

**Preparatory Committee for the 2005 Review
Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the
Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons**

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"Reductions of non-strategic nuclear weapons"

**Working paper submitted by
Austria, Mexico and Sweden**

The current situation

1. Nuclear weapons are a global concern. While international nuclear arms control and disarmament efforts have focused on strategic nuclear weapons, non-strategic nuclear weapons have been neglected. Non-strategic or tactical nuclear weapons pose threats and create risks that arguably are on par with those created by strategic nuclear weapons. Their portability, proximity to areas of conflict and high probability of pre-delegation in case of military conflict increase the risk of proliferation and of early, pre-emptive, unauthorised or accidental use. They can be more easily and frequently transported than strategic nuclear weapons and often do not have the same safety and security features.
2. The character of non-strategic nuclear weapons is such that it could lead military planners to treat them as another means of warfare, or "battlefield weapons" as they are sometimes referred to. Low-yield non-strategic nuclear weapons are by some considered less destructive, and thus "usable" and "justified". They are seen as weapons to target and destroy mobile as well as hardened and deeply buried targets. There are indications of plans of developing new types of these weapons - despite the development of conventional weapons for similar purposes. At the same time, tactical nuclear weapons could be seen as a counter to conventional forces - especially if resources are lacking to advance and modernise conventional weapons' systems. Efforts to erase the distinction between conventional weapons and non-strategic nuclear weapons could lead to the threshold against the use of nuclear weapons being lowered.
3. One objective is to prevent the spread of weapons of mass destruction, particular nuclear weapons, to terrorists. Non-strategic nuclear weapons could be appealing to terrorists due to their relatively small size and the availability on the international market of delivery systems



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for such weapons. Non-strategic nuclear weapons with less sophisticated safety and security devices present particular risks in terms of theft. The search of means to combat international terrorism and to help prevent future terrorist acts from being carried out with weapons of mass destruction has only highlighted the importance of nuclear disarmament and the relevance and objective of the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

4. Due to the lack of transparency, general knowledge about the current situation on non-strategic nuclear weapons throughout the world is limited. The exact numbers and locations of existing weapons, operational and in storage are unknown. Estimates range between 7,000 and 20,000, depending on definitions. The estimated number of systems that could deliver non-strategic nuclear warheads furthermore seems to be greater than the estimated number for strategic nuclear weapons.

Commitments

5. Nuclear weapons, including non-strategic nuclear weapons, are still part of states' national security or defence strategies, despite commitments made in 2000 by all States Parties to the NPT to take steps to diminish the role of nuclear weapons in security policies, to minimise the risk of those weapons ever being used and to facilitate the process of their total elimination.

6. The only specific framework for non-strategic nuclear weapons is comprised of the 1991/92 presidential initiatives or declarations. The first presidential declaration was made by President George Bush on 27 September 1991 in which he committed the United States to eliminate its entire arsenal of ground-based short-range nuclear weapons and to withdraw all non-strategic nuclear weapons from surface ships, attack submarines and ground-based naval aircraft, with part of those slated for storage and the rest for elimination. President Michail Gorbachev on 5 October replied that the Soviet Union would eliminate all its nuclear artillery shells, nuclear warheads for tactical missiles and nuclear mines. It would also remove nuclear warheads of anti-aircraft missiles from the army, store them in central bases and destroy parts of them. Furthermore, all non-strategic nuclear weapons from surface ships and multi-purpose submarines would be removed. These weapons, as well as weapons from ground-based naval aircraft, would be placed in central storage areas and parts of them would be dismantled. In 1992, President Yeltsin reaffirmed the prior Soviet commitment and also committed the Russian Federation to eliminate one third of its sea-based non-strategic nuclear weapons and one half of its nuclear warheads for anti-aircraft missiles and stocks of air-launched non-strategic nuclear munitions.

7. These three presidential declarations are not legally binding, but rather political commitments. There is no common understanding regarding the implementation of the initiatives and there is no mechanism for exchange of information or for the verification of compliance. Exchanges of information have taken place and were of an ad hoc nature and reportedly were inadequate. This makes it difficult to monitor progress in the dismantlement and disarmament process. Since the existing framework is informal and based on unilateral

declarations, it is possible to withdraw from the stated intentions at any time without prior notification. Both sides already have postponed the completion of elimination under the 1991/92 declarations.

8. In the 1997 Helsinki Statement, the Russian Federation and the United States expressed willingness to discuss non-strategic nuclear weapons in talks to be held in the context of the START III-negotiations. With the START-process abandoned, no formal process for discussions on non-strategic nuclear weapons remains in place.

9. At the 2000 NPT Review Conference, States Parties agreed on a number of steps by all nuclear-weapons states leading to nuclear disarmament in a way that promotes international stability. One of these steps was the further reduction of non-strategic nuclear weapons based on unilateral initiatives and as an integral part of the nuclear arms reduction and disarmament process. The nuclear-weapons states thus have this commitment to live up to.

10. In 2002, the UNGA adopted resolution 57/58 entitled "Reduction of non-strategic nuclear weapons" reiterating that it is the particular responsibility of the nuclear-weapons states for transparent, verifiable and irreversible reductions of nuclear weapons, leading to nuclear disarmament, and calling upon the Russian Federation and the United States of America to formalise their presidential nuclear initiatives into legal instruments and to initiate negotiations on further effectively verifiable reductions of their nuclear arsenals.

The Way Ahead

11. An embryo of a framework on non-strategic nuclear weapons exists with the 1991/92 presidential declarations. This framework could be further developed and strengthened. For example, the United States and the Russian Federation could reaffirm their continued commitment to the declarations. The declarations could be codified into a legally binding treaty and mutually agreed guidelines for the implementation could be adopted. This framework could be used to help the Russian Federation acquire resources to implement the remaining part of its 1991/92 commitments. It could also be used for further reductions that the United States and the Russian Federation agree upon. The underlying principles could be extended to all nuclear-weapons states possessing non-strategic nuclear weapons.

12. There have been political statements to the effect of including talks on non-strategic nuclear weapons within the strategic dialogue between the United States and the Russian Federation within the framework of the Moscow Treaty. So far, we have no indications that this has been done. The Moscow Treaty however does not contain verification provisions and does not include non-operational warheads. It is regrettable that the cuts are not made irreversible.

13. One step agreed upon in the 2000 NPT Review Conference was to establish in the Conference on Disarmament an appropriate subsidiary body with a mandate to deal with

nuclear disarmament. Non-strategic nuclear weapons would be a natural part of the general nuclear disarmament process.

14. In order to reduce the threat of non-strategic nuclear weapons, confidence-building measures, including increased transparency, could be developed between or among the nuclear weapons states possessing these weapons. These measures could include the exchange of data on holdings and status of non-strategic nuclear weapons, safety provisions, types of weapons, yields, ranges of their designated delivery systems, distribution by region and weapons elimination.

15. The risks of use, pre-emptive or accidental, of non-strategic nuclear weapons could be reduced through the reduction of the operational status. Security could be enhanced by the development of accountability measures. These could include the removal of non-strategic nuclear weapons to secure storage with no movement outside the storage without prior notification, including a commitment to a ceiling in the number of weapons deployed.

16. To reduce the risk of proliferation and theft, special security and physical protection measures for transport and storage of non-strategic nuclear weapons could be enhanced. Guarantees for the safety of these weapons, their components and related materials could be given by the nuclear-weapons states.

17. As a first step, certain types of non-strategic nuclear weapons could be prohibited and eliminated including those that already have been removed from the arsenals of some nuclear weapons states. A ban could be suitable for nuclear mines, nuclear artillery shells, short-range ballistic missiles, nuclear anti-aircraft and anti-missile weapons. Transparency mechanisms for the verification of the elimination of these weapons could be developed.

18. The principles of verifiability, transparency and irreversibility should be applied to commitments agreed upon.

Footnote: The Preparatory Committee should continue to discuss how reductions and elimination of non-strategic nuclear weapons best be achieved with a view to making recommendations on the matter to the 2005 NPT Review Conference. Footnote: Austria, Mexico and Sweden wish to acknowledge earlier contributions made on this subject in the NPT process and in other fora, particularly by Finland, Germany, UNIDIR, and the Monterey Institute of International Studies.
