

Red Flag from Nuclear Powers

We should give nuclear powers their due. They conducted a targeted work to reduce the number of States participating in the second session of the Conference to prohibit nuclear weapons, which started on June 15 in New York and will last three weeks, until July 7.

As the second world chess champion Emanuel Lasker said, “*You can only get smarter by playing a smarter opponent*”.

The nuclear five – the United States, United Kingdom, France, Russia, China – is an experienced player. Each their move is subject to careful analysis and appropriate lessons should be drawn from them.

And if, nevertheless, the states, despite the fierce silent resistance of the nuclear powers and their allies, can agree on a draft convention on the prohibition of nuclear weapons, the **first day of the negotiations showed another their red flag – the Netherlands**.

In principle, even at the first session of the Conference in March, the participation of the Netherlands, NATO member state, which hosts nuclear weapons on its territory, looked strange, at least against the backdrop of the boycott by the nuclear powers.

However, at that time there were still “*logical reasons*” why the Netherlands was participating in the first session of the Conference in order not to “*spoil*” its chairmanship at the first meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the NPT Review Conference held in May, 2017, in Vienna.

On the first day of the Conference, on June 15, 2017, **the Netherlands** again, like in March, said that they **can only support the draft Convention if it will not contradict their obligations within NATO** (*laughter in the conference room*).

After that, they were tactfully silent the whole day.

This position was confirmed by Netherlands at the second day of the Conference.

It is obvious that the next time we will hear the voice of the Netherlands, when the issue of approving the draft Convention arises. And, no doubt, they will oppose and demand voting.

The participating States of the Conference need to understand right now that they may forget **about the adoption of the document based on a consensus**.

It is one thing for a small state, responding to the nuclear powers' claims, to shrug the shoulders and say that “*our business is small, we could not go against consensus*”, and quite another – to press the button “*in favor*”, looking in the eyes of the nuclear powers.

This will be the next powerful wave of pressure from the nuclear five, so that states, under any pretext, could find an opportunity to “*abstain*” or vote “*against*” the approval of the draft Convention.

And to withstand, we must get ready for it now...

Alimzhan Akhmetov,
Director of the Center for International Security and Policy,
Kazakhstan