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The NPT-Review Conference: Chance and Challenge for the EU

- The European Union has identified the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction as a key threat to its security and considers the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) as a cornerstone of its strategy of fighting the spread of WMD. A successful outcome of the next NPT Review Conference in May 2010 is thus of essential interest to the Union.
- Why is NPT important in Europe? Because disarmament and arms control created the basis for European integration. Disarmament minimized the risk of armed conflict between participating countries and also founded a new sense of confidence between European states.
- The failure of NPT talks will foster the ambitions of states seeking nuclear weapons, which will then further undermine the existence of NPT. Member states should therefore renew their commitment to nuclear disarmament as stated in Article VI of the treaty.
- The United States nuclear policy is taking a positive turn: Russia and the US have signed yesterday the START follow-up treaty, signifying that both countries are complying with their proposals to disarm. The United States will also reveal its Nuclear Posture Review, which will determine its nuclear defense policy for the next five to ten years.
- A constructive US-Russian approach to disarmament, as is taking place at the moment, could pave the way for substantial progress. Reliable agreements on further reductions would ease the atmosphere at the Review Conference and make it more difficult for a small number of countries to torpedo the whole NPT process.
- To boost momentum ahead of the NPT conference, Obama and Medvedev should announce their readiness to resume consultations on the next round of nuclear arms reductions.

- The NPT community should work toward the ratification of the IAEA's additional protocol, which would give nuclear inspectors greater authority to detect concealed nuclear weapons programs in non-nuclear countries. This task can only be carried-out in states that have completed comprehensive safeguard agreements. Only half of NPT countries have ratified the additional protocol, and this is a goal we must work toward together.
- Another area in need of attention is the development of a state's right of termination from NPT. One suggestion is that the announcement of termination would result in an international conference that would doubly serve as an opportunity for diplomacy and a method of hindrance. If the terminating state refuses to participate in the international conference, the case would be forwarded to the UN-Security Council. This measure would stem the ability of non-nuclear powers from suddenly desiring and acquiring a weapon.
- Finally, the proposed 13-Steps toward nuclear disarmament should be reemphasized as a path toward a nuclear free world. While many criticize the Steps as being out-dated, the Obama administration has signaled that a similar approach or updated 13-Steps could built wide support for the overall success of the NPT.
- I want to highlight the link between the universality of the NPT and compliance. Bringing India, Pakistan and Israel as Non-Nuclear-Weapon-States into the Treaty would greatly improve the conditions for compliance by current non-nuclear state parties. Although there is no realistic chance today to make this happen, the EU should not give up the objective of making the NPT universal. These three de facto Nuclear Weapon States should be engaged in the fight against proliferation, without recognising their nuclear status.

- Furthermore I want to attach great importance to the development of internationally recognized Nuclear Weapon Free Zones. Support for and the creation of new zones free of nuclear weapons is a critical part of the NPT bargain. Since 2005, two such zones—covering Africa and Central Asia—have come into force. This brings the total number of nuclear weapons free zones to six. Effective Nuclear Weapon Free Zones enhance regional and global peace and security and are a means to promote nuclear disarmament, stability and confidence.
- NPT remains the foundation of nuclear non-proliferation policy and the most important reference point for all steps toward disarmament. A successful NPT Review Conference in New York is therefore crucial to the survival of a non-nuclear proliferation agenda.
- The EU as the main protagonist of a multilateral, treaty-based approach in the fight against proliferation has a particular responsibility to avoid the Review Conference to become a failure.