
Preparatory Committee for the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

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De-alerting

Joint working paper submitted by the members of the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative (Australia, Canada, Chile, Germany, Japan, Mexico, Nigeria, the Netherlands, the Philippines, Poland, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates)

1. The 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, in its consensus final document, included in its 13 practical steps towards nuclear disarmament the need for “concrete agreed measures to further reduce the operational status of nuclear weapons systems”.
2. Action 5 of the action plan adopted at the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons further highlighted the importance of de-alerting nuclear weapons. It called for nuclear-weapon States to “commit to accelerate concrete progress” on the 13 practical steps agreed at the 2000 Review Conference. It specifically called upon nuclear-weapon States to “consider the legitimate interest of non-nuclear-weapon States in further reducing the operational status of nuclear weapons systems in ways that promote international stability and security” (action 5 (e)) and to “reduce the risk of accidental use of nuclear weapons” (action 5 (f)).
3. The issue of de-alerting is also closely related to the other aims found in the action plan. For example, de-alerting may provide a much-needed boost to disarmament efforts (action 5 (a)) and help to de-emphasize the role of nuclear weapons (action 5 (c)).
4. As expressed in our ministerial statement of 26 September 2013, the members of the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative urged all nuclear-weapon States and those States outside of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons to take steps towards de-alerting their nuclear forces to help lower the risk of inadvertent use.
5. A lowered operational readiness for nuclear weapons systems would demonstrate a commitment to reducing the role of nuclear weapons in security and defence doctrines. It would also be a valuable confidence-building measure and an important step towards nuclear disarmament.



6. While we acknowledge steps taken by the United States of America and the Russian Federation to mitigate the risk of avoidable nuclear war, including through the operation of nuclear risk reduction centres, we are concerned by the lack of declared or assumed reductions in operational status since the 2010 Review Conference.

7. The high alert nuclear force posture is based on a security environment that existed during the Cold War, but there has been no correspondingly significant change to reflect the major reduction in levels of tension since the end of the Cold War.

8. We therefore recommend that the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons:

(a) Urge all nuclear-weapon States to take concrete and meaningful steps, whether unilaterally, bilaterally or regionally, to implement actions 5 (e) and 5 (f) in the action plan adopted at the 2010 Review Conference;

(b) Call on all nuclear-weapon States to provide an update to States Parties to the Treaty on efforts they have undertaken to implement actions 5 (e) and 5 (f);

(c) Highlight the importance of nuclear armed States outside the Treaty also taking steps towards de-alerting their nuclear forces.
