



**Future-Proofing the NPT: A Youth-led Intergenerational Dialogue on
Nuclear Weapons and Emerging Technologies**

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Excellencies, distinguished delegates, dear colleagues, and especially dear young people,

It is a pleasure to welcome you to this youth-led side event, co-organized with the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) and the Government of the Republic of Korea. I would like to thank the Republic of Korea for its valued partnership and continued support for my Office's flagship youth outreach programme, Youth4Disarmament. This event is also part of a broader set of youth-led initiatives that UNODA is convening around the NPT Review Conference, reflecting the importance of opening intergovernmental spaces to young people in ways that make multilateral disarmament discussions more inclusive and forward-looking.

Today's discussion builds on the important foundation laid last year through the first-ever **UN Youth4Disarmament Forum**, which launched a youth-led conversation on nuclear weapons and emerging technologies. Young people brought fresh thinking, strong policy recommendations, and a clear reminder that the future of disarmament cannot be shaped without those who will live longest with its consequences. This side event draws directly on that momentum, and the Forum's outcome document, by carrying the conversation into the NPT context, with a particular focus on the future of the Treaty.

Yet, the future of the NPT is about more than the future of a Treaty. It is about whether this cornerstone of the global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation architecture can remain credible, relevant, and resilient in a rapidly changing and challenging world. The NPT remains an essential foundation across disarmament, non-proliferation, and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. But that foundation is under pressure.

Progress on disarmament is widely seen as too slow. Multilateralism is under strain. And rapid developments in technologies - from artificial intelligence to information and communications technologies - are reshaping the security environment in ways our institutions are still trying to catch up with. These developments bring both risks and opportunities, but above all they underscore the need for the NPT to remain responsive to a changing world.

But future-proofing the NPT is not only about technology. It is also about people.

If the future of the Treaty is being discussed without the meaningful involvement of those who will inherit that future, then something important is missing. Too

often, young people, especially from the Global South/Majority constituencies, still have too little influence in formal NPT discussions. Yet they are not simply observers. They are already leaders, advocates, and contributors - bringing urgency, imagination and new ideas to the table.

That is precisely why this event matters and is so timely. It is not a discussion about youth, but a discussion *shaped* by youth. Organized by young people themselves, from idea to execution, it shows what meaningful participation can look like when young people are trusted not only to join the conversation, but also to help lead it.

By inviting us to reflect through a future-oriented scenario, this event encourages us not only to respond to present challenges, but also to ask what choices we must make now to ensure that the NPT remains effective, relevant and responsive for generations to come.

I would like to leave you with the words of the Secretary-General:

‘Today, humanity is just one misunderstanding, one miscalculation away from nuclear annihilation. We need the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons as much as ever. That is why this Review Conference is so important. It’s an opportunity to hammer out the measures that will help avoid certain disaster. And to put humanity on a new path towards a world free of nuclear weapons.¹’

With that in mind, I hope today’s discussion will be dynamic, interactive, and ambitious. But above all, I hope it serves as a reminder that keeping the NPT strong will depend not only on preserving what already exists, but on having the courage to listen, to adapt, and to make space for new voices and new ideas. Because future-proofing the NPT is not only about protecting a treaty, but also about protecting our shared future.

Thank you.

¹ ANTÓNIO GUTERRES, United Nations Secretary-General at the Tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT

1 August 2022, New York