

United States
Statement to the NPT Review Conference, 3 May 2010
US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton

SECRETARY CLINTON: I want to thank the Secretary General, Director General Amano, Ambassador Cabactulan, for their outstanding leadership in pulling together this Review Conference and addressing the challenges of nuclear proliferation.

As you know, President Obama has made reducing the threat posed by nuclear weapons and materials a central mission of our foreign policy, and the NPT lies at the core of that mission. I want to begin by reading a section of the message that President Obama has sent to this conference:

“For four decades, the NPT has been the cornerstone of our collective efforts to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons. But today, this regime is under increasing pressure. A year ago in Prague, I therefore made it a priority of the United States to strengthen each of the treaty’s key pillars as we work to stop the spread of nuclear weapons and to pursue the peace and security of a world without them.

“Today, the eyes of the world are upon us. Over the coming weeks, each of our nations will have the opportunity to show where we stand. Will we meet our responsibilities or shirk them? Will we ensure the rights of nations or undermine them? In short, do we seek a 21st century of more nuclear weapons or a world without them? These are the questions we must answer and the challenges we must meet. At this conference and beyond, let us come together in partnership to pursue the peace and security that our people deserve.”

Now, President Obama and I know that there are many different perspectives and historical experiences represented in this room. We know there are doubts among some about whether nuclear weapons states, including my own country, are prepared to help lead this effort. I am here to tell you as clearly as I can: The United States will do its part. I represent a President and a country committed to a vision of a world without nuclear weapons and to taking the concrete steps necessary that will help us get there. And along with my delegation, I come to this conference with sincere and serious proposals to advance the fundamental aims of the NPT and strengthen the global nonproliferation regime.

Now, President Obama and I have spoken often of rights and responsibilities, and for us that’s not just a slogan; it is the guiding principles of our efforts. We recognize the rights of all countries in compliance with the treaty to realize the benefits of nuclear energy. And we recognize our responsibility to commit the resources that will help spread those benefits as widely as possible.

We also recognize our responsibility as a nuclear weapons state to move toward disarmament, and that is exactly what we are doing. And as we work to uphold our end of the basic bargain of the NPT, we are asking all signatories to do the same, to work with us to strengthen global nonproliferation rules and hold accountable those who violate them.

So as we begin this conference, let’s remember why we are here, because it is easy to get lost in the jargon and the technical disputes. But there is a deeper mission here to create a safer world where all of our children and grandchildren can realize their God-given potential without the threat of nuclear proliferation.

This meeting comes 40 years after the NPT first entered into force. At that time, the world was at a crossroads. President Kennedy had warned that by the year 1975, up to 20 countries might have nuclear weapons, and many said that nuclear proliferation was inevitable. Well, today we can be grateful that

this treaty helped dispel the darkest predictions of that era and that a nuclear weapon has not been used in those four decades.

Yet as we recognize the significance of the NPT, we must also acknowledge that like our predecessors 40 years ago, we stand at a crossroads too. Once again, we face the prospect of a new wave of proliferation. Once again, we hear claims that the spread of nuclear weapons is unavoidable. And once again, some say we must learn to live with the fear and instability of a world with more and more nuclear-armed states and networks.

Now, today, the vast majority of states are living up to their nonproliferation obligations. But a few outliers have demonstrated a determination to violate the rules and defy the international community. During the past decade, one state said it was withdrawing from the NPT after being caught cheating and subsequently announced two nuclear tests. Another has cynically claimed to be abiding by the treaty while violating its safeguards, expanding its enrichment program, failing to cooperate with the IAEA, and ignoring the injunctions of the Security Council.

But amid these challenges, once again, most nations have the opportunity to choose a different path. And the message that President Obama delivered in Prague last year has a new urgency. Rules must be binding. Violations must be punished. Words must mean something. And the world must stand together to prevent the spread of these weapons. Now, at this conference, it is time for a strong international response.

These Review Conferences have been held every five years for the last four decades, but too often they have fractured along familiar lines: nuclear weapons states versus non-nuclear-weapons states, or the Western Group versus the Non-Aligned Movement. Instead of working together to meet a common challenge, we have retreated into predictable positions to protect our presumed interest. This time must be different. As one minister said to me, “We not only must think out of the box, we must think out of the blocs.”

We know there are some countries who will choose not to be constructive. This morning, Iran’s president offered the same tired, false, and sometimes wild accusations against the United States and other parties at this conference. But that’s not surprising. As you all heard this morning, Iran will do whatever it can to divert attention away from its own record and to attempt to evade accountability. Ultimately, however, we will all be judged not for our words but for our actions. And we will all be measured not by how assertively we claim our rights but by how faithfully we uphold our responsibilities. And as the Secretary General said, in this regard the onus is on Iran. So far, it has failed to meet its burden. Iran is the only country represented in this hall that has been found by the IAEA Board of Governors to be currently in noncompliance with its nuclear safeguards obligations – the only one. It has defied the UN Security Council and the IAEA, and placed the future of the nonproliferation regime in jeopardy. And that is why it is facing increasing isolation and pressure from the international community.

But Iran will not succeed in its efforts to divert and divide. The United States and the great majority of the nations represented here come to this conference with a much larger agenda: to strengthen a global nonproliferation regime that advances the security of all nations, to advance both our rights and our responsibilities. So now is the time to focus on promoting practical solutions, not pursuing unrealistic agendas. Now is the time to build consensus, not to block it. And I call on Iran to join with all the other delegations represented at this meeting to go ahead and fulfill our international obligations and work toward the goal of a safer world.

The stakes are as high as they were at the dawn of the NPT. And we cannot fall into the ruts left over from old divisions. So rather than allow a small minority to focus attention on our differences, we must acknowledge we are all in this together and set a course for 40 more years of progress to stem the tide

of proliferation, prevent the use of these weapons, and use nuclear power for the purpose of peace and prosperity.

So to realize this goal, we must recommit ourselves to strengthening the three pillars of the nonproliferation regime. And with respect to those three pillars – nuclear disarmament, access to civilian nuclear energy, and nonproliferation – this Administration, the United States has led through deeds, not simply through words. Our commitment to the NPT begins with our efforts to reduce the role and number of nuclear weapons in our own arsenal. When President Obama came into office, he recognized that the greatest potential danger facing the United States comes from a terrorist group like al-Qaida obtaining a crude nuclear device, not from a global nuclear war. And we know that the threats of the 21st century cannot be addressed with a massive nuclear stockpile. So we are taking irreversible, transparent, verifiable steps to reduce the number of the nuclear weapons in our arsenal. Our new START treaty with Russia will limit the number of strategic nuclear weapons deployed by our countries to levels not seen since the 1950s. This agreement is consistent with the Secretary General's call to pursue nuclear disarmament through agreement on a framework of separate, mutually reinforcing instruments.

Our Nuclear Posture Review ruled out the development of new U.S. nuclear weapons and new missions and capabilities for our existing weapons. It also stated we will not use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapons states that are parties to the NPT and in compliance with their nuclear nonproliferation obligations. We have made a commitment to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, and we are ready – past ready – to start multilateral negotiations on a verifiable Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty.

And today, I am announcing we will submit protocols to the United States Senate to ratify our participation in the nuclear-weapon-free zones that have been established in Africa and the South Pacific. Upon ratification, parties to those agreements will have a legally binding assurance that the United States will not use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against them, and will fully respect the nuclear-weapons-free status of the zones. And we are prepared to consult with the parties to the nuclear-weapons-free zones in Central and Southeast Asia, in an effort to reach agreement that would allow us to sign those protocols as well.

We support efforts to realize the goal of a weapons of mass destruction-free zone in the Middle East, in accordance with the 1995 Middle East Resolution. The Middle East may present the greatest threat of nuclear proliferation in the world today. Adherence to the NPT is not universal, and a few countries that are parties to the NPT have violated their treaty obligations. But in spite of these difficulties, we want to reaffirm our commitment to the objective of a Middle East free of these weapons of mass destruction, and we are prepared to support practical measures that will move us toward achieving that objective.

President Obama has made clear the United States will retain a nuclear deterrent for as long as nuclear weapons exist, one that can protect our country and our allies. But we will continue to seek further reductions and we will pursue concrete steps to improve the transparency of our nuclear arsenal. Beginning today, the United States will make public the number of nuclear weapons in our stockpile and the number of weapons we have dismantled since 1991.

So for those who doubt that the United States will do its part on disarmament, this is our record, these are our commitments, and they send a clear, unmistakable signal. We are also committed to bolstering another pillar: access to civilian nuclear energy. We unequivocally support the rights of states that are in compliance with the treaty to access nuclear technology and energy for peaceful purposes. The IAEA's high-end projection for new nuclear capacity has nearly doubled since the last Review Conference five years ago. And the United States wants to help expand the ability of all states to utilize

peaceful nuclear energy. Over the past decade, we've provided nearly \$200 million to support the IAEA's Technical Cooperation Fund. We are the largest contributor to that effort. And it has helped more than 100 countries develop or expand the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

Today, the President has asked me to announce that the United States will make an additional commitment of \$50 million over the next five years for a new IAEA Peaceful Uses Initiative. We hope other partners will match this contribution with an additional \$50 million. We will use these resources to improve health care and nutrition, manage water resources, increase food security, and help countries develop the infrastructure for the safe and secure use of nuclear power.

We are pleased that the IAEA's director general has made expanding use of civil nuclear energy for humanitarian purposes one of his signature initiatives. The United States is also strengthening bilateral technical cooperation arrangements with more than 40 states, particularly in the Middle East, North Africa, and Southeast Asia.

But this treaty is weakened when a state flouts the rules and develops illicit nuclear weapons capabilities. So as we pursue progress on these pillars, we must recommit our nations to bolster the nonproliferation regime. When leaders of the IAEA ask for more resources and authority to carry out their mission of verifying compliance with nonproliferation obligations, we must respond. When the IAEA calls on states to sign and ratify an additional protocol to ensure that parties to the NPT are meeting their treaty obligations, we must act.

But improving the IAEA's ability to detect safeguard violations is not enough. Potential violators must know that they will pay a high price if they break the rules, and that is certainly not the case today. The international community's record of enforcing compliance in recent years is unacceptable. So we need to consider automatic penalties for the violation of safeguards agreements such as suspending all international nuclear cooperation or IAEA technical cooperation projects until compliance has been restored. And we must use all of the possible financial and legal tools to disrupt illicit proliferation networks. That means tightening controls on transshipment and enhancing restrictions on transfers of sensitive technology. We should also find ways to dissuade states from utilizing the treaty's withdrawal provision to avoid accountability.

Now, I am not proposing to amend the treaty to limit the rights of states to withdraw. But we cannot stand by when a state committing treaty violations says it will pull out of the NPT in an attempt to escape penalties and even pursue nuclear weapons. Parties to the NPT have invested decades in building a global nonproliferation regime, and that work will be rendered meaningless if the international community continues allowing nations to break the rules of the NPT with impunity.

Our work at this conference must provide a foundation for future actions, including strengthening IAEA safeguards, negotiating a fissile material cutoff treaty at the Conference on Disarmament and toughening enforcement against proliferation violations at the UN Security Council.

The last 40 years have proved that nuclear proliferation is not inevitable. We believe it can be stopped, but it will take all of us here recognizing common dangers and finding common ground, rolling up our sleeves and getting creative, taking practical steps together in the next month.

A lot of skeptics out there say that when countries gather at the United Nations, nothing happens but a lot of words are used up. Well, it is up to us at this conference to prove those doubters wrong. Forty years from now, our successors will mark the 80th anniversary of the Nonproliferation Treaty. And the men and women, who gather on that occasion in the new building, once it is finally completed, will not remember the words we speak today unless those words are matched by actions. But our children and our grandchildren will live with the consequences of what we decide this month. Whether the world is more or less secure depends on the path we take, and there is no greater reason than that to find a way

to act together and to act decisively.

Thank you very much. (Applause.)