



Speech by Joschka Fischer,  
Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs,  
at the Opening Session of the 7th Review Conference  
of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons  
New York, 2 May 2005

Check against delivery!

Mr President,

Please accept my warm congratulations on your election as President of this Review Conference. I wish you every success for your important task. Rest assured that Germany and the EU will do their utmost to support you. By adopting a Common EU Position, we have made an important initial contribution to a successful outcome of this conference. I fully endorse the statement of the Luxembourg EU Presidency.

Mr President,

Currently, we are marking the 60th anniversary of the end of the Second World War. We are remembering the terrible destruction and untold suffering that this war brought upon so many people. This anniversary of the end of the war is also an opportunity to once again recall the lessons the international community has drawn from its horror.

Above all we realized that we require an international order "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war", as the founders of the United Nations declared in the Preamble to the Charter.

To protect peace and security everywhere in the world, we need efficient multilateral cooperation that is both effective and based on common rules. Today, after the end of the confrontation between the two blocs during the Cold War, and after 11 September, this holds true more than ever.

Let us not be fooled: the risk of nuclear war is by no means a thing of the past. In recent years, we far too often experienced the brutal, ruthless violence of international terrorism. One does not want to imagine how devastating the consequences would be if terrorist groups were to get hold of nuclear weapons. However, we must view nuclear terrorism as a very real danger.

Mr President,

Because no state has the ability or the resources to meet these challenges on its own, we need an effective international regime to counter the threats that nuclear weapons and their proliferation pose to our security. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons plays a highly central role in this.

We can therefore not close our eyes to the dangers the Treaty is currently exposed to. Breaches of non-proliferation commitments fill me with concern, as do indications that nuclear weapons are again playing an increasingly important role. This is why we must do everything we can to safeguard the integrity of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, and to further strengthen its authority.

Our efforts must be directed equally towards the two central aims of this Treaty: In view of new and growing dangers presented by the spread of nuclear weapons, we must ensure that states abide by their non-proliferation commitments. At the same time, we must bring new momentum to nuclear disarmament.

With regard to the first aspect, non-proliferation, I believe we must urgently tackle four core tasks:

First, we can only effectively counter those breaches of the Non-Proliferation Treaty that we know about. To better discover violations, our present-day possibilities for verification must be improved. Above all, we must universalize the IAEA Additional Protocol and make it the new verification standard for the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Second, we must ensure that civilian nuclear energy is not misused for military purposes. There can be no doubt that anyone who masters the fuel cycle also has the option of developing a nuclear weapons programme. This is one of the most central challenges that we must jointly tackle at this conference.

Let me make one thing perfectly clear: I am by no means questioning the right to use nuclear energy for civilian purposes. In this regard, every country must make its own decision based on its contractual obligations. Germany, for its part, opted for a phase-out of nuclear power. That being said, we must together develop a response

to a very real proliferation risk that affects the entire international community and that can arise from the closing of the fuel cycle.

Third, we are all aware of the unparalleled dangers that nuclear weapons could pose if they fell into the hands of terrorist groups. We must therefore do our utmost to prevent these groups from gaining access to weapons-grade nuclear materials. The security and physical protection of nuclear weapons and material must therefore be further increased.

Fourth, again and again, we are confronted with situations in which the Non-Proliferation Treaty is breached. This is why we must forge a new strategic consensus at the United Nations Security Council on how to deal with severe violations of the Treaty, and how to strengthen enforcement.

Mr President,

The non-proliferation commitment of states must be reinforced in these four important areas. But this alone is not sufficient. We must also address the regional developments that currently pose a concern. All diplomatic options must be used to achieve viable solutions and to dispel the concerns of the international community.

On the Korean peninsula, the six-party talks present an opportunity to minimize the North Korean nuclear risk. This opportunity must not be wasted. I call upon North Korea to immediately return to the six-party talks.

The international community expects the North Korean government to fully and verifiably meet all its obligations that arise from the Non-Proliferation Treaty. This is not only an absolute requirement for regional stability, it is also in North Korea's own interest – of this I am convinced. The aim remains a nuclear-weapon-free Korean peninsula.

Mr President,

Permit me to say a few words on Iran. The breaches that have been identified with regard to Iran's Safeguards Agreement with the IAEA have shaken our confidence in

the aims of its nuclear programme. Great Britain, France and Germany, with the support of the High Representative of the European Union, are conducting intensive negotiations with Iran in order to dispel the international community's serious concerns.

A nuclear arms race in the Middle East would have unforeseeable consequences for our security that would extend far beyond the region. We want to prevent such a development.

The negotiation process has already borne fruit. I would like to expressly draw attention to the fact that Iran is willing to work together with the IAEA in order to clarify the questions that are still unresolved. Iran has also made a commitment to suspend all uranium enrichment and reprocessing activities for the duration of the negotiations. These first steps have enabled a continuation of the EU-3-talks with Iran – a path that must resolutely be pursued. To that end, I call upon Iran to fully honour its commitments under the Paris Agreement and the relevant IAEA-resolutions.

Together, we are hoping to conclude a long-term agreement with Iran, at the center of which will be "objective guarantees" – this is what has been agreed with Iran. They are designed to ensure that Iran's nuclear programme can only be used for peaceful purposes. This is the core issue, and we must come to a satisfactory mutual agreement on this matter. If we succeed in reaching an agreement on a lasting commitment by Iran to give up uranium enrichment, this would put EU–Iran relations on a totally new footing.

Mr President,

We must also critically assess the current situation with regard to nuclear disarmament.

Today, we are in a unique historical position: the end of the East-West confrontation has brought with it new opportunities for disarmament. The end of the strategic rivalry between two opposed blocs allows nuclear arsenals to be further reduced. We

should re-examine the existing arsenals of strategic and sub-strategic nuclear weapons and energetically work to further reduce them.

I therefore most strongly argue that this opportunity should not be wasted. What we need now is new impetus for nuclear disarmament – not least to effectively counter the danger of an erosion of the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Let me be perfectly clear: The aim of German policy remains a world that is free of the threat of nuclear weapons. We are aware that the complete elimination of nuclear weapons cannot be achieved overnight. This is precisely why we need a step-by-step approach that irreversibly leads to the goal of the complete elimination of nuclear weapons.

At the last Review Conference, we jointly agreed on thirteen decisive Practical Steps. These thirteen steps are the basis for – and the benchmarks by which we will measure – the success of nuclear disarmament.

Mr President,

Since the end of the Cold War, important progress has been achieved with regard to nuclear disarmament. However, decisive challenges still lie ahead.

For instance, the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty must finally enter into force. This remains an issue that we are particularly committed to. Until this happens, we expect that nuclear-weapon states will maintain their moratoria on nuclear testing – and that they will not give rise to any doubts in this regard.

It is also imperative that we finally restart the stalled process at the Geneva Conference on Disarmament and start negotiations on prohibiting the production of fissile material for weapons purposes. Unblocking the Conference on Disarmament would be a visible sign of the willingness to decisively continue global nuclear disarmament efforts.

Nuclear-weapon states must also reaffirm their unequivocal undertaking to nuclear disarmament, and they must back this up with confidence-building steps.

It is also our aim to reduce sub-strategic nuclear weapons – with the ultimate goal of their complete elimination. In Germany, there is a serious public debate on this issue which calls for practical steps. The European Union Common Position on this Review Conference also highlights this aim. In it, the EU takes up a step-by-step approach that was advocated in a Working Paper that Germany presented to the Preparatory Committee of this conference.

For example, as a first step we propose the complete implementation of the respective unilateral commitments that were made by the United States and Russia in 1991 and 1992 to reduce their sub-strategic nuclear arsenals. It is our objective to reduce and eliminate these weapons on all sides.

We also believe transparency measures could be agreed that would account for these weapons. A further step could then be the formalization and verification of the unilateral commitments.

These would be important steps that would make progress towards the elimination of sub-strategic nuclear arsenals.

Mr President,

Even 35 years after its entry into force, we must not take the Non-Proliferation Treaty for granted. To do so would be irresponsible and negligent. We must not underestimate the risks that the treaty regime is exposed to now more than ever.

That is why we must do our utmost to jointly make this conference a success. There is no reason why we should not aim to achieve ambitious goals. Germany will therefore make every effort to ensure that this conference will adopt a strong and convincing Final Document with further-reaching agreements and recommendations.

We are jointly charged with the task of countering the threat that nuclear weapons and their proliferation pose to global security. We can only successfully tackle this challenge if everyone contributes: Nuclear-weapon states are called upon to live up to their commitments to further reduce their arsenals. Non-nuclear-weapon states must exercise their right to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes in a way that does not give rise to concern about misuse and military nuclearization.

Mr President,

More than any other era in history, the 20th century was marked by destructive nationalism, devastating wars and dangerous arms races. It was an "Age of Extremes" in the worst sense, as the British historian Eric Hobsbawm once described it.

We are called upon to ensure that this young 21st century will not be characterised by such extremes. Moreover, we must do everything within our power to make the 21st century an age of an effective multilateral order.

If, at this conference, we succeed in safeguarding and strengthening the Non-Proliferation Treaty, it can play a central role in this endeavour. Together, let us tackle this challenge.

Thank you.