

Main Committee I
“Security Assurances”
U.S. Statement
2015 Non-Proliferation Review Conference
Ambassador Robert A. Wood
United States Delegation to the Conference on Disarmament
United Nations, New York, New York
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Mr. Chairman,

I welcome this occasion to speak to the subject of Security Assurances, both “negative” and “positive.”

Negative Security Assurances

The United States recognizes the importance of security assurances to states that have forsworn nuclear weapons and that abide by their nuclear nonproliferation obligations. Reflecting this understanding, the United States updated and strengthened its long-standing security assurances in the context of the U.S. Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) published in April 2010. In the NPR, the United States declared that it will not use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against Non-Nuclear Weapon States that are party to the NPT and in compliance with their nuclear nonproliferation obligations.

Mr. Chairman,

This negative security assurance is one of the benefits that Non-Nuclear-Weapon States derive from being parties to the NPT and fulfilling their nonproliferation obligations. Beyond this assurance, the 2010 NPR made clear that it is in the interest of the United States as well as that of all nations that the nearly 70-year record of non-use of nuclear weapons be extended forever. A practical step-by-step approach, as laid out by President Obama in his 2009 Prague speech, has proven to be the most effective means to increase stability, reduce nuclear danger, and advance the disarmament objectives of the NPT.

Among these steps, as noted in the 2010 NPR, the role of nuclear weapons in U.S. national security and U.S. military strategy has been reduced significantly in recent decades. The United States will continue to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in deterring non-nuclear attacks. We have also made clear that the United States

would only consider the use of nuclear weapons in the most extreme circumstances in order to defend our vital interests.

Mr. Chairman,

Nuclear-weapon-free zones (NWFZ)

The United States supports well-crafted nuclear-weapon-free zones (NWFZs) developed in accordance with the guidelines adopted by the United Nations Disarmament Commission and vigorously enforced. The United States is working to extend legally binding negative security assurances to zone parties through the protocols to these treaties.

In this regard, we were very pleased the Nuclear Weapon States were able to sign the Protocol to the Central Asian nuclear-weapon-free zone treaty on May 6 last year, here in New York and that President Obama transmitted the Protocol to the Senate on April 27 for advice and consent to ratification. We have also ratified the Protocol to the Treaty of Tlatelolco and signed the protocols to the African and South Pacific nuclear-weapon-free zones treaties. We have called on the Senate to take up the protocols to the South Pacific and African nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties as well so that these important instruments are brought into force at an early date. Moreover, we are continuing our efforts with the other Nuclear Weapon States to engage ASEAN with the hope that it will be possible soon for us to sign the revised Protocol to the Southeast Asia nuclear-weapon-free zone. We will address the Middle East issue in a separate statement.

Positive Security Assurances

The United States and the other Nuclear Weapon States have also offered “positive security assurances” to NPT non-nuclear weapon States. In 1995 the Security Council adopted resolution S/RES/984 taking note of the unilateral assurances given by the Nuclear Weapon States to seek action by the Security Council to provide assistance, according to the relevant provision in the Charter of the United Nations, in the event that a country is threatened or attacked with nuclear weapons. Resolution 984 notes separate statements by each of the P5 on their positive security assurance policies, and the intention of each to take appropriate measures in response to a request for technical, medical, scientific or humanitarian assistance, even as the United States hopes in the strongest terms that such an instance never again arises.

Mr. Chairman,

Today, I reaffirm the commitment of the United States to the security assurances we have provided. We are prepared to work with the other NPT states parties on additional steps that could be taken to assist states, particularly in view of the emergency response and consequence management challenges should a state become the victim of terrorist nuclear attack.

I encourage the other Nuclear Weapon States to reaffirm the security assurances they have given to Non-Nuclear-Weapon States. Those assurances are a valuable benefit for states that comply with their nuclear nonproliferation obligations. Those states have a legitimate interest in the reliability and credibility of the assurances provided. It's a two-way street.

Mr. Chairman,

It is our hope that this Review Conference will:

- Welcome the reaffirmation by the Nuclear Weapon States of their commitment to existing negative security assurances regarding the use, or threat of use, of nuclear weapons.
- Welcome the reaffirmation by the Nuclear Weapon States of their commitment to existing positive security assurances regarding the use, or threat of use, of nuclear weapons, as well as their respective statements contained in UNSCR 984.
- Welcome continuing efforts by the Nuclear Weapon States to conclude legally binding negative security assurances in the context of nuclear weapon free zones and call for the entry into force of the relevant protocols that have been signed at the soonest possible date.

Mr. Chairman,

We appreciate this opportunity to share our views on this topic and the practical steps we are taking.

Thank you.

