



ABOLITION 2000

GLOBAL NETWORK TO ELIMINATE NUCLEAR WEAPONS
NO NUKES, NO WAR

January 6, 2022

‘Nuke-Speak’ Should be Turned into Real Action to Prevent Nuclear War, End the Nuclear Arms Race, and Eliminate Nuclear Weapons

Abolition 2000ⁱ Global Council response to the Joint Statement of the Leaders of the Five Nuclear-Weapons States on Preventing Nuclear War and Avoiding Arms Racesⁱⁱ

The affirmation made by the five Nuclear-Weapon States Parties to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in their Joint Statement of 3 January 2022, that “a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought” should be followed up by genuine action by them to change current nuclear-war fighting policies, end the costly and destabilizing nuclear arms race, and eliminate nuclear weapons.

We welcome the first two sentences of the Joint Statement, which was released on what would have been the eve of the 10th Review Conference of the NPT, now postponed for the fourth time due to the ongoing pandemic:

“The People’s Republic of China, the French Republic, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America consider the avoidance of war between Nuclear-Weapon States and the reduction of strategic risks as our foremost responsibilities.

We affirm that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought.”

To our dismay, this is immediately followed by: “[W]e also affirm that nuclear weapons—for as long as they continue to exist—should serve defensive purposes, deter aggression, and prevent war.” This reflects the reality that most of the nuclear-armed states maintain first use/first strike doctrines, and on one or more occasions during international crises and wars have prepared and/or threatened to initiate nuclear war. The inconvenient truth is that nuclear weapons will continue to exist as long as nuclear-armed states continue to cling to the dangerous doctrine of “nuclear deterrence” – the threatened use of nuclear weapons.

We are glad to see this in the statement: “We remain committed to our Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) obligations, including our Article VI obligation ‘to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament...’.” But we are hardly reassured. More than 50 years after the NPT entered into force, the behavior of the NPT Nuclear-Weapon States points in the opposite direction.



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All of the nuclear-armed states, including the four outside the NPT (India, Israel, Pakistan, and North Korea) are engaged in costly programs to qualitatively upgrade and in some cases quantitatively increase their nuclear arsenals. Despite the reassuring-sounding words in the Statement, that “We intend to continue seeking bilateral and multilateral diplomatic approaches to avoid military confrontations, strengthen stability and predictability, increase mutual understanding and confidence, and prevent an arms race that would benefit none and endanger all,” the reality is that a new nuclear arms race is already underway. This time it is compounded by offensive cyber capabilities, artificial intelligence, developing hypersonic capacities, a return to intermediate-range delivery systems, and the production of delivery systems capable of carrying either conventional or nuclear payloads.

In 2010, the NPT States Parties agreed by consensus to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in security strategies. Twelve years later the opposite is true; that role has been expanded. The scale and tempo of war games by nuclear-armed states and their allies, including nuclear drills, is increasing. Ongoing missile tests, and frequent close encounters between military forces of nuclear-armed states exacerbate nuclear dangers. With potential flashpoints over Ukraine and Taiwan, the risk of another use of nuclear weapons is as high as it has ever been. The nuclear disarmament process is stalled, and the five NPT Nuclear-Weapon States cannot credibly claim they are meeting their NPT Article VI obligations.

Their statement hypocritically declares: “We underline our desire to work with all states to create a security environment more conducive to progress on disarmament with the ultimate goal of a world without nuclear weapons with undiminished security for all.” This is a recipe for indefinite delay. As the South African representative told the Security Council in 2019: “While we are aware that some States are arguing for the creation of a so-called special environment for nuclear disarmament, it is our view that this was already established with the entry into force of the NPT on the basis of its ‘grand bargain’.”

The 2010 NPT Review Conference affirmed “that all States need to make special efforts to establish the necessary framework to achieve and maintain a world without nuclear weapons.” Non-nuclear-armed states have undertaken such efforts including by establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones and by negotiating the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), which entered into force in 2021. Yet the five NPT Nuclear-Weapon States have resolutely rejected the TPNW and they refuse to recognize its legitimacy.

In George Orwell’s novel “1984,” Newspeak words/phrases were created by the government to placate the public and disguise the reality which was often the opposite of those words/phrases. It is well past time for the five NPT Nuclear-Weapon States to stop issuing Orwellian “nuke-speak” statements and commence negotiations in good faith on elimination of their nuclear arsenals. Possible pathways include:



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- negotiation of a framework agreement which includes the legal commitment to achieve a nuclear-weapon-free world, identifies the measures and pathways required in general terms, and provides a process for agreeing on details over time;
- negotiation of protocols to the TPNW which nuclear armed and allied states would sign as part of a process for them to join the TPNW and build the nuclear destruction, elimination, verification and compliance process through the TPNW;
- negotiation of a comprehensive nuclear weapons convention or package of agreements.

There are important choices to be made about the path to abolition of nuclear arms. But what is most critical is that the process of negotiating the elimination of nuclear weapons begin immediately, without further delay.

ⁱ [Abolition 2000](#) is a global network of civil society organizations established in 1995 to promote negotiations on a Nuclear Weapons Convention (NWC) which would prohibit and eliminate nuclear weapons.

ⁱⁱ [Joint Statement of the Leaders of the Five Nuclear-Weapon States on Preventing Nuclear War and Avoiding Arms Races | The White House](#)