

Statement on the 2005 NPT Review Conference and Beyond

April 5, 2005

Thirty-five years ago, the nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) set into place one of the most important international security bargains of all time: states without nuclear weapons pledged not to acquire them, while nuclear-armed states committed to eventually give them up. At the same time, the NPT allowed for the peaceful use of nuclear technology by non-nuclear-weapon states under strict and verifiable control.

Over the years, the NPT security framework has led several states to abandon their nuclear weapons ambitions and has made it far more difficult for other non-nuclear-weapon states to acquire the material and technology needed to build such weapons or to avoid detection of a covert nuclear weapons program. The NPT process also has encouraged action on several nuclear arms control initiatives and led the nuclear-weapon states to pledge not to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon NPT members, thereby reducing incentives for others to seek nuclear arms for prestige or defense.

Today's security environment requires an even more comprehensive and robust global nonproliferation strategy. The NPT's future success depends on universal compliance with tighter rules to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons, more effective regional security strategies, and renewed progress toward fulfillment of the nuclear-weapon states' NPT disarmament obligations.

We call upon all states-parties to recommit themselves to the legal and political obligations established by the treaty and successive NPT Review Conferences, as well as agree on a specific and balanced program of action to strengthen treaty implementation and compliance.

Since the 2000 Review Conference, the nuclear threat has evolved in dangerous ways and the global nonproliferation system faces difficult challenges. We have seen new and more deadly forms of terrorism, wars, nuclear black markets, states cheating on the NPT, and even one, North Korea, announcing its withdrawal from the treaty. Perhaps today's greatest threat stems from the existing global stockpiles of highly enriched uranium and plutonium, the fissile materials that are the fuel of nuclear bombs. These materials remain far too accessible to terrorists as a result of inadequate security and accounting at nuclear facilities throughout the former Soviet republics and in dozens of other countries.

Another significant concern is that additional countries could acquire the capacity to produce fissile materials and manufacture nuclear weapons under the guise of "peaceful" nuclear endeavors. North Korea may already have manufactured a small nuclear weapons arsenal. Iran may soon have the capacity to produce fissile material for weapons and may do so if current European diplomatic efforts falter. As the NPT has been interpreted, countries can acquire technologies that bring them to the very brink of a nuclear weapons capability without explicitly violating the agreement, and can then leave the treaty without penalty unless the United Nations Security Council takes action.

Fifteen years after the end of the Cold War, the majority of countries also feel that the five original nuclear-weapon states do not intend to pursue their NPT-related nuclear disarmament commitments. That growing conviction—reinforced by lackluster progress on disarmament—erodes the willingness

among certain states in the non-nuclear-weapon majority to fulfill their own treaty obligations, much less to agree to strengthen the regime.

For all these reasons, there are rising doubts about the sustainability of the nonproliferation regime. Nations with ample technological ability to develop nuclear weapons may be reconsidering their political decisions not to do so. As the United Nation's recent High-Level Panel Report *A More Secure World* concludes: "We are approaching a point at which the erosion of the nonproliferation regime could become irreversible and result in a cascade of proliferation."

The global nuclear threat cannot be reduced without stronger international leadership and cooperation.

Consequently, the United States and other countries should pursue a comprehensive and balanced approach beginning with the 2005 NPT Review Conference. They should:

1. Agree to establish more effective controls on technologies that can be used to produce materials for nuclear weapons.
2. Expand the ability of the International Atomic Energy Agency to inspect and monitor compliance with nonproliferation rules and standards through existing authority and the Additional Protocol, to which all states should adhere.
3. Conduct vigorous diplomacy to halt uranium-enrichment and other sensitive nuclear fuel cycle activities in Iran and dismantle North Korea's nuclear weapons capacity, as well as diplomacy designed to address the underlying regional security problems in Northeast Asia, South Asia, and the Middle East, which would facilitate nonproliferation and disarmament efforts in those regions.
4. Accelerate implementation of the nuclear-weapon states' disarmament obligations and commitments, including further reducing the alert status and size of their nuclear stockpiles, permanently barring nuclear test explosions and the production of fissile materials for weapons, refraining from development of new nuclear weapons, and reaffirming existing assurances to NPT non-nuclear-weapon states that they will not be subjected to nuclear attack. These steps would reduce the risk of nuclear war and the allure of nuclear weapons.
5. Secure all nuclear-weapons-usable material to the highest standards to prevent access by terrorists or other states by expanding programs to secure and eliminate these materials, halting the use of highly enriched uranium in civilian reactors, and strengthening national and international export controls and material security measures as required by UN Resolution 1540.
6. Clarify that no state may withdraw from the treaty and escape responsibility for prior violations of the treaty or retain access to controlled materials and equipment acquired for "peaceful" purposes.

The May 2005 Review Conference is a crucial forum for parties to measure progress—or lack of progress—in implementing their mutual NPT obligations and commitments. It is also an essential opportunity for

the parties to demonstrate their political will to make further tangible progress to meet all of the treaty's objectives. The success of the conference should be judged by the ability of the parties to agree on specific, additional steps that will strengthen the treaty regime. The security of the international community demands no less.

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