Statement on Nuclear Disarmament

UN General Assembly, 74th Session, First Committee
delivered by
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Permanent representative to the Conference on Disarmament

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Germany is fully aligned with the EU statement.

Excellencies, colleagues,

- Next year we are celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Non-Proliferation Treaty – a landmark treaty and a success story of multilateralism. We all know: This treaty is at a critical juncture.

- Geopolitical shifts and technological developments are transforming the strategic landscape. They need to be taken into account and addressed.

- But while the security environment evolves, our political commitments stand firm. Germany remains committed to the full spectrum of objectives laid down in the in NPT and related engagement, notably the 2010 Action Plan.

- Proliferation crises continue to demand our fullest resolve.

- North Korea’s ballistic missile tests constitute flagrant violations of UNSC resolutions. Opposing these provocations is a matter of credibility for the NPT and the global non-proliferation efforts at large.

- We condemn these tests and we remain fully supportive of US efforts to establish negotiations with North Korea. As chair of the 1718 Committee we are working hard to make sure sanctions are fully and duly implemented.

- Only by credibly embarking on the path to complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization can North Korea regain the trust of the international community and expect sanctions relief.
• Germany remains fully committed to the preservation and full implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) by all sides. The nuclear agreement is an important contribution to the global non-proliferation regime.

• We are deeply concerned about Iran’s decision to no longer implement some of the central nuclear-related provisions laid down in the JCPOA. We urge Iran to return to full compliance without delay. Full implementation of all provisions contained in UNSCR 2231 by Iran, including Annex B, is essential.

• The IAEA’s system of safeguards is a fundamental component of the nuclear non-proliferation regime. Comprehensive Safeguards Agreements along with the Additional Protocol constitute the current IAEA verification standard and we strongly support its universalisation.

Excellencies, colleagues,

• Germany remains fully committed to the goal of a world without nuclear weapons. We are convinced that this objective can be reached through concrete cooperative steps, building on dialogue between NWS and NNWS.

• That is why, in April, Foreign Minister Heiko Maas has brought the issue to the Security Council. And that is why we strongly support the Swedish Initiative to reinvigorate nuclear disarmament under the NPT. The Foreign Ministers of the Stockholm group are invited to Berlin next year to amplify the message.

• Progress in nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation are clearly intertwined. Without steady progress towards nuclear disarmament, incentives to seek nuclear weapons will persist – and in the long run grow.

• It would be unreasonable to deny that effect and not to act accordingly.

• What we need at this stage is a realistic roadmap leading our way back to nuclear disarmament. Foreign Minister Maas has pointed out, at the April Security Council meeting, where we see the stepping stones.

• First: We must reduce the risks of inadvertent escalation.

• A conflict-prone environment with new tensions, rapid technological change and a blurring of lines between the nuclear and non-nuclear realm, urgently calls for a set of concrete risk reduction measures.

• Maximum transparency on arsenals and a dialogue on doctrines that includes non-nuclear weapon States should be on the top of such agenda. NWS must better explain ambiguities, and remove them where they are misleading.
We therefore welcome the transparency reports submitted by the UK and China. We notably recognize the UK’s active engagement on discussing their nuclear force posture. We encourage others to follow suit.

Transparency is a flagship issue for the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative (NPDI), which Germany belongs to. The NPDI has thus developed a standard reporting template on transparency and encourages all NPT States Parties to refer to this template in fulfilling reporting duties.

In view of building bridges between nuclear-weapons and non-nuclear-weapons states, the NPDI sustains a regular dialogue with the P5. In particular - as in the previous review cycle -, the NPDI is planning to engage with all P5 on their transparency reports. We have begun this process with the UK and China.

In the current environment restraint can significantly contribute to stability.

The P5 should do their utmost to dispel concerns that have re-occurred about a growing role of nuclear weapons in strategies and doctrines. A nuclear war must never be fought. The P5 should also reaffirm, formalize and tighten the negative security assurances given to non-nuclear weapons States.

Strategic risk reduction should facilitate nuclear disarmament not replace it. We therefore welcome the working strand on risk reduction in the CEND initiative. We are ready to contribute to this process as co-chair with Finland.

Second: We must lay the ground for a world without nuclear weapons. In particular, we see a real value-added in carrying forward our practical work in the field nuclear disarmament verification.

How can NNWS verify nuclear warhead dismantlement without gaining knowledge about the nuclear device? Providing solid answers to such questions is a prerequisite for any major steps in nuclear disarmament.

Together with France we just conducted a practical exercise bringing us closer to such answers. We look forward to presenting you with the first findings from the NuDiVe exercise in the margins of the First Committee.

Last but not least: The erosion of the nuclear arms control architecture must be reversed. Numerous arrangements are tied into the NPT. Together, they form an invaluable network of mutually reinforcing commitments.

Unfortunately, the violation and subsequent end of the INF treaty has been a detrimental signal as far as the compliance to and preservation of the international nuclear arms architecture is concerned.
• New START has reduced the two largest nuclear arsenals, containing a global nuclear arms race. It has set a verification standard, significantly enhancing transparency and stabilizing strategic relations. And it underpins the biggest nuclear powers' commitment to Article VI.

• We therefore call on the US and Russia to show leadership by extending New START and subsequently adjusting it to new developments. The future of New START is a litmus test for nuclear disarmament under the NPT.

• On FMCT we have been biding time for far too long. It is high time that we start negotiations. Differences on certain aspects must no longer serve as a pretext not to move forward. We welcome that the P5 have put FMCT on their agenda and we encourage courageous steps to that end.

• Finally, we renew our call on all States that have not signed and ratified the CTBT to show leadership and do so. As CTBT co-coordinator we will spare no efforts in promoting the treaty's entry into force. Nuclear testing must be a thing of the past. The road to Global Zero leads through a universal test ban.

Excellencies, colleagues,

• It has often been said: The wisdom of the NPT lies in its carefully balanced pillars. It was on the basis that the NPT came into being. It was on that basis that major achievements were made in curbing proliferation, bringing nuclear arsenals down from cold-war levels and spreading the benefits of nuclear technology.

• Only on that basis, by steadily engaging on all three pillars, can we add more chapters to the success story of the NPT.

Thank you.