

Joint Statement IND - 2025

Joint Statement on the principle of Irreversibility in Nuclear Disarmament

NPT PrepCom III, New York, April 2025

Delivered by Mr. Hans Christian Kjølseth, Norway

I am delivering this statement on behalf of Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Chile, Ecuador, Gabon, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Malta, Mexico, Moldova, The Netherlands, Panama, Peru, Philippines, San Marino, Spain, Sweden, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Türkiye, the United Kingdom and my own country, Norway.

The NPT is the cornerstone of the global disarmament and non-proliferation regime. We underline our unwavering commitment to the Treaty and its full implementation. We reaffirm the continued validity of past agreements and obligations, and that they continue to guide current and future work on NPT implementation.

States Parties to the NPT have agreed on three principles which underpin the disarmament process: transparency, verifiability, and irreversibility. These three principles are concurrent, complementary, mutually reinforcing and strongly interrelated; they represent a path for how to effectively attain and maintain a world without nuclear weapons.

The principle of irreversibility should be further explored. This was acknowledged during discussions at the Tenth Review Conference of the NPT. States Parties voiced interest in and support to building a common

understanding of the application of irreversibility measures in attaining and maintaining a world free of nuclear weapons, and to exchanging information on the application of the principle of irreversibility in relation to the implementation of their Treaty obligations - including both past and intended future actions.

Efforts to understand irreversibility, like transparency and verification, are not an end in themselves. They are not a pre-requisite to commence nuclear disarmament, in compliance with the spirit and letter of article VI of the NPT. Nor are they a pre-requisite to implement the obligations and commitments agreed within the framework of the treaty. We are however convinced that the application of these three principles can ensure more effective and sustainable nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. We are equally convinced that the implementation of these obligations and commitments will benefit from work already having been done on these three principles.

We reiterate the central importance of applying the agreed principles of transparency, verifiability, and irreversibility to any nuclear disarmament efforts, and towards the sustainability of all pillars of the NPT.

We are, therefore, supportive of enhanced dialogue among States Parties to build a common understanding of the application of irreversibility, in its technical, legal, normative and political dimensions. This dialogue could be informed by a growing body of academic work on the principle.

We understand irreversibility in nuclear disarmament as a spectrum of mutually reinforcing elements aimed at making the reconstitution of nuclear capacities as difficult as possible, including i.a. legal, economic, social, societal, normative, political and technical measures. Nothing is ever truly irreversible

and the capacity to develop nuclear weapons cannot go to zero, but weapons can be irreversibly eliminated in a verifiable and transparent manner.

We also highlight that while all States have an interest in attaining and maintaining a world without nuclear weapons, the main focus of such a dialogue would be on irreversibility in the actions and activities of nuclear-weapon States to implement their agreed obligations and commitments on nuclear disarmament. These actions and activities will benefit from work already having been done on the three principles.

Moreover, we also acknowledge that nuclear disarmament efforts become significantly more irreversible when they are underpinned by a legally binding obligation on the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

Nuclear disarmament should be irreversible as all States Parties of the NPT are concerned about the catastrophic consequences that would arise from the use of such weapons.

We undertake to work towards the Eleventh NPT Review Conference with a view to further enhance our understanding of the substance and application of the principle of irreversibility and invite State Parties to engage with us in this effort. This is crucial to continuing taking forward the obligations and commitments agreed on the total elimination of nuclear weapons, so that when nuclear disarmament is a reality, we have all the necessary tools to ensure its effectiveness and sustainability.

Based on the foregoing, we submit the following recommendations to the Preparatory Committee for further recommendation to the Review Conference:

1. The Review Conference should reaffirm the importance of all states applying the principles of transparency, verifiability and irreversibility in relation to the implementation of their disarmament and non-proliferation treaty obligations.
2. The Review Conference should reaffirm that further work is required to ensure the irreversibility of nuclear disarmament and, as a first step, encourage all States to build an understanding of the application of irreversibility measures in attaining and maintaining a world free of nuclear weapons, and to exchange information on the application of the principle of irreversibility in relation to the implementation of their Treaty obligations. Time should be allocated for a discussion of irreversibility at the Review Conference, as well as in the next review cycle.
3. The Review Conference should acknowledge the importance of providing assistance, in particular to developing countries, through capacity building in order to enhance participation in efforts to apply the principles of transparency, verifiability and irreversibility in nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.