



**Statement by Mr. Nicholas Clutterbuck
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**UNGA 74 First Committee
Nuclear Debate Statement**

22 October 2019

Mr Chair,

You will find in an inscription outside the ornate room in Geneva in which the Conference on Disarmament meets the words: “Nations must disarm or perish”.

Very unfortunately, it seems this is not a truth accepted by *all* those who pass by these words. Most concerningly, it does not seem to be accepted by those possessing the most destructive weapons of all – capable of destroying our planet – nuclear weapons.

Instead, those states are engaged both in modernising their arsenals and developing new weapon types. At times, it seems that we are indeed facing a renewed nuclear arms race. These actions fly in the face of long-standing aspirations and efforts by the international community to work towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

For the purposes of today’s statement, Mr Chair, my delegation wishes to put to one side the question of whether these actions are prudent from the point of view of global security and stability, or whether they elevate the risk of the use – deliberate or inadvertent – of a nuclear weapon and the catastrophic humanitarian consequences which that would entail. I am leaving aside, too, the question of whether these actions represent a wise use of financial resources or whether they are helpful in advancing the SDGs.

I would like, instead, to focus on the implications for the NPT. There can, surely, be no one here who is unaware of the importance of next year's Review Conference in carrying forward the key gains secured by that Treaty, grounded in the Treaty's Grand Bargain.

That Bargain has been strong enough to surmount the differing emphasis given by States Parties to its various elements, and resilient enough to encompass even variable interpretations its core obligations – particularly that of Article VI: its disarmament pillar.

The framing of the Treaty, and of Article VI, is broad enough to encompass a variety of approaches to its implementation. Certainly it has not prescribed a *single* pathway forward for nuclear disarmament. Whilst New Zealand might regret that not all states subscribe to the most ambitious legal pathway currently available to advance nuclear disarmament – that provided by the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) – we acknowledge that States are not specifically obliged by the NPT to do so.

But notwithstanding this flexibility, not even the most *de minimis* reading possible of Article VI can give any basis for a nuclear weapon state to move backwards on its implementation of that provision.

Mr Chair,

Concerns of a positive outcome at the 2020 Review Conference are widespread. My Government has no intention of allowing this to become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Accordingly, New Zealand has joined a number of efforts aimed at injecting momentum into the NPT agenda, and identifying proposals which may help reap a positive harvest next year. New Zealand looks forward to continuing to work with other States that are – like us – deeply committed to achieving a meaningful outcome, especially under the nuclear disarmament pillar.

In closing, Mr Chair, I wish to note that New Zealand fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by Egypt on behalf of the New Agenda Coalition.

Thank you.

NZ disarmament statements online, www.converge.org.nz/pma/nzdist.htm