

THE NUCLEAR NON-PROLIFERATION TREATY: PROMOTING DISARMAMENT



“So today, I state clearly and with conviction America’s commitment to seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons. This goal will not be reached quickly—perhaps not in my lifetime. It will take patience and persistence.”

— President Barack Obama

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) rests on three interrelated and mutually reinforcing pillars: nonproliferation, peaceful uses of nuclear energy, and disarmament.

Disarmament

The NPT is critical to sustaining progress toward disarmament. It is the principal legal barrier to the spread of nuclear weapons, and its Parties undertake in Article VI “to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to the cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a Treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective control.”

The United States has made significant progress on disarmament. We have a new strategic arms reduction treaty with Russia, New START, which is the most significant arms control agreement in nearly two decades. Treaties banning chemical and biological weapons are now in force. At the 2000 NPT Review Conference, the five NPT nuclear weapon states reiterated an unequivocal undertaking to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals leading to nuclear disarmament.

Challenges

The obstacles to achieving the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons are great. Despite massive reductions in nuclear arsenals since the height of the Cold War, thousands of these weapons remain in stockpiles. After decades of discussion, there remains no international ban in force on nuclear explosive testing or the production of fissile materials for use in nuclear weapons. The United States remains committed to meeting these challenges and moving forward on an ambitious disarmament agenda.

U.S. Actions in Support of the NPT’s Disarmament Pillar

- Reducing strategic nuclear weapons: Since 1988 the United States has dismantled more than 13,000 nuclear warheads. It has reduced the number of deployed nuclear weapons from approximately 10,000 in 1991 to 1,800 as of February 5, 2011. The United States has also dismantled more than 3,000 non-strategic nuclear weapons. New START, entered into force February 5, 2011, will limit the United States and Russia to 1,550 deployed strategic warheads each. It places significant new limits on strategic nuclear delivery vehicles and includes an effective verification regime.
- Reducing the role of nuclear weapons in U.S. national security strategy: The April 2010 Nuclear Posture Review declares that the United States will not use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against NPT non-nuclear weapon states in compliance with their nuclear nonproliferation obligations; affirms that the United States will not conduct nuclear explosive tests, develop new nuclear weapons, or pursue new military missions or capabilities for nuclear weapons; promotes strategic stability with Russia and China; and improves transparency and mutual confidence.
- Reducing delivery systems and fissile materials for weapons: The United States has eliminated more than 1,000 launchers for strategic ballistic missiles, 350 heavy bombers, and 28 ballistic missile submarines. It has removed 374 tons of highly enriched uranium and almost 61.5 tons of plutonium from the weapons inventory.
- Taking further steps toward a world without nuclear weapons: President Obama has pledged that the United States will pursue further reductions in nuclear weapons, including for the first time, non-strategic and non-deployed nuclear weapons, ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and seek a new treaty that verifiably ends the production of fissile materials for use in nuclear weapons.

***For more information about the NPT, please visit
<http://www.state.gov/t/isn/npt/index.htm>***