

Open Ended Working Group taking forward

Multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations

Geneva 2016

Item X of the Agenda

Working Paper on “Nuclear Disarmament in context - a global governance issue”

Submitted by Ireland

1. This Working Paper is submitted for consideration in accordance with the mandate of the OEWG as drawn from OP3 of the Resolution “Taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations” and specifically the issues relating to risk, transparency and raising awareness. It builds on the discussions at the February session of the OEWG and is associated with the consultation paper prepared by Chatham House, “Nuclear Disarmament: the Missing Link in Multilateralism”.
2. This is a time of global uncertainty, strain and threat. All of our institutions, allegiances and assumptions are under challenge. The existence of nuclear weapons does nothing to protect us or to make the world a safer place in such tense and sensitive circumstances; in fact, as we heard in compelling presentations from the expert panellists in February, the inherent risks of nuclear weapons makes the world even more dangerous.
3. Our meetings in February generated useful and focused discussions with broad agreement on the need for enhanced transparency and risk reduction measures. We welcome the elements set out in Annex 2 of the Chair’s Synthesis Paper of 21 April 2016.
4. With regard to transparency, we note that States who participated in the Panel 2 discussions stressed the importance and the need for greater transparency regarding nuclear arsenals and measures to safeguard them.
5. While acknowledging that some Nuclear Weapon States are providing greater levels of information and transparency than others, the levels of information provided remains insufficient and uneven. Adoption of the common reporting template already developed and

proposed by the NPDI, would encourage best practice and ensure that all Nuclear Weapon States provide the same and better levels of information.

6. While building and expanding on the reporting commitments undertaken in the context of the NPT was one option which was shared by those who spoke, another useful recommendation made by many States related to the possibility of developing measures on transparency which could be adopted also by those Nuclear Weapon States outside the NPT. Ireland supports such calls and looks forward to full engagement with the Nuclear Weapon Possessor States on this important issue. We believe that this should be one of the key out workings of this OEWG leading to clear and concrete recommendations in the Final Report.
7. In February, we also received detailed, well-documented and disquieting presentations from experts on the current level of risk and the need for urgent action. We all know and agree that the only action which can truly address the risk is the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons. However, given that this is likely to take some time to achieve, mitigation against current risk levels must be put in place as a matter of urgency.
8. The risk of a nuclear detonation, either by accident or on purpose, is probably higher now than it ever was. Indefinite retention means inevitable catastrophe. The longer nuclear weapons remain and the more complacency there is about them, the more likely it is that an accident will occur. There have been numerous documented near-misses and these are just the incidents that became public knowledge.
9. A particular risk which Ireland would wish to highlight is in the area of growing automation of weapons systems, an issue which is currently the subject of considerable attention in the Conventional Weapons field. In view of the evidence that many accidental nuclear weapon detonations were avoided in the past largely due to human agency and intervention, this is an area of increased risk which needs to be highlighted also in regard to the continued reliance on nuclear weapons in security doctrines.
10. While we value all efforts at enhanced nuclear safety and welcome moves towards risk reduction and greater transparency, we believe that it is also important to underline that addressing the risks should not serve to suggest any support for the indefinite retention of the core cause. Most recently, we witnessed the Nuclear Security Summit in Washington

acknowledge all of the risks inherent in nuclear material. However, the discussions took place in the context of the safest ways to continue holding onto nuclear weapons.

11. Every day that nuclear weapons continue to exist is a day when they could potentially be detonated, either on purpose or by accident or accessed by rogue actors. Regrettably, the level of interest and attention being directed at nuclear disarmament, at national and international levels, remains in stark contrast with the urgency surrounding this level of risk.
12. An important and integral part of the work of this OEWG has to be in the area of increasing awareness and generating informed public and political concern, both in order to address current risks but also to mobilise action for future change.
13. In this respect Ireland has been particularly active with regard to the question of raising awareness in relation to the gendered impact of ionising radiation. Ireland believes it is vitally important to continue raising awareness and contributing to knowledge around this hitherto little appreciated aspect of nuclear weapons use. A nuclear detonation of any size will impact hugely on all human beings exposed to its radiation, but more so on women than on men and on girl children more than boy children. This aspect of these weapons needs greater visibility and Ireland hopes that the OEWG final recommendations will reflect the importance of this matter.
14. The Economist Intelligence Unit/EIU global forecast in March made for stark reading, with a focus on rising international tensions and the very real potential for escalation, coupled with the possibilities of accidents and miscalculations. In addition, we see the increasing prominence of nuclear weapons in security doctrines and ongoing significant investment in modernisation, much of which would have the effect of actually making it easier to use nuclear weapons. Against such a backdrop, the deliberations of this OEWG are both timely and pressing.
15. Last year saw two ground breaking international agreements, one on the Sustainable Development Goals and one on Climate, examples of what is possible when we work together, face up to reality and focus on the future. But those agreements exist under the shadow of a potential nuclear detonation, which puts their success at risk. This is a small planet, getting smaller every day. Our concept of the world as a vast and unconnected place has shifted to

one where everything is interlinked. In such a world, multilateralism plays a key role and questions of security impact not just nationally but on us all.

16. Therefore, in terms of the sustainability of our planet and collective human security, there has never been a greater need for more joined-up thinking and global governance. Good progress was made with the SDGs and the Climate Agreement. But these agreements are overshadowed by the lack of progress on nuclear disarmament and all of their objectives are threatened by the risks associated with the continued existence of and reliance on nuclear arsenals.
17. In this context, nuclear disarmament is not a side issue; it is not a technical or specialist debate and it should not be addressed as such. This issue is in fact an integral and horizontal one which has the potential to impact on all citizens and which therefore needs to be integrated with policy making in all other areas which have a global impact. Whatever the issue that concerns us, be it migration or food security, cyber terrorism or global warming, human rights or gender equality, the potential negative impact is heightened by the complicating factor of nuclear weapons.
18. With all of this in mind and in order to contribute substantively to this session, Ireland has been pleased to commission a new consultation paper from Chatham House, setting out how nuclear disarmament is essentially the missing piece in the global governance jigsaw and why and how this must be addressed now.
19. The key points which we would wish to highlight from that research are as follows. The paper presents nuclear disarmament as a fundamentally interconnected issue. This is a time of great challenge, on the global stage, for nations and for all of humanity. It is therefore a time for leadership and a time to accept our international obligations, our commitments and our responsibilities. Nuclear disarmament must be viewed in a global context and if we are genuinely concerned about the sustainability of the planet then we need to be equally concerned about nuclear issues. Therefore, the commitments we make under other international agreements also impact on the commitments we must make, and must fulfil, around nuclear disarmament.

20. It is time to embed nuclear disarmament as a horizontal issue, recognising its impacts on broader rights and entitlements, as well as on obligations and responsibility. We need to generate informed public concern, which in turn will serve to drive the necessary political will.
21. More joined up multilateralism, which includes a greater understanding of the comprehensive and interconnected nature of our international obligations and how nuclear disarmament is inextricably linked, will lead ultimately to this being rightly treated as a horizontal, top table, global governance issue.
22. The paper sets out the ways in which nuclear weapons would have disastrous impacts on a whole set of issues in which the possibility of nuclear weapons use is not currently discussed or factored in to policy-making. These top-table issues include: the SDGs, Climate Change, the Environment, Development, Gender, Children's Rights, Protection of Cultural Heritage, Public Health, Non-State Armed Groups, Humanitarian Action and Cyber Security.
23. The paper makes the case that those who are concerned about the survivability of the planet and the betterment of humanity, need to be equally concerned about nuclear weapons. The international commitments and obligations that countries have made on those top-table issues need to be explicitly linked to the international commitments and obligations on nuclear weapons and the disappointing lack of action on same. Leaving nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation obligations unfulfilled will have severe impact on all the efforts underway to address climate and environmental issues, SDG implementation and other measures.
24. The paper reaches a number of important conclusions that should resonate beyond this OEWG and into the wider policy arena. These include: connecting expert and diplomatic communities across the range of issues to yield new perspectives, synergies and practical ideas, following through on the links between disarmament and development, recognising the vital role of women in disarmament, acting on the connection between nuclear disarmament and the protection of cultural heritage, renewing action between the nuclear disarmament community and public health experts, joining the dots between nuclear disarmament and nuclear safety, exposing the cyber vulnerabilities not just of civilian nuclear material but that in material use and using the World Humanitarian Summit as a model of how nuclear disarmament can take its place among the most significant global challenges of our time.

25. The paper suggests that progress, or the lack of it, on nuclear disarmament should be factored in to monitoring progress on the SDGs and that experts and officials working on global threats would benefit from including nuclear disarmament in their perspective and that all of these issues should be taken forward by the UN in a cross-sectoral approach, including joint studies, working papers, meetings and exchanges of knowledge between relevant Committees.
26. The paper also proposes that the vulnerabilities and risks associated with nuclear weapons be taken into account in all security and emergency planning and that a response to a nuclear detonation should be included in all risk management and mitigation processes, as well as recommending an examination of the capacity for a humanitarian response to such a nuclear detonation and noting the particular responsibility of the nuclear weapon states and those who have nuclear weapons on their territory, in this regard.
27. Fundamentally, the consultation paper supports Ireland's view that nuclear disarmament and the legal framework pertaining to it can therefore be truly characterised as the missing piece of the global governance jigsaw.
28. Ireland hopes that participants in the OEWG will share our view, supported by the consultation paper, on the need for an enhanced awareness of the interconnected nature of the nuclear disarmament agenda and the importance of elevating this to the highest levels of our global governance. This is no time for business as usual, this is a time for informed concern and for collective action.
29. We would like to see this approach discussed further at the OEWG and reflected in the recommendations contained in the Final Report.

IRELAND

7 April 2016