

Intervention by Ireland on Security & Nuclear Deterrence Issues

Mr Chairman,

I would like to thank the Panel for their contributions this morning. I would also like to thank retired General Cartwright for his frank engagement in the very interesting and informative side event organised by Sweden, Switzerland, Malaysia and Nigeria on Tuesday.

The Global Zero speakers at the side event made some striking remarks in their presentations which confirmed for my delegation that nuclear weapons serve no military, strategic purpose and in fact the perceived benefit of nuclear deterrence is actually a fallacy and an illusion which rather poses a far greater threat to those populations that rely on them for their security. There was also the confirmation that modernisation, ie making nuclear weapons smaller and better, makes them more usable and therefore more likely to be used and that the massive level of investment in them actually promotes the idea of use.

I also noted the remarks at the side event that “keeping nuclear weapons on a high trigger alert does not contribute to deterrence other than in the imagination” and that “fixed nuclear weapons serve no purpose, other than as a target and forcing states into an escalation they cannot get out of”. I just wanted to make sure that I had noted all that down correctly as it’s very helpful for my delegation to have all that confirmed by the retired generals.

I would also like to invite the Panel to comment on Henry Kissinger’s remarks, in retirement, on the “credibility deficit” relating to extended nuclear deterrence. These find resonance in the WP submitted by the Acronym Institute and in particular paragraph 20, which I will quote.

Lastly, like Malaysia, I would like to ask about the growing issue of cyber threats. I note that this was referred to by the General in an interview last year when he said that the sophistication of the threat has increased exponentially and that it was reasonable to believe that the threat had now extended itself to nuclear command and control systems, with it being reasonable to assume that these could have been penetrated. Noting that a 2013 Pentagon review process found that US nuclear weapons control systems had not been properly assessed for cyber vulnerabilities and that the then head of the US Strategic Command told the Senate Armed Service Committee that “*we don’t know what we don’t know*”, I was wondering if there was any update or any more clarity on this important issue?