



WE DID NOT GET MUCH OUT OF THE FOUR WEEKS OF THE REVIEW CONFERENCE

To the Editor-in-Chief,

The outcome of the 2015 Review Conference was not unexpected. It was clear since the 2014 NPT PrepCom that the Middle East and nuclear disarmament would be issues where the gaps were unbridgeable. Reasons for failure were plenty. Even if one accepts at face value the statements of the NAM and the Arab Group that they were prepared to accept the President's draft final document, then it might have passed muster if the NWS too were prepared to be flexible — however, many in the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons (HINW) group and in NAC were very unhappy with the forward-looking disarmament paragraphs. The draft document, if accepted, would have strengthened accountability on disarmament. It should be understood clearly that it is not possible to progress nuclear dismantlement and disarmament through the NPT process — unfortunate though that might be.

The HINW supporters had unrealistic expectations and no workable strategy to promote this issue other than repetitive platitudes. Efforts should have been made before the RevCon to engage with the NWS to find some common ground to move the issue forward at the 2017–2019 PrepCom sessions with a view to agreement in a process at the 2020 RevCon, instead of rushing the issue following the Oslo, Nayarit and Vienna conferences. The 160 countries in the HINW are not all on the same page — their ranks include the 'umbrella States' which are mere proxies for the NWS one way or the other, the NPDI which is dominated by 8 'umbrella States' which though preaching feasibility to nuclear disarmament nonetheless are on a time line that will take generations to achieve nuclear disarmament if ever, and the NAC which has lost its coherence.

On the other hand, the hard line rejectionist attitude of the NWS could be considered as regrettable — particularly since some 160 NNWS were behind the HINW. The NWS are all not on the same page, the Russian Federation and the US occupy a separate niche, the UK and France another niche, and China yet another. Thus, it is impossible to deal with them as a single entity — a graduated approach needs to be developed.

A ban treaty or a NWC with the inclusion of the NWS and the other four nuclear weapon possessor States clearly is not on the horizon.



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The CD should negotiate in parallel on a FMT, PAROS, NSA and nuclear disarmament — the Western States need to drop the silly assertion that an FM(C)T is «ripe for negotiation» and is the «next logical step», and be realistic and negotiate a FMT that includes stocks.

The HINW issue at the 2014 NPT RevCon has become ideological and emotional, and proselytizing does not help — the fourth HINW conference should focus on engaging with the nine States with nuclear weapons however frustrating and difficult that will be. And, the NWS need to back off their arrogance — after all history's greatest proliferators of biological, chemical and nuclear weapons and purveyors of conventional weapons are the five NWS, also the permanent members of the Security Council — a body which for me has zero credibility when it comes to dealing with WMD and is now completely outmoded and out of sync with contemporary realities. The UNSC now represents the intransigence of the P5. The instrumental use of the Council on WMD can be considered *ultra vires*.

Anyhow, it was the US that sunk the Final Document. In my view, the US rejection of the President's draft final document was unnecessarily harsh and hardline. Perhaps, the US made a deal with Israel that it would squash any further moves on the Middle East NWFZ/WMDfZ conference in return for Israeli acquiescence to the agreement between the E3+3 and Iran expected in June.

All in all, we did not get much out of the four weeks of the RevCon. The fault lies squarely with delegations for being unprepared, not implementing the strengthened review process and being prisoners of 19th century diplomatic practices. Furthermore, as I have written for the SIPRI NPT website, subsidiary bodies are meant to discuss specific issues and not to negotiate forward-looking documents even though that transpired at the 2010 RevCon. The Main Committees are mandated under Decision 1 of the 1995 NPT REC to both review and to recommend ways to improve implementation of the Treaty over the next 5 years. The Chairs of the MCs should chair both the MC and its Subsidiary Bodies and negotiate the forward look — unfortunately, this was disregarded and the result is plain to see. The days are long gone when a small cabal of States can meet in back rooms and negotiate for the collectivity, but the President did just that and in doing so provided cover for the naysayers on disarmament and the Middle East. 🐘

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