Pugwash Statement to the 2nd PrepCom of the 2020 NPT RevCon, 25 April 2018

We face an increasingly unstable international environment in which the salience of nuclear weapons has been renewed and the possibility of their use has been dangerously increased.

Despite some limited progress by the two largest possessor states on reducing their stockpiles, the risk of a resumption of an arms race has grown considerably. Attempts to broaden the usability of nuclear weapons have been coupled with qualitative and quantitative upgrades to nuclear arsenals. Some nuclear doctrines have moved further away from the course of disarmament, against the wishes of most states of the global community.

We have witnessed a worrisome deterioration of relations between the major powers, a hardening of postures, and growing confrontation, with the resulting reduction of room for understanding. Furthermore, we see erosion of respect for universal legal norms, starting with the fundamental norms in the UN Charter, which should govern relations among sovereign states. Such a situation risks undermining global security as well as one of its cornerstones, the NPT. Urgent steps are needed to reverse these dangerous trends.

The NPT is confronted by proliferation crises in areas of nuclear risk. In North East and South Asia, these are deeply linked to wider security dynamics that must be addressed through dialogue. On the same level, challenges to the JCPOA represent an unacceptable risk and are detrimental to what has been a significant achievement of previous years. All states are responsible for preserving its success.

The maintenance of solid conditions of lasting peace and security for all through cooperation is in the interest of all. Efforts by adversaries to discuss their differences should be praised and supported by the international community as a whole, under the aegis of the UN and in accordance with the Principles and Purposes of the Charter. Enlightened statesmen and women know that narrow national interests cannot prevail over the general interest of humankind.

The non-proliferation regime is indeed under threat. The success of the 2020 Review Conference depends on the willingness of all states to work cooperatively and in good faith to preserve the existing achievements and to look forward in agreeing further progress toward nuclear disarmament.

We call for renewed dialogue on nuclear issues, both to preserve the existing limitations and create new ones, including various confidence building measures and further reductions. States must seek to ensure the proper use of existing negotiating mechanisms, energizing the disarmament machinery. In particular, we call upon all states participating in this process to strive to identify and exploit complementarities between the NPT and the Nuclear Ban Treaty, rather than looking for and exploiting possible antagonisms.

The international community cannot allow the next Review Conference to fail in a similar manner, or worse, than it did in 2015. Political will must be forged to identify key steps, acceptable to all states, that pushes forward both the nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament agendas in parallel.