

## GLOBAL ENTERPRISE TO STRENGTHEN NONPROLIFERATION AND DISARMAMENT

October 22, 2020

9:30 – 11:30 AM (EDT / GMT-4)

### MEETING SUMMARY

The October 22 meeting of the Global Enterprise (GE) was the second in a series of virtual roundtables aimed at exploring concrete and actionable commitments states could take either prior to or at the postponed 2020 NPT Review Conference (RevCon). Participants engaged in a productive dialogue on a revised version of the discussion paper “Strengthening the NPT – Illustrative Actions for 2025” and the concept of Joint Voluntary Commitments (JVCs). Two new illustrative JVCs in the area of risk reduction – one on “Affirmation of Strategic Restraint” and another on “Reinvigorating Arms Control” – were circulated beforehand.

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

#### *General comments*

- In response to a question about whether greater coordination among various non-governmental NPT-related initiatives would be useful, a majority of participants saw greater value in having a range of (mutually reinforcing) ideas instead of one single, coordinated approach.
- Participants noted the value of the GE in providing a vehicle to engage on key issues, to understand different priorities, and to set realistic ambitions for the RevCon.
- Participants anticipated (and it was confirmed subsequently), that the RevCon would be postponed to August 2-27, 2021, with the understanding that a final decision would be confirmed in late April.

#### *Revised Discussion Paper “Strengthening the NPT – Illustrative Actions for 2025”*

- Most participants reiterated their support for identifying a short list of actions for states to realize between the 2021 and 2025 RevCons. A few preferred that efforts focus solely on the upcoming RevCon and actions that could be achieved earlier than 2025. Others pointed out that some actions listed in the discussion paper should not be postponed (such as reaffirmation of the Reagan-Gorbachev principle and the moratorium on nuclear weapons testing).
- Several participants felt a list of recommended actions could combine actions to realize by 2025 and earlier, providing flexibility given the changing political and security environment.
- Participants discussed the need to **prioritize actions** within all three NPT pillars to identify the “sweet spot” between easily achievable actions (that may not have significant impact nor exert enough pressure on nuclear weapons states) and unrealistic commitments (for example those exclusively aimed at dramatic

breakthroughs in bilateral or trilateral arms control). Otherwise, some participants argued, states might opt to take on the easiest – and potentially least impactful – commitments, rather than doing the hard work necessary to make more substantial progress.

- There was particular support for greater focus on encouraging actions related to the **peaceful uses of nuclear energy** (potentially linking those to the UN Sustainable Development Goals).
- In order to avoid the impression that a comprehensive, consensus RevCon outcome document is seen as unattainable, some participants suggested reframing the discussion paper and emphasizing that any agreement to a short list of actions to “get done” by 2025 should be **complementary to pursuit of a consensus document**.

#### *Joint Voluntary Commitments (JVCs)*

- Participants continued to have **different views on the concept of JVCs**. Several expressed concern that introducing JVCs to the NPT could undermine the review process by reducing pressure to reach consensus and weakening cooperation between nuclear weapons states (NWS) and non-nuclear weapon states (NNWS).
- A few participants also mentioned that allowing States parties to sign on to select JVCs bears the risk of creating **different degrees of NPT compliance and implementation**. Thus, it could promote a fragmented approach to the NPT despite equal obligations of parties under the Treaty.
- Other participants, however, highlighted the complementary nature of JVCs to a potential consensus-based outcome document. They recalled so-called “gift baskets” introduced at the Nuclear Security Summits, which succeeded in **providing an incentive for important bilateral and multilateral advances and served as a force multiplier** for other countries to take actions. JVCs could play a comparable role in advancing NPT implementation.
- Some participants cautioned against proposing JVCs to support disarmament but saw **potential merit in applying the concept to certain aspects of nonproliferation and peaceful uses** of nuclear energy.
- Recognizing the importance of rebuilding trust and confidence to alleviate tensions, lessen competitive military deployments, and avoid military confrontation, one participant emphasized the need to **identify concrete trust-restoring measures** and create a “toolbox” to reduce mutual uncertainties and misperceptions.
- An alternative approach suggested during the discussion was to propose a **list of priority topics** for consideration during the P5 process and/or the upcoming RevCon. It was noted that there is value in the NWS hearing the perspectives of NNWS. Such an approach could also help promote dialogue and understanding between NWS and NNWS.