

Human Security Post 2015 NPT Review Conference: A Seminar Report by IPB Staff

Background

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) is widely considered to be a cornerstone of international security. As is well known, in May 2015, its 191 states party failed to agree on an outcome at their five-yearly Review Conference in New York; in addition, the Iranian nuclear talks are at a critical juncture. In order to face these challenges, and others arising worldwide (such as ISIS-ISIL, Ukraine, Syria, cyber attacks,...) the international community has to find new ways to resolve dangerous conflicts.

On 18th June, 2015, *United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research* and the Moscow-based *PIR Center* in cooperation with *Centre russe d'études politiques* chaired a panel of experts, followed by a discussion in the CD Council Chamber at the Palais des Nations, in Geneva. The panel of experts considered the question: *Where does the 2015 failure leave nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation efforts, and what lies ahead?*

Problems

The general consensus was clear: the 2015 NPT Review Conference did not contribute to improving the current situation. The different measures required by the Treaty, and the Review process, even if creating relative political pressure, don't seem to be working and the Review Conference outcome is an indicator of how blocked the process is. In fact, past Review conferences never reached their ambitious aims. In 1995, when the treaty was extended indefinitely, states endorsed the establishment of a WMD-free zone in the Middle East. This has not been implemented so far. In 2010, the new START treaty was just signed, and delegations came with such high expectations that the result was not sustainable. All the speakers agreed that as a result of the 2015 Review Conference, the NPT process is paralyzed.

According to them, two main malfunctions appeared at the meeting in New York. One is the paper failure, as we know that the final document proposed at the end of the conference was rejected by Canada, the USA and the UK. The tensions around the disarmament pillar were so strong that it blocked the whole agreement and caused the other pillars to be neglected. Mr. Andrey Baklitskiy from the PIR Center mentioned nuclear security, which was not discussed a great deal during the conference even though it represents a serious threat today, especially with the growth of dangerous non-State actors. The lack of legal and technical framework to deal with such concerns is alarming, but the debate was set aside. Furthermore, as indicated by Dr. Vladimir Orlov of the PIR Center, the emphasis on the disarmament issue made the parties forget about other pillars, such as peaceful nuclear energy.

Besides commenting on the paper failure, they stressed the bad spirit that permeated the conference. For Dr. Vladimir Orlov, the Conference saw a confrontation between the USA and the Russian Federation, unprecedented since the end of the Cold War. Meanwhile, the European security climate has deteriorated and the tensions in East Asia are increasing. The stagnation of the process is a sign of the deep crisis of multilateral disarmament, and he deplored the behavior of the states which during negotiations. Dr Rebecca Johnson, founder of the Acronym Institute

for Disarmament Diplomacy, made the same observation and accused the governments of coming not to eliminate nuclear weapons, but to defend their own interests on the international stage. In her view, the Conference encountered two kinds of problems: political, and systemic/institutional. The Cold War has ended but the NPT Review conference, like many other institutions, is a place where we observe a range of power struggles. A process of reduction of nuclear weapons has been launched since the end of the Cold War, but it is undermined by a process of constant modernization.

Solutions

Rather than dwelling on a conference which was agreed by all to be a failure, the panel made several suggestions about how to move forward. Dr. Vladimir Orlov emphasized the need for creating measures to prevent nuclear accidents and pointed to PIR's recommendation that nuclear states, at the minimum, do not increase their existing arsenals. Mr. Andrey Baklitskiy focused on nuclear security, calling for a set of mechanisms to evaluate the security of nuclear facilities and for agreements to prevent cyber attacks on them.

Dr. Rebecca Johnson pointed out that the topic of nuclear prohibition, not simply nuclear non-proliferation, must be brought into serious consideration and that non-nuclear states must have equal participation with nuclear possessors in disarmament discussions. She urged both Russia and the United States to remove and store all of their short-range nuclear weapons. Dr. John Borrie, of UNIDIR, echoed some of the sentiments of previous panelists and entreated the international community to think outside the framework of the NPT and the Conference on Disarmament, welcoming new initiatives to combat the deadlock that has pervaded both the Conference on Disarmament and the NPT process in recent years.

Connection

An exciting aspect of the panel discussion came with further remarks by Dr. Rebecca Johnson. Focusing on nuclear disarmament and its effect on human security, Dr. Johnson argued how weapons continue to hinder human security and the link between the two topics is critical. She stressed that the humanitarian narrative has the interest of everyone in mind and the majority of countries desire to take the nuclear disarmament process forward in order to enhance their own, and global, human security.

Dr. Johnson's point substantiates the argument of the Global Campaign on Military Spending (GCOMS) that IPB has been helping to advance in the framework of Disarmament for Development. In line with Dr. Johnson's words, IPB, and in our view the majority of the global community, believes that reallocating the time, talent, and resources that go into creating and maintaining nuclear weapons detracts from the effort to develop a more secure world. To find a real solution, Mr. Andrey Baklitskiy reiterated that the strategic stability and humanitarian constituencies are interconnected. Thus, the dialogue between the two must continue to be promoted. For as Dr. Johnson emphatically concluded, "As humanity, we will sink or swim together."

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Web Resources:

UNIDIR: <http://www.unidir.ch>

Acronym Institute for Disarmament Diplomacy: <http://www.acronym.org.uk>

PIR Center: <http://www.pircenter.org/en/>