

Bridging the gaps - building the framework – ensuring success

Informal Civil Society Working Paper

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1. Introduction – purpose of this paper

The purpose of this informal working paper is to provide some feedback from civil society on the ongoing discussions of the *United Nations Open Ended Working Group on Taking Forward Multilateral Nuclear Disarmament Negotiations* (OEWG) in order to build collaboration for success.

This working paper provides a short analysis of proposals to the OEWG that appear to have the best chance of finding common support in order to facilitate multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations and to initiate preparatory work in support of this goal. The paper includes some specific recommendations for the final report, including on the future of the OEWG following the conclusion of the current mandate. It also addresses the role of civil society to support the OEWG process and recommendations developed as part of its mandate.

2. Summary of proposals

Proposals to the OEWG from governments (or groups of governments) were submitted in the form of working papers, which include the following:

- **Austria:** *Perceptions and views on nuclear disarmament: addressing differences and bridging gaps* ([A/AC.281/WP.1](#))
- **Cuba:** *Proposal for practical actions to achieve nuclear disarmament* ([A/AC.281/WP.2](#))
- **OEWG Chair:** *List of ideas, elements and proposals raised during the May meetings of the Open-ended Working Group* ([A/AC.281/WP.3](#))
- **Australia, Belgium, Canada, Finland, Germany, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia and Sweden:** *Building Blocks for a World without Nuclear Weapons* ([A/AC.281/WP.4](#))
- **Malaysia:** *Model Nuclear Weapons Convention*
- **Iran:** *Working paper submitted by Iran*

And “food for thought” papers, such as:

- **Mexico:** *Organizing ideas to develop proposals to take forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations*
- **Austria:** *An exploration of some contributions that also Non-Nuclear Weapon States could engage in to take multilateral nuclear disarmament forward*

The proposals include a range of approaches. Some focus on the *elements* that would be required to achieve a nuclear weapons free world. The most detailed of these is the *Model Nuclear Weapons Convention* submitted by Malaysia, which outlines the legal, technical, political and institutional elements for the achievement of a nuclear weapons free world and a proposed framework for the phased elimination of stockpiles under effective verification and compliance measures.

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Others focus on *interim/incremental measures* that should be taken which could pave the way for negotiations on the elimination of nuclear weapons. The *Building Blocks* paper, for example, focuses on a number of non-proliferation and disarmament measures that should be sought in the short-term with an aim to consider, 'in due course', what would be required for a nuclear weapons convention or multilateral nuclear disarmament framework as the 'final building block.'

Yet others focus on *actions that should be taken or processes that could lead to success*. The Cuban and Iranian papers, for example, list a large number of actions that should be taken pluri-laterally (by the nuclear-armed States), regionally (such as nuclear weapon free zones) and multilaterally to achieve the global elimination of nuclear weapons. These include a mix of incremental and comprehensive actions.

The Austrian and Mexican papers focus more on *processes to enable progress*. The Austrian paper suggests, in particular, ways to bridge differences between approaches, including between a) those focusing primarily on non-proliferation versus those focusing primarily on disarmament, and b) those focusing primarily on incremental measures versus those focusing primarily on a comprehensive approach. The Mexican paper proposes a framework for deliberations and negotiations that draws from the differing approaches, outlines the various elements (without locking them into either a step-by-step or comprehensive process), examines the role of nuclear weapons in the 21st century security context (in order to identify ways to reduce and replace/eliminate that role), and considers the range of actors that can contribute to achieving a nuclear weapons free world.

Informal proposals were also made during the working sessions of the OEWG from governments, international organisations and civil society including from the Basel Peace Office[†] and the Abolition 2000 Task Force on the OEWG.[‡]

The Chair's paper provides an overview/list of all the proposals made – both formally (in the working papers) and informally in the OEWG sessions including suggestions/proposals from civil society.

The papers and proposals demonstrate that there are different – and at times conflicting - perceptions about how to take nuclear disarmament negotiations forward, which is not surprising as it is these differences that have prevented progress in the Conference on Disarmament for nearly two decades. On the other hand, the papers and proposals demonstrate that there is also considerable good will and common ground that makes possible the development of some agreed approaches.

3. Analysis of approaches

a. Step-by-step

The approach to nuclear disarmament generally favoured by the nuclear-weapon States – and to some degree the allies under extended nuclear deterrence doctrines – is a step-by-step approach focusing on a number of measures to strengthen nonproliferation, in addition to some incremental disarmament steps. The nuclear weapon States are committed in principle to more comprehensive disarmament measures, but only after a number of conditions have been met (and they don't necessarily agree on all the conditions).

The step-by-step approach has a couple of advantages. Achievement of small steps build confidence and provide a basis to take the next step. In addition, Nuclear weapon States are generally ready to negotiate such concrete steps, where-as they are not ready to commence more comprehensive negotiations.

[†] See *Reflections on the May sessions of the OEWG and visions for successful outcome*, at www.baselpeaceoffice.org/article/reflections-may-sessions-oweg-and-visions-successful-outcome

[‡] See *Abolition 2000 Manual for Governments: Open the Door to a Nuclear Weapons Free World*, page 19 at www.baselpeaceoffice.org/sites/default/files/imce/oweg/oweg-manual-governments_edition1.0.pdf

However, the step-by-step approach also has a number of weaknesses. Even if the steps are important components for a nuclear weapons free world, the approach is usually discriminatory in application (leads to a strategic imbalance in the process, since different steps/sequences affect States differently and there is no guarantee that *all necessary* steps will be taken in the end). States' capabilities are asymmetrical, so that controls imposed on one aspect – such as nuclear testing or fissile materials – favour those that have already advanced beyond such a control. In addition, once a step has been completed, there is no obligation for states to negotiate the next one. Sometimes the achievement of a step gives the appearance of greater progress in disarmament than actual progress made and can lead to complacency and a diminished political traction for more comprehensive disarmament.

Finally, the steps undertaken so far have done little to reduce States' reliance on nuclear doctrines – the threat of using nuclear weapons – or their capabilities to inflict massive destruction. Thus, the non-NWS have not gained much in terms of security from the threat of use of nuclear weapons – and some have even felt compelled to thus develop their own nuclear deterrence capabilities in response (India, Pakistan and North Korea). As such, the step-by-step approach by itself does not gain a lot of support from non-NWS and non-NPT nuclear-armed States, most of which are calling for a more comprehensive approach.

b. Comprehensive

There have been a number of comprehensive plans for nuclear disarmament submitted to the UN General Assembly, the Conference on Disarmament and/or the NPT Review Conferences, or proposed independently. These include the Rajiv Gandhi Action Plan for a Nuclear-Weapon-Free and Nonviolent World Order, a Non-Aligned Movement Plan for comprehensive nuclear disarmament to be achieved by 2025, a Nuclear Weapons Convention (illustrated by a Model Nuclear Weapons Convention), and the UN Secretary-General's Five Point Plan for Nuclear Disarmament.

An advantage of the comprehensive approach is that it is not discriminatory and would provide the same obligations for all States: to not possess or acquire nuclear weapons, to dismantle and destroy all nuclear weapons they might possess, and to be subject to controls to verify compliance. Once implemented, no State would be at a disadvantage to any other State (or group of States) with respect to nuclear weapons capabilities.

On the other hand, among the weaknesses of a purely comprehensive approach, are that the negotiations to achieve the final abolition regime could take a long time and States may continue to resist starting such negotiations or bringing them to a conclusion because the trust and confidence required to accept complete elimination may need to be built up through mutual experience on the basis of partial disarmament measures.

Therefore, a number of the proposals of a comprehensive nature are framed in a more nuanced framework which allows for simultaneous work on both incremental measures and the comprehensive goals. The proponents of a Nuclear Weapons Convention, for example, have done so – as well as the UN Secretary-General in his Five Point Plan – and have proposed work on interim measures alongside negotiations on a nuclear weapons convention or framework of agreements.

Global Zero advances a slightly different incremental-comprehensive approach, focusing on a range of simultaneous disarmament measures, followed by the negotiation of a comprehensive treaty – the entire process to be completed by 2030.

Such incremental-comprehensive approaches have considerable merit and have provided some impetus to a key approach being developed in the Open Ended Working Group: the building block approach (see 3 d below).

c. Prohibition measures by non-NWS including a ban treaty

A number of proposals (formal and informal) to the OEWG focus on measures that could be taken by non-NWS to prohibit nuclear weapons nationally or regionally, and to strengthen the global norm against nuclear weapons. These include the adoption of national legislation to prohibit nuclear weapons, divestment of public funds from nuclear weapons corporations, establishment of regional nuclear weapon free zones, criminalizing the use of nuclear weapons for example through the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court, and the adoption of a treaty on the prohibition of nuclear weapons (a ban treaty) by non-NWS.

It has been recognized that Nuclear Weapon Free Zones play an important role to reduce (or eliminate) the role of nuclear weapons in regions, develop cooperative security mechanisms and provide security assurances against the use of nuclear weapons. They are thus an important part of the building blocks for a nuclear weapons free world. The proposal for a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction was identified as being of special importance.

Article 36, a civil society organisation, proposed that a nuclear-ban treaty could be negotiated amongst willing States. All States would be invited to join, but the negotiations would commence and conclude without waiting for those that are not ready to join such a ban – such as the NWS and those still under extended nuclear deterrence arrangements. The idea of the ban is that it would ‘extend and renew the stigma that already attaches to nuclear weapons and will contribute to their progressive delegitimation.’ An additional advantage is that it would generate considerable political and public attention thus increasing pressure on NWS and their allies to join the negotiations.

A disadvantage is that it does not address the core security issues that give rise to nuclear deterrence, nor the verification and compliance mechanisms required to ensure confidence by the NWS and their allies in any disarmament process. It thus risks alienating the NWS and their allies from the process. In recognizing these disadvantages, Article 36 proposed the ban treaty as ‘a step in a process – the ban would be an additional tool towards a nuclear weapon free world.’

d. Building blocks

The *Building Blocks* paper submitted by Australia, Belgium, Canada, Finland, Germany, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia and Sweden, provides a new and useful framework to bridge the gaps between the ‘step-by-step versus comprehensive process’ and the ‘non-proliferation versus disarmament’ approaches.

The paper begins with the list of non-proliferation and disarmament steps generally agreeable to States Parties to the NPT, and part of the 2010 NPT Action Plan. A useful emphasis in the paper is that a building blocks approach ‘foresees the possibility of parallel and simultaneous steps’ rather than each step having to follow after the one before or a specific sequence. As such, the building blocks approach is advanced to ‘complement the pursuit of a step by step approach.’

Although this is a good start, the building blocks identified in the paper draw primarily from the incremental measures agreed already by the NWS – and do not bring in the more comprehensive disarmament measures called for by the majority of non-NWS including measures to prohibit nuclear weapons and the negotiation of a phased process for nuclear disarmament within agreed timeframes. The paper recognizes this to some degree, noting that ‘more building blocks are required’. The identification of some of those additional building blocks and their incorporation into the building block approach, could perhaps provide a common basis for the OEWG to reach agreement on the most promising process and proposals to take forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations.

4. Finding common ground to move forward

a. Bridging the gaps by addressing needs of all countries

The Austrian paper *Perceptions and views on nuclear disarmament: addressing differences and bridging gaps* provides important considerations on the need to address the diverse security needs and perceptions with respect to nuclear disarmament. The paper notes that in general nuclear-armed States continue to rely on nuclear weapons for their security –and place further nuclear non-proliferation as an important condition before significant steps can be taken on nuclear disarmament. They thus only support incremental disarmament steps. Non-NWS, on the other hand, perceive the existing nuclear weapons stockpiles and doctrines as both a high threat and a stimulus to proliferation. They thus see the need to take a more comprehensive approach to nuclear disarmament in order to reduce and eliminate this threat.

Several initiatives/proposals attempt to bridge these differences by including both non-proliferation and disarmament measures, and a combination of incremental measures undertaken simultaneously with a more comprehensive approach. These include the UN Secretary-General's Five Point Plan, the incremental/comprehensive framework put forward by the advocates of a nuclear weapons convention (including Abolition 2000) and the building blocks approach.

In order to ensure success, a deeper consideration of the security issues which give rise to such perspectives is required, in particular those of the nuclear-armed States in order to facilitate their engagement in the proposals put forward by the OEWG.

These security issues include:

- a concern that in a particular stage of the process, a country possessing nuclear weapons will find itself in a disadvantageous position in relation to other nuclear weapons possessors, whose nuclear potential and deterrent capacity have not been affected by that step – *a feasible approach should thus **guarantee to all involved states that any imbalance that may occur during the process will be only temporary and that the process will be successfully concluded, leaving all former nuclear armed states with zero nuclear weapons;***
- a concern that after abolishing its nuclear arsenal, a country will be more vulnerable due to imbalance of conventional forces – *a feasible approach should thus **strengthen the role of non-military security arrangements;***
- a concern that after abolishing its nuclear arsenal, a country will lose its political status – *a feasible approach should thus be accompanied by efforts to **change the perception of possession of nuclear weapons both by the public and political leaders.***
- a concern that 100% verification of nuclear disarmament is impossible and that States might eliminate their nuclear weapons only to find that another State has kept a few and could thus 'hold the world hostage'. A feasible approach to this is to develop non-nuclear ways that the international community could collectively deal with such an eventuality.

The OEWG could explore these issues in more depth, including with the nuclear armed States already participating in the OEWG and through engagement with the other nuclear-armed States (see engaging the NWS below).

b. Building on the building blocks

The building block approach appears to have the most potential to bridge existing gaps between alternative approaches, to provide a process for addressing the security needs of all States in the disarmament process, and to take forward multilateral negotiations.

While the *Building Blocks* paper outlines some of the possible building blocks, further work is needed to identify and describe the full range of building blocks that will be required, and ascertain which ones can be developed in the near future and which ones will require further preparatory work, prior steps or preliminary conditions.

The Model Nuclear Weapons Convention⁵ provides a useful guide regarding most of the building blocks that will be required. It outlines the obligations that would be required of States (both positive and negative), a phased process for elimination, the responsibilities of (and protection measures for) individuals, arrangements for dealing with dual use materials and delivery systems, verification measures, procedures for ensuring compliance, national implementation requirements, establishment of an implementation and oversight agency, relations and cooperation with other agencies and international agreements, entry-into-force procedures and other related measures.

The Model NWC however, does not address the security issues that gave rise to nuclear deterrence policies other than those relating to deterrence against the threat or use of nuclear weapons. Additional building blocks relating to non-nuclear security will need to be discussed and developed to complement the provisions outlined in the Model NWC. This will be especially important to engage nuclear-armed States in the process.

In addition to identifying the building blocks, attention will need to be given to which building blocks are able to be developed, adopted and implemented in the short term, and which ones will require prior steps or pre-conditions in order to be developed. Universal agreement on this does not need to be reached prior to commencing negotiations or undertaking preparatory work on specific building blocks or, indeed, on a comprehensive disarmament process. Some states could commence work on specific building blocks – or on preparatory work for more comprehensive negotiations – prior to universal agreement. Non-NWS could, for example, commence work on technical aspects such as verification, negotiate regional aspects such as Nuclear Weapon Free Zones and some legal measures such as a ban treaty or criminalization through the International Criminal Court, and undertake national implementation measures such as national prohibitions.

Non-NWS could also undertake additional exploratory work on other elements required for a nuclear-weapons-free world, picking up from and further developing those elements identified in the Model Nuclear Weapons Convention. These include requirements for control of missiles and other delivery systems, compliance procedures and mechanisms, control of nuclear facilities, and institutions that will be required to manage a nuclear abolition regime including relationship with already existing institutions.

Non-NWS could also explore the roles that nuclear weapons play in security doctrines and propose alternative security approaches or mechanisms to fill those roles, and thus enable a reduction or elimination of the roles of nuclear weapons in security doctrines to facilitate nuclear disarmament. Those non-NWS under extended nuclear deterrence doctrines could also utilize this exploratory work to take concrete steps to phase out their reliance on nuclear deterrence.

Engaging the nuclear weapon States

There is thus a lot of concrete work that could be done by non-NWS on exploration, development and implementation of building blocks for a nuclear-weapons-free world. However, such work will remain limited without engagement with and participation of the nuclear-armed States. Although they are not the only States relying on nuclear weapons, they are the ones that ultimately have to decide to reduce and eliminate their stockpiles of nuclear weapons and to agree on a global ban.

Some nuclear-armed States are already participating in the OEWG. All of them should be encouraged to join. Pursuant to their formal participation, informal consultation with nuclear-armed States is vital

⁵ “Model Nuclear Weapons Convention” ([A/62/650](#))

to ensure that their security concerns are reflected – along with the security concerns of the non-NWS – in the building block process.

The OEWG could facilitate engagement with the nuclear weapon States by identifying some of the obstacles to their willingness to commence multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations, and proposing solutions to these obstacles.

Commencing work on building blocks

In focusing on building blocks, States do not need to agree on which are the most important building blocks. Differing security needs will determine that some blocks are more important for some States and others more important for others. Nor do all States necessarily have to work on the same aspects.

When building a house there will necessarily be a division of labour, with some builders working on the foundations, others preparing the wall materials, others working on the framework, others preparing the windows, etc... What is important, however, is that the different building blocks fit together. For this reason, attention must be paid to the overall plan – the design of the framework for a nuclear weapons free world, which is like the architectural plan for a house. The Model NWC provides such a workable plan. As indicated above, some of the elements could be explored in more detail. It could also be useful to develop a road map, including aspects of timing and sequencing.

The plan and roadmap do not need to be perfected before work is begun on the building blocks. Many of the details will emerge as work progresses. The most important aspect is to commence work, and to undertake such work with good faith and a sense of some urgency.

c. Supportive measures (creating the conditions, regional non-nuclear security)

There are a range of measures that might not necessarily be part of multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations, but which can nevertheless support the process.

Some of these are identified in the UN Secretary-General's Five Point Plan, including the elimination of other types of WMD; new efforts against WMD terrorism; limits on the production and trade in conventional arms; and new weapons bans, including of missiles and space weapons.

Others are identified by some of the nuclear-armed States and some States under extended nuclear deterrence arrangements as 'conditions' required for a nuclear weapons free world. The nuclear armed States do not agree entirely on what these conditions are, but conditions put forward include prevention of further proliferation, resolution of regional disputes, promotion of strategic stability, conventional arms control, and restraints or bans on missile defenses and space-based systems – a condition put forward by Russia and China but contradicted by a condition of NATO and the US on the need to develop missile defences.

Work on such supportive measures can be noted and encouraged by the OEWG, but should not be a requirement or pre-condition for work to start on the building blocks for a nuclear weapons free world including multilateral negotiations for nuclear disarmament.

5. Role of Civil Society

Civil society has a vital role to play in promoting and supporting multilateral negotiations for nuclear disarmament and the development and implementation of building blocks for the achievement of a nuclear-weapons-free world. Civil society can contribute ideas and proposals unhindered by the constraints of diplomats who have to represent their countries' perspectives and national interests. Civil society also plays a key role in building public awareness about nuclear disarmament measures, and in encouraging their governments to support and implement disarmament measures.

Elected representatives (mayors and parliamentarians) have special roles to play. Mayors represent the interests of local and their inhabitants who would be the innocent victims of any use of nuclear weapons whether by miscalculation, accident or design. They thus have a special responsibility to represent the collective interests of citizens for a nuclear-weapons-free world.

Parliamentarians have special authority in representing civil society in parliament and government. They have a role to hold governments accountable to their disarmament obligations. They have a parliamentary platform to raise questions, make proposals, adopt motions, pass legislation, decide on funding for disarmament initiatives (or on funding for nuclear weapons programs) and play a key role in developing government policy. They also have a role in ratifying and enacting disarmament agreements. Thus, the engagement of parliamentarians in the OEWG process is a welcome and important development and should be continued.

The engagement of youth is also important. Youth already play a critical role in determining which issues get media and political attention. In addition, the elimination of nuclear weapons is a process that will take some time to achieve, and will require continuing management for generations to ensure that there is not breakout and resumption of nuclear weapons production, acquisition and threat of use. Awareness and expertise about nuclear weapons amongst current and future generations is this vital for achieving and maintaining a nuclear-weapons-free world.

The majority of young people are currently unaware about the present dangers of nuclear weapons. As a result, they are complacent to the current doctrine of extended nuclear deterrence and unaware about the current stagnation in the international disarmament machinery. Additional efforts in disarmament education in order to effectively inform and engage youth are thus needed.

6. Recommendations for the OEWG report to UN General Assembly

UN General Assembly resolution A/RES/67/56 established the OEWG to “develop proposals to take forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations for the achievement and maintenance of a world without nuclear weapons” and to “submit a report on its work, reflecting discussions held and all proposals made, to the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session, which will assess its work, taking into account developments in other relevant forums.”

In addition to reporting on the proposals discussed in the OEWG, it would be advisable for the report to provide some guidance, as a result of the OEWG discussions, on the approaches which have the best possibility to take forward multilateral negotiations and to support such negotiations.

In particular, the Abolition 2000 Task Force recommends that the report encourage UN Member States to enhance the building block approach, commence preparatory work on specific elements supporting a nuclear weapons free world, develop a road map for the process to achieve a nuclear-weapons-free world, dedicate resources to the process, elevate political attention to the OEWG and the proposals arising from it, renew and extend the mandate of the OEWG, support the engagement of civil society in nuclear disarmament deliberations and negotiations, and support additional efforts in disarmament education including the possibility of establishing a UN Decade for Disarmament Education.

a. Enhance the building block approach

The building block approach appears to have the most potential to bridge the gaps between alternative approaches, provide a process for addressing the security needs of all States in the disarmament process, and take forward multilateral negotiations. *The OEWG should recommend the further development of the building block approach by States – and make this one of the key tasks for the OEWG should its mandate be renewed. This would include identifying and exploring the full range of building blocks that will be required drawing on the elements outlined in the Model Nuclear Weapons Convention.*

b. Commence work on developing, adopting and implementing the building blocks

The building blocks approach includes measures that could be developed, adopted and implemented in the near term, and other measures that will require prior steps, conditions and/or the engagement of nuclear weapon States. *The OEWG should recommend that States commence work on developing, adopting and implementing the building blocks already identified, while simultaneously exploring other building blocks that will be required.*

c. Develop a road map

The OEWG should recommend the development of a road map to nuclear disarmament. This would include discussion of the relationship and sequencing of the building blocks required for a nuclear-weapons-free world.

d. Dedicate resources to process

The OEWG should recommend that governments dedicate additional resources to nuclear disarmament, including to undertake tasks involved in the development, adoption and implementation of building blocks for a nuclear-weapons-free world. Those countries currently dedicating resources to nuclear weapons should, in particular, shift some of those resources towards nuclear disarmament tasks.

e. Elevate political attention to OEWG

The OEWG should recommend to governments that they elevate the political attention devoted to disarmament and to the OEWG. This includes making nuclear disarmament a core issue for heads of government and foreign ministers. Governments should also consider dedicating a ministerial position and/or government department to disarmament.

f. Renew mandate of OEWG

The OEWG should recommend that the UN General Assembly renew its mandate for a subsequent year, meeting for up to five weeks during the year, and tasked to continue work on proposals to take forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations, with a work mandate to include further exploration and development of building blocks for a nuclear weapons free world, and preparation of a roadmap to achieve a nuclear weapons free world.

g. Propose a UN Decade for Disarmament Education

The OEWG should recommend the establishment by the United Nations General Assembly of a UN Decade for Disarmament Education.

h. Support the role of civil society in multilateral deliberations and negotiations

The OEWG should highlight the positive role of civil society in the OEWG and recommend that participation be granted for civil society participation in the same way in other multilateral disarmament forums including in the UN General Assembly. The OEWG should also highlight the importance of engaging youth and propose special attention to this be given by the UN Office of Disarmament Affairs including through the establishment of a youth disarmament forum.

Conclusion

The Open Ended Working Group has provided a vitally needed forum for governments to discuss in a constructive way various proposals for taking forward multilateral negotiations for nuclear disarmament. Government delegations have, in the most, used this opportunity to make good faith efforts to bridge differences and find common ground. The OEWG has also provided space for key constituencies from civil society to contribute. There is of course a huge distance between these fruitful deliberations and the successful conclusion of negotiations to achieve and sustain a nuclear weapons free world. However, this positive beginning provides a basis to make substantive progress should the mandate of the OEWG be renewed and concrete tasks undertaken by the OEWG in 2014. We remain ready to engage in the OEWG and to promote and support this exciting process.