

Ireland

Statement on Disarmament Education

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NPT Preparatory Committee

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Chairman

I am very pleased to take this opportunity to inform the meeting of initiatives Ireland has taken in fulfilment of our commitments to Disarmament Education. We believe that raising awareness with regard to the very real risks and devastating humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons is of key importance in achieving our goal of a world without nuclear weapons. An informed public is of key importance in ensuring that these weapons are never used again. Ireland would like to thank in particular the Hibakusha for their powerful testimonies.

We were particularly honoured to have hosted Hibakusha Setsuko Thurlow for our Disarmament Symposium in 2014, which we organized in cooperation with the Japanese Embassy in Ireland and University College Cork. The papers from that seminar were

subsequently published by us as a contribution to meeting our Disarmament commitments in the 2015 Review cycle.

The need for this education is particularly important at this juncture when we have witnessed an alarming increase in threats of use of nuclear weapons. Ireland believes that a diminution in the previously strong taboo against such threats is of the greatest concern and something this Review conference should be deeply engaged with. Perhaps if people understand what exactly it is that is being threatened, the annihilation in an instant of many thousands if not hundreds of thousands of human lives by a weapon of mass destruction, we may see some movement.

To highlight the very real and underestimated risk of a nuclear weapons explosion, accidental or deliberate, Ireland hosted a very successful film event last December with Eric Schlosser's film *Command and Control*, accompanied by a talk from Dr. Gillian Wylie of Trinity College Dublin. This was particularly useful in engaging with younger audiences and we agreed with the Civil Society speakers from Wednesday who highlighted film and culture as particularly useful ways of engaging with the public on NPT questions.

The main issue I wish to address today Mr Chairman is that of the critical and serious topic of Gender and Nuclear Weapons. As part of our Disarmament Education work, Ireland has, since 2015, engaged with Chatham House and with UNIDIR on work to broaden the discussion on Nuclear Weapons beyond the narrow confines of Disarmament and Non-proliferation forums. As part of this work, we funded a seminal research study by UNIDIR and ILPI on Gender,

Development and Nuclear Weapons which was presented at a Side Event hosted by Sweden and Ireland yesterday.

A Working Paper, broadly based on this research, has been presented to the Preparatory Committee by Ireland today. We trust that the serious questions raised in it on the gendered impact of nuclear weapons, and on the need for greater participation by women in nuclear weapons negotiations should be reflected in your report Mr Chairman, and in the outcome document of this Review cycle.

The Working Paper, among many serious findings, highlights research showing that, while the detonation of one or more nuclear weapons would cause massive death and injury to all, over the longer term, of those who are exposed to ionising radiation from such a detonation, women and girls have a far higher risk, almost **twice as high**, of dying from cancer than men who are similarly exposed to ionising radiation.

The other question which the Working paper addresses is that of women's participation in nuclear weapons negotiating forums. Here again the research findings are unambiguous. Women's participation in all international negotiating forums and peace processes, sixteen years on from the adoption of UNSCR 1325, still lags behind that of men in most bodies. However, in Nuclear weapons forums it is even further behind again, by about 30 years. Indeed I understand that at the CTBTO Side Event yesterday this issue was independently highlighted by many participants

Mr Chairman

Recognising that the underlying trend for women's engagement in nuclear weapons forums is improving, though slowly, Ireland would encourage States who can do so to assist and sponsor qualified women participants in Nuclear Weapons forums and to take gender diversity into account in the composition of their delegations and when putting expert panels together.

Studies show that diversity and differing perspectives make group prediction and problem solving more effective. Almost 50 years from the adoption of the NPT, and with a failure to agree an outcome document in 2015, this Review Cycle offers an opportunity for more effective discussions and outcomes. A conscious and genuine commitment to improving women's engagement and participation in the work of the NPT would be a good place to start.

To conclude

In September 2015 our Heads of State and Government adopted an agenda for sustainable development which was nothing less than a promise to humanity. As we begin this NPT Review Cycle, we must keep in mind the threat posed by nuclear weapons to these global goals and aspirations, which we all share. Any nuclear weapons detonation, whether accidental or deliberate, would have a significant impact on development, gender equality, health, protection of cultural heritage and the environment. A more wide-scale event, such as a so called "limited nuclear exchange", would wreak devastation for generations. In our working paper Ireland have sought to bring attention to the gendered impact of nuclear

weapons and the need to increase women's participation in nuclear disarmament negotiations. But we are also cognisant of the wider developmental and environmental concerns which nuclear weapons pose for our ever more fragile planet.

The drafters who framed the NPT did so in the shadow of the first use of Nuclear weapons in warfare and with a strong sense of the danger the continuing existence and proliferation of these weapons pose for "all mankind". Almost 50 years from the adoption of the Treaty, and with a view to the 25th anniversary of its extension in 2020, Ireland looks forward to working with NPT States Parties so that progress on the questions raised in our paper can be achieved

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