

Madam Chairperson

Distinguished colleagues

Madam, Sir

Current geopolitical tensions and regional instabilities complicate the nuclear disarmament process. Yet, such challenges must not be an excuse for inaction. On the contrary, the many uncertainties that we are facing and the current strain on the nuclear regime make substantial progress on disarmament and non-proliferation all the more important.

Switzerland has been actively engaged in efforts to deepen our understanding of the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of the use of nuclear weapons. A nuclear detonation, whether by accident, miscalculation or design, would constitute a humanitarian disaster of such magnitude that we would have no response to it. The catastrophic consequences of a nuclear weapon detonation are a primary reason why Switzerland is determined to move resolutely towards a world without nuclear weapons.

The overarching objective is clear: a world without nuclear weapons. It is a primary responsibility of authorities to protect their population from such catastrophes. We have to do everything possible to ensure that such weapons are never used again, under any circumstances.

Since the end of the Cold War, nuclear-weapon states have made significant reductions in their nuclear arsenals, dismantled warheads, decommissioned nuclear facilities, or made progress on verification procedures and other elements essential for a world free of nuclear weapons. The disarmament process, however, has slowed down in recent years and enormous destructive capacities persist – with these capacities being seemingly maintained for the foreseeable future. In this regard, we are concerned that the modernization efforts might undermine the disarmament objectives and go beyond mere security and safety related considerations.

There is a compelling need for nuclear possessor states to continue disarmament efforts and to further reduce their arsenals. They have to redouble efforts to agree on goals for quantitative and qualitative reductions.

The total elimination of nuclear weapons cannot be achieved overnight. But what should be achieved, as an initial urgent step, is the progressive reduction of risks related to nuclear weapons. Nuclear-armed states should “de-alert” their nuclear weapons, which means reducing the operational readiness of their weapons, in order to lengthen decision times. With regard to doctrines, Switzerland proposes, as another initial step, that nuclear-armed states limit the role of nuclear weapons to the sole purpose of deterring the use of nuclear weapons by other States. Also, Switzerland advocates for more transparency both by nuclear possessor states and states whose security doctrines rely on nuclear weapons. Finally, my country supports efforts to develop multilateral nuclear disarmament verification mechanisms that would contribute to effectively verify the irreversible dismantlement and disposal of nuclear weapons.

Switzerland is convinced that nuclear disarmament will require both practical risk reduction measures (such as de-alerting, transparency etc.) as well as new effective legal measures. Beyond the practical efforts deployed by nuclear-armed states, together we also must address the legal gap in the nuclear regime. Nuclear weapons remain the one category of weapons of mass destruction not prohibited by a multilateral convention. Additionally, the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban-Treaty has still not entered into force. Negotiations on a treaty prohibiting the production of fissile material have yet to commence.

We have to be both ambitious and pragmatic. Eliminating nuclear weapons requires an inclusive approach with the engagement of and cooperation between all states, nuclear armed states and non-nuclear weapon states. It is a global challenge that can only be accomplished together. We must collectively shape a security environment conducive to achieving a world without nuclear weapons.

At the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review conference last year, my country called for thorough and inclusive conceptual discussions about possible

additional instruments to advance multilateral nuclear disarmament. As established and mandated by the UN General Assembly Resolution 70/33, the Open-ended Working Group on Nuclear Disarmament (OEWG) is exactly providing the platform for such discussions. The deliberations held in this forum are useful and advance our understanding of the possible next steps in terms of multilateral nuclear disarmament.

Switzerland regrets that nuclear possessor states have not participated in the OEWG's work this year. Its mandate has been carefully drafted in a way that, in our view, allows for all UN Member States to participate. It is quite possible that the OEWG will lead to multilateral negotiations on nuclear disarmament in 2017. It would be best if such negotiations are structured in such a way as to allow participation of nuclear possessor states and those under extended nuclear deterrence relationships. This would support the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which will start another review cycle in 2017.

The OSCE has a long tradition in painstakingly working towards confidence-building, creating relations at all levels, in particular between armed forces. In this era of mutual distrust, the OSCE has an important role to play. Using the existing established frameworks to bring participating States together and to foster dialogue, establishing new platforms to open new communication channels and address existing, new and emerging risk are but a few measures that the OSCE should further explore. As the main euro-atlantic/eurasian forum for cooperative security, the OSCE, its participating States as well as its Parliamentary Assembly should undertake all necessary efforts to reduce tensions, mistrust and hence contribute to nuclear disarmament.

The OSCE should also continue to make concrete contributions:

One important contribution by the OSCE is the support for the regional implementation of UNSCR 1540, which prevents the potential theft and/or smuggling of weapons of mass destruction and related materials by non-state actors. The OSCE has built up significant capacities in this field and plays a key role in the promotion of the implementation of UNSCR 1540 and its successor resolutions. The OSCE improved cooperation among the relevant regional and national stakeholders and has helped States to develop National Action Plans or improve their national legislations.

Another important contribution are the “OSCE Principles Governing Non-proliferation,” through which the participating States undertook to enhance and strengthen existing norms against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

A third contribution could be to explore a European Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone as a regional confidence-building measure. Such a zone would strengthen the non-proliferation obligations of European countries, and would include security assurances from the nuclear-armed States that they would not threaten or use nuclear weapons against the countries included in the zone. A recent study by the Peace Research Institute of Frankfurt, funded by the Swiss and Austrian governments, indicates the security value and the feasibility of establishing such a zone in a phased process.

I thank you for your attention.

Tbilisi, 4th July 2016