



## **Opening Remarks for Regional Consultations for States Parties to the NPT**

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As delivered



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Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to join you in Panama City for the regional consultations for States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

I wish to express my sincere appreciation to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for hosting this meeting at its Regional Hub in Panama, and to the European Union for its continued and generous support which has made these consultations possible. I also welcome the attendance of Her Excellency Ambassador Izabela Matusz of the Delegation of the European Union to Panama.

And, of course, I want to once again congratulate His Excellency Ambassador Do Hung Viet on his election as President-designate of the 2026 Review Conference. As the fourth and last regional consultation convened under the EU-supported process for the Review Conference – following meetings in Hanoi, Addis Ababa and Amman – this meeting in Panama City underscores the President-designate's commitment to inclusivity, transparency and meaningful regional engagement. The United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs remains fully committed to supporting his efforts towards a successful Review Conference.

Excellencies,

We meet at a moment of profound challenge for international peace and security. Multilateral cooperation, and the architecture that underpins it, is under huge strain. Geopolitical tensions are high and rising, while dialogue among nuclear-weapon States has stagnated. Decades of hard-won progress in nuclear

disarmament and non-proliferation – progress that has significantly contributed to global stability – are being reversed.

This context has been sharpened by the expiration of the New START Treaty and the end of verifiable limits on the strategic nuclear arsenals of the Russian Federation and the United States. On that occasion, the Secretary-General warned that the expiration “marks a grave moment for international peace and security,” and “this dissolution of decades of achievement could not come at a worse time – the risk of a nuclear weapon being used is the highest in decades.”

Against this backdrop, a qualitative nuclear arms race is already underway, and the prospect of a renewed quantitative one cannot be dismissed. As longstanding guardrails are being pushed aside, all elements of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime – including the NPT – are under growing pressure.

The NPT, long the cornerstone of global nuclear stability and the central multilateral framework governing nuclear weapons, faces deepening divisions and distrust among its States Parties. Preserving the Treaty - and international peace and security - must begin with a renewed collective commitment.

A third consecutive Review Conference without consensus would carry real consequences for the health of the Treaty. It could lead to a hollowing out of the regime, as States lose confidence in the Treaty’s ability to deliver on its core promises across all three pillars.

Since its indefinite extension in 1995, the credibility of the NPT has rested on the mutually reinforcing nature of disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. When one pillar is weakened, the others inevitably suffer. Preserving this balance, therefore, remains essential.

This is why the 2026 Review Conference is so important. It offers an opportunity not only to reaffirm long-standing commitments, but also to chart a practical and

forward-looking pathway to strengthen the Treaty in a rapidly evolving, and increasingly challenging, security environment.

Achieving this will require political will, flexibility and a shared understanding that no State Party benefits from a weakened NPT.

These consultations are designed to support that process. They provide space for open, regionally focused dialogue, enabling the President-designate to hear directly from States about their priorities and concerns, and to identify areas where convergence is possible.

While views may differ among States on what success should look like, we know that flexibility, creativity and a commitment to constructive engagement will be indispensable.

Excellencies,

Latin America and the Caribbean hold a distinctive and respected place in the history of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. The region was the first to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in a densely populated area through the Treaty of Tlatelolco, adopted in 1967. With the ratification of the Treaty by Cuba in 2002, all 33 States in the region are now parties, making the zone universal in scope. This achievement reflects a longstanding regional consensus that security is best pursued without nuclear weapons.

Regional leadership has been sustained through the work of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL), which for decades has supported the implementation of the Treaty of Tlatelolco and promoted cooperation, transparency and confidence-building. This experience offers valuable lessons for the broader NPT community on how regional arrangements can reinforce global norms.

Disarmament lies at the heart of the NPT's grand bargain, and frustrations over the lack of progress are widely felt. For Latin America and the Caribbean, disarmament has never been an abstract aspiration. The region's strong engagement with humanitarian perspectives underscores a clear understanding of the catastrophic consequences – human, environmental, and developmental – that any use of nuclear weapons would entail.

As we look toward this year, advancing the implementation of existing disarmament commitments under the Treaty remains a central challenge. The catastrophic consequences of any nuclear weapon use demand urgent measures to reduce risks, including enhanced dialogue, effective crisis communication, transparency and restraint in nuclear doctrines. Such measures are not substitutes for disarmament, but they are necessary and complementary steps to prevent catastrophe.

Nuclear non-proliferation remains indispensable to international peace and security. The Latin America and Caribbean region's consistent support for robust safeguards, universality and compliance has been critical to upholding the integrity of the NPT. As new technologies and applications emerge, maintaining strong regulatory frameworks and effective international cooperation will be crucial. Regional arrangements such as the Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials (ABACC) demonstrate how confidence-building, verification and cooperation can reinforce global non-proliferation norms.

The peaceful uses pillar represents the tangible benefits of the NPT for sustainable development. Across this region, nuclear science and technology contribute to healthcare, agriculture, water management, environmental protection and climate resilience. In this context, strengthening the nexus between peaceful uses, sustainable development and technical cooperation financing will

be particularly important. The 2026 Review Conference should reaffirm the importance of equitable access to these benefits for all States Parties, particularly developing countries, alongside the highest standards of safety, security and non-proliferation.

Excellencies,

The forthcoming Review Conference is a moment to renew commitment, rebuild trust and strengthen the foundation of the Treaty. There is no template for a successful outcome. What matters is that the outcome reinforces the NPT and the confidence that sustains it.

Every State Party has a stake in this effort, and every region brings essential perspectives, experience and political will. The NPT has endured for more than five decades because it has adapted to changing realities. It must do so again, guided by realism, determination and a shared sense of responsibility.

I encourage you to use these consultations to listen to one another, reflect candidly on the challenges before us and work together toward a strengthened NPT in 2026 and beyond.

I wish you productive deliberations and look forward to the insights and recommendations that will emerge from your discussions.

I thank you very much for your attention.

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