



IRELAND

Nuclear Disarmament in context - a global governance issue

Working Paper presented by Ireland to the Preparatory
Committee of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear
Weapons

in association with

the updated 2017 edition of “Nuclear Disarmament - The
Missing Link”, a collaboration with Chatham House

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INTRODUCTION

Security concerns and the security environment have been a recurring theme in our discussions at the 2017 Prep Com, but when we speak of security, especially when it comes to weapons which respect no boundaries, and which, if detonated, would spread their toxic poison through the air, to damage human, animal and plant life across continents, as well as polluting our water and soil, with the potential to cause famine and change our weather for a decade or more, it is also important to adjust the perspective, from the national, the regional, the international and take a truly global view of the risk which is integral to these weapons. In the digital age, we face threats hitherto considered unlikely. In recent times, the vulnerability of cyber infrastructure, both civilian and military, has been challenged and compromised. We have, in recent times, witnessed the acceleration of missile programmes in certain countries, enabled through illicit procurement, intangible technology transfer and perhaps, through cyber espionage. As reported in the recent important UNIDIR/Chatham House paper on Understanding Nuclear Weapons Risk, we live in an age where cyber technologies are in the grasp of most states, regardless of their economic capacities, as well as non-state actors. This levels the strategic playing field and creates hitherto unparalleled opportunities for small belligerent governments or terrorist groups to instigate high impact attacks. This heightens the risk, not only of an unintended nuclear detonation, but also the determinative impact the manipulation of data may have in decision making. To be consistent and effective, our focus must be on the weapon and the impact of the weapon, not on the actor and we bring this approach to our work on all weapons issues. We endorse the former UNSG view that there are no right hands for the wrong weapons. Given all the risk factors, our vigilance and efforts on disarmament and non-proliferation are needed now more than ever. In this regard, Ireland is pleased to introduce this new Working Paper on how our work in the NPT Review Cycle should be undertaken in context, not just the security context but also the wider, global risk and global governance context, mentioned by many delegates, for example in terms of poverty, development, climate, environment, health, cultural heritage and gender equality. This new Working Paper is based on Ireland's collaborative research with Chatham House since 2015, an updated version of which has been made available in brochure form for delegates. We hope that this research and this Working Paper will re-energise our efforts throughout this Review Cycle and we look forward to forward consultation on this issue and the development of the various strands.

1. This is a time of global uncertainty and challenge. The existence of nuclear weapons does nothing to protect or to make the world a safer place in such tense and sensitive circumstances; in fact the inherent risks of nuclear weapons makes the world even more dangerous. The only actions which can truly address the risk are the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons. However, given that this is likely to take some time to achieve, mitigation against current risk levels must be put in place as a matter of urgency. The risk of a nuclear detonation, either by accident or on purpose, is higher now than ever. Indefinite retention means inevitable catastrophe. The longer nuclear weapons remain and the more complacency there is about them, the more likely it is that an accident will occur. While we value all efforts at enhanced nuclear safety and welcome moves towards risk reduction and greater transparency, we believe that it is important to underline that addressing the risks should not serve to suggest any support for the indefinite retention of the root cause. Every day that nuclear weapons continue to exist is a day when they could potentially be detonated, either accidentally or on purpose or accessed by terrorists. Regrettably, the low level of effort being invested in nuclear disarmament remains in stark contrast with the urgency surrounding this heightened level of risk.

2. A particular risk which Ireland wishes to highlight is in the area of growing automation of weapon systems, an issue which is currently the subject of considerable attention in the Conventional Weapons field. In view of the evidence that many accidental nuclear weapon detonations were avoided in the past largely due to human agency and intervention, this is an area of increased risk which needs to be highlighted in regard to the continued reliance on nuclear weapons in security doctrines. An important and integral part of our work as NPT States Parties should be in the area of increasing awareness. In this respect, Ireland has been particularly active with regard to raising awareness of the disproportionate gendered impact of ionising radiation. Ireland believes it is vitally important to continue raising awareness and contributing to knowledge around this hitherto little appreciated aspect of nuclear weapons

use. (This aspect of these weapons needs greater visibility and Ireland has submitted a dedicated Working Paper on this issue.)

3. Rising international tensions entail the very real potential for escalation, coupled with the possibilities of accidents and miscalculations. In addition, we see the increasing prominence of nuclear weapons in security doctrines and ongoing significant investment in modernisation, much of which would have the effect of making it easier to use nuclear weapons. Against such a backdrop, action on nuclear disarmament is both timely and pressing. 2015 saw ground breaking international agreements, one on the Sustainable Development Goals and one on Climate, examples of what is possible when we work together, face up to reality and focus on the future. But those agreements exist under the shadow of a potential nuclear detonation, which puts their success at risk. This is a small planet and our concept of the world as a vast and unconnected place has shifted to one where everything is interlinked. In such a world, multilateralism plays a key role and questions of security impact, not just nationally, but on us all. Therefore, in terms of the sustainability of our planet and collective human security, there has never been a greater need for more joined-up thinking and global governance. Good progress was made with the SDGs and the Climate Agreement. But these agreements are overshadowed by the lack of progress on nuclear disarmament and all of their objectives are threatened by the risks associated with the continued existence of and reliance on nuclear arsenals.
4. In this context, nuclear disarmament and our work in the NPT Review Cycle is not a side issue; it is not a technical or specialist debate and it should not be addressed as such. This issue is in fact an integral and horizontal one which has the potential to impact on all citizens and which therefore needs to be integrated with policy making in all other areas which have a global impact. Whatever the issue that concerns us, be it migration or food security, cyber terrorism or global warming, human rights or gender equality, the potential negative impact is heightened by the complicating factor of nuclear weapons. This is no time for business as usual, this is a time for informed concern and for collective action. With all of this in mind and in order to contribute substantively to this Review Cycle, Ireland has been pleased to commission

an updated consultation paper from Chatham House, setting out how nuclear disarmament is essentially the missing piece in the global governance jigsaw and why and how this must be addressed now.

5. The **key points** which we would wish to highlight from that research are as follows.

The paper presents nuclear disarmament as a fundamentally interconnected issue. This is a time of great challenge, on the global stage, for nations and for all of humanity. It is therefore a time for leadership and a time to accept our international obligations, our commitments and our responsibilities. Nuclear disarmament must be viewed in a global context and if we are genuinely concerned about the sustainability of the planet then we need to be equally concerned about nuclear issues. Therefore, the commitments we make under other international agreements also impact on the commitments we must make, and must fulfil, around nuclear disarmament.

It is time to embed nuclear disarmament as a horizontal issue, recognising its impacts on broader rights and entitlements, as well as on obligations and responsibility. We need to generate informed public concern, which in turn will serve to drive the necessary political will.

More joined up multilateralism, which includes a greater understanding of the comprehensive and interconnected nature of our international obligations and how nuclear disarmament is inextricably linked, will lead ultimately to this being rightly treated as a horizontal, top table, global governance issue.

The paper sets out the ways in which nuclear weapons would have disastrous impacts on a whole set of issues in which the possibility of nuclear weapons use is not currently discussed or factored in to policy-making. These top-table issues include: the SDGs, Climate Change, the Environment, Development, Gender Equality, Children's Rights, Protection of Cultural Heritage, Public Health, Non-State Armed Groups, Humanitarian Action and Cyber Security.

The paper makes the case that those who are concerned about the survivability of the planet and the betterment of humanity, need to be equally concerned about nuclear weapons. The international commitments and obligations that countries have made on those top-table issues need to be explicitly linked to the international commitments and obligations on nuclear weapons and the lack of action on same. Leaving nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation obligations unfulfilled will have severe impact on all the efforts underway to address climate and environmental issues, SDG implementation and other measures.

The paper reaches a number of important conclusions that should resonate beyond this Review Cycle and into the wider policy arena. These include: connecting expert and diplomatic communities across the range of issues to yield new perspectives, synergies and practical ideas, following through on the links between disarmament and development, recognising the vital role of women in disarmament, acting on the connection between nuclear disarmament and the protection of cultural heritage, renewing action between the nuclear disarmament community and public health experts, joining the dots between nuclear disarmament and nuclear safety, exposing the cyber vulnerabilities not just of civilian nuclear material but that in material use and using the World Humanitarian Summit as a model of how nuclear disarmament can take its place among the most significant global challenges of our time.

The paper suggests that progress, or the lack of it, on nuclear disarmament should be factored in to monitoring progress on the SDGs and that experts and officials working on global threats would benefit from including nuclear disarmament in their perspective and that all of these issues should be taken forward by the UN in a cross-sectoral approach, including joint studies, working papers, meetings and exchanges of knowledge between relevant Committees.

The paper also proposes that the vulnerabilities and risks associated with nuclear weapons be taken into account in all security and emergency planning and that a response to a nuclear detonation should be included in all risk management and mitigation processes, as well as recommending an examination of the capacity for a humanitarian response to such a nuclear detonation and noting the particular responsibility of the nuclear weapon states and those who have nuclear weapons on their territory, in this regard.

6. Fundamentally, the research which we have commissioned supports Ireland's view that nuclear disarmament can be truly characterised as **the missing link in multilateralism**. Ireland hopes that delegates will share our view, supported by the research paper, on the need for an enhanced awareness of the interconnected nature of our nuclear disarmament work and the importance of elevating this to the highest levels of our global governance, so that our NPT commitments are reviewed in the necessary global context. We would like to see this proposition discussed further in the course of the Review Cycle and reflected in the Outcome Document.

This Working Paper is submitted for consideration in association with the consultation paper prepared by Chatham House, "Nuclear Disarmament: the Missing Link".