NATO Secretary General Rasmussen: New Threats Receive the Same Attention,” Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 22 April 2010, <http://vm.ee>.

⁴ “Foreign Minister Paet: Agenda for NATO Foreign Ministers’ Meeting in Tallinn Focused on Future of NATO,” Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 9 April 2010, <http://vm.ee>.

⁵ E. Karapetyan, “Missile Madness,” *The Baltic Times*, 28 July 2010, www.baltictimes.com.

⁶ See: J. Durkalec, “NATO Defence and Deterrence Posture: Central and Eastern European Perspectives,” *PISM Policy Paper*, no. 29, May 2012, Polish Institute of International Affairs; Ł. Kulesa, “Polish and Central European Priorities on NATO’s Future Nuclear Policy,” *BASIC NATO Nuclear Policy Papers*, issue 2, 2010; S. Shetty, I. Kerns, S. Lunn, “The Baltic States, NATO and Non-Strategic Nuclear Weapons in Europe,” *RUSI-ELN Occasional Paper*, December 2012, Royal United Services Institute.

⁷ S. Shetty, I. Kerns, S. Lunn, “The Baltic States...,” *op. cit.*, p. 17; J. Durkalec, “NATO Defence...,” *op. cit.*, p. 3.

⁸ J. Durkalec, “NATO Defence...,” *op. cit.*, pp. 8–10.

⁹ “President Ilves: Europe Needs Restoration of Common Arms Control,” website of the President of the Republic of Estonia, 5 February 2011, president.ee. See also: “Foreign Minister Paet: Discussions on Conventional Arms Control Are Essential,” Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 10 February 2010, <http://vm.ee>.

¹⁰ D. Blair, “Sitting Near a Nuclear Tripwire, Estonia’s President Urges Nato to Send Troops to Defend His Country,” *The Telegraph*, 11 April 2015, www.telegraph.co.uk.

NUCLEAR NON-PROLIFERATION AND DISARMAMENT EFFORTS IN THE GLOBAL ARENA

Apart from aligning itself with the EU's positions, Estonia has also delivered national statements at the meetings of the Preparatory Committee (PrepCom) for the 2015 NPT Review Conference.

Estonia highlighted that creating the conditions for the total elimination of nuclear weapons must be advanced "without jeopardising international stability and diminishing security,"¹¹ The country cited the greater transparency with regard to nuclear arsenals and the enhancement of confidence between the countries possessing nuclear weapons, as necessary conditions for progress in nuclear disarmament. At the 2013 PrepCom meeting, Estonia endorsed the New START treaty between the U.S. and Russia, as well as potential future treaties between the two powers, while noting that they should cover all categories of nuclear weapons, including non-strategic systems. Estonian statements in the NPT forum have also advocated for the entry into force of the CTBT, and commencement

on negotiations on the treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other explosive devices (the Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty, or FMCT).¹²

Estonia emphasised that FMCT negotiations should take place within the Conference on Disarmament (CD) in order to ensure broad participation in the treaty. As an observer state to the CD, Estonia has also called for enlargement of its membership.¹³

Estonia has shared "the concern of diverse nuclear risks and their serious impact on humanity," and participated in all three conferences on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons, in Oslo in March 2013, in Nayarit, Mexico, in February 2014, and in Vienna in December 2014.¹⁴ The country has, however, not endorsed the idea of banning nuclear weapons on the grounds of international humanitarian law, as pursued by some countries participating in the Humanitarian Initiative and not supported by the nuclear-armed states.¹⁵ In a statement

¹¹ "General Statement by H.E. Mr. Jüri Seilenthal, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Estonia to United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva at the Second Session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)," Geneva, 22 April–3 May 2013.

¹² *Ibidem*.

¹³ "Statement by H.E. Mr. Urmas Paet, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Estonia, at the High Level Segment of the 2013 Plenary Session of the Conference on Disarmament," Geneva, 26 February 2013.

¹⁴ "Statement by H.E. Mr. Margus Kolga, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Estonia to the United Nations at the Preparatory Committee for the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons," New York, 29 April 2014.

¹⁵ Ł. Kulesa, "The nuclear weapon ban is inevitable—too bad that it won't bring disarmament," European Leadership Network, 9 December 2014, www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org.

delivered at the 2014 Vienna conference, Estonia stressed that disarmament efforts should be realised through multilateral efforts, especially with the participation of states possessing nuclear weapons. Estonia has highlighted the importance of the NPT as the “cornerstone for progress towards nuclear disarmament,” indicated that total elimination of nuclear weapons requires a long-term process, and referred to the working paper “Building blocks for a world without nuclear weapons,” submitted by Estonia and 19 other countries at the 2014 PrepCom meeting.¹⁶

The “Building blocks” paper proposed a series of “practical” measures based on the 2010 NPT Action Plan. The paper noted that the establishment of a document or a framework on total elimination of nuclear weapons would be considered as a conclusive step in a longer process, depending on progress in

shaping the “prevailing environment of trust and confidence.”¹⁷

At the 2014 PrepCom meeting, Estonia vocally criticised Russia for its actions against Ukraine and violation of the 1994 Budapest Memorandum.¹⁸

Estonia has been a supporter of export controls, and called for the strengthening of measures against violations of the NPT, including the abuse of the right to withdraw from the treaty.¹⁹ At the 2010 NPT review conference, the country also advocated for the universalisation of the Additional Protocol, and for enhanced multilateral cooperation in the peaceful use of nuclear energy, such as the establishment of an IAEA low enriched uranium bank.²⁰

Estonia participates in the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI).

NUCLEAR SECURITY²¹

The 2014 NTI Nuclear Materials Security Index ranked Estonia as sixteenth out of 151 countries without weapons-usable

nuclear materials. Estonia ratified the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material (CPPNM), along with

¹⁶ Estonian statement at the Vienna Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, 8–9 December 2014.

¹⁷ “Building blocks for a world without nuclear weapons,” working paper submitted by Australia, Belgium, Canada, Colombia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden and Ukraine, Preparatory Committee for the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, New York, 15 April 2014.

¹⁸ “Statement by H.E. Mr. Margus Kolga...,” *op. cit.*

¹⁹ “General Statement by H.E. Mr. Jüri Seilenthal...,” *op. cit.*

²⁰ “Statement by H.E. Mr. Urmas Paet, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Estonia, at the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons,” New York, 5 May 2010.

²¹ This section provides basic information on Estonia’s engagement in international cooperation on nuclear security. For more detailed data see: “Estonia,” Country Profiles, The Nuclear Threat Initiative, www.nti.org/country-profiles/estonia.

the 2005 amendment, and signed the International Convention on the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism. The country participates in the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism (GICNT).

Estonia does not operate any nuclear reactors. Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia and the GE Hitachi corporation have planned to start joint construction of the Visaginas nuclear power plant in Lithuania, as minority shareholders, by 2015. Nonetheless, the project has experienced delays and there was no a final agreement to begin the works as of April 2015.²² Neither was there any progress in the development of Estonia's own nuclear

power plant, although in 2009 the Estonian government approved plans to launch such a station by 2023.²³

In February 2008, Estonia and the United States signed an agreement on the expansion of bilateral cooperation in countering the smuggling of nuclear materials. Under the deal, the U.S. Department of Energy's National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) was to assist Estonia in installing detection and communication equipment at Estonian border crossings, airports and seaports, and to provide assistance in training in the equipment's use.²⁴

MISSILES

MISSILE DEFENCE

Estonia neither possesses nor plans to acquire ballistic missile defence (BMD) capabilities. There are no plans to deploy any BMD installations on Estonian territory. The country supports the deployment of elements of the U.S. missile defence system in Europe (the European Phased Adaptive Approach,

or EPAA) as part of NATO's ballistic missile defence (BMD) capability.

The country has been continuously stressing that the NATO missile defence system should cover the territories of all Allies.²⁵ Although Estonia has not opposed the NATO–Russia dialogue on BMD issues, it simultaneously

²² "Estonia and Latvia Still Waiting for Profitability Assessment of Lithuanian NPP," *DELFI News*, 10 April 2015, en.delfi.lt.

²³ "Estonia," *Country Profiles*, *op. cit.*

²⁴ "U.S. and Estonia Cooperate to Prevent Smuggling of Nuclear and Radioactive Material," National Nuclear Security Administration, 25 February 2008, nnsa.energy.gov.

²⁵ "Estonian President: Missile Shield Should Cover All NATO Member Countries," Estonian Embassy in Washington, 18 March 2008, www.estemb.org; "Foreign Minister Paet: Agenda for..." *op. cit.*

expressed its scepticism about the prospects for effective cooperation, and supported the progress in deployment of the Allied system regardless of Russian objections.²⁶ The country has also voiced its concerns about the possible deployments of Russian missile systems near Estonian territory.²⁷ In the wake of the Russian announcement of plans to deploy offensive

and defensive missile systems in Kaliningrad Oblast as a response to the development of the NATO BMD system, president Ilves stated in April 2012 that “we would very much like the Allies who have proposed this measure not to leave this area with less security (than before) thanks to an Allied proposal to defend all of Europe against a potential Iranian attack.”²⁸

BALLISTIC AND CRUISE MISSILES

Estonia does not currently possess, produce or host ballistic or cruise missiles on its territory. The country has not expressed an intention to acquire such capabilities. Estonia is a subscribing state to the Hague

Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation. The country has been applying for membership of the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) since 2003.²⁹

3. CHEMICAL

Estonia does not possess or pursue chemical weapons. Estonia is a party to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC),

as well as a member of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the Australia Group (AG).

4. BIOLOGICAL

Estonia does not possess or pursue biological weapons. The country is a party to

the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC).

²⁶ Foreign Minister of Estonia Urmas Paet, Presentation at NATO Parliamentary Assembly, Tallinn, 26 May 2012, pp. 3–4; B. Whitmore, “‘Fresh Start’ as NATO Invites Russia to Join Missile Defense,” *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 20 November 2010, www.rferl.org.

²⁷ “Russia Missile Deployment Causes Concern Abroad,” *Deutsche Welle*, 16 December 2013.

²⁸ “Poland, Baltics Wary on Russian Army Plans in Kaliningrad,” *SpaceDaily*, 17 April 2012, www.spacedaily.com.

²⁹ “Statement of the Republic of Estonia at the General Debate of the 69th Session of the UN General Assembly First Committee,” New York, 13 October 2014.