

**Open Ended Working Group
on taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations**

Geneva, Thursday 23 May 2016

Intervention by Ireland

Panel VI: Review of the Role of Nuclear Weapons in Security

Mr Chairman

Thank you for giving us the floor again. I requested it as we feel the discussion and responses by the panel this morning has thrown up some issues which deserve further consideration.

In particular I wanted to revert to the question we raised last Monday with Dr. Patricia Lewis relating to worrying signs that the norm against use of nuclear weapons appears to be weakening in recent times. This is particularly relevant to this discussion given that the success of deterrence is premised on the non-use and non-acceptance of use of these weapons, as mentioned by Jamaica.

This weakening of the norm is occurring in spite of the work done in the three humanitarian impact conferences which showed the devastation any nuclear weapons detonation, accidental or deliberate, would cause, and the lack of any effective global response capacity to deal with even a minor detonation, as highlighted so clearly by the ICRC.

In spite of this work, and the commitment by the greater part of the international community to move to a world without nuclear weapons, we are seeing:

Nuclear testing by North Korea against the established norm set by the still not entered into force CTBT;

Fairly unambiguous threats of use of nuclear weapons by political actors in nuclear weapons States and nuclear armed States;

Open pursuit of Weapons of Mass Destruction by Non State Actor Groups;

And finally, huge investment in modernisation and in making nuclear weapons more strategic and therefore, it seems, more usable. This latter concern has been raised by many speakers.

I would like to reiterate our deep concern at this apparent weakening of the established norm against nuclear weapons use, and the growing risks around the continued existence of these weapons as has been highlighted so well during the discussions we have had, including at the excellent side events held during this working group.

Against the backdrop of the failure of the NPT to achieve an agreed outcome document, we continue to be gravely concerned that continued possession of these weapons serves as a proliferation driver and that continued reliance on nuclear weapons in security doctrines and postures only serves to encourage and excuse the spread of these weapons.

Mr Chairman

The panel this morning stated that security concerns are not equal and that there are differences in security threats between regions and between States within regions.

Our view is that security is indivisible and comprehensive and that the threat of a nuclear strike affects the security of all. The concerns we have raised in relation to gendered impact of these weapons is also relevant to this discussion.

Another issue touched on this morning was the issue of the disruptive nature of new technologies and cyber threats as they pertain to nuclear weapons.

With regard to this, we wish to mention again our concerns regarding the growing automation of weapons systems, a question which is being given serious consideration in the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. In view of the exponential growth in risk in recent times which has been highlighted by those groups and states active in the De-alerting initiative, as highlighted this morning in Sweden's useful Statement, we wish again to reiterate our concern in relation to growing automation of weapons systems.

This automation brings the risk that the human element in decision making, which has in the past, been the main factor in averting accidental nuclear weapons strikes, may be reduced and, as we heard at the side event on Tuesday, a nuclear weapons launch could be made possible through the activation of a short string of computer code.

Thank you