

Cluster 3: Stockpile destruction

UN Conference to Negotiate a Legally Binding Instrument to Prohibit Nuclear Weapons, Leading Towards Their Total Elimination

Delivered by Nadja Schmidt, 19 June 2017

Madam President,

Our goal, ultimately, must be to attract the adherence of all states to this treaty. ICAN considers it essential, therefore, that states possessing nuclear weapons be permitted to accede to the treaty subject to a simple obligation to destroy their stockpiles in a verifiable, time-bound manner.

As they work to fulfil this obligation, they would be bound to comply with all other aspects of the treaty, including – most important of all – the prohibition on ever using their nuclear weapons.

An acceding nuclear-armed state, or group of states, would need to submit to a meeting of states parties a plan for destroying its stockpile. That plan would then be discussed, amended and approved.

This approach, we believe, is far preferable to one whereby nuclear-armed states would instead be compelled to disarm outside the treaty.

It is consistent with our firm belief that prohibition precedes – and acts as a catalyst for – elimination, and it avoids any suggestion that the so-called step-by-step approach is the only possible route to abolition.

The draft envisages the negotiation of a broad range of possible protocols, on topics not limited to stockpile destruction, and it is unclear whether a protocol party must also be a party to the treaty itself. Greater clarity is needed.

We consider it crucial that the safeguards requirements meet prevailing international standards, and offer no possible justification for a reduction in the safeguards standard that a particular state has already accepted.

The treaty should require all its parties to make declarations – not only on whether they have possessed nuclear weapons, but also on other pertinent matters, including whether they host nuclear weapons on their soil.

We believe that substantial changes to the draft are needed in order to establish a clear, robust framework for achieving a nuclear-weapon-free world.

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In this regard, we welcome the concrete proposals put forward by South Africa, on the overall package of articles 2 to 5, and by Ireland, on safeguards, as a useful starting point.

Thank you.