
2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

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Strengthened review

Working paper submitted by the United States of America

1. Some are concerned that the “strengthened review” envisaged in 1995 has fallen short of expectations. Since the overall process from the beginning of the preparatory work to the end of the 2000 Review Conference has yet to be completed, it may be premature to formulate firm conclusions about the nature of the process. At this juncture, however, it appears desirable to begin consideration of the various elements which collectively could comprise a complete working definition of what constitutes a strengthened review process. There are several factors which could be included in such a definition.

2. First, did the process accomplish the necessary goal of preparing participants for the many issues likely to be addressed at the Review Conference? Certainly the preparatory work leading up to the 2000 Review Conference achieved this purpose. The myriad speeches, proposals and comments assembled appear to identify the issues of concern to participants and to describe adequately the spectrum of ideas that the 2000 Conference will address. Delegates clearly identified those new issues requiring attention, notably the South Asian nuclear tests. Delegates also agreed that it was important that those tests not weaken the non-proliferation norm or provide an opportunity for additional States to claim status under the Non-Proliferation Treaty as nuclear-weapon States. In addition, most nuclear-weapon States provided information at some or all of the Preparatory Committee meetings apprising parties of their activities in pursuit of nuclear disarmament. Non-nuclear-weapon States provided their assessment of the adequacy of those efforts and identified steps they believed the nuclear-weapon States should pursue.

3. Second, did the process address sufficiently the variety of organizational and administrative issues that must be resolved in preparation for the Review Conference? Clearly, the preparatory process leading up to the 2000 Review Conference successfully resolved the full range of these issues, providing the basic organizational structure necessary to allow the Conference to pursue its work.

4. Third, was decision-making in the preparatory process sufficient to allow recommendations to be made by the Preparatory Committee to the Review Conference itself? On this it is clear that the Preparatory Committee was not able to achieve *consensus* recommendations to the Review Conference. However, it may

well be that such a goal is simply beyond the reach of a preparatory process that must equitably address the views and concerns of 187 States. Indeed, history reminds us that the past five Review Conferences were able to achieve a consensus outcome only twice. Rather than seeking an outcome that will always remain at best elusive, it may be best to consider alternatives.

5. In this connection, it may be desirable to develop clear distinctions about the purpose of the different preparatory meetings. For example, paragraph 3 of Decision 1 on strengthening the review process contemplates a two-week preparatory committee meeting during each of the three years prior to the Review Conference with the possibility of a fourth if that is considered necessary. It could be the purpose of the first two preparatory meetings “to *consider* principles, objectives and ways in order to promote the full implementation of the Treaty, as well as its universality” and the purpose of the third preparatory meeting “to *make recommendations*” thereon to the Review Conference. The two preparatory committees tasked with consideration only could discuss the clustered issues and, if proposals are tabled, compile them for the third preparatory committee and the Review Conference. The third preparatory committee could also discuss issues within the clusters and receive tabled proposals, but would also make an effort to elaborate consensus recommendations or identify priority issues that the preparatory committee recommends be addressed at the Review Conference.

6. Because of the difficulty of achieving consensus on what issues to include, commenting on contemporary events, or taking a “snapshot”, should be avoided. Moreover, such an approach is more appropriate for the Review Conference itself, not meetings of preparatory committees.

7. There are other approaches that could be contemplated for organizing the first two preparatory meetings. One approach would be to focus each meeting on different substantive issues, e.g., peaceful uses, safeguards and nuclear-weapon-free zones at one meeting and non-proliferation and disarmament at the other. Another approach would be to schedule seminars and briefings at preparatory committee meetings, in addition to plenary debate, that would permit exchanges of information and relevant educational initiatives on the topics being considered.
