

2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

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Principles and responsible practices for Nuclear Weapon States*

Working paper submitted by France, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America

1. France, the United Kingdom and the United States, as Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Nuclear Weapon States Parties, reaffirm the Joint Leaders' Statement on Preventing Nuclear War and Avoiding Arms Races of 3 January 2022, in particular the understanding that nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought. The following principles and responsible practices are representative of ways in which our governments are continuing to carry forward implementation of the Leaders' Statement, consistent with our obligations under Article VI of the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT). We recognize our special charge to be responsible custodians of nuclear weapons and to work persistently to achieve conditions that would allow for their ultimate elimination. We consider this especially relevant given the significantly changed security environment following Russia's unprovoked and unlawful war of aggression against Ukraine and Russia's reckless nuclear actions. We continue to call on Russia to cease its irresponsible and dangerous nuclear rhetoric and behaviour, to uphold its international commitments, and to recommit – in words and deeds – to the principles enshrined in the recent P5 Leaders' statement.

Disarmament and Arms Control

2. We affirm our continued support for efforts to reduce global nuclear stockpiles, including through reciprocal and verifiable agreements, and in a way that promotes international peace, stability, and security. We recognize that further steps on nuclear arms control and strategic stability are needed. We note with interest the proposals outlined by initiatives such as the Stockholm Initiative on Nuclear Disarmament, the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative (NPDI), and the Creating an Environment for Nuclear Disarmament (CEND) initiative in this regard. Although the challenges are considerable we consider there are a number of meaningful and achievable measures that should be pursued now to make progress on the road towards a world free of nuclear weapons:

- i. We seek to control and limit nuclear arms competition through formal arms control treaties that are reciprocal and verifiable, as well as through less formal

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confidence-building, risk reduction, and related conflict prevention measures. We recognize that a fundamental purpose of nuclear arms control is to reduce the likelihood of nuclear employment by promoting strategic stability, improving mutual security, and enhancing trust and transparency;

ii. We support the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and are committed to achieving its entry into force. We continue to maintain our zero-yield moratoriums on nuclear explosive testing, consistent with the CTBT, and call on all relevant states to declare and maintain such moratoriums;

iii. We call on all relevant states to join us in establishing voluntary moratoriums on the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons and to support the immediate launch of negotiations at the Conference on Disarmament of a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty to cap the amount of material for use in nuclear weapons;

iv. We continue to provide national negative and positive security assurances to NPT Non-Nuclear Weapon States Parties and honour such assurances once given;

v. We continue to explore the many complex political, military, and technical issues that will need to be resolved if the States that possess nuclear weapons are to reduce and ultimately eliminate their arsenals verifiably, and to prevent nuclear weapons from ever re-emerging.

Risk Reduction: preserving the non-use of nuclear weapons since 1945

3. We reject irresponsible rhetoric concerning potential nuclear use intended for military coercion, intimidation or blackmail. We recall that nuclear weapons – for as long as they continue to exist – should serve defensive purposes, deter aggression and prevent war. We continue to work to preserve an open, inclusive, and rules-based international order, in which international relations continue to be governed by law, including the UN Charter, and with all States complying with their international legal obligations. We continue to shoulder our responsibilities as NPT Nuclear-Weapon States and separately as Permanent Members of the Security Council to further international peace and security and to advance implementation of the NPT in all its aspects.

4. We are committed to reducing the risk of nuclear conflict which could have far-reaching consequences for all. This remains a priority. Any use of nuclear weapons would fundamentally change the nature of a conflict. In accordance with our respective national doctrines, we underscore that the use of nuclear weapons should only be considered in extreme circumstances of self-defence and in accordance with the UN charter. While we recognize that work on strategic risk reduction does not replace disarmament obligations, we see this as a complementary and necessary step to reduce the risk of nuclear conflict and enhance mutual trust and security.

5. We therefore affirm the importance of strategic risk reduction, including measures for war avoidance, crisis management, reduction of escalation pressures, and related actions. While the current security environment is challenging, we continue to pursue opportunities for strategic risk reduction, including promoting confidence building and predictability through dialogue, increasing understanding, and establishing effective crisis management and prevention tools. Existing initiatives are making welcome and constructive contributions to this issue. We are ready to work with others to identify elements of risk reduction that the Review Conference could endorse. This includes, but is not limited to, the following:

i. We affirm the aspiration and high stakes associated with the preservation of the record of non-use of nuclear weapons in place since 1945;

ii. We seek to foster dialogue among States possessing nuclear weapons, and between States possessing nuclear weapons and Non-Nuclear Weapon States, to

increase understanding and reduce the risk of misinterpretation and miscalculation;

iii. We are committed to transparency of nuclear policy, doctrine, and budgeting, including public sharing of information on modernization plans and nuclear deterrence goals, and encourage other States to do likewise;

iv. We do not target our nuclear weapons at any other State's territory and will continue to support and adhere to this;

v. We continue to institute policies and procedures to ensure a deliberate process allowing leaders sufficient time to gather information and consider courses of action in a crisis;

vi. We maintain effective national nuclear measures and associated legislation to ensure that nuclear weapons remain safe, secure and under persistent positive control to prevent accidents, incidents and unauthorized detonations;

vii. Consistent with long-standing policy, we will maintain human control and involvement for all actions critical to informing and executing sovereign decisions concerning nuclear weapons employment;

viii. We are ready to work with all relevant stakeholders towards the creation and enhancement of secure communication channels among the capitals of the nuclear-weapon states. This modest step, among others, can improve communication and transparency, including in a crisis;

ix. We continue to promote research and multilateral dialogue on future nuclear arms control and disarmament verification requirements and measures, to include the Group of Governmental Experts on Nuclear Disarmament Verification and the International Partnership on Nuclear Disarmament Verification.

6. The NPT is a central platform to ease international tensions and create conditions of stability, security, and trust among nations. It remains the cornerstone of non-proliferation and disarmament. Every State Party has the responsibility to engage actively and in good faith to advance the Treaty's goals. The International Atomic Energy Agency is instrumental in the implementation of NPT obligations by facilitating peaceful nuclear cooperation and by implementing safeguards, including the Additional Protocol, to verify peaceful nuclear activities. Alongside the IAEA, the CTBT Organization and the Conference on Disarmament also play key roles in the furtherance of NPT objectives.

7. In this spirit, we will continue to work with the IAEA to help States that want to develop a civil nuclear energy industry to do so in ways that are safe and secure, and that minimize the risks of nuclear weapons spreading or re-emerging. We are determined to prevent proliferation of nuclear weapons to additional States, and to enhance global nuclear security. To this end, we will continue consistent implementation of non-proliferation measures and continue to offer practical help in this field to other States Parties.

8. Making progress will require building a broad coalition including States, international organizations, businesses, and non-governmental organizations. We support inclusive dialogues incorporating both government officials and civil society from Nuclear Weapons States and Non-Nuclear Weapons States to identify areas of common concern and interest. While we have a special responsibility, progressing towards the elimination of nuclear weapons needs the active engagement of the entire international community to create the necessary political and security environment. Multilateralism must underpin our approach and we should work together to strengthen those institutions that are vital to the future international order.