International Network of Engineers and Scientists Against Proliferation (INESAP)

**Missiles, Missile Defenses and Space Weapons as Obstacles to Nuclear Disarmament**

*NGO Statement to the NPT Preparatory Committee Meeting 2017*

The opportunities for nuclear disarmament after the end of the Cold War were missed. Although the number of nuclear weapons of the United States and Russia have been reduced, there are still more than 15,000 nuclear weapons that threaten life on Earth. The number of nuclear weapon states has increased and new conflicts emerged, from Yugoslavia and the Iraq war to the civil wars in Afghanistan, Ukraine, Syria, Libya and other African nations, aggravated by the quest for expansion and dominance. Terror attacks, refugee movements and climate change are contributing to the world’s instability. Grave concerns are justifiably held concerning the spiraling threats of missile proliferation, missile defense and space weapons programs, which are increasing the likelihood of nuclear war and are major obstacles to nuclear disarmament.

1. Nuclear weapons could be delivered by various systems, including aircraft, ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, artillery, and unmanned aerial vehicles. Ballistic missile technology has spread to more than 30 countries, many of which have access only to short range missiles. For the time being, only the five nuclear weapon states in the NPT have Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs). In addition, North Korea, India, Iran, Israel, and Pakistan have produced or flight-tested intermediate-range ballistic missiles with a range of between 1,000 km and 5,500 km. All those states continue to develop and test their missile arsenals. The United States is developing a new generation of conventional, precision-guided, long-range, hypersonic missiles, capable of striking any target on earth within 60 minutes (Prompt Global Strike systems).

2. A number of countries are developing missile defense systems, including the United States and several other NATO members, Russia, Israel, Australia, India, Japan and South Korea. Although missile defense is still not a proven and operational technology, its development and deployment has severe negative impacts on the reduction and elimination of nuclear forces, and undermines strategic stability. US missile defense systems in Europe have poisoned the relationship with Russia and become an obstacle to the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty, the 1987 Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty and the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty. Military responses to the missile threat, such as nuclear deterrence, preemption, counter-proliferation and missile defence, may aggravate the risks of proliferation, provoke an offense-defense missile race and disrupt regional balances.

3. Outer space is turning into an arena of space warfare with military satellites, ballistic missiles, missile defenses and anti-satellite weapons, becoming integral components of warfare on Earth. Advanced space weapons, such as kinetic kill vehicles, conventional and nuclear explosives, maneuverable space mines and micro-satellites, and the use of particle, microwave and laser beam technologies, increase vulnerabilities and threats. Transforming space from the “common heritage” of humanity into a “high frontier” for space warfare where weapons are used “to, from, in and through” space, contains considerable risks for all states, making attempts to defend “space assets” potentially obsolete.

These highly complicated and destabilizing arms races increase the risk of nuclear war in the regional crisis hot spots of the Middle East, South Asia and Northeast Asia. The military
standoff between the United States and North Korea on the Korean Peninsula could incite the whole region into nuclear war. Similar concerns exist in the wicked conflict over Syria. These developments have become obstacles for nuclear disarmament, blocking progress among major powers.

Since the NPT Review and Extension Conference of 1995, the nuclear weapon states did not fulfill Article 6 to end the nuclear arms race but rather intensified it by the modernization of their nuclear arsenals. The Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty was abandoned by the US in 2002, the INF Treaty and strategic arms reduction agreements are at stake.

In the dark age for nuclear disarmament the negotiations on a Ban Treaty allow all states of good will to move towards a nuclear-weapon-free world, without waiting for the nuclear weapon states and their allies. This approach can also serve as a basis for the international control of missiles, missile defenses and space weapons.

1. The NPT preamble emphasizes “the elimination from national arsenals of nuclear weapons and the means of their delivery pursuant to a Treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control”, but does not specify how to achieve this ultimate goal. Besides US-Russian agreements, there are no treaty constraints on the acquisition, development, testing and deployment of missiles. The 1987 Missile Technology Control Regime and related mechanisms are largely based on export controls among potential missile suppliers, but their effectiveness is limited if motivation to acquire missiles persists. To reduce emerging missile threats will require a ban on certain missile types, as suggested by a multilateral INF Treaty. In 1996, the Canberra Commission called for a “global treaty controlling longer range ballistic missiles” and the exploration of a missile flight test ban which would effectively prevent modification or new missile designs.

2. A “missile freeze” could cover offensive and defensive missiles, extending a control regime on ballistic missiles to the international control of ballistic missile defense systems, reversing the US withdrawal from the ABM Treaty and fulfilling the 2000 NPT commitment to preserve and strengthen that Treaty.

3. Prevention of an arms race in outer space is more effective, less complicated and less expensive than any measures undertaken once an arms race is under way. A comprehensive approach to space arms control would go beyond specifying rules of the road and instead ban weapons that target space objects, space objects that target others or the Earth below, and prohibit the development, testing, and deployment of such systems before more advanced weapons become operational.

All governments should support the establishment of international controls on delivery systems and missile defense systems as part of a global process of reducing and eliminating nuclear forces, banning weapons in space and generally limiting strategic weapons. All nations with these common goals should formulate international laws that put increasing pressure on the major powers.