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Press Release

BASIC expert comment on critical nuclear weapons conference in New York from next week

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The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference in New York will be attended by 189 countries and last from 3 to 28 May 2010.

BASIC's Washington Program Director, Anne Penketh, has provided the scorecard below on key things to look for from the Review Conference. BASIC also has a number of publications either published or forthcoming on key issues surrounding the NPT.

What to watch for at the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference

Anne Penketh
BASIC Program Director

Final document agreed by consensus

Chances of agreement: 3/10

A final document with extensive commitments, such as the one agreed in 2000, would be a major achievement and a shot in the arm for the NPT, but is highly unlikely. One that avoided the main issues and any definitive commitments, but reflected a shared desire to see greater cooperation, is more likely. But more likely still is no final document. Crucially, Iran is expected to reject language on treaty compliance, which would prevent consensus on an issue at the heart of many states' objectives for this Review Conference (RevCon).

Document agreed by five nuclear weapons states

Chances: 9/10

Will reflect the consensus among the five (who are also permanent members of the UN Security Council) on their disarmament commitments and other issues. Watch the language to see whether they move beyond (or retreat from) 2000 RevCon commitment to "an unequivocal undertaking by the Nuclear Weapon States to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear

arsenals." In the likely absence of a Final Document, this could be the most important on-going commitment coming out of the RevCon.

Conference on Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction

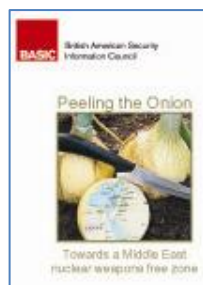
Chances: 5/10

This is the object of intense negotiations in the run-up to the RevCon and the result could go either way. There is a chance progress will be made on Egypt's proposal for an international conference, which would be an important breakthrough in implementing the 1995 RevCon resolution calling for a Middle East zone "free of nuclear weapons as well as other weapons of mass destruction." Failure to agree on practical steps could wreck the conference. There is clear frustration with agreement in principle that leads to no action.

Strengthening the treaty

Chances: 4/10

The Nuclear Weapon States want to see the Additional Protocol of the International Atomic Energy Agency adopted as a universal standard, but there is little or no chance of this being confirmed by the RevCon. A total of 127 NPT states have signed the Additional Protocol, which provides for a reinforced safeguards regime and more intrusive inspections, and is aimed at deterring non-compliance with the Treaty. However Non-Aligned Movement states want to see the Additional Protocol remain voluntary. Individual states may announce their intention to adhere to the Additional Protocol during the RevCon, which would be a sign of progress. Also watch to see what is done about attempts by the Nuclear Weapons States to dissuade parties – such as Iran - from withdrawing from the Treaty after being found in non-compliance.



BASIC Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference 2010 Papers

Peeling the Onion: Towards a Middle East nuclear weapons free zone

(PDF)

Anne Penketh, 18 March 2010

Bold initiatives are being sought to prevent a much-feared nuclear arms race in the Middle East. The U.N. resolution on a Middle East nuclear weapons free zone is one such initiative that would bind countries in the region, including Israel and Iran. This paper provides a brief history of the quest for such a zone and makes recommendations for progress.



Treading Water in 2010: The Nuclear Weapon States and Nuclear Disarmament (PDF)

Chris Lindborg and Nicholas Meros, 20 April 2010

The Nuclear Weapon States (NWS) have come under increasing pressure the past few years to make bolder progress on nuclear disarmament. This report provides an overview of NWS nuclear postures and policies, their general approaches to the NPT and what their movements on substantive nuclear disarmament would look like.



Non-proliferation requires disarmament, and vice versa: Advice to the Iranian Government as it seeks to challenge the nuclear order at the NPT Review Conference (PDF)

Paul Ingram, 21 April 2010

The fears that many states have about a possible Iranian nuclear weapon capability have undermined the case for disarmament. Regardless of whether claims by various sides are justified, Iran could improve the situation by actively reframing the discussion. If Tehran were to improve and strengthen its relationship with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and reinstate and ratify the Additional Protocol, it could more credibly claim leadership in global disarmament efforts.

Forthcoming papers over the next two weeks:

- Keeping the “Non” in the Non-Nuclear Weapon States, Chris Lindborg
- Squaring the circle of NATO’s cohesion, deterrence and disarmament responsibilities, Paul Ingram

Anne Penketh will be at the RevCon for the duration, and will be joined in the second week by Paul Ingram and members of BASIC’s Board. They may be reached for comment at the following:

Contact:

Paul Ingram, Executive Director:

UK cell: +44 (0)7908 708175; US cell: +1 202 230 4465

pingram at basicint.org

Anne Penketh, Program Director:

US cell: +1 202 570 6701

apenketh at basicint.org

ENDS

BASIC UK: The Grayston Centre, 2nd Fl, 28 Charles Square, London N1 6HT, +44-(0)20-7324 4680

BASIC US: 110 Maryland Ave NE, Suite 205, Washington, DC 20002, +1 202 546 8055

<http://www.basicint.org>