

Norwegian report on General Assembly resolution 71/67 on nuclear disarmament verification

Summary

Norway reiterates its firm commitment to contribute to further efforts to reduce and eliminate all types of nuclear weapons. Verification will be a key building block for achieving and maintaining a world without nuclear weapons. There have been considerable efforts within the UN to further refine generic approaches to the verification of disarmament in all its aspects. Broader verification and inspection tools have been developed at the multilateral level under non-nuclear treaties such as the Chemical Weapons Convention. While the nuclear weapon states (NWS) bear the prime responsibility for reducing and eventually eliminating their nuclear arsenals, non-nuclear weapon states (NNWS) should also contribute to this end.

For many years, Norwegian experts have been exploring ways in which NNWS can obtain the necessary assurances without acquiring sensitive information. Norway has provided funding for UNIDIR and VERTIC (the UK-based Verification Research, Training and Information Centre). Norway was also represented in the ad hoc group of scientific experts in the lead-up to the CTBT negotiations.

Since 2007, Norway has cooperated with the UK on nuclear warhead dismantlement verification research through the UK-Norway Initiative. This is the first such instance of collaboration between an NWS and an NNWS, and it has paved the way for further broadening nuclear weapon verification research to include NNWS.

Together with Sweden, the US and the UK, Norway has recently entered into a multi-year arms control simulation initiative called the Quad Nuclear Verification Partnership (QNVP). This initiative builds on experience from the UK-Norway Initiative (UKNI) and previous UK-US verification and arms control exercises.

As an active member of the International Partnership on Nuclear Disarmament Verification (IPNDV), Norway supports the development of a culture of cooperation and trust and seeks to promote a common understanding of the technical issues of nuclear disarmament verification among a large group of states. Capacity building is another area that is being explored.

The group of governmental experts (GGE) to be established by the Secretary-General will draw on verification experience gained and lessons learned from past treaties. This includes both UN monitoring and inspection arrangements and the work carried out by the UKNI, QNVP and IPNDV. The GGE report is expected to contain practical recommendations for the consideration of the UN General Assembly.

Introduction

Norway was one of the main sponsors of General Assembly resolution 71/67 on nuclear disarmament verification, and reiterates its firm commitment to contribute to further efforts to reduce and eliminate all types of nuclear weapons. On 26 April 2016, the Storting (the Norwegian parliament) adopted a unanimous decision asking the Government to work actively towards the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons and to promote the implementation of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). The decision also asked the Government to play a leading role in efforts to promote non-proliferation and disarmament, with a view to achieving balanced, mutual, irreversible and verifiable elimination of nuclear weapons. The Government was asked to take a long-term approach to efforts, to secure a legally binding framework for achieving this.

Verification will be a key building block for achieving and maintaining a world without nuclear weapons. At the NPT review conferences, the nuclear weapon states have reaffirmed their unequivocal undertaking to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear weapons. The nuclear arsenals have been dramatically downsized in recent decades, as a result of either bilateral agreements (such as the START treaty and New START, SORT, and the INF treaty), reciprocal declarations or unilateral measures. Some agreements have led to the development of verification and monitoring instruments, but only for the parties involved. It should be noted that the parties to New START have kept the broader international community informed on the implementation of this treaty, which is essential from the perspective of transparency.

The key principles of nuclear disarmament – irreversibility, verifiability and transparency – have been set out in a number of outcome documents from the UN as well as from NPT review conferences. There have been considerable efforts within the UN to further refine generic approaches to verification of disarmament in all its aspects, through the 16 UNDC Principles of Verification and the work carried out by groups of governmental experts set up by the UN General Assembly. Broader verification and inspection tools have been developed at the multilateral level under non-nuclear treaties such as the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Within the nuclear field, important experience has been gained from the CTBT monitoring system and from implementation of the IAEA safeguards agreements, including the Additional Protocol. These non-proliferation measures are essential in creating a more conducive environment for nuclear disarmament. They should be further strengthened so that they can form part of the legal architecture in a world without nuclear weapons.

While the NWS have the prime responsibility for reducing and eventually eliminating their nuclear arsenals, NNWS should also contribute to this end. Recalling the 10th principle of the UNDC, which reads ‘All States have equal rights to participate in the process of international verification agreements to which they are parties’, it follows that NNWS have a legitimate right to be assured that NWS actually carry out their obligations under future multilateral nuclear disarmament

regimes. The involvement of NNWS in verification and inspection arrangements must comply with the non-proliferation obligations of the NPT.

UN General Assembly resolution 71/67 notes the contribution of representatives of civil society from the non-governmental, academic and research communities in nuclear disarmament verification. In this context, it should be noted that for many years Norwegian experts have been exploring ways in which NNWS can obtain the necessary assurances without acquiring sensitive information. Norway has provided funding for UNIDIR and the UK-based Verification Research, Training and Information Centre (VERTIC). Norway was also represented in the ad hoc group of scientific experts in the lead-up to the CTBT negotiations.

The UK-Norway Initiative (UKNI)

Since 2007, Norway has cooperated with the UK on nuclear warhead dismantlement verification research through the UK-Norway Initiative (UKNI). As the first instance of collaboration between an NWS and an NNWS, the Initiative has paved the way for further broadening nuclear weapon verification research to include NNWS.

The UKNI has demonstrated that it is possible for an NWS and an NNWS to work constructively in partnership on the complex issues that nuclear weapon dismantlement verification raises. The UKNI has made progress on the development of mutually trusted equipment, it has tested inspection procedures for specific tasks under 'Managed Access' arrangements in nuclear facilities, and it has researched factors that influence the outcome of inspections in nuclear weapon verification. The Initiative has also involved a significant outreach component, with participants from a number of other states attending UKNI research exercises and briefings.

Norway and the UK presented comprehensive working papers to the NPT Review Conferences in 2010 and 2015 detailing the activities carried out and the lessons learned through the UKNI.

Broader initiatives

Norway, Sweden, the UK and the US have entered into a multi-year arms control simulation initiative. The Quad Nuclear Verification Partnership (QNVP) builds on experience from the UK-Norway Initiative (UKNI) and previous UK-US verification and arms control exercises. With its long-standing track record in the field of arms control, verification and disarmament, Sweden brings valuable additional expertise to the partnership.

The Quad can make a tangible contribution to the current NPT cycle and to the fulfilment of Article VI of the NPT. It aims to provide the international community with:

- capacity-building, in the form of hands-on practical experience of nuclear weapons-related verification;

- a realistic testbed for exercising and evaluating monitoring technologies that all states could use to support their work on verification issues; and
- a model verification protocol – or standard operating procedure – that could contribute to future discussions on how treaty monitoring activities could be implemented in the real world.

This step toward multilateralism will be valuable for understanding the impact of including multiple NWS and NNWS in future verification activities. The aim is to demonstrate that such collaboration is beneficial without promoting proliferation.

Norway highlights the importance of the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification (IPNDV), in which we are an active member, in pursuing the development of a culture of cooperation and trust. This partnership can also advance a common understanding of the technical issues of nuclear disarmament verification among a larger group of states through the sharing of experience and coordinated efforts.

The 25 countries in the IPNDV are working to develop innovative approaches, methodologies and techniques for nuclear disarmament monitoring and verification, so that they subsequently may be shared with the broader international community. The aim is that these will in turn foster a culture of confidence, which is essential for making further progress on nuclear disarmament.

In November 2015, Norway hosted the second plenary meeting of the IPNDV, where a decision was made to establish the following three separate working groups and their terms of reference:

1. the Working Group on Monitoring and Verification Objectives;
2. the Working Group on On-Site Inspections; and
3. the Working Group on Technical Challenges and Solutions.

While acknowledging that the wider aspects of the nuclear weapons cycle needed to be addressed, it was decided to start with a focus on warhead dismantlement.

The Group of Scientific Experts (GSE) in relation to the CTBT

From 1976 to 1996, the Group of Scientific Experts (GSE) under the Conference on Disarmament (CD) worked on the design, development and testing of a global monitoring system for verifying compliance with a possible future Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). During these years, the GSE developed a culture of cooperation and trust among scientists that facilitated an understanding of technical issues, which in turn led to the group agreeing on the specifics of a monitoring system. The agreed design could then be readily used as a basis for parts of the

verification protocol developed during the CTBT negotiations under the CD from 1994 to 1996. Lessons learned from the GSE could be useful when assessing how to verify compliance with a possible future treaty or treaties on nuclear disarmament.

Capacity building

In order to support the UK-Norway Initiative, relevant Norwegian institutions have been engaged in extensive cooperation on topics related to verification. The major contributors have been the Norwegian Radiation Protection Authority, the Norwegian Defence Research Establishment (FFI) and the Institute for Energy Technology, the Norwegian Seismic Array (NORSAR), as well as the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This Norwegian network has also developed strong collaborative ties with partners in the UK, the US, Sweden, and the IAEA and research institutions such as the Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI) and VERTIC.

Within the IPNDV, Norway has been engaged in producing a capacity mapping document that outlines existing skills and areas of expertise applicable to key monitoring and verification activities, and identifies possible gaps.

There is a need for experts who are knowledgeable about the political dimensions of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control, as well as about the many technical aspects of the complex process of dismantling nuclear weapons in a safe, secure, and verifiable manner. This process may need to be carried out in steps, starting with the promotion of a verification culture in member states and building up networks. This will in turn facilitate efforts to develop concepts until requirements for verification have been refined to the extent that the work of training verification teams for a global nuclear verification regime can begin. Centres of Excellence for both conceptual work and the training of inspectors could be considered.

The way ahead

A key motivation behind UN General Assembly resolution 71/67 is to secure broader support for nuclear disarmament in the UN, thus engaging more Member States. While this is clearly a long-term process, Norway expects the new group of governmental experts (GGE) to draw on verification experience gained and lessons learned from past treaties. This includes UN monitoring and inspection arrangements and the work carried out by the UKNI, QNVP and IPNDV. Capacity building is another important area to explore further.

The GGE report should contain practical recommendations, which can subsequently be considered by the UN General Assembly or further addressed by the Conference on Disarmament and/or the UN Disarmament Commission, as stipulated in resolution 71/67.

