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TACTICAL NUKES: OLD AND NEW

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Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Delegates, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to address this Preparatory Committee for the 2005 Review Conference of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. This statement will focus on the challenges presented by currently deployed and stored tactical nuclear arsenals and then briefly highlight some disturbing trends toward the development of new models of these weapons.

The final document from the Sixth NPT Review Conference in 2000 reflected agreement among all NPT states parties on the need to reduce tactical or nonstrategic nuclear weapons. For the first time, the final NPT document specifically called for “further reduction of non-strategic nuclear weapons, based on unilateral initiatives and as an integral part of the nuclear arms reduction and disarmament process.” This long overdue acknowledgment will hopefully encourage serious progress toward reducing and eliminating all nuclear weapons regardless of category. However, it is important to note that the lack of verification and transparency inherent in informal reductions based on unilateral initiatives can be problematic in this context. “The principle of irreversibility” applied “to nuclear disarmament, nuclear and other related arms control and reduction measures” that is stated in the program of action of the 2000 Review Conference’s final document must be taken into account when calling for any reductions of forces based on unilateral initiatives. A decade ago the United States and Russia initiated unilateral measures to reduce significant portions of their huge tactical nuclear arsenals. The force reductions that took place were welcome developments, but it is still unclear how extensively either Russia and to lesser extent, the U.S. have fulfilled the 1991/1992 pledges.

Thousands of substrategic, or tactical, nuclear weapons remain in the US, some NATO nations and in Russia, unmonitored and uncontrolled by any existing treaties or codified agreements. Hundreds more are deployed in China, Israel and South Asia. Basic information about these weapons is shrouded in secrecy. Transparency and disarmament measures of all nations’ tactical weapons have to be addressed in the context of future disarmament measures and codified treaties including the nonproliferation treaty. In this way, the need for further reaching U.S.-Russian initiatives to address the safeguarding of tactical nuclear weapons arsenals goes well beyond the U.S.-Russian context and should serve as a starting point for addressing multilateral reductions. U.S./Russian cooperation on arms control, especially with the NPT, will deeply affect the global strategic outlook in the post-cold war security environment by influencing the weapons policies of other nuclear states. To reduce risks within these states, and to prevent others from attaining these weapons, the U.S., Russia and all other relevant nations must actively reduce the political status they attach to possessing nuclear weapons.

We are pleased that relations with NATO and Russia appear to be improving and that NATO members, such as Norway, have encouraged the alliance to propose a set of transparency measures and pursue the pursuit of dialogue on arms control on this important subject. NATO’s report, “Options for Confidence and Security Building Measures (CSBMs), Verification, Non-proliferation and Arms Control,” has also

stated these aims. Overall, however, proposals and agreements of this nature on tactical nuclear weapons have not achieved any results in recent years that can realistically be viewed as tangible progress towards the pledges agreed to at the 2000 NPT review conference. Substrategic nuclear forces continue to be viewed as essential security guarantees by governments of the NATO Nuclear Planning Group member nations and in Russia. More effort is needed by NATO to verify the number of Russian tactical weapons and the viability of its procedures for safeguarding these weapons. Additionally, the information presented by the Russians on the status of their efforts to fulfill the 1991-92 initiatives has been consistently vague.

The numbers of weapons in NATO had been reduced significantly in the immediate post-cold war period. However, as of 2002 as many as 360 US B-61 nuclear bombs can still be deployed in 13 European bases. There is a great deal of symbolic value attached to the stationing of these weapons in Europe which diminishes the level of confidence in this aspect of the relationship with Russia and can encourage other nations to acquire similar weapons. The US and NATO are now preparing to make major decisions that would address possible roles for substrategic nuclear weapons in fighting terrorist entities that could include non-nuclear states and non-state actors. According to the US posture review, the Pentagon “will not seek any change to current the [NATO] posture, FY02”, but it will review plans and “assess whether any modifications to current posture are appropriate to adapt to the changing threat environment. A plan is underway to conduct a review to U.S. and allied dual capable aircraft in Europe and present recommendations to ministers in summer of 2002.” The recently updated U.S. nuclear posture will more than likely foreshadow alterations to NATO posture, providing expanded roles for nuclear weapons by including threats with weapons of mass destruction, not only threats from nuclear weapons, as justification for a U.S. or NATO nuclear strike. The adoption by NATO of counterproliferation measures as integral components of doctrine and policy—as they have been in the latest version of the U.S. Nuclear Posture Review and in recent statements made by the UK Secretary of Defense on this matter -- is incompatible with the negative security assurances of NATO's nuclear weapons states in UN Security Council Resolutions 984 and 255. Furthermore this direction in nuclear posture reaffirms allied determination to deploy nuclear weapons in Europe for the foreseeable future and undermines commitments made to the NPT (particularly Article VI) by all NATO member states. Furthermore, Articles I and II of the treaty, permit no exceptions and make it clear nuclear weapons may not be transferred or received by the signatories. NATO nuclear sharing is widely seen as a violation of the treaty in this regard. As the alliance intends to extend membership to several new members this year, it is creating further anxiety about the roles that increasing numbers of declared non-nuclear weapons states may have in the planning, training, and, under certain circumstances, the execution of allied nuclear missions.

At a minimum NATO should make concrete assurances that it will NOT deploy nuclear weapons on the territory of any new member states. It should also increase transparency of nuclear weapons capabilities, speed up the implementation of agreements pursuant to Article VI and as a voluntary confidence-building measure to support further progress on nuclear disarmament. The alliance should further demonstrate its commitment to fulfill its pledges under the NPT by removing nuclear weapons from Europe and supporting the creation of a regional Nuclear Weapons Free Zone to preclude the deployment or redeployment of tactical nuclear weapons.

NATO should also offer substantial alliance-financed contribution to the Nunn-Lugar Cooperative threat Reduction Initiative to help financing the Russian tactical nuclear weapons.

New Models of Tactical Nuclear Weapons

Government officials in the United States and Russia are calling for the development of new models of “low-yield” and more robust nuclear weapons. In the US they are being pressured from nuclear weapons laboratories. The US Congress has now received multi-million dollar FY2003 federal budget requests to begin development of a "Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator" and according to classified excerpts of the US nuclear Posture Review leaked to the US media, there are demands for the development of comparatively low-yield battlefield weapons designed to increase the penetration capability of the B-61 Model II nuclear bomb configured as earth-penetrating bombs or as missiles to target deeply buried or hardened underground targets, such as bunkers and bomb shelters. There is debate among proponents of these weapons about whether the efficacy of such new tactical nuclear weapons would have to be tested. If testing such weapons would result as part their development, this would clearly undermine the objectives Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) that the United States has signed but not ratified. Regardless, of whether the development of the weapons requires testing, deployment and plans to use these weapons will lower the threshold by make nuclear weapons usable military options. For obvious reasons, the development and intent to use such weapons run contrary to the core goals the NPT, by providing, rather than reducing, incentives to other countries to develop their own nuclear weapons, and by condoning the use of nuclear weapons.

At the NPT PrepCom, the focus should be on reducing and eliminating all existing classes of nuclear weapons. Developing new models, is a move in the wrong direction, which has very serious and negative consequences for the future of the Nonproliferation Treaty and should be rejected outright by all states parties. Thank you.

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