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**EMERGING  
VOICES  
NETWORK**

**BASIC**

# Regional Youth Perspectives on the NPT Review Process

An Early Career/Youth Consultation by BASIC's  
Emerging Voices Network (EVN)

Edited by Kim Obergfaell



# Emerging Voices Network

Launched in December 2020, the Emerging Voices Network (EVN) is a digital network of high-potential, next-generation leaders on nuclear issues who will inherit the responsibility to manage nuclear threats. In founding the EVN, BASIC's aim was to create a truly inclusive digital space wherein younger voices from marginalised communities around the world are heard on nuclear issues. The Network promotes collaboration, dialogue and bridge-building between next-generation leaders from the Global North and South, with diversity and inclusivity at the forefront of the Network's ethos and mission.

## BASIC

BASIC is an independent, non-profit think tank working to safeguard humanity and Earth's ecosystem from nuclear risks and interconnected security threats, for generations to come. We have a global reputation for convening distinctive and empathic dialogues that help states overcome complex strategic and political differences. Our established networks and expertise, developed since 1987, enable us to get the right people in the room and facilitate effective, meaningful exchange between siloed and often hostile political communities.

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## Editor

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# List of Acronyms

AP	Model Additional Protocol
CANWFZ	Central Asian Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone
COPREDAL	Preparatory Commission for the Denuclearisation of Latin America
CSA	Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement
CWC	Chemical Weapons Convention
CTBT	Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty
DNPE	Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Education
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
EVN	Emerging Voices Network
FMCT	Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
ICBM	Intercontinental Ballistic Missile
IGO	Intergovernmental Organisation
JCPOA	Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action
LATAM	Latin America
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
NAM	Non-Aligned Movement
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
New START	New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NNWS	Non-Nuclear Weapon States
NPP	Nuclear Power Plant
NPT	Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
NSG	Nuclear Suppliers Group
NWFZ	Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone
NWS	Nuclear Weapon States
OPANAL	Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean
PrepCom	Preparatory Committee for the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
RevCon	Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
TPNW	Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNODA	United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction
WMDFZ	Weapons-of-Mass-Destruction-Free Zone

# Introduction

Forming part of BASIC's Inclusive International Security Programme, the Emerging Voices Network (EVN) seeks to reach, engage and platform early career and young experts from communities, countries and backgrounds that are underrepresented in mainstream nuclear policy fora. The EVN is committed to helping these individuals overcome institutional barriers to ensure that nuclear fora are truly global and that the perspectives and expertise of communities that are often minoritised, yet impacted by nuclear weapons development and policy, are centred and integrated into mainstream nuclear dialogue. The EVN aims to support this new generation of experts, policy professionals and researchers who will be working on these issues to address the risks posed by nuclear weapons.

As part of this endeavour, nine early career leaders from across the globe steered an early-career / youth consultation on the NPT review processes over the past four months. The aim of this project was to explore the regional barriers to, as well as opportunities for engagement of early career professionals with the NPT in the lead up to the NPT PrepCom meeting in August 2023 and the Eleventh NPT RevCon in 2026.

The youth consultation included the dissemination of a survey, a regional focus group meeting, interviews with young professionals, as well as a global town hall meeting with other young and early-career professionals in the nuclear policy field. This allowed our EVN consultants to gather information from their respective regions on youth perspectives on the NPT review process. Throughout this consultation, BASIC and the EVN team provided support and guidance to all consultants. The consultants' main findings will also be shared in the form of a short Working Paper that BASIC will submit to the PrepCom meeting to take place in August 2023.

The regional reports explore a variety of challenges for the current NPT review cycle. These range from concerns about the effectiveness of the NPT regime in regions such as East and Southeast Asia, the collapsing US-Russian arms control regime at times of territorial disputes in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, the lack of political will and institutional barriers among some states in Latin America and the Caribbean, to the lasting impact of colonial powers' nuclear testing on First Nations communities in Oceania. Yet, the reports also highlight key opportunities for youth and early-career professionals to engage with the NPT review process: Among these are encouraging regional actors in the Middle East and North Africa to highlight the value of a Middle East WMDFFZ, raising awareness among North American actors regarding the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons and structural barriers to engagement with the NPT, as well as strengthening access to regional youth and civil society in South Asia to engage in non-proliferation and risk reduction dialogue. Lastly, the reports underline the importance of international cooperation on the peaceful uses of nuclear technology, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, and the role of multilateral initiatives in paving the way towards nuclear disarmament in Western Europe. Despite these challenges, the reports consider the NPT to be an essential framework and an important vehicle to shape a better world for generations to come.



# East and Southeast Asia

Wooyun Jo<sup>1</sup>

## Executive Summary

This report discusses the challenges, opportunities, and recommendations for advancing the effectiveness of the NPT in East and Southeast Asia, based on the unique perspectives of regional countries. The report addresses the key challenges for the NPT in the region, focusing on North Korea and China's nuclear weapons and the current power dynamics. Notably, North Korea's growing nuclear advancement is causing significant concerns among states in the region and internationally, with reports indicating that North Korea will have 200 nuclear weapons and dozens of intercontinental ballistic missiles by 2027.<sup>2</sup> This has led to emerging voices from East and Southeast Asia calling for the abandonment or the temporary suspension of the NPT and for developing their own nuclear arsenal, especially in South Korea. The report also highlights the key

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<sup>2</sup> Bruce W. Bennett, Kang Choi, Myong-Hyun Go, Bruce E. Bechtol, Jr., Jiyoung Park, Bruce Klingner, and Du-Hyeogn Cha, *Countering the Risks of North Korean Nuclear Weapons*, (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2021), p. xi.



opportunities of the NPT regime in the region and provides recommendations to promote the NPT in East and Southeast Asia.

## Introduction

The NPT was opened for signature in 1968 to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons, advance peaceful use of nuclear energy and move towards global disarmament. However, since North Korea successfully developed nuclear weapons in violation of and abandonment of the NPT regime, East and Southeast Asian countries have emerging concerns about the non-proliferation regime's ability to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons. In particular, East Asian countries have a unique perspective on the significance of the Treaty. Some of them, such as South Korea and Japan, are under the US nuclear umbrella but still face an existential threat from North Korea's nuclear weapons. In addition, China, Russia and North Korea are armed with nuclear forces. This nuclear dynamic creates a framing conflict within the region between those who view the NPT as an effective tool for preventing proliferation and global disarmament and those who do not. The latter group is sceptical of its ability to guarantee its security under the present regional circumstances.

To understand these regional dimensions more deeply, the author conducted semi-structured interviews and focus group meetings as the primary research methods. The interviewees are mostly youth and early career researchers from diverse nationalities, including the Republic of Korea, Japan, China, Singapore, and Malaysia. During this series of in-depth interviews and focus group meetings with the regional experts, concerns were raised about the enforcement and effectiveness of the NPT in light of North Korea's nuclear weapons development. In addition, some East and Southeast Asian countries have expressed the belief that the NPT regime does not focus enough on nuclear disarmament, while expecting restraint and limitations from non-nuclear weapon states. This report, therefore, examines the unique perspectives of East and Southeast Asian countries on the NPT and their concerns regarding the current NPT regime. First, it addresses the key challenges for the NPT from regional perspectives, focusing on North Korea's nuclear weapons and the existing power dynamics in the region. The second part discusses key opportunities for the NPT regime in the region. Lastly, it provides recommendations to advance the effectiveness of the NPT in East and Southeast Asia.

## Key Challenges

East and Southeast Asians are living in a persistent state of fear with North Korea's growing nuclear advancement. Pyongyang recently conducted military drills simulating nuclear air bursts to attack the South Korea-US Alliance. According to the North Korean state media, the principal purpose of these joint drills was to 'substantially reinforce the country's war deterrence and nuclear counterattack capability and make relevant unit master procedures and processes to carry out tactical nuclear attack missions.'<sup>3</sup> Therefore, North Korea's military exercise, which assumes the use of low-yield nuclear weapons, not only sends a 'warning of strong military response' to the pressure from South Korea and the United States using strategic assets such as the US nuclear-powered aircraft carrier but also verifies the 'reliability and combat power of war deterrence'.<sup>4</sup> In the past, North Korea claimed that its nuclear development was aimed at responding to the threat of nuclear war by the United States and not targeted at other neighbours. However, on September 8, 2022, North Korea

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<sup>3</sup> Ji Da-gyum, "N. Korea simulates nuclear air burst to attack South Korea." The Korea Herald, March 21, 2023, <https://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20230320000600#:~:text=North%20Korea%20said%20it%20conducted,Korea%20and%20the%20United%20States.>

<sup>4</sup> Ji Da-gyum, "N. Korea simulates nuclear air burst to attack South Korea."

issued a new document titled 'On the DPRK's Nuclear Force Policy.'<sup>5</sup> Even a pre-emptive nuclear strike against other states was justified in this document. In Article 3, North Korea stipulates, a nuclear strike to destroy the hostile forces would be carried out automatically and immediately. Article 6 states the following circumstances as conditions for North Korea's use of nuclear weapons, including: (1) nuclear or other WMD attack on North Korea has occurred or is imminent; (2) in case of an unavoidable operational necessity to prevent the expansion and prolongation of the war and to seize the initiative in the war in case of emergency; (3) when an unavoidable situation arises in which there is no choice but to respond with nuclear weapons.

North Korean nuclear threats are a reality for the region. A report jointly published in April 2021 by the RAND Corporation of the United States and the Asan Institute for Policy Studies in South Korea states that North Korea will have 200 nuclear weapons and dozens of ICBMs by 2027.<sup>6</sup> A report by the Korea Institute for Defence Analysis estimates the current number of uranium and plutonium nuclear warheads in North Korea at around 80 to 90.<sup>7</sup> This is expected to increase to a maximum of 166 by 2030. They also suggest North Korea may even possess a nuclear submarine by 2025.

Drawing on North Korea's nuclear development, resulting from the violation and withdrawal from the NPT in 2003, emerging regional voices have called for the abandonment or temporary suspension of the NPT and the development of their own nuclear arsenals. For example, one 2023 national poll indicates that 77% of the South Korean public support nuclear armament to counter Pyongyang's growing nuclear threats.<sup>8</sup> In this sense, interviewee A argues that the South Korean government needs to declare that if North Korea conducts its 7th nuclear test, South Korea should seriously consider withdrawing from or suspending the implementation of the NPT for survival and security. They added that if South Korea withdraws from the NPT, it will reveal to the outside world that South Korea can also go in the direction of nuclear armament. Therefore, opening up the possibility of nuclear armament by South Korea's withdrawal from the NPT will increase South Korea's diplomatic leverage in negotiations of strengthening the nuclear umbrella with Washington.<sup>9</sup> In addition, the failure of non-proliferation efforts to prevent North Korea from acquiring nuclear weapons has renewed debates about the effectiveness of the NPT. Interviewee B also agrees with the abovementioned opinions, stating that it is a double standard of great powers to force East and Southeast Asian countries to follow the NPT when facing existential nuclear threats in the region.<sup>10</sup> In this regard, the South Korean ruling party leader, Gi-Hyeon Kim, publicly argues that the NPT is an unequal treaty for NNWS.<sup>11, 12</sup> As can be seen in the voices of regional experts, the issue of North Korea's nuclear programme, which violated the principles of the NPT and has since been sanctioned, has led to discussions among the public and government officials about withdrawing from or temporarily suspending the implementation of the NPT regime. The failure of the

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<sup>5</sup> Hwang Il-do, DPRK's law on the nuclear forces policies, (Seoul: ROK Institute of Foreign Affairs and Security, 2022), <https://www.ifans.go.kr/knda/ifans/eng/pblct/PblctView.do?csrfPreventionSalt=null&sn=&bbbsSn=&mvpSn=&searchMvpSe=&koreanEngSe=ENG&ctgrySe=&menuCl=P11&pblctDtaSn=14058&clCode=P11&boardSe=#~:text=Paragraph%201%20and%20%20of,Supreme%20Commander%20of%20the%20KPA>.

<sup>6</sup> Bennett, Bruce W., Kang Choi, Myong-Hyun Go, Bruce E. Bechtol, Jr., Jiyoung Park, Bruce Klingner, and Du-Hyeogn Cha.

<sup>7</sup> Younghan Park and Lee Sangkyu, North Korea's Nuclear Warhead Quantity Estimates and Prospects, (Seoul: Korea Institute of Defence Analysis), 2023, <https://isis-online.org/isis-reports/detail/2023-north-korean-nuclear-weapons-arsenal-new-estimates>.

<sup>8</sup> Nari Shin, "76.6% of the people: need to develop own nuclear weapons... Independent Nuclear Armament Theory." *Dong-A Ilbo*, (Seoul, South Korea), 30 January, 2023.

<sup>9</sup> Interviewee A, Interview by the Author, Microsoft Teams, 27 March, 2023.

<sup>10</sup> Interviewee B, Interview by the Author, Microsoft Teams, 27 March, 2023.

<sup>11</sup> Jihoon Park, "Kim Gi-hyeon, who floats the deployment of tactical nuclear weapons, "NPT is an unequal treaty...has to have nuclear weapons." *YTN News*, (Seoul, South Korea), 14 October, 2022.

<sup>12</sup> See also Almontaser Albalawi's chapter on the Middle East and North Africa.



NPT to prevent North Korea from acquiring nuclear weapons has led to growing debates about its effectiveness.<sup>13</sup>

Southeast Asian countries do not possess any nuclear weapons following the signing of the Bangkok Treaty in 1995, also known as the Treaty on the Southeast Asia NWFZ. However, Southeast Asian states are encountering a growing assertiveness of nuclear-armed China in the South China Sea as well as Beijing's nuclear proliferation. Specifically, the South China Sea, which is one of the most significant economic and ecological zones on earth, is home to more than half of the world's fishing fleet, and millions of people rely on these seas for both their food supply and means of subsistence.<sup>14</sup> In addition, a 2023 US Congress report reported that the Chinese government has been expanding its nuclear forces,<sup>15</sup> and G7 leaders recently expressed deep concerns about Beijing's nuclear arsenal, which 'without transparency nor meaningful dialogue poses a concern to global and regional stability.'<sup>16</sup> Therefore, Southeast Asian countries, with the Bangkok Treaty signed, have continued to express deep concerns about China's assertiveness and proliferation in the region. Drawing on this threat perception, Southeast Asian countries may be motivated to rethink their nuclear policies for the future.<sup>17</sup> In other words, the current NPT regime faces significant challenges from East and Southeast Asian perspectives, as the region witnesses unique proliferation problems not sufficiently addressed by the NPT.

## Key Opportunities

While the debate on North Korea and China's growing nuclear threats and regional states' potential withdrawal from the NPT continues, it is essential to consider several key opportunities. Based on the interviews and focus group meetings, the report identifies one significant opportunity: regional stability through non-proliferation.<sup>18</sup> The NPT regime is undoubtedly one of the most effective mechanisms for preventing the spread of nuclear weapons. Any withdrawal from it would send a negative signal to the whole international community. Through the NPT, regional states can signal their strong commitment to non-proliferation, the peaceful use of nuclear energy and disarmament and thereby play a central role in promoting regional stability and security. All these efforts would contribute to reducing tensions in the region and preventing a nuclear arms race.<sup>19</sup> This is particularly a noteworthy point for East Asia as there are existential tensions between non-nuclear weapon states, the United States, China, Russia and North Korea. It would also reduce the risk of misunderstandings and miscalculations between states and regulate the transfer of nuclear technology and materials. Moreover, the peaceful use of nuclear energy through nuclear power plants could contribute to economic development in the region.<sup>20</sup> Overall, the NPT regime offers a robust framework for promoting regional stability and preventing the spread of nuclear weapons in East and Southeast Asia. By adhering to the treaty's provisions and working together to strengthen its implementation, states in the region can lower the

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<sup>13</sup> Interviewee D, Interview by the Author, Microsoft Teams, 28 March, 2023.

<sup>14</sup> Leigh Hartman, "Importance of the South China Sea." *Share America*, 11 July, 2019, <https://share.america.gov/importance-of-south-china-sea/>.

<sup>15</sup> Paul Kerr, "Chinese Nuclear and Missile Proliferation." *US Congress In Focus*, 1 February, 2023, <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/nuke/IF11737.pdf>.

<sup>16</sup> The White House, "G7 Leaders' Hiroshima Vision on Nuclear Disarmament." 19 May 2023. Accessed 19 May 2023 from <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2023/05/19/g7-leaders-hiroshima-vision-on-nuclear-disarmament/>.

<sup>17</sup> Focus group meeting, Interview by the Author, Microsoft Teams, 13 April, 2023.

<sup>18</sup> Focus group meeting, Interview by the Author, Microsoft Teams, 13 April, 2023; Interviewee E, Interview by the Author, Microsoft teams, 29 March, 2023.

<sup>19</sup> Focus group meeting, Interview by the Author, Microsoft Teams, 13 April, 2023.

<sup>20</sup> Interviewee C, Interview by the Author, Microsoft Teams, 28 March, 2023.

risk of nuclear conflict and create a safer and more stable future for all. In light of these opportunities and challenges, several recommendations can be made.

## Recommendations

1. States should call for the introduction of a peaceful dialogue between regional states in East and Southeast Asia to develop confidence-building measures, and prioritise diplomacy over military action.
2. The UN should create a new regional security dialogue on nuclear matters chaired by East and Southeast Asian member states or the IAEA. This could provide a platform for discussing security concerns and promoting cooperation on nuclear issues in the region. By doing so, states can demonstrate their continued commitment to non-proliferation, the peaceful use of nuclear energy and disarmament and explore avenues to ensure the NPT regime will remain relevant to the region, which will help prevent nuclear proliferation leading to regional security stability.
3. The NPT member states should prioritise transparency around nuclear materials and build confidence. For instance, transparency measures such as regular reporting on nuclear activities and sharing information on nuclear safety and security measures can help build trust among states.<sup>21</sup>
4. The IAEA should strengthen its monitoring and enforcement mechanisms to ensure that all states fully comply with their obligations.<sup>22</sup> This can also be achieved through providing technical assistance, training and education to member states to enhance their capabilities to verify compliance with the NPT.
5. The international community should learn from the case of North Korea's nuclear weapons development. If the NPT cannot contribute to proving itself relevant or beneficial to states in the region, the distrust among regional states might negatively affect the regime.<sup>23</sup>

## Conclusion

This report addressed key challenges that the NPT regime is encountering in East and Southeast Asia. Emerging voices in the region suggest that North Korea's nuclear expansion, despite its NPT violations and subsequent sanctions, as well as China's growing threats to neighbouring countries, have made the region deeply concerned about the relevance of the current NPT regime. It is noteworthy that some interviewees argue that the NPT is not a fair treaty for smaller NNWS and that great powers apply double standards in dealing with nuclear issues in the region. As such, it is imperative for the NPT regime to prioritise transparency and build trust among regional states by strengthening monitoring and enforcement mechanisms. However, despite the challenges, in the region, the NPT is still one of the most effective systems which can bring stability and keep proliferation at bay due to its established non-proliferation policies and the strong regulation of nuclear materials. Therefore, it is vital for states in the region to continue to work together within the framework of the NPT and build on its successes while addressing its shortcomings to ensure that nuclear weapons are not used again and that regional stability is maintained. To more firmly consolidate the NPT's status in the region as a stabilising and reliable regime to members, the UN should contemplate a way to enhance trust among regional states to convince them not to derail from this international regime. For instance, launching a new regional dialogue in East and Southeast Asia on nuclear matters to discuss problems and encourage cooperation should be considered. In conclusion, while the NPT regime faces

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<sup>21</sup> Focus group meeting, Interview by the Author, Microsoft Teams, 13 April, 2023.

<sup>22</sup> Interviewee H, Interview by the Author, Microsoft Teams, 10 April, 2023.

<sup>23</sup> Interviewees F and G, Interview by the Author, Microsoft Teams, 30 March, 2023.

challenges in East and Southeast Asia, it should remain a pivotal legal framework for preventing nuclear proliferation and advancing regional strategic stability.





# Eastern Europe and Central Asia

*Galina Salnikova*<sup>24</sup>

## Executive Summary

The 2023-2026 review cycle of the NPT presents a crucial opportunity for Eastern European and Central Asian states to address nuclear non-proliferation challenges and capitalise on opportunities amid a challenging political environment. The region is characterised by diverse geopolitical affiliations, nuclear status, and a complex history that make constructive engagement challenging but essential.

Key challenges include regional nuclear security issues amplified by territorial disputes, a collapsing US-Russian arms control regime, weakened security assurances to the CANWFZ and other NNWS, as well as a lack of awareness and prioritisation of non-proliferation issues in the public discourse. However, there are significant opportunities for cooperation, including capacity building, technical cooperation, disarmament education, and enhancing the collective voice of NNWS in international forums.

The recommendations produced by this report focus on fostering regional cooperation and information sharing, especially on nuclear security; building bridges between NWS and NNWS to advance concrete actions towards disarmament; as well as increasing engagement on DNPE. Beyond this, the states in the region are

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advised to approach the current NPT review cycle as a necessity to uphold the status of the Treaty as an effective international agreement and cornerstone of the nuclear non-proliferation regime and actively engage with the newly-established Working Group on Strengthening the Review Process.

## Introduction

The 2023-2026 NPT review cycle is unique for two main reasons: (1) It began without a gap year since the last NPT RevCon was held in 2022; (2) it follows up on two consecutive review cycles without consensus final documents or substantive decisions adopted. The Working Group on Strengthening the Review Process, created by the 2022 RevCon,<sup>25</sup> will meet for the first time before the first PrepCom in Vienna, Austria, in late July 2023. Although the NPT is far from being considered moribund, constructive discussions during the review cycle are important for upholding the reputation of the Treaty as a cornerstone of the nuclear non-proliferation regime.

Eastern Europe and Central Asia is a peculiarly heterogeneous region. Today, the region comprises countries from diverse international organisations and groupings, including but not limited to the EU, the Commonwealth of Independent States, NATO, the Collective Security Treaty Organization, and others, with some states belonging to several of those groupings at the same time. The region also accommodates diverse nuclear capabilities: a NWS (Russia), CANWFZ, as well as NNWS with various types of civil nuclear installations, such as NPPs, spent fuel storages, storages of enriched uranium (such as the IAEA Low Enriched Uranium Bank in Kazakhstan). The diversity of nuclear status is amplified by geopolitical shifts in the past several decades, primarily by the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and by subsequent regroupings and territorial disputes. A conceptual challenge to regional cooperation, which goes beyond the nuclear domain, is to find the middle ground among all the diverse actors on different aspects: geopolitical competition and territorial disputes, lack of coordination and exchange of information, as well as different approaches to the issue of disarmament. However, this challenge also represents an opportunity to share best practices in the implementation of the NPT.

The report reflects the views of young professionals from Eastern Europe and Central Asia on regional non-proliferation challenges and opportunities to be addressed during the Eleventh NPT review cycle. The data collection methodology included an extensive discussion at a focus group meeting, organised for the purpose of the report by the author and attended by the youth from Russia, Moldova, and Kazakhstan, collecting the responses to the survey created by the Emerging Voices Network and distributed among youth networks, together with analysing relevant news and analytical sources.

## Key Challenges

Nuclear security in the region faces the most pressure, primarily due to the unprecedented threats to nuclear security in Ukraine: (1) shelling of NPPs and other nuclear installations in the conflict zone; (2) risk of radioactive contamination from other nuclear installations (especially spent nuclear fuel storages); (3) increased risk of human mistakes or accidents. Nevertheless, the majority of nuclear security threats in the region are connected to the 'contested spaces' in the region rather than Ukraine, particularly due to the large

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<sup>25</sup> "Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference Ends without Adopting Substantive Outcome Document Due to Opposition by One Member State." *United Nations*, August 26, 2022, <https://press.un.org/en/2022/dc3850.doc.htm>.

amounts of nuclear and other radioactive materials left in states close to those spaces after the dissolution of the USSR.<sup>26</sup>

Another major challenge for the region is the collapsing US-Russian bilateral arms control regime with Russia suspending its participation in New START in February 2023.<sup>27</sup> Since then, Russia has conducted a test launch of an 'advanced' intercontinental ballistic missile<sup>28</sup> and announced the preparation to deploy low yield nuclear weapons in Belarus.<sup>29</sup> Combined, the United States and Russia now possess approximately 89 percent of the world's total inventory of nuclear weapons,<sup>30</sup> thus they bear special responsibility for disarmament. The bilateral arms control and reductions regime proved itself to be an efficient measure advancing disarmament<sup>31</sup> and facilitating nuclear risk reduction and confidence-building in Europe. This challenge is aggravated by Belarus, the only state in the region without the AP to the IAEA Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement in force.<sup>32</sup> Stationing nuclear weapons on a territory of a state with no AP in force increases the risks of the diversion of peaceful nuclear programmes to military purposes.

The youth participants in the focus group meeting note overall frustration with the lack of progress towards nuclear disarmament amidst diminished regional security. The collapse of the US-Russia arms control is accompanied by the reluctance of most governments of NNWS to engage in the disarmament process – only Kazakhstan has ratified the TPNW so far in the whole region.<sup>33</sup>

Non-proliferation challenges are aggravated by an overall lack of awareness and little prioritisation of discussing such issues by governments, media, and, consequently, the general public. While public awareness of the nuclear risks in the region considerably increased in recent years, especially with the start of the armed conflict in Ukraine, these shared views are often insufficiently informed or politicised. The participants in the focus group meeting highlight the lack of DNPE learning opportunities: few sources in the Russian or other local languages, isolated cases of relevant courses at higher education institutions, absence of DNPE at schools, and very limited scholarship opportunities for research and education. For instance, all the participants in the focus group meeting shared that their school curricula only had a brief description of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki from the point of view of the geopolitical reasoning behind those bombings, and university curricula in best case scenario would have a couple of courses on the non-proliferation regime without teaching much about the horrendous consequences of nuclear weapons use. It all

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<sup>26</sup> Vitaly Fedchenko, Iryna Maksymenko, Polina Sinovets, and Wilfred Wan. "Nuclear Security in Ukraine and the Black Sea Region: New Threats, New Risks, New Consequences." *Nuclear Security During Armed Conflict: Lessons From Ukraine*, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.55163/oipi2439>.

<sup>27</sup> Caleb Davis, "Russia Says Suspension of Nuclear Pact Not Impacted by US Data Move." *Reuters*. Thomson Reuters, March 29, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/russia-says-its-suspension-nuclear-pact-is-not-impacted-by-us-data-move-2023-03-29/>.

<sup>28</sup> AFP, "Russia Conducts Test Launch of 'Advanced' ICBM." *The Moscow Times*, April 12, 2023, <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2023/04/12/russia-conducts-test-launch-of-advanced-icbm-a80802>.

<sup>29</sup> Hayden, Jones. "Putin says Russia to deploy tactical nuclear weapons in Belarus." *Politico*, March 25, 2023, <https://www.politico.eu/article/putin-says-russia-to-deploy-tactical-nuclear-weapons-in-belarus-reports/>.

<sup>30</sup> "Status of World Nuclear Forces." Federation of American Scientists, March 31, 2023. <https://fas.org/initiative/status-world-nuclear-forces/>.

<sup>31</sup> In historical context, the number of nuclear weapons in the world has declined significantly since the Cold War: down from a peak of approximately 70,300 in 1986 to an estimated 12,500 in early-2023. Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> "Status List: Conclusion of Additional Protocols as of 3 May 2023." International Atomic Energy Agency. <https://www.iaea.org/sites/default/files/20/01/sq-ap-status.pdf>

<sup>33</sup> "Signature and Ratification Status." ICAN, May 10, 2023, [https://www.icanw.org/signature\\_and\\_ratification\\_status](https://www.icanw.org/signature_and_ratification_status).



goes in conjunction with the lack of resources in native languages of the audience since the predominant language on non-proliferation research is English.

## Key Opportunities

Despite all the differences in geopolitical stances in the region, there is still overall agreement on the fundamental importance of the NPT and its three pillars. In addition, all states in the region are parties to the NPT, have ratified the CTBT, and have an IAEA AP in place (apart from Belarus). As long as such conceptual understanding persists, opportunities for constructive engagement will remain.

Peaceful uses of nuclear energy seem the most encouraging route for regional cooperation. Various nuclear capacities and emerging nuclear security crises call for capacity building and the sharing of best practices on nuclear safety and security, as well as technical cooperation to combat nuclear security threats. By working together, states in the region can develop effective regional strategies to address current nuclear safety and security challenges.

Lastly, the presence of territories with a nuclear-weapon-free status in the region (CANWFZ and Mongolia) builds up the potential for regional NNWS to strengthen their collective voice on NPT-related issues. This can include pushing for stronger negative security assurances, disarmament efforts, and more equitable access to nuclear technology for peaceful purposes.

## Recommendations

Keeping in mind the regional challenges and building on existing opportunities, Eastern European and Central Asian states could consider the following recommendations.

1. Peaceful uses of nuclear energy and technical cooperation on peaceful nuclear applications is considered by the focus group a less controversial NPT pillar the region could build on. Where viable, the states within the region may consider the creation of a regional collaboration network for nuclear security and emergency response. This network should facilitate sharing of best practices, expertise, and resources to improve nuclear safety and security in the region as well as share the access to the benefits of the atom.
2. Regional states should work on building bridges between NWS and NNWS by identifying areas of common ground on non-proliferation and disarmament. This could involve exploring ways for NWS to engage with disarmament-related initiatives without undermining their vision of deterrence, while promoting confidence-building measures and greater transparency. Nuclear risk reduction is suggested as the starting point of bridge-building as it corresponds to the interests of both NWS and NNWS.
3. As an NWFZ, CANWFZ states also have potential to gather the NNWS of the region in a unified voice calling for disarmament. NNWS of the region should generally revisit their stance on disarmament and collaborate with each other more in calling for action from NWS. They might consider submitting a common working paper to future PrepComs and RevCons and facilitate inter-governmental and NGO engagement on disarmament issues.

4. Advancing DNPE initiatives targeting governments, media, civil society, and the general public, including but not limited to engaging with UNODA Disarmament Education strategy,<sup>34</sup> can help to raise awareness on the importance of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Such initiatives include but are not limited to: (1) translation of educational resources such as books, articles, videos in national languages; (2) adding more academic hours to school and university curricula to teach on the complexity of non-proliferation and disarmament; (3) increase funding of DNPE projects for various audiences.
5. The States of the region might use the meeting of the Working Group on Strengthening the Review Process as a platform to endorse Vienna as a venue for more NPT-related processes, such as future meetings of the Working Group and even RevCons, because of better accessibility and less hindrances in visa processes for certain delegations. They might want to use the Working Group as a venue for promoting this.

By working together on these shared objectives, the countries in Eastern Europe and Central Asia can strengthen the NPT, promote regional stability, and enhance global nuclear security.

## Conclusion

By focusing on bridge-building between NWS and NNWS, capacity building in peaceful uses and nuclear security, advancing disarmament education initiatives, and consolidating NNWS narrative for disarmament, states can strengthen the NPT and contribute to global nuclear security. Pursuing the recommendations contained in the present report can enhance regional stability, promote a more secure nuclear landscape, and demonstrate a collective commitment to a world free of nuclear weapons. Cooperation and coordination are key to ensuring the NPT's continued relevance and effectiveness as the cornerstone of the global non-proliferation regime.

## Acknowledgements

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<sup>34</sup> UNODA "Disarmament Education Strategy," December 5, 2022, <https://disarmament.unoda.org/disarmament-education-strategy/>.



# Latin America and the Caribbean

*Lucia Madero Murillo*<sup>35</sup>

## Executive Summary

This report analyses the key opportunities and barriers for Latin America and the Caribbean with regards to regional perspectives and goals for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, from the viewpoints of youth in or close to the field. There were two focus groups, a town hall, and a survey that led to the majority of the perspectives in this report. The members who participated in these events contained a mix of nationalities that included Spanish, Mexican and Russian, to name but a few.

LATAM and the Caribbean has a long-standing commitment to disarmament, as evidenced by the 1967 Treaty of Tlatelolco and the region's continued advocacy for a world free of nuclear weapons. Despite this dedication, the region faces several barriers to helping progress the global disarmament agenda, including a lack of political will among some states, institutional barriers to engagement tied to the NPT, and other barriers owed

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to limited resources and insufficient regional grassroots expertise. To address the institutional barriers that contributors thought regional participants associate with the NPT, the countries of the region can advocate for the unconditional extension of negative security assurances and the negotiation of a legally binding instrument on these. The region can also work towards a more cohesive approach to disarmament and non-proliferation, building on the precedent exemplified by the Treaty of Tlatelolco. LATAM and the Caribbean should be encouraging the participation of regional youth, promoting educational programmes such as those offered by OPANAL, and holding forums to outline case by case contributions made to the international disarmament regime, and ways of applying them in public policy. By taking advantage and promoting underutilised programmes, advocating for systematic changes, and building on its past successes, the region can continue to help pave the way in promoting a world free of nuclear weapons.

## Introduction

The denuclearisation of Latin America and the Caribbean started with a Joint Declaration issued on April 29, 1963 by the presidents of Mexico, Brazil, Chile, Bolivia and Ecuador. In this statement, they announced their intention to sign a multilateral agreement in which they pledged that their countries would not manufacture, receive, store, or test nuclear weapons or associated launching devices. Shortly after the creation of COPREDAL in 1964,<sup>36</sup> which would become OPANAL, drafting of the Treaty of Tlatelolco began to take place. In 1967, the COPREDAL unanimously approved the Treaty of Tlatelolco, and it opened for signature.<sup>37</sup> It was the first treaty of its kind in establishing a NWFZ in Latin America and the Caribbean and serving as a model for the establishment of other NWFZs around the world.

Since then, Latin American and Caribbean states have continued to play an active role in promoting nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation and have influenced other regions to follow in their footsteps. A notable example is the Treaty of Pelindaba, which incorporated many of the principles and procedures established in the Treaty of Tlatelolco, such as the requirement for states to conclude Comprehensive Safeguards Agreements with the IAEA and the establishment of a verification mechanism to ensure compliance with the treaty's provisions, as is the role of OPANAL in the LATAM region.

However there have been numerous challenges and institutional barriers in LATAM and the Caribbean that hinder the advancement of the regional nuclear agenda —promoting disarmament— including negative security assurances, the absence of political cohesion, and economic constraints. Despite these challenges, the region can and should build on the success of the Treaty of Tlatelolco and other initiatives such as the Joint Declaration of the Summit of the Americas and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Global Nuclear Weapons Ban Conference and follow recommendations outlined in the UNODA's 2022 Disarmament Education Strategy to promote disarmament and non-proliferation.<sup>38</sup>

## Key Challenges

According to the participants and contributors for this project, one of the main barriers to LATAM and the Caribbean's engagement with the NPT is the perceived lack of progress in the implementation of the treaty's disarmament obligations. The NPT recognises the right of NNWS to pursue peaceful nuclear activities, while

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<sup>36</sup> Martinez Cobo, J.R. "The nuclear-weapon-free zone in Latin America." *IAEA Bulletin*, 24, no. 2 (1982): 56-58 (p. 56) <https://www.iaea.org/sites/default/files/publications/magazines/bulletin/bull24-2/24203595659.pdf>.

<sup>37</sup> Alfonso Garcia Robles. "The Twentieth Anniversary of the Treaty of Tlatelolco (1967-1987)." *OPANAL*, page 11-35, <https://www.opanal.org/en/the-prohibition-of-nuclear-weapons-in-latin-america/>.

<sup>38</sup> United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. "Disarmament Education Strategy." *UNODA*. Last modified 5 December 2022, <https://disarmament.unoda.org/disarmament-education-strategy/>.

also requiring NWS to take steps towards nuclear disarmament. However, many NNWS in LATAM and the Caribbean feel that NWS have not made sufficient progress towards disarmament, and that the NPT's disarmament obligations have not been fully implemented or enforced, leading to a sense of frustration

Our contributors also emphasised negative security assurances<sup>39</sup> as being a problem to regional states. These assurances have been seen as insufficient by many NNWS, including those in LATAM and the Caribbean, since some NWS have qualified their negative security assurances by stating that they reserve the right to use nuclear weapons in response to certain types of attacks, such as chemical or biological attacks. The absence of a legally binding commitment by NWS not to use nuclear weapons against NNWS undermines the credibility and effectiveness of the international non-proliferation regime, which has been a recurring theme in regional discussions on these issues.

Finally, this project found that there are certain political obstacles in the region standing in the way of the state's joint engagement with the NPT. LATAM and the Caribbean is composed of diverse countries with varying political systems, cultures, and priorities. This diversity has made it difficult to develop a common approach to disarmament and non-proliferation and has obstructed the region's ability to speak with a unified voice on these issues. Regional security challenges such as drug trafficking, organised crime, and political instability can divert attention and resources away from disarmament and non-proliferation issues. The biggest challenge to the disarmament agenda is the lack of resources and grassroots awareness in the region. Many LATAM and Caribbean countries have limited capacity and funds to participate in international disarmament and non-proliferation initiatives, which constrains their ability to spread education on the importance of such undertakings.

## Key Opportunities

Despite these barriers, there are several opportunities for LATAM and the Caribbean to engage with disarmament and non-proliferation initiatives. One of the biggest opportunities is the current NPT Review Cycle and second TPNW meeting of state-parties. These conferences provide an opportunity for the region to engage in multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation discussions, promoting its perspectives on these issues. In particular, the region should be furthering disarmament education and awareness-raising activities since these are important tools for promoting regional values and for engaging the public in discussions on these issues. Participants suggested this could be done by incorporating disarmament and non-proliferation issues into school curricula, and by organising public awareness-raising activities such as seminars, conferences, and workshops. It is important to acknowledge that there are several IGOs and civil society organisations partnering with renowned institutions such as the James Martin Center for Non-Proliferation Studies to provide courses for diplomats within LATAM and Caribbean states, and, when given the opportunity, within universities and public forums.

The region can also engage in multilateral initiatives to promote disarmament and non-proliferation. One such initiative is the CTBT, which bans all nuclear explosions. Though LATAM and Caribbean states have all ratified the CTBT, a notable feat, it has not yet entered into force, as several states listed in Annex 2 of the treaty have not ratified it. The region can also continue pushing for the negotiation and implementation of other disarmament and non-proliferation agreements, such as the FMCT, which would ban the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and further the region's nuclear disarmament agenda.

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<sup>39</sup> United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. "Fact Sheet. The Conference on Disarmament and Negative Security Assurances." OPANAL. Last modified July 2017, [https://www.opanal.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Dia\\_2\\_a\\_UNODA\\_Fact\\_sheet\\_CD\\_and\\_negative\\_security\\_assurances.pdf](https://www.opanal.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Dia_2_a_UNODA_Fact_sheet_CD_and_negative_security_assurances.pdf).

## Recommendations

There are several steps that LATAM and the Caribbean can take to participate effectively in the upcoming NPT Review Cycle and its associated treaties and conferences.

1. Latin American and Caribbean states should continue utilising the Treaty of Tlatelolco as a model by which to promote further NWFZs and encourage progress of other treaties such as the CTBT and FMCT. The region should work together to promote the adoption of legally binding protocols tied to NWFZ treaties<sup>40</sup> by strengthening regional cooperation, and by promoting the establishment of additional NWFZs in other regions of the world.
2. Latin American and Caribbean states should work together to promote the negotiation and implementation of disarmament and non-proliferation agreements by encouraging partnerships with other states, civil society organisations, and intergovernmental mechanisms and IGOs such as CELAC and OPANAL. These kinds of cooperative unions allow states to extend their reach, increase legitimacy and public support, provide opportunities for knowledge sharing and capacity building, and increase efficiency by streamlining processes, reducing duplication of efforts, and optimising resource allocation.
3. Thirdly, Latin American and Caribbean states should work to promote the entry into force of the TPNW.<sup>41</sup> Given that it complements article VI of the NPT and more than 70% of OPANAL Member States have signed and ratified the treaty, it has achieved universalisation in the Central American region. As Mexico will be presiding over the second meeting over TPNW states-parties, LATAM and Caribbean states can use their influence and leadership to promote the approval and entry into force of the TPNW.<sup>42</sup>
4. Latin American and Caribbean states should prioritise the promotion of disarmament education and awareness-raising activities. This can be done by developing and implementing national and regional strategies for disarmament education, and by engaging with civil society organisations,<sup>43</sup> academic institutions, and IGOs.
5. In line with general education is leveraging the voices of youth and young professionals. Instead of creating a Young Professionals Network of P5 Academics, as recommended in the Joint Communiqué of the Non-Proliferation Treaty P5 Nations,<sup>44</sup> countries invested in the promotion of disarmament and non-proliferation education should be able to participate in a global initiative to diversify perspectives and provide opportunities for youth to bring forth ideas that may sustain negotiations. Precedents

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<sup>40</sup> OPANAL. "Declaration of the Member States of OPANAL on the 50th Anniversary of the conclusion of the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (Treaty of Tlatelolco)." OPANAL. Last modified 22 March 2017, <https://www.opanal.org/en/declaration-50th-anniversary-of-the-treaty-of-tlatelolco/>.

<sup>41</sup> International Campaign Against Nuclear Weapons. "Latin American and Caribbean states intensify efforts to eliminate nuclear weapons." ICAN. Last modified 24 November 2022, [https://www.icanw.org/tlatelolco\\_conference?locale=en](https://www.icanw.org/tlatelolco_conference?locale=en).

<sup>42</sup> OPANAL. "Declaration of the Member States of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean." OPANAL. Last modified 26 September 2022, [https://www.opanal.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Inf\\_30\\_2022Rev\\_4\\_eng-Dec.26sept.2022.pdf](https://www.opanal.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Inf_30_2022Rev_4_eng-Dec.26sept.2022.pdf).

<sup>43</sup> OPANAL. "Communiqué of the Member States of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL)." OPANAL. Last modified 21 September 2022, [https://www.opanal.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Final-Communique%CC%81-MS\\_X-RevCon-NPT-2022.pdf](https://www.opanal.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Final-Communique%CC%81-MS_X-RevCon-NPT-2022.pdf).

<sup>44</sup> Bureau of Arms Control, Verification and Compliance. "Joint Communiqué of the Non-Proliferation Treaty P5 Nations." U.S. Department of State. Last modified 3 December 2021. <https://www.state.gov/joint-communique-of-the-five-nuclear-weapons-states-of-the-non-proliferation-treaty/>.



such as the partnership between China and CELAC<sup>45</sup> in outlining their intent to implement a 'Bridge to the Future' Training Programme for One Thousand Chinese and Latin American Youth Leaders and hold the China-LAC Youth Development Forum,<sup>46</sup> should be replicated.

## Conclusion

It is important that states within LATAM and the Caribbean do not lose focus of these goals, despite the political and economic barriers. The region should aim to utilise the current NPT Review Cycle and associated conferences to promote more NWFZs, further education and awareness-raising activities, and engage in multilateral initiatives to further the progress of treaties such as the TPNW, CTBT, and FMCT. Latin America and the Caribbean must seize these opportunities to advance its disarmament and non-proliferation agenda, and to contribute to the effort to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons.

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<sup>45</sup> CELAC Community of Latin American and Caribbean States. *Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI)*. Last modified 14 March 2023. <https://www.nti.org/education-center/treaties-and-regimes/community-latin-american-and-caribbean-states-celac/#:~:text=On%207%20February%202013%2C%20heads,September%2C%202013%20in%20New%20York>.

<sup>46</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China. "CHINA - CELAC JOINT ACTION PLAN FOR COOPERATION IN KEY AREAS (2022-2024)." *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China*. Last modified 07 December 2021. [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/wibxw/202112/t20211207\\_10463459.html](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wibxw/202112/t20211207_10463459.html).



# Middle East and North Africa

*Almuntaser Albalawi*<sup>47</sup>

## Executive Summary

The report briefly addresses the key priorities, challenges, and opportunities for advancing nuclear arms control in the Middle East and North Africa. While it takes into consideration the positions held by states, it does not assess or argue for them. Instead, it sheds light on youth and early career perspectives following the conclusion of the Tenth NPT RevCon. Most importantly, the report does not evaluate the recent review process but offers recommendations for the PrepCom process ahead of the 2026 RevCon.

Imbalances in the NPT regime, the risk of nuclear proliferation, and the absence of international monitoring of Israel's nuclear activities are among the top concerns from a regional perspective. The priorities of the region are to reinforce the NPT and maintain progress on the Middle East WMDFZ as a viable solution for the nuclear

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risk. To that end, efforts should be focused on restoring confidence in the NPT regime and creating favourable circumstances for regional arms control negotiations.

## Introduction

The MENA region has been of primary importance to global nuclear arms control for several reasons. Three states in the region, Syria, Iraq, and Libya attempted to develop nuclear weapons capabilities in clandestine ways but failed to obtain them. Another state, Iran, is currently operating nuclear activities that can serve military purposes. Additionally, the only state in the region that is not a member of the NPT, Israel, is believed to have secretly developed and stockpiled ninety nuclear warheads,<sup>48</sup> also as Israel continues to reject any international monitoring of its facilities.

Attempts to address the risks of nuclear weapons in the region primarily originated in three international tracks: the NPT RevCon, the IAEA General Conferences, and the UNGA.<sup>49</sup> All tracks have endorsed one approach: a comprehensive and mutually negotiated treaty on establishing a NWFZ. A resolution for establishing the zone was adopted during the 1995 NPT RevCon and an agreement on practical steps for implementation followed during the 2010 NPT RevCon. However, since then, no substantial progress has been made. While discussions on the realisation of the zone are held from time to time when political conditions allow, the zone is not closer to realisation than when it was first proposed in 1974.<sup>50</sup>

For the most part, Arab states saw, and continue to see, the WMDFZ proposal as an opportunity to create diplomatic leverage against Israel's nuclear weapons capability and military superiority. However, a free zone in principle, also limits the regional arms race, reduces tensions, and advances regional cooperation. Efforts to achieve progress on the realisation of the zone are regularly impacted by political developments in the region and the ever-changing security landscape. For instance, it is difficult to negotiate the zone in isolation from developments in the Arab-Israeli conflict or intermittent outbreaks of conflicts such as the Syrian and Iran-Israel relations, all of which create unfavourable circumstances for laying the groundwork for negotiation among all concerned parties.

Considering the ongoing political polarisation between the regional rivals, primarily Iran and Israel, the risks of nuclear proliferation are looming again with the growing interest in nuclear energy and following the collapse of the JCPOA.<sup>51</sup> This is taking place at a time of uncertainty for the non-proliferation regime. The NPT regime's imperfections and imbalances, including but not limited to the fundamental asymmetry between state parties, and the prioritisation of non-proliferation over disarmament, are now complemented by the worsening North Korean nuclear problem as well as the implications of the Russian war on Ukraine. All of these have resulted in undermining the prospects for disarmament and non-proliferation. Russia's threat of using nuclear weapons,

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<sup>48</sup> SIPRI. *SIPRI Yearbook 2022: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2022).

<sup>49</sup> Jasmine Auda & Tomisha Bino. "The Middle East Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone in the IAEA General Conference: Is There a "Grand Strategy" behind the IAEA Track?." *Journal for Peace and Nuclear Disarmament*, 5, no. 1 (2022): 86-100, DOI: 10.1080/25751654.2022.2079328.

<sup>50</sup> UN General Assembly Resolution 3263 On The "Establishment Of A Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone In The Region Of The Middle East", <https://undir.org/node/5618>.

<sup>51</sup> Almutaser Albalawi, "Why a WMD-free zone in the Middle East is more needed than ever." *The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*, 2023: <https://thebulletin.org/2023/04/why-a-wmd-free-zone-in-the-middle-east-is-more-needed-than-ever/>.



seen as nuclear bullying of NNWS, is reducing incentives for nuclear states to disarm and for NNWS not to consider the weaponisation option.<sup>52, 53</sup>

## Key Challenges

The main challenge for nuclear arms control in the region is the growing scepticism over the efficacy of the NPT. Criticism over the regime's imbalances including over-prioritising the non-proliferation pillar compared to the disarmament and peaceful uses pillars – remains dominant in both state and non-state narratives. Additionally, there has been no substantial progress on commitments made at previous RevCons, including practical steps towards the establishment of the Middle East WMDFZ, which continues to be a regional top priority.

While most state parties believe that the lack of progress on global disarmament is seriously harming the NPT treaty and threatening regional and international security,<sup>54</sup> there is a sense that NWS are backing away from unfulfilled commitments such as taking practical measures towards disarmament. Worse, they are accused of pushing back against the region's legitimate concerns over the relevance and urgency of establishing the zone to curb the spread of nuclear weapons.<sup>55</sup> For instance, the United States has advocated for breaking the WMDFZ issue out from the NPT track – arguing it should not be a platform for resolving 'regional disputes'.<sup>56</sup>

The Middle East WMDFZ is considered a matter of high priority not only for the Arab group but also for the NAM group – as highlighted by their working paper for the Tenth NPT RevCon.<sup>57</sup> Dismissing these concerns would risk cohesion among member states in the NPT regime. Such a deterioration can be the straw that breaks the camel's back when a major NWS is already contesting nuclear weapons norms and rules-based international order.

One of the WMDFZ's most significant features is its biggest challenge; it should be inclusionary. In that sense, the zone or any other regional arrangement would require buy-in of all countries in the region (especially those with active WMD capabilities) for it to succeed. This difficult process of consensus building partly explains why no substantial progress was made in initiatives when at least one country was not in support.

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<sup>52</sup> Daryl G. Kimball, "Putin's Assault on Ukraine and the Nonproliferation Regime." *Arms Control Association*, March, 2022, <https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2022-03/focus/putins-assault-ukraine-nonproliferation-regime>.

<sup>53</sup> See also Wooyun Jo's chapter on East and Southeast Asia.

<sup>54</sup> The United Nations, "Final Document 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons." (New York, 2010), <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N10/390/21/PDF/N1039021.pdf?OpenElement>.

<sup>55</sup> Working paper submitted by the Group of Arab States for the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, "Specific regional issues and implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East." (New York, 26 August, 2020), <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N20/237/35/PDF/N2023735.pdf?OpenElement>.

<sup>56</sup> Working paper submitted by the United States to Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, "Establishing Regional Conditions Conducive to a Middle East Free of Weapons of Mass Destruction and Delivery Systems." (New York, April 2018), <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N18/116/10/PDF/N1811610.pdf?OpenElement>.

<sup>57</sup> Working paper submitted by Group of Non-Aligned States Parties to Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, "Regional issues: Middle East." (New York, April 2019), <https://disarmament.unoda.org/wmd/nuclear/npt2020/prepcom2019/prepcom2019-official-documents/>.

Furthermore, this constraining condition makes the realisation of the zone vulnerable to a single state's appetite or lack of appetite for disarmament.

Likewise, certain preconditions that are necessary for building trust and showing commitment to arms control and the process of establishing the zone are not being met. These include the declaration of state's nuclear-related activities, accession to binding international treaties such the NPT and the CWC, and compliance with IAEA safeguards. Syria's non-compliance with the CWC, Iran's research into nuclear weapons developments, Israel's policy of nuclear ambiguity, and its refusal to put its nuclear facilities under IAEA safeguards or join the NPT are some examples.

Increasing rivalry in the region also undermines progress and is, in fact, fuelling the risks of nuclear proliferation. Several countries in the region have established or expressed interest in pursuing nuclear power programmes for peaceful uses, which has raised the possibility of another kind of race; a nuclear capability race short-of-weapons development – a race towards nuclear hedging.

It could also be argued that the decline in arms control and international disarmament diplomacy, such as the failed legacy of the JCPOA, and US-Russian arms control disputes, including Russia's suspension of New START, also negatively impacts the progress in the Middle East. This is for two reasons: firstly, it demonstrates to decision-makers of the Middle East the futility of pursuing such diplomatic efforts to advance regional interests, and secondly, it undermines the ability of international partners to be effective patrons of such processes.

## Key Opportunities

The growing interest in peaceful nuclear applications is an opportunity to encourage technical cooperation among regional states and, at the same time, maintain trust in the NPT's value for ensuring states' access to nuclear material and technology for peaceful uses. Access to the peaceful use of nuclear energy and technical cooperation could pave the way for enhancing trust between states while reducing secrecy about nuclear activities. This has been a long-standing advocated measure by the international community for building trust, and it is currently even more realistic given recent political developments. For instance, both Israel and Iran claim to be open to sharing peaceful nuclear technology with Arab states following the Abraham Accords and the recent Iran-Gulf rapprochement.<sup>58</sup>

To address its regional concerns around the Iranian nuclear and missile threats, Israel has favoured a coercive and hardline policy against Iran instead of the cooperative JCPOA or the multilateral WMDFZ approach. However, Arab normalisation with Syria and the recent rapprochement between Iran and the Gulf states, and possibly with Jordan and Egypt, suggest that Arab states are not convinced of the Israeli approach towards Iran.<sup>59</sup>

These developments also present opportunities for breaking the deadlock on the Middle East WMDFZ. The modest progress made on the UNGA track with the commencing of three sessions of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Free Zone is a stepping stone toward that end. While Israel continues to hold its opposing position, the United States is likely to show more flexibility. For instance, in a vote on a resolution

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<sup>58</sup> Yonah Jeremy Bob, "Israel may share nuclear tech with Abraham Accords states - Israeli atomic chief." *The Jerusalem Post*, September, 2022: <https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/article-718327>; "Iran says ready for nuclear cooperation with Saudi Arabia." *Iran Front Page*, March, 2023: <https://ifpnews.com/iran-nuclear-cooperation-saudi-arabia/>.

<sup>59</sup> Tuqa Khalid, "Iran: Saudi Arabia detente to positively affect our ties with Egypt, Jordan, Bahrain." *Alarabiya News*, March, 2023: <https://english.alarabiya.net/News/middle-east/2023/03/13/Iran-Saudi-Arabia-detente-to-positively-affect-our-ties-with-Egypt-Jordan-Bahrain>.

of the matter, the United States changed its vote from 'against' to 'abstention' during the UNGA 77<sup>th</sup> and 76<sup>th</sup> Sessions compared to past votes.<sup>60</sup>

As the path to reviving the JCPOA seems blocked in the near term, re-engaging in the WMDFZ talk is one possible option to avoid escalation. Endorsing the process could be a win-win for everyone. First, it fulfils one of the Arab group and Iran's priorities under the NPT regime which reduces the chances of undermining future review cycles. Second, it offers Israel and the United States a way out from drifting into power politics and military alternatives that would only undermine the region's stability and future prospects for arms control negotiations.

## Recommendations

1. Maintain confidence in the NPT regime by committing to regional concerns in the review processes. The issue of the zone treaty continues to be a priority and will feature prominently at the forthcoming RevCons. In endorsing the process, state parties and NWS, in particular, show commitment to addressing the region's concerns. From a regional perspective, this is a step toward restoring the balance between the NPT's three pillars and upholding the regime.
2. Build trust and create favourable circumstances for arms control negotiations by promoting dialogue on technical cooperation and peaceful uses of nuclear sciences to reduce ambiguity on nuclear activities and explore potential cooperative venues such as a joint regional fuel cycle proposal or other cooperative research projects similar to the Synchrotron-light for Experimental Science and Applications in the Middle East (SESAME).
3. Incentivise regional actors by highlighting the value of the WMDFZ in addressing emerging risks: One enabling condition for a mutually negotiated zone treaty is that it could go beyond existing arms control regimes. For instance, the Middle East WMDFZ could allow for further arrangements that could fill normative and structural gaps in the NPT and IAEA safeguards, such as a robust and comprehensive verification system and provisions to control risks of indigenous nuclear fuel cycles and weapon delivery systems, all of which are among the Israelis' concerns.
4. Expand the role of civil society in arms control by creating new opportunities and building on existing initiatives such as UN Security Council Resolution 1540 Civil Society Forum.<sup>61</sup> Civil society's role is usually overlooked yet could be essential in creating momentum for treaties and breaking the deadlock when state channels fail. This was evident in the cases of the TPNW and the Convention on the Prohibition of the Anti-Personnel Mines.<sup>62</sup> However, civil society organisations can only be enabled if they remain involved and most importantly are offered access to information. To that end, it is important to facilitate their participation in relevant working groups and RevCons.

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<sup>60</sup> The United Nations. *Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East : resolution / adopted by the General Assembly*, November 2022: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N22/690/00/PDF/N2269000.pdf?OpenElement>.

<sup>61</sup> United Nations University Centre for Policy Research. *UNSCR 1540 Civil Society Forum: A Dialogue with Academia and Civil Society*. June 2016: <https://i.unu.edu/media/cpr.unu.edu/attachment/2187/Meeting-Report-UNSCR-1540-Civil-Society-Forum.pdf>.

<sup>62</sup> Kenki Adachi, *Changing Arms Control Norms in International Society*. (London: Routledge, 2021) 127. Also on TPNW: Motoko Mekata (2018) "How Transnational Civil Society Realized the Ban Treaty: An Interview with Beatrice Fihn," *Journal for Peace and Nuclear Disarmament*, no 1(1) (2018): 79-92, DOI: 10.1080/25751654.2018.1441583.

5. Revitalise youth underrepresented roles by building on the UN Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace, and Security and by creating designated spots for youth within the already established fora and platforms, or in separate advisory panels and boards to support the processes.

## Conclusion

The risk of nuclear proliferation is again increasing in the Middle East and North Africa. The WMDFZ is the most viable solution to disarm nuclear weapons in the region and prevent further proliferation while securing the right for peaceful uses. Yet, it remains far from realisation for political reasons. Nevertheless, it is essential to revitalise this issue and find innovative ways to engage all regional actors in the process.

Recent regional developments offer an opportunity for progress. Promoting dialogue on peaceful uses of nuclear sciences to reduce risks and strengthen the regime could be the starting point. In addition, regional technical cooperation could create incentives and pave the way for enhancing trust between regional actors while reducing secrecy about regional nuclear activities.

## Acknowledgments

The report draws upon findings from informal interviews and a regional focus group meeting with experts and young professionals that were held from February to April 2023 as well as an electronic survey distributed among the Emerging Voices Network. Thanks to Manuel Herrera, Sara Al-Sayed, and Océane Van Geluwe, among other contributors, for their valuable insights. Also, many thanks to the EVN team at BASIC for their assistance throughout the process. Finally, the views expressed are the author's own and do not represent any other entity.





# North America

*Ananya Agustin Malhotra*<sup>63</sup>

## Executive Summary

This EVN Summary Report sheds light on the key priorities, challenges, and opportunities for early-career and youth participation in NPT processes. It offers recommendations for the PrepCom process in advance of the 2026 NPT RevCon, based on the perspectives of youth and early-career expert participants from North America as expressed and gathered from focus group meetings, survey responses, individual email correspondence, and a Town Hall convened by BASIC in the lead-up to the 2023 NPT PrepCom Process.

At a time where the NPT regime faces heightened geopolitical tensions and increased nuclear risk, participants noted that many early career and youth concerns related to gender, climate concerns, and the humanitarian impacts of nuclear weapons are not adequately reflected in NPT processes. They observed that to overcome structural barriers to engagement with the NPT for youth and early career experts in North America, it is important that avenues for civil society participation in NPT PrepCom and RevCons are

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strengthened. Participants also felt that attention to the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons in the NPT context could present an important avenue for access for North American youth, civil society, and under-represented groups to engage with NPT processes, including indigenous communities located in North America and communities affected by nuclear weapons use, testing and development. Finally, participants expressed the belief that NPT states parties should continue to implement more gender-sensitive approaches to the NPT – an effort that requires more nuanced, intersectional, and sustained engagement, reflected not only in drafts but in actions in final documents.

## Introduction

Participants from North America asserted that the region's settler-colonial history has profoundly shaped Canada and the United States' reliance on nuclear weapons since the advent of the nuclear age in 1945 – and is thus important to acknowledge when considering barriers and opportunities to youth and early career engagement with the NPT and related processes.<sup>64</sup> The United States tested its first ever nuclear weapon in rural New Mexico, where Nuevomexicano and Tewa people were forcibly dispossessed from their ranches and native land; and the uranium the United States used to build the "Fat Man" bomb dropped on Nagasaki was mined from the Shinkolobwe mine in the Belgian Congo.<sup>65</sup> Reliance on nuclear weapons in the region have had profound impacts on indigenous communities in North America since 1945: significant amounts of uranium have been mined on indigenous lands in North America, and nuclear waste is routinely dumped on Native lands in the United States and Canada, in violation of the 2008 UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.<sup>66</sup> With growing recognition in Canada and the United States of historic injustice against Indigenous communities and other marginalised communities,<sup>67</sup> North American youth participants believed Indigenous and nuclear-affected communities' concerns are neglected in many multilateral fora, including the NPT, though this has begun to shift with the TPNW, where civil society, including affected communities, commanded a significant presence at the First Meeting of States Parties.

The views and perspectives of smaller communities within North America, however, especially the indigenous communities who have been disproportionately affected by nuclear weapons testing and development, are noticeably absent from most high-level dialogues. Building on the precedent set by the 2010 NPT RevCon, in which state parties officially expressed their 'deep concern at the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons' and reaffirmed 'the need for all States at all times to comply with applicable international law, including international humanitarian law,'<sup>68</sup> participants believe that NPT states parties should increase attention to the humanitarian implications of the harms of nuclear testing on indigenous

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<sup>64</sup> Ward Churchill and Winona Laduke, "Native America: The Political Economy of Radioactive Colonialism," *Insurgent Sociologist*, 13, no. 3 (1986): 51–78; Anne Sisson Runyan, "Disposable waste, lands and bodies under Canada's gendered nuclear colonialism," *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 20, no. 1 (2018): 24-38; Traci Brynne Voyles, *Wastelanding: Legacies of Uranium Mining in Navajo Country* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015).

<sup>65</sup> Myriah Gómez, *Nuclear Nuevo México: Colonialism and the Effects of the Nuclear Industrial Complex on Nuevomexicanos* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2022); Gabrielle Hecht, *Being Nuclear: Africans and the Global Uranium Trade* (Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 2014).

<sup>66</sup> Danielle Endres, "The Rhetoric of Nuclear Colonialism: Rhetorical Exclusion of American Indian Arguments in the Yucca Mountain Nuclear Waste Siting Decision," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 6, no. 1 (March 2009): 39–60, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14791420802632103>.

<sup>67</sup> Rose Skylstad, "Reckoning and Reparation: Canada Navigates Past Mistreatment of Indigenous Populations," *Wilson Center*, 18 November, 2021, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/reckoning-and-reparation-canada-navigates-past-mistreatment-indigenous-populations>.

<sup>68</sup> "Final Document," *2010 Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference* (2010), NPT/CONF.2010/50 (Vol. I), <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N10/390/21/PDF/N1039021.pdf?OpenElement>.

communities and lands as an opportunity for wider youth engagement with NPT processes. In this regard, NPT state parties could look to the precedent set by the TPNW which includes measures for environmental remediation and victim assistance as the newest contribution to the international legal architecture on nuclear disarmament.

## Key Challenges

Civil society participation, which presents an important avenue for youth and early career engagement with the NPT PrepCom and RevCon, is limited to one meeting per PrepCom and RevCon. This does not allow for substantive engagement between state parties and civil society stakeholders in NPT processes. Excluded from the more substantive discussions, civil society participation in NPT processes is currently relegated to a separate meeting that many States Parties do not attend. Moreover, NPT processes often take place in North America or Europe, and participants from the Global South therefore often encounter prohibitive barriers to attending multilateral fora such as NPT PrepComs and RevCons due to cumbersome visa obstacles.<sup>69</sup> North American participants believed that these two structural factors inhibit diverse youth and early career engagement with NPT processes and should be addressed.

Participants also noted that given Canada's recent efforts to recognise historic harms done to Indigenous communities in Canada,<sup>70</sup> and as part of a broader trend in increased political activism amongst many North American youth on climate justice, racial justice, and indigenous rights, inclusion of indigenous perspectives in nuclear fora is increasingly understood as essential.<sup>71</sup> Such incorporation should not be limited to an acknowledgement or to noting the disproportionate harms on indigenous communities; rather, substantive representation of such issues should be woven into the final outcomes and decisions of NPT processes.

Participants also acknowledged a need for substantive action on gender and intersectional diversity in the NPT process, noting the gap between State parties' expressed support for gender consideration in the process in the NPT context and concrete, measurable progress or outcomes on gender-related concerns. For example, though states like Canada put forth gender considerations at a high level, decisions and actions about gender rarely make it into the final draft or are implemented. In the 2022 RevCon, gender concerns were included in the first Draft Final Report as 'States Parties recognise the importance of, and commit to ensure the equal, full and effective participation and leadership of both women and men in the NPT implementation and review, and to further integrate a gender perspective in all aspects of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation decision-making processes'. However, any mention of 'gender' was ultimately excised from the (revised) final document.<sup>72</sup>

Furthermore, participants noted that current efforts towards gender-inclusive measures represent surface-level changes, which often fail to interrogate more deeply the link between gender and nuclear weapons policy in a sufficiently rigorous and intersectional manner. As Brown and Considine have articulated: the forms of

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<sup>69</sup> Olamide Samuel, "Travelling while black: A first-hand account of the restrictive visa system impacting diversity at nuclear policy conferences," *European Leadership Network Commentary*, 8 August, 2022, <https://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/commentary/travelling-while-black-a-first-hand-account-of-the-restrictive-visa-system-impacting-diversity-at-nuclear-policy-conferences/>.

<sup>70</sup> See, for example, "Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada," *Government of Canada*, last updated September 29, 2022, <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1450124405592/152910606052>.

<sup>71</sup> Megan Carnegie, "Gen Z: How young people are changing activism," *BBC*, 2022, <https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20220803-gen-z-how-young-people-are-changing-activism>.

<sup>72</sup> Draft Final Document, 2020 NPT Review Conference, NPT/CONF.2020/CRP.1, 22 August, 2022; Draft Final Document, 2020 NPT Review Conference, 26 August, 2022, NPT/CONF.2020/CRP.2.



'gender inclusion' currently practised in the NPT have the effect of 'erasing differences amongst women' by conceptualising 'women' as a homogenous group who are currently left outside the NPT space and must be 'included.'<sup>73</sup> This has the effect of, for example, erasing the disproportionate impacts of nuclear policy on women and girls in indigenous communities and the gendered impacts of radiation.<sup>74</sup>

## Key Opportunities

Participants noted that increased discussion about the security threats presented by climate change and the climate-nuclear nexus could increase early career and youth engagement with the NPT and related processes. The intersection of climate-nuclear issues presents a new lens on NPT-related issues that reflect younger generations' concern for combating climate change. Some participants noted that this discussion could take place in the context of the second pillar of the NPT, relevant to promoting the peaceful uses of nuclear energy for economic, social, and environmental benefits, while ensuring their safety and security. This could include supporting nuclear energy generation, research, and development of advanced nuclear technologies, or promoting international cooperation in nuclear energy. Some participants also reiterated the need for an intersectional lens to this approach, emphasising the environmental impacts of uranium mining, including for peaceful uses, and its impacts on indigenous communities, as well as the historic risks of 'peaceful' nuclear power.

Participants noted that gender-sensitive approaches in the NPT context focus mostly on 'inclusion' of women without substantive engagement with gendered approaches to nuclear policy, and without understanding the ways 'gender is already at work in nuclear policy'.<sup>75</sup> Canada has adopted a 'feminist foreign policy,' but is also reliant on US extended nuclear deterrence and NATO's Article 5 security guarantee. This is a paradox that underscores a failure to recognise any potential tension or contradiction between the two. The 'gender-sensitive' approach taken by states like Canada in the context of the NPT prioritises inclusion of women over the interrogation of nuclear policy through a feminist lens.<sup>76</sup> While NPT documents occasionally call for states parties to 'note' or 'recognise' the gendered impacts of radiation on 'women and girls,' they exclude any discussion of what action should be taken after 'noting' these consequences.<sup>77</sup> Participants identified that: (1) the failure to fund, collect, and incorporate data on gender, and; (2) the narrow framing of 'gender sensitive' approaches, as focused on homogenous inclusion rather than interrogating nuclear policy through intersectional lens, all present opportunities for improved participation in NPT processes.

## Recommendations

1. State parties should foster inclusion of civil society by increasing transparency and access to NPT processes, and by expanding avenues for civil society representation beyond the one meeting that is currently allocated. Civil society experts and representatives could provide input to states parties through expert panels and through presentations attended by states parties, especially on subjects of specialised or technical knowledge.
2. Strategies to ensure the NPT PrepCom and RevCon are more accessible and inclusive could be discussed, for example, at the Working Group meeting on Strengthening the NPT Review Process with

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<sup>73</sup> Laura Rose Brown, Laura Considine, "Examining 'gender-sensitive' approaches to nuclear weapons policy: a study of the Non-Proliferation Treaty," *International Affairs*, 98, no. 4 (2022): 1251, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iiaa114>.

<sup>74</sup> Anne Sisson Runyan, "Disposable waste, lands and bodies under Canada's gendered nuclear colonialism."

<sup>75</sup> Laura Rose Brown, Laura Considine, "Examining 'gender-sensitive' approaches to nuclear weapons policy, 1255.

<sup>76</sup> Brown and Considine, "Examining 'gender-sensitive' approaches," 1255.

<sup>77</sup> Brown and Considine, "Examining 'gender-sensitive' approaches," 1259.



a mandate to 'review and make recommendations to the PrepCom for the eleventh Review Conference on measures that would improve the effectiveness, efficiency, transparency, accountability, coordination and continuity of the Treaty review process' scheduled to convene in Vienna in July 2023.<sup>78</sup>

3. States parties should devote resources to including youth, indigenous and affected communities in a culturally sensitive manner, inviting and empowering individuals from such communities to represent the views of their communities in the environment of the NPT. Youth disarmament education, empowerment, and capacity-building is an important aspect of this project.
4. States should commit resources to gathering more data related to gender issues, especially through an intersectional lens, as reflected in the first draft Final Document from the 2020 RevCon for the Secretariat to 'collect, track and publish data disaggregated by sex and gender statistics' at the Conference.<sup>79</sup>
5. Gender lenses should be implemented and integrated into policy procedures. For example, deeper understandings of gender in nuclear weapons policy would not just 'note' and 'recognise' the gendered impacts of nuclear weapons' physiological, psychological, social, and health impacts, but would take seriously what these consequences imply for policy choices.<sup>80</sup> For this, NPT states-parties could look to the TPNW, which proposes addressing such harms through gender-sensitive remediation and assistance to affected communities.

## Conclusion

Given the outsized influence and presence of North America, especially the United States in multilateral fora like the NPT, North American participants in EVN's Early Career and Youth Consultation on the NPT Process have offered critical reflections on what steps could be taken to increase early career and youth representation, access, and engagement with NPT processes. State parties should build on past NPT RevCons' affirmation of the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons in substantive ways. This includes taking steps to increase transparency in NPT processes; devote resources to capacity building and civil society inclusion; including the participation of indigenous and nuclear-affected communities; and devoting resources to data collection and analysis of gender in the NPT context.

## Acknowledgements

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<sup>78</sup> Decision on the next review cycle, NPT/CONF.2020/DEC.2 (26 August 2022), <https://www.un.org/en/conferences/npt2020/documents>; and "Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference Ends without Adopting Substantive Outcome Document Due to Opposition by One Member State," *UN Media Coverings and Press Releases*, 26 August, 2022, <https://press.un.org/en/2022/dc3850.doc.htm>.

<sup>79</sup> This sentence was ultimately excised from the revised Draft Final Document. Draft Final Document, 2020 NPT Review Conference, NPT/CONF.2020/CRP.1, 22 August 2022.

<sup>80</sup> Brown and Considine, "Examining 'gender-sensitive' approaches."



# Oceania

*Jena Jaensch*<sup>81</sup>

## Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to share the views of youth and early career experts in the Oceania region on the barriers to and opportunities for engagement with the NPT PrepComs and the 2026 RevCon.

A key challenge for engagement in this region is the lack of attention paid at the international level to issues that matter most to youth and early career experts, focusing instead on the agenda set by NWS. Prior nuclear testing continues to affect First Nations' and colonised lands and its people. The colonial powers were able to test nuclear weapons in the region, and from the safety of their national shores. These historical undertakings have had lasting consequences and continue to shape the NPT, PrepComs, and RevCon. Excluding the perspectives of many youth and early career experts in this region as the knowledge of colonised people are

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devalued, such as those from First Nations communities.<sup>82</sup> Furthermore, the gendered expectations, norms, and behaviours inherent in the NPT continue to limit the capacity of women and gender diverse people to authentically participate.

A key opportunity for youth and early career expert engagement is the lived experiences of the people throughout this region of issues relating to the NPT which directly affect them, including the environmental and health impacts of nuclear weapons.

State parties should address and take action on region specific issues, such as the legacy of nuclear testing, and the failure to eliminate nuclear weapons and safeguard the future of this region. The NPT, PrepComs, and RevCon continue to perpetuate colonial and patriarchal power structures, behaviours, and norms, which restricts engagement. To allow for the full and equal participation of women, gender diverse, First Nations people, and people of colour, the NPT, PrepComs, and RevCon require institutional change, not merely the increased participation of these groups.

## Introduction

The Oceania region includes Australia, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, French Polynesia, Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Palau, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, and Wallis and Futuna. There are no nuclear weapons states in this region, however, French Polynesia and New Caledonia are French territories and Wallis and Futuna is a French collectivity. The states in Oceania have experienced some of the worst impacts of nuclear weapons development and this legacy continues today. The views in this report are based on publicly available statements and interviews from youth and early career experts.

## Key Challenges

The key challenges for youth and early career expert engagement with the NPT, PrepCom, and RevCon are region specific issues which are often ignored at the international level. This is, in part, a result of geography, history, size, and influence in the international system.

Surveys conducted for this report revealed a lack of engagement in this region with the NPT, PrepCom, and RevCon. Throughout the history of the NPT, there has been little progress on issues which matter most to many states and communities in this region. In particular, the perspectives and needs of Pacific Islander and First Nations people have been ignored. NWS, many of whom are responsible for nuclear testing and set the agenda at the NPT PrepCom, view nuclear weapons as a way to safeguard their population against nuclear threats.<sup>83</sup> Conversely, many states in this region continue to experience the negative impacts of nuclear weapons testing. Although there has been some progress towards banning nuclear weapons testing, the CTBT has not yet entered into force as it has not been signed by required states, including the United States, a NWS which has previously conducted nuclear weapons testing in the Pacific.

The youth-led Pacific-based chapter of 'Reverse the Trend' and the Marshallese Educational Initiative highlight the need for nuclear justice.<sup>84</sup> Activists demand acknowledgement and action to address the impact of nuclear

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<sup>82</sup> Aníbal Quijano, "Coloniality of Power and Eurocentrism in Latin America," *International Sociology*, 15, no. 2 (2000): 215–32, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0268580900015002005>.

<sup>83</sup> Mere Tuilau, "RTT Pacific Interview with Mere Tuilau," interview by Franscine Anmontha, *Instagram*, RTT Pacific, December 9, 2022; International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, "Nuclear Test Impacts," accessed April 26, 2023, <https://www.nucleartestimpacts.org/>.

<sup>84</sup> Reverse the Trend, accessed April 25, 2023, <https://rttreversingthetrend.org/>.

testing on the people and the environment of the Pacific, including its intergenerational impact.<sup>85</sup> France, for example, has acknowledged the continuing impact of nuclear weapons testing, however, activists have criticised the barriers to receiving compensation.<sup>86</sup> If states ignore or minimise the issues that are important to youth in this region, they will view it as an institution built by and for people who hold power in the international system, rather than an organisation built to secure their own future and address issues which are important to them.

Colonial structures of power shape the PrepCom and RevCon agendas and determine which states are deemed responsible enough to continue to possess nuclear weapons while working towards a nuclear free world, despite the harms that these states have perpetrated.<sup>87</sup> Nuclear testing in the Pacific has overwhelmingly impacted First Nations communities on colonised lands.<sup>88</sup> These communities have historically been viewed as acceptable collateral damage in the development of nuclear weapons to ensure the safety of those in power. Attempts to slow the disarmament process reinforce these hierarchies and show these communities that their safety is not a priority.<sup>89</sup>

Additionally, the Oceania region is thousands of kilometres from Vienna, Geneva, and New York – the locations of the NPT PrepCom meetings. A key challenge, especially for young people and early career experts in this field, is the expense of travelling to these locations, including securing a visa to travel. Online meetings partially address this barrier, however, if meetings are held online, they are often at inconvenient times for this region as they are accessible to the majority of states. Engaging with young people and early career experts, especially First Nations people, means taking steps to not only amplify their voices but to change systems and associated practices that have been built on their exclusion.

Gendered expectations, norms, and behaviours are embedded within the NPT, PrepComs, and RevCon, which reinforce patriarchal constructions of power prevalent in the international security field.<sup>90</sup> Although not specific to this region, the intersection between gender, race, ability, and sexuality means that people in this region often face compounding levels of disadvantage when engaging with the PrepCom and RevCon. In the NPT discourse, gender is synonymous with ‘women’ and masculine norms and hierarchies within the NPT are not challenged as they are viewed as the objective.<sup>91</sup> The existing institutional and gendered limitations on how women are able to participate, and in what capacity, are not addressed. In associating gender with women, states fail to recognise how gender, and masculinities in particular, has already been embedded into the NPT processes and the way in which this constrains women and gender diverse people when engaging with the NPT PrepCom.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Christian Ciobanu, “International Joint Youth Statement,” *Reversing the Trend*, August 8, 2022, <https://rttreversingthetrend.org/blog/international-joint-youth-statement>; Mere Tuilau, “RTT Pacific Interview with Mere Tuilau,” December 9, 2022.

<sup>86</sup> Owen LeGrone, “France Admits Nuclear Coercion in Polynesia,” *Arms Control Association*, accessed May 10, 2023, <https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2019-09/news-briefs/france-admits-nuclear-coercion-polynesia>.

<sup>87</sup> Laura Rose Brown and Laura Considine, “Examining ‘Gender-Sensitive’ Approaches to Nuclear Weapons Policy: A Study of the Non-Proliferation Treaty,” *International Affairs* 98, no. 4 (2022): p. 1250, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iiaa114>; Shampa Biswas, *Nuclear Desire: Power and the Postcolonial Nuclear Order* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 96.

<sup>88</sup> Elizabeth Minor, “NPT Sees Growing Response to Nuclear Weapons’ Harmful Legacy,” *Rethinking Security*, September 5, 2022, <https://rethinkingsecurity.org.uk/2022/09/05/npt-sees-growing-response-to-nuclear-weapons-harmful-legacy/>

<sup>89</sup> Ciobanu, “International Joint Youth Statement.”

<sup>90</sup> Brown and Considine, “Examining ‘Gender-Sensitive’ Approaches to Nuclear Weapons Policy,” (2022): p. 1250.

<sup>91</sup> Brown and Considine, “Examining ‘Gender-Sensitive’ Approaches to Nuclear Weapons Policy,” (2022): pp. 1251-1257.

<sup>92</sup> Brown and Considine, “Examining ‘Gender-Sensitive’ Approaches to Nuclear Weapons Policy,” (2022): p. 1258.



## Key Opportunities

The key opportunities in Oceania lie in the people and communities of this region. As youth are already experiencing the devastating impact on climate change on their own lives, they are passionate about safeguarding the environment.<sup>93</sup> A key opportunity for engagement is through focusing on the environmental impact of nuclear weapons and the risk that nuclear weapons pose to the environment if nuclear weapons states fail to disarm.

The Pacific Islands have a large youth population which will continue to grow in the coming decades. Youth in this region are already campaigning for these issues to be addressed. There is a strong commitment to the Treaty of Rarotonga to preserve the Pacific NWFZ. Grass roots, youth-led organisations are already active in this space, especially Pacific Islanders.<sup>94</sup> As these issues affect the people of Oceania and their safety directly, not just their political leaders, they are motivated to achieve the goals of the NPT. NWS have the opportunity to work with and listen to communities affected by nuclear weapons testing to determine how they can best make reparations.<sup>95</sup>

## Recommendations

1. Issues specific to the Oceania region should be prioritised during the NPT PrepCom meetings. Member states should centre the perspectives and experiences of those who have been most affected by nuclear weapons, rather than upholding the power structures which centre NWS. Of particular importance is addressing the legacy of nuclear testing in Oceania.
2. Member states should work to decolonise the NPT, PrepComs, and RevCon. They should acknowledge and address the ways in which these NPT processes continue to uphold patriarchal and colonial power structures. This includes restructuring the NPT PrepComs and RevCon and dismantling the colonial power structures on which the NPT was built. In addition to structural change, member states should consider the access needs of marginalised populations so that they are able to participate fully in the PrepComs and RevCons.
3. Beyond increasing women's participation, member states should address gendered expectations, norms, and behaviours embedded within the NPT, PrepCom, and RevCon. The current institutional structures limit the agency of young and early career women and gender diverse people. Their participation alone will not change the gendered nature of the institution; this requires an analysis of how gender plays out within the NPT and its implications.

## Conclusion

The proliferation of nuclear weapons is a prevalent issue, one which has had a lasting impact on the people in the Oceania region. At the international level, there continues to be a lack of representation of key issues in this region and the gendered and colonial structure of the NPT and its related processes means that women, gender diverse, people of colour, and First Nations people often lack agency, even when they are part of the NPT PrepComs and RevCon. Despite these barriers, Oceania has some key opportunities for engagement that centre on youth engagement in issues such as climate change and nuclear testing. Youth and early career

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<sup>93</sup> Ciobanu, "International Joint Youth Statement"; Mere Tuilau, "RTT Pacific Interview with Mere Tuilau" interview by Franscine Anmontha, *Instagram*, RTT Pacific, December 9, 2022.

<sup>94</sup> Ciobanu, "International Joint Youth Statement"; Tuilau, "RTT Pacific Interview with Mere Tuilau".

<sup>95</sup> LeGrone, "France Admits Nuclear Coercion in Polynesia".

experts in the nuclear policy field care about issues relating to non-proliferation, the main barrier to their engagement is the regime itself.



# South and Southern Asia

Anant Saria<sup>96</sup>

## Executive Summary

South and Southern Asia is a high-risk region given the historic enmities between India and Pakistan. This contributes to a persistent underlying risk for accidents, as seen with an accidental launch of a missile in Pakistan's territory in 2022, which could possibly lead to escalations.<sup>97</sup> The international community, however, can bolster efforts to promote risk reduction dialogues by identifying key barriers, and opportunities, and tailoring their policy actions to tackle such barriers.

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<sup>97</sup> Sameer P. Lalwani, "How to Deal with the Risk of Nuclear Escalation in South Asia," *United States Institute of Peace*, May 2022. Available at <https://www.usip.org/publications/2022/05/how-deal-risk-nuclear-escalation-south-asia>; Daniel Markley, "The Persistent Threat of Nuclear Crises Among China, India and Pakistan," *United States Institute of Peace*, February 202. Available at: <https://www.usip.org/publications/2023/02/persistent-threat-nuclear-crises-among-china-india-and-pakistan>

The key barriers for the region's youth and civil society to engage in non-proliferation dialogue are the stalling of non-proliferation dialogue regionally and internationally, and a lack of adequate international and domestic funding to support domestic stakeholders. These challenges can be addressed with policy actions capitalising on key opportunities, such as the countries' active engagement with key multilateral fora and the space for accelerating the involvement of domestic youth and civil society in disarmament and non-proliferation dialogue.

The international community can use trade and technology transfer incentives for nuclear energy while also encouraging regional risk reduction dialogue, which could also be used to support possible disarmament and non-proliferation dialogue, to address the risk of any accidental escalations in the region. They can also use more universal multilateral fora, like the UN General Assembly to initiate a Special Session for Disarmament to support non-proliferation dialogue outside of the NPT, and engage in efforts to bolster access for domestic youth and civil society.

## Introduction

This report seeks to identify and summarise the views of youth and early career researchers from the South and Southern Asia region regarding the NPT's three pillars: non-proliferation, disarmament, and peaceful use of nuclear energy. It achieves this objective by summarising the views expressed by several young experts and early career researchers that have participated in a combination of activities, which include: a survey, focus group meeting, and bilateral meetings with the author to discuss the obstacles and opportunities for non-proliferation in South Asia. These researchers were invited to contribute their views through an open call for anonymous contributions to the project. The contributing group was diverse, with views ranging from participants located in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka.

The objective of this report is two-fold as it first seeks to identify key challenges for the region's participation in the NPT and engage with non-proliferation dialogues, despite their relative adherence to non-proliferation norms, and then attempts to identify the opportunities in supporting non-proliferation initiatives in the region. It ends with policy recommendations for the NPT's member states to consider in bolstering South Asian nuclear non-proliferation dialogue.

From the perspective of participants, South and Southern Asia remains prominent in discussions of possible escalations and nuclear use. Participants felt that prior limited conventional conflict between the two South Asian rivals, and between India-China, has cast a worrisome nuclear shadow, inviting fears of possible escalations.<sup>98</sup> These concerns are exacerbated by more recent misadventures that include: confrontations between India and Pakistan over militant attacks in India in Uri (2006), Pulwama (2019), and Balakot (2019).<sup>99</sup> India-China tensions include the Doklam stand-off of 2017 and the 2020 Galwan River Valley skirmishes, with ongoing cross-accusations and the possibility of spontaneous confrontations.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Karthika Sasikumar, "India-Pakistan Crises under the Nuclear Shadow: The Role of Reassurance," *Journal for Peace and Nuclear Disarmament*, 2, no. 1 (2019): 151-169.

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/25751654.2019.1619229>.

<sup>99</sup> Kriti M. Shah, "Looking back: Two years since the Pulwama attack and the Balakot strikes," *Raisina Debates*, 2021.

Available at: <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/looking-back-two-years-since-pulwama-attack-balakot-strikes/>.

<sup>100</sup> Pillai Rajagopalan Rajeshwari, "The Galwan Valley India-China skirmish is a gamechanger for New Delhi," *Observer Research Foundation*, 2020. Available at: <https://policycommons.net/artifacts/1349958/the-galwan-valley-india-china-skirmish-is-a-gamechanger-for-new-delhi/1962118/>; "India accuses China of violating border agreements," *Al Jazeera*, 2023; Available at <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/4/27/india-accuses-china-of-violating-border-agreements>.



## Key Challenges

From the perspective of participants, the key challenge for South Asia is the stalling of non-proliferation dialogue alongside their refusal to sign the NPT. India and Pakistan's refusal to sign the NPT has less to do with adhering to its spirit and purpose, and more to do with its discriminatory preference given to states that possessed nuclear weapons before its signing, thereby drawing a distinction between the so-called nuclear 'haves' and the 'have-nots'. Notwithstanding the fact that India and Pakistan are in possession of nuclear weapons, as nuclear outliers to the NPT their legal obligation to disarm is supererogatory. Whilst this can be viewed as an advantage over the NPT possessors, it also impacts their incentive to pursue, promote, and engage in non-proliferation dialogue. However, the two states are vocal in their support and adherence to globally accepted non-proliferation norms, which is wholly encouraging. However, with political disagreements and enmities between India and Pakistan, there is a practical absence of any ongoing regional non-proliferation initiatives.

India possesses nuclear weapons outside the NPT framework and is technically not a NWS as defined by the legal provisions contained in the NPT. Yet, the United States continues to view India as a 'responsible' nuclear power and led the international effort in pushing for India's partial waiver to the NSG in 2008.<sup>101</sup> Additionally, given the historic sentiments of enmity between the countries in the region, domestic support for any prospects of unilateral disarmament has also remained low.<sup>102</sup> From the perspective of the participants, the space for civil society, and in particular the youth, to effectively engage with any non-proliferation dialogues remains minimal. This extends to a shrinking space for civil society to contribute to the state's non-proliferation considerations, with conversations about non-proliferation and disarmament largely absent from domestic political activities and agendas. Additionally, the ability and accessibility for the public to engage with larger international disarmament dialogues that are mostly based in the United States or Europe is limited.

Additionally, regional stakeholders also felt there is a sense of fatigue around confidence building measures, which has been growing over several years. This fatigue has stifled progress in pursuing regional non-proliferation dialogue.<sup>103</sup> India, Pakistan and China are all pursuing the modernisation of their nuclear forces to maintain their deterrence capabilities, which could impact their practices over deterrence. This can prompt greater threat perceptions, fueling the need for active engagement in risk reduction dialogue and measures. The absence of formal mechanisms and political fora to initiate dialogue limits the chances for effective regional engagement with broader international nuclear non-proliferation regime and risk reduction initiatives.

## Key Opportunities

The international community can capitalise on some key opportunities to empower regional non-proliferation dialogue. In particular, India and Pakistan should continue to pursue the expansion of nuclear energy as a key component of their shift to more sustainable sources of energy.<sup>104</sup> Given that adherence to nuclear non-proliferation norms is a prerequisite to receiving full entry into the NSG, this incentive can be used to nudge

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<sup>101</sup> AFP, "India energized by nuclear pacts," 2008. Archived from the original on May 20, 2011, Available at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20110520182512/http://afp.google.com/article/ALeqM5geN2RWjoN4oJhPibc7rhkxMXfzq>.

<sup>102</sup> David Cortright and Amitabh Mattoo (eds), *India and the Bomb: Public Opinion and Nuclear Options* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1996), 10-16.

<sup>103</sup> Lora Saalman and Petr Topychkanov, "Reinvigorating South Asian Nuclear Transparency and Confidence-building Measures," SIPRI, 2021. <https://www.sipri.org/publications/2021/sipri-insights-peace-and-security/reinvigorating-south-asian-nuclear-transparency-and-confidence-building-measures>.

<sup>104</sup> World Nuclear Association, "Asia's Nuclear Energy Growth." Last updated: April, 2023. Available at: <https://world-nuclear.org/information-library/country-profiles/others/asias-nuclear-energy-growth.aspx>

states into interacting with non-proliferation dialogue, particularly by tabling international assistance with nuclear technology and material as a possible route.<sup>105</sup> Thus, India's partial waiver to the NSG, incentivises Pakistan to bolster its efforts in adhering to non-proliferation norms and engage with regional non-proliferation and risk reduction dialogues. International fora, like the UNGA, with a Special Session on Disarmament, can be invoked to promote disarmament dialogue. This route could boost engagement between South Asian states and encourage collective action, which can significantly improve their prospects for exploring risk reduction ideas.

Transnational civil-society awareness around disarmament dialogues means that there is growing momentum in disarmament advocacy. This has led to increasing youth awareness from online research on non-proliferation, with the youth now also engaging with political science and world-wide discussion of nuclear-related issues. Whilst online engagement has helped to create an understanding of the issues, measures that increase awareness, and provide a space for the youth to voice their perspectives are still needed. Greater impact can be achieved with target funding; in-person engagement between the youth and overseas organisations could yield a fresh crop of perspectives and opportunities that advance South and Southern Asian voices.

Whilst the UN has bolstered efforts for youth inclusion in international fora on peace and security in line with the UN Security Council resolution 2250 (2015), 2419 (2018) and 2535 (2020), and the UN General Assembly A/Res/74/64, this momentum can be extended to include efforts to expand space for youth from South Asia, with the international community bolstering funds and opportunities for youth and civil society from South Asia to participate in non-proliferation dialogue internationally. Given that 65 per cent of India's population is under 35, engaging youth in non-proliferation dialogue could also embolden this demographic to advocate for their governments to engage in risk reduction and regional non-proliferation dialogue.<sup>106</sup> This is particularly true with the youth being the future leaders that will also wield the power to redirect national priorities and efforts on non-proliferation.

## Recommendations

Based on the regional focus group discussions and inputs by early career researchers, the following policy decisions can inform efforts for the region's engagement with the global non-proliferation dialogue:

1. The international community should include local civil society and youth from South Asia in non-proliferation advocacy. This can be done by leveraging financial and extending knowledge-based resources to them, including access to platforms like conferences and participation in the works of international think tanks. This must also include efforts to address the barriers of visa restrictions and high financial costs for youth and civil society from the region to engage with non-proliferation conferences. This would also allow civil society to feel empowered and actively engage in domestic and international advocacy to urge their own governments to engage in non-proliferation efforts.
2. The international community, particularly aid providers and NSG members, can consider the use of access to technologies and materials for nuclear energy to incentivise and influence the countries' outlook towards dialogue for nuclear non-proliferation. This can be done by capitalising on India and Pakistan's efforts to bolster their production and use of nuclear energy as part of their energy policies

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<sup>105</sup> Matthew Bunn, "Nuclear Disarmament, Nuclear Energy, and Climate Change: Exploring the Linkages", in Bård Nikolas Vik Steen and Olav Njølstad, (eds), *Nuclear Disarmament: A Critical Assessment* (Oxon, England: Routledge, 2019), 185-204.

<sup>106</sup> International Labour Association, "Decent Work for Youth in India," Available at: [https://www.ilo.org/newdelhi/info/WCMS\\_175936/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/newdelhi/info/WCMS_175936/lang--en/index.htm).

and use greater international aid for these efforts in exchange for active engagement in regional and international dialogues. This would also need dialogue to move past political disagreements to find common ground for progress in non-proliferation dialogue.

3. The international community must step up their engagement with the states on multilateral fora, like the General Assembly with a Special Session on Disarmament, to maintain pressure on India and Pakistan to engage in confidence building and risk reduction. This would require regional and international actors to recognise the 'confidence-building measure fatigue' in the region and actively work towards moving past it to support regional stability.<sup>107</sup>
4. Given India and Pakistan's non-membership to the NPT and the ongoing deadlock over a proposed FMCT at the Conference on Disarmament, a possible approach to fruitful non-proliferation engagement could be to initiate dialogue in a new, more agreeable and universal forum. To this purpose, a UN General Assembly Special Session on Disarmament would provide an opportunity to aid such engagement.<sup>108</sup> However, this could also add another platform for non-proliferation dialogue alongside the fora where discussions have stalled. Any new initiatives will likely require joint support for a dialogue from multiple states, or support for similar calls from civil society to build consensus to begin such discussions.

## Conclusion

Given the high tensions between India, Pakistan, and China, dialogue and engagement are imperative. Despite difficulties like the stalling of various regional and international dialogues, there are key opportunities that should be tapped into. The international community can incentivise these states with trade and technology transfer concessions, which will ultimately support India and Pakistan's efforts to boost their reliance on nuclear energy, as well as pave the path to regional disarmament and non-proliferation dialogue. Additionally, the international community can expand the space for regional civil society and youth, given the shrinking space and funding for disarmament advocacy in the region. There is also great scope for progress on risk reduction in South Asia with the NPT's state parties remaining best positioned to facilitate such efforts.

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<sup>107</sup> Lora Saalman and Petr Topychkanov, "Reinvigorating South Asian Nuclear Transparency and Confidence-building Measures," *SIPRI*, 2021. <https://www.sipri.org/publications/2021/sipri-insights-peace-and-security/reinvigorating-south-asian-nuclear-transparency-and-confidence-building-measures>.

<sup>108</sup> SCRAP Weapons "Activating a UN Special Session in Disarmament - Information Pack," 2022. Available at: <https://scrapweapons.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Updated-SSOD-Information-Pack.pdf>.



# Sub-Saharan Africa

*Oladipupo Michael Ola*<sup>109</sup>

## Executive Summary

The NPT is regarded as the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime and an essential foundation for the current international security climate. The NPT is designed to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons, to further the goals of nuclear and general disarmament, and to promote cooperation on the peaceful uses of nuclear technology. The central aim of this report is to determine and examine the priorities or concerns on nuclear matters of countries in Sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>110</sup> A second aim is to understand if the mainstream discourse at high level fora represents the region's nuclear priorities, and if not, to note the

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<sup>110</sup> Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Congo (Brazzaville), Congo (Democratic Republic), Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Equatorial, Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Réunion, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Western Sahara, Zambia, Zimbabwe.



barriers to, and opportunities for, engagement by both the states and youth relative to these priorities at the relevant global high-level fora.

Consequently, the report lays out what appears to be core nuclear priorities to countries in Sub-Saharan Africa such as peaceful uses of nuclear technology; control of export of uranium deposits, promoting nuclear disarmament at the global stage as well as other domestic (regional priorities). The main finding of the report is that peaceful uses of nuclear technology are essential to power industrial growth and economic development, and it argues that nuclear energy is key to the industrial and economic needs of countries in the region. The report further examines the key challenges towards the drive for nuclear energy in the region with recommendations on how to overcome the challenges. The report further provides road maps towards the internationalisation at various high-level fora and its implementation in the region.

## Introduction

The next RevCon is taking place in 2026 following the last one in 2022. The first meeting of the PrepCom is expected to take place in August 2023. This report is a compilation of the views expressed by participants in the Regional Focus Group for Sub-Saharan Africa, the EVN NPT PrepCom survey and this year's town hall meeting.

Central to the dialogue steered by the EVN NPT PrepCom Early Career/Youth Consultation is the question on the key nuclear priorities in Sub-Saharan Africa. The main finding is that the promotion of the peaceful uses of nuclear technology and science for generating the region's electricity needs is a key priority in the region. At present, 600 million people, or 43% of the total global population, lack access to electricity, most of them in Sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>111</sup> Moreover, since becoming independent states, countries in the region are struggling with industrial growth and economic development and the key to solving these issues is boosting their current energy-generating capacity with such capacity that only nuclear reactors can provide. Nuclear energy could allow countries in Sub-Saharan Africa to meet their local energy demands for industrial developments, reduce their over-dependence on petroleum for power generation and foreign exchange earnings, and reduce their dependence on fossil fuel and water from neighbouring countries for power generation.<sup>112</sup> In Africa especially, aside from the benefits mentioned above, it is also suggested that nuclear energy has the potential to considerably improve human health, agricultural production, and food security.<sup>113</sup>

Another key concern relates to the control of export of uranium from Sub-Saharan Africa. Sub-Saharan Africa was a significant world producer of uranium after 1945 when it was discovered in the Democratic Republic of Congo – then the Belgian Congo.<sup>114</sup> Currently, there are four major types of deposits that produce the majority of the uranium in Africa such as the Archaean quartz-conglomerate-hosted gold uranium deposits of South Africa; the Neoproterozoic end-orogeny sheeted leucogranites and small stocks of Namibia; the Mesozoic sandstone-hosted roll-front deposits of Niger and Malawi; and the recent channel-hosted calcrete and alluvial deposits in Namibia.<sup>115</sup> The existence and amount of uranium discovered here and in other areas in the region underscore the region's importance as far as nuclear issues are concerned. The resource can serve as a major

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<sup>111</sup> International Energy Agency, "Africa Energy Outlook: A Focus on Prospects in Sub-Saharan Africa," *The Infrastructure Consortium for Africa*, 2014: 1 – 242. <https://www.icafrica.org/en/knowledge-hub/article/africa-energy-outlook-a-focus-on-energy-prospects-in-sub-saharan-africa-263/>.

<sup>112</sup> Participant A (2023). EVN NPT PrepCom Youth/Early Career Consultation Survey.

<sup>113</sup> Bossman, I. (2023). EVN NPT PrepCom Youth/Early Career Consultation Survey.

<sup>114</sup> Judith A. Kinnaird, and Paul A. M. Nex, "Uranium in Africa," *EIUGS and EGRI*, 39, no. 2 (2016): p. 335. <https://doi.org/10.18814/epiugs/2016/v39i2/95782>

<sup>115</sup> Judith A. Kinnaird, and Paul A. M. Nex, "Uranium in Africa," p. 335.

foreign exchange earnings for countries in the region. Therefore, the responsibility (priority) to ensure that the export of uranium does not result in the diversion of resources for military purposes is central to the status of the region as important exporters of uranium in the world.<sup>116</sup> Other priorities for the region, as expressed in the EVN NPT PrepCom Youth/Early Career Consultation survey and in the Regional Focus Group Online Session, relate to promoting nuclear disarmament at the global stage in line with other domestic and regional priorities,<sup>117</sup> getting Mauritius to sign and ratify the CTBT, nuclear safety,<sup>118</sup> and promoting laws that will curb risks of nuclear accidents and radiation exposure,<sup>119</sup> compensation for victims of nuclear tests, and addressing youth/women underrepresentation in nuclear matters.<sup>120</sup>

## Key Challenges

As specifically expressed, promoting peaceful uses of nuclear technology for generating the region's electricity requirement is generally believed to be key to the region's push for industrial growth and economic development. It is also generally noted that mainstream nuclear dialogue at high level fora such as the NPT does not represent this view and or does not seem to be aware of how important this is to the region's socio-political development and growth.<sup>121</sup> A key challenge in this area of concern relates to the lack of unified attempts by countries in the region to make this a substantive issue during the PrepCom sessions leading up to the actual RevCon. Political conflicts and economic stagnation due to widespread corruption in these countries have often made such unified attempts almost impossible despite group affiliation provisions such as the African Group, the NAM, the African Union etc. The IAEA has been accused of serving the interests of the West, making the verification of preparedness for the use of nuclear technology for energy-generating purposes in developing countries methodically slow.<sup>122</sup>

The author believes that NPT diplomacy and its associated processes are international diplomacy and processes heavily influenced by representatives in pursuit of the interests of the Western or European countries. This has the potential to impact security, development, and regional stability in Sub-Saharan Africa in the sense that it can undermine or block efforts of countries from the region in pursuit of regional security and development goals at these global high-level fora. In this perception, the failure of the last Review Cycle to reach consensus on a final document is an illustration of how the NPT processes have become highly influenced by representatives in pursuit of the interests of the Western or European countries, which in itself presents a barrier – a challenge to not only the global non-proliferation regime but also to countries in the region who primarily depend on the NPT regime for development and growth. The highly controlled nature of NPT diplomacy can make it difficult and has often made it hard for the region to achieve its goals leading eventually to unequal outcomes. Therefore, it is not difficult to see why concerns primarily connected to the needs of countries in the region remain at the back burner at these high-level fora.

However, a greater challenge relates to the economic dynamics existing in the countries in the region.<sup>123</sup> For one, current NPPs on the market, at a power rating of 1,000 megawatts (MW) or more, exceed the capacity

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<sup>116</sup> Participant B (2023). EVN NPT PrepCom Youth/Early Career Consultation Survey.

<sup>117</sup> Participant B (2023). EVN NPT PrepCom Youth/Early Career Consultation Survey.

<sup>118</sup> Participant Z (2023). EVN NPT PrepCom Youth/Early Career Consultation Survey.

<sup>119</sup> Participant Z (2023). EVN NPT PrepCom Youth/Early Career Consultation Survey.

<sup>120</sup> Participant Z (2023). EVN NPT PrepCom Youth/Early Career Consultation Survey.

<sup>121</sup> It is generally believed based on the information in the survey that discourse within high level international fora does not definitively include the peculiarities of Sub-Saharan Africa.

<sup>122</sup> Lawrence Scheinman, "The IAEA: Politicization and Safeguards," *Journal of Nuclear Materials Management*, 12, no. 24 (1983).

<sup>123</sup> Lawrence Scheinman, "The IAEA: Politicization and Safeguards."

that many African countries can support – (there is a rule of thumb that no power plant in a country should have a capacity that exceeds 10 percent of that country’s total grid capacity).<sup>124</sup> High capital costs, low human capital, weak institutional quality, long times required to develop robust legal and regulatory frameworks, and proliferation concerns of nuclear fuel also serve as barriers to the adoption of nuclear technology in the region. For these reasons, only South Africa has an operating NPP.<sup>125</sup> In the future, the country plans to further increase its nuclear capacity by 9,600 MW, and expand the share of its electricity from nuclear power from 5 to 25 percent by 2025.<sup>126</sup> Jewell conducted an assessment on the feasibility of developing 1,000 MW or larger NPPs in 52 emerging nuclear countries, including 14 African countries.<sup>127</sup> Jewell’s assessment characterised the motivation and capacity of each country to develop nuclear power by using metrics such as electricity grid size, GDP per capita, and the World Bank Government Effectiveness Indicator to categorise where each country stands in the quest to develop nuclear power.<sup>128</sup> Of the 14 African countries assessed, nuclear power development would only be possible for two (Zambia and Namibia) only with international support.<sup>129</sup>

Inter-states dynamics within the region, intra-state challenges, institutional barriers engendered by the highly politicised NPT regime and its associated processes, and lack of funds to independently embark on the NPP projects have made it difficult for these regional priorities to be adequately represented within high level fora. They also remain key barriers to engagement for the region in the NPT Review Cycle and associated conferences and committees.

## Key Opportunities

At the moment, the situation as to the key challenges highlighted above is not so hopeless. These challenges should be seen as key opportunities for countries in the region to put on the thinking cap and find ways for these challenges to become part of the main discourse within the region first, and then shift the discussion to various high-level fora such as the NPT Review Cycle and associated conferences and committees.

The biggest opportunities for engagement for countries in Sub-Saharan Africa are clean energy sources from nuclear technology to power industrial growth, economic development, improvement and breakthrough in human health treatment, agricultural production, and food security; youth inclusion in nuclear matters.

## Recommendations

1. The discussion on the main priority of countries in Sub-Saharan Africa must take place at all regional fora such as the Economic Community of West African States, East African Community, and Southern Africa Development Community, including associated subsidiaries. In the African Union, a comprehensive proposal must be made to outline and determine steps to implement the main regional nuclear priority. The Africa Union should then liaise with relevant bodies and pan-African

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<sup>124</sup> Jessica A. Jewell, “Nuclear-powered North Africa: Just a Desert Mirage or Is There Something on the Horizon?,” *Energy Policy*, 39, no. 8 (2011): .4445 – 4457. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0301421510007287>.

<sup>125</sup> Eskom, “Koeberg Power Station,” 2016. Available at: <https://www.eskom.co.za/eskom-divisions/gx/nuclear/>.

<sup>126</sup> Abigail Sah, Jessica Lovering, Omaro Maseli, and Aishwarya Saxena. 2018. “Atoms for Africa: Is There a Future for Civil Nuclear Energy in Sub-Saharan Africa?” CGD Policy Paper. Washington, DC: Center for Global Development. <https://www.cgdev.org/sites/default/files/atoms-africa-there-future-civil-nuclear-energy-sub-saharan-africa.pdf>.

<sup>127</sup> Jessica A. Jewell, “Nuclear-powered North Africa: Just a Desert Mirage or Is There Something on the Horizon?.”

<sup>128</sup> Jessica A. Jewell, “Ready for nuclear energy?: An assessment of capacities and motivations for launching new national nuclear power programs,” *Energy Policy*, 39, no. 3 (2011): 1041-1055. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0301421510007925>.

<sup>129</sup> Jessica A. Jewell, “Ready for nuclear energy?.”

group affiliations like the IAEA, the African Group within the UNGA and the NPT associated committees, and the NAM to make regional priorities substantive issues within the NPT.

2. The issues relating to the main regional nuclear priority should be emphasised within such international fora as the UNGA, the NPT Review Cycle and its associated committees and conferences, IAEA sponsored conferences, the African Group within the NPT conferences, the NAM within the NPT conferences, AFCONE and its sponsored activities etc.
3. Because countries in Sub-Saharan Africa do not currently have the capacity to independently finance their NPP projects, it is highly recommended that the states in the region who have indicated a willingness to source for energy from nuclear technology should consider concession of NPP development to international vendors as a form of approach to solving their energy dilemma. The vendors should have the capacity to provide such facilities with high support from the IAEA and should not be from countries that are currently under international sanctions.
4. Since the region has sufficient uranium deposits, a key component in any major NPP needed to meet the region's energy needs, it is recommended that laws that currently prohibit diversion of uranium export for military purposes should be strengthened.
5. It is also recommended that safeguards and safety issues should be constantly revisited by the IAEA in the region in countries with plans for nuclear energy.

## Conclusion

There is great interest and demand for nuclear energy across the African continent, and nuclear vendors are keenly aware of this. Competition among the major international vendors such as Russia, China, and South Korea may also accelerate deployment by lowering costs and providing more services within the scope of the project. Dozens of Nuclear Cooperation Agreements and Memoranda of Understanding have been signed with these countries, ranging from research and development and human resources development to full reactor projects. Such agreements will only continue to expand and grow in value notwithstanding the international political and security climate. Safeguard measures and nuclear safety concerns are also key components of this report. The number of countries in the region interested in exploring nuclear technology to meet their energy needs is rising and will continue to rise. Therefore, regional and international cooperation are crucial to ensure the safety, security, and peaceful uses of nuclear applications.

## Acknowledgements

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# Western Europe

*Elia Duran-Smith*<sup>130</sup>

## Executive Summary

This consultation of young and early career experts in Western Europe has been conducted at a decisive juncture for the region under a tense international security environment which has threatened European security, namely as a result of Russia's war against Ukraine. However, this has also been an opportunity for the region to reconsider its needs and redirect resources to improving its security and energy sovereignty. The consultation found that Western European early career experts regarded some of the key challenges of the region's engagement with the NPT review cycle and high-level nuclear fora to be disagreement on the routes towards strengthening the non-proliferation agenda and efforts towards disarmament, as well as a lack of clarity on the region's position on the role of nuclear energy in climate change mitigation. The participants identified some of the key opportunities for engagement to be the ability for Western European states to utilise the continent's multilateral fora – such as the EU, NATO, and the European Political Community – to find

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<sup>130</sup> Elia Duran-Smith is a recent graduate with an MSc International Relations from the University of Glasgow. Prior to this, they were an intern for the International Security Programme at Chatham House. They are also a member of the EVN's climate change and nuclear issues working group.

consensus on paths forward for nuclear risk reduction, non-proliferation and disarmament and to be able to advocate for concrete steps in a coordinated fashion beyond the region.

Building upon these key challenges and opportunities for engagement, this report offers recommendations for Western European states to adhere to their obligations under the NPT by refraining from vertical proliferation in the case of the United Kingdom and France, to encourage all Western European states to contribute to multilateral initiatives towards risk reduction and disarmament, and for the region to establish the role that nuclear power will play in helping it reach net zero greenhouse gas emissions.

## Introduction

This youth and early career consultation on the NPT review cycle and high-level nuclear fora has been conducted against a backdrop of elevated international tensions which have deeply affected the Western Europe region. The Russian invasion of Ukraine has been a catalyst for reconsideration of the constituent states' national security and the security of the region. The invasion has particularly caused the region to value energy sovereignty and military resilience more highly. As Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium and Italy host US nuclear weapons as part of NATO burden sharing, Western Europe has a crucial stake in reducing the risk of nuclear weapons use. The consultation of early career experts on the NPT review cycle demonstrated a reflection of these concerns for Western European security and the region's role in contributing towards international efforts towards the non-proliferation and disarmament pillars. Additionally, the region has been weighing up the safety and security risks of nuclear power against their obligations to reach net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.<sup>131</sup> This has made the region's energy strategy unclear and caused some divisions among EU member states, with France leading an alliance to ensure nuclear power is central to the bloc's transition to net zero emissions, meanwhile members such as Germany and Austria argue that nuclear power could undermine a union-wide shift towards renewable sources.<sup>132</sup>

This report shares some of the key themes identified among the responses of the Western European early career experts who participated in this consultation, including the key challenges for Western European states in engaging with the nuclear issues underpinning the three pillars of the NPT (non-proliferation, disarmament and peaceful uses of nuclear energy). These challenges include a lack of consensus on how best to pursue risk reduction measures and disarmament, as well as a lack of consensus on the role nuclear power will play in the region's energy transition away from fossil fuels. Subsequently, a discussion of the key opportunities for engagement for the region in the NPT review cycle demonstrates early career experts' optimism for the region's record of shared interest in pursuing risk reduction measures and supporting initiatives which can fulfil the goals of the NPT, providing that the states do not pursue siloed initiatives through the TPNW or NATO frameworks. Finally, the report provides recommendations for implementation by Western European states based on these themes which address a critical element of each of the three pillars of the NPT.

## Key Challenges

The participants in the consultation agreed that while Western Europe certainly has a voice in high level nuclear fora, this voice is often not one in any meaningful dialogue in which all states can truly engage with

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<sup>131</sup> European Commission, "2050 long-term strategy", [https://climate.ec.europa.eu/eu-action/climate-strategies-targets/2050-long-term-strategy\\_en#:~:text=The%20EU%20aims%20to%20be,AgreementEN...](https://climate.ec.europa.eu/eu-action/climate-strategies-targets/2050-long-term-strategy_en#:~:text=The%20EU%20aims%20to%20be,AgreementEN...).

<sup>132</sup> America Hernandez and Benjamin Mallet, "Pro-nuclear countries pitch atomic role in Europe's green transition", *Reuters*, 16th May 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/pro-nuclear-countries-pitch-atomic-role-europes-green-transition-2023-05-16/>; Laura Dubois and Sarah White, "EU agrees compromise on nuclear energy amid French pressure," *Financial Times*, 30th, March 2023, <https://www.ft.com/content/02adde01-3b27-4743-8c17-2e39ab682660>

each other's rhetoric and policies, provide accountability and identify areas of common concern and interest, and there are but rather several groups in these fora which speak past one another. Within the region there is a divide which the focus group participants identified as follows: Ireland and Austria are part of the larger group of states parties to the TPNW which call for immediate unilateral nuclear disarmament, on addressing the harms faced by the communities which have been affected by all stages of the production and testing of nuclear weapons, and allocating more resources to environmental remediation. The larger group in the region are NATO member states (or aspiring) who, because of the current international security environment, are not aiming for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament in the near future and see the NPT processes as the primary vehicle through which nuclear issues should be discussed. This contrast between Austria and Ireland's adoption of the TPNW and the reinforcement of nuclear deterrence by the region's NWS has been illustrated by France and the United Kingdom pursuing modernisation of their nuclear forces and the United Kingdom increasing its nuclear warhead cap. The focus group participants felt that without trust being built among these opposing sides on a broader international level, the risk of breakdown of adherence to obligations under the NPT could elevate among NWS.

Regarding the peaceful uses pillar of the NPT, the consultation participants observed that there exists a divide in Western Europe over attitudes and policies towards nuclear energy production which could impact the region's engagement with the peaceful uses pillar of the NPT in the eleventh review cycle. On one side of this spectrum sits France for whom the vast majority of its energy consumption comes from its domestic nuclear energy production and is an important exporter of civil nuclear assistance to other states.<sup>133</sup> On the other side of the divide, Austria has never had an operational NPP (but does have one research reactor), Germany closed all of its NPPs in April 2023 and Belgium is also phasing out nuclear energy.<sup>134</sup> The EU Taxonomy includes nuclear energy under a list of environmentally sustainable economic activities for investors to support as a 'transitional' source of energy. This means use of nuclear energy within the EU should be 'time-limited and dependent on specific conditions and transparency requirements'.<sup>135</sup> In response to this, Austria, supported by Luxembourg, filed a legal challenge against the European Commission.<sup>136</sup> The focus group participants felt that the EU's strategy on nuclear energy production and trade remains unclear. This lack of clarity seems to be especially pronounced as despite the EU taxonomy's labelling of nuclear power as a technology to be phased

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<sup>133</sup> Benjamin Plackett, "Why France's nuclear industry faces uncertainty," *Nature*, 5th September, 2022, <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-022-02817-2>; French government, "Support for the responsible development of nuclear energy," n.d., <https://www.francetnp.gouv.fr/support-for-the-responsible-development-of?lang=fr>; France Diplomacy, "Civil Nuclear Energy," 23rd February, 2018, <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/french-foreign-policy/economic-diplomacy-foreign-trade/supporting-french-businesses-abroad/strategic-sector-support/civil-nuclear-energy/>

<sup>134</sup> European Commission, "EU Science Hub: Austria," n.d., [https://joint-research-centre.ec.europa.eu/ehro-n/member-states-info/austria\\_en#:~:text=Austria%20does%20not%20operate%20any%20was%20never%20put%20into%20operation](https://joint-research-centre.ec.europa.eu/ehro-n/member-states-info/austria_en#:~:text=Austria%20does%20not%20operate%20any%20was%20never%20put%20into%20operation;); Jens Thureau, "Germany shuts down its last nuclear power stations," *Deutsche Welle*, 4th April, 2023, <https://www.dw.com/en/germany-shuts-down-its-last-nuclear-power-stations/a-65249019>; World Nuclear Association, "Nuclear Power in Italy," July, 2022, <https://world-nuclear.org/information-library/country-profiles/countries-g-n/italy.aspx>

<sup>135</sup> European Parliament, "Taxonomy: MEPs do not object to inclusion of gas and nuclear activities," 6th July, 2022. <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20220701IPR34365/taxonomy-meps-do-not-object-to-inclusion-of-gas-and-nuclear-activities>

<sup>136</sup> Kira Taylor, "Anti-nuclear Austria files legal challenge to EU green investment rules," *Euractiv*, 10th October, 2022, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/energy-environment/news/anti-nuclear-austria-files-legal-challenge-to-eu-green-investment-rules/>

out in favour of renewables, some states such as France continue to advocate for nuclear energy to be recognised as a long-term fixture in the EU's strategy to reach net zero emissions by 2050.<sup>137, 138</sup>

## Key Opportunities

One of the key opportunities for engagement identified by the focus group participants was that there appears to be a broad appetite for risk reduction measures to avoid escalation and lower the risk of nuclear weapons use. This was reflected in the EU's statement to the Conference on Disarmament, stressing 'the need for concrete and effective measures to reduce strategic and nuclear risks' which are 'urgently required in the current context'.<sup>139</sup> Potential risk reduction measures that the statement cited included 'transparency and dialogue on nuclear doctrines and policies, military-to-military dialogues, hotline agreements among nuclear weapon possessors, 'accident measure' agreements, and notification exercises, as well as missile launch notification and other data exchange agreements'.<sup>140</sup> This recognition is important for Western European states, along with their Eastern counterparts, to be able to pursue opportunities for engagement but requires instigation and momentum to be built to reap the benefits of risk reduction and confidence-building. The focus group agreed that international dialogue on nuclear issues should not solely be resigned to the NPT review cycle. The participants noted that Western Europe, in collaboration with Eastern Europe, has historically played a key role in being a setter of international norms and championing the rules-based international order. The participants saw this historical legacy as one which the region should tap into to advance progress on initiatives which could propel the ambitions of the NPT, such as countering proliferation concerns by promoting cooperation between adversarial states. The EU was particularly regarded as an important vehicle for Western European states, along with Eastern European states, to build consensus and promote coordinated policy solutions which make use of member states' existing expertise. By taking advantage of this expertise, the EU can develop the capacity to engage on nuclear weapons issues as well as its constituent member states in broader international fora. The summits of the European Political Community, as opportunities for dialogue on strategic issues, could also be opportunities to discuss the role that Western Europe, in cooperation with the rest of the continent, can play in strengthening the region's role in upholding the principles underlying the NPT.

The focus group participants viewed other multilateral fora such as the G7 and G20 summits as key opportunities to strengthen international dialogue and norms on making progress towards risk reduction and non-proliferation by including nuclear weapons issues outside of security-centred fora which could provide greater awareness and, consequently accountability, for states' commitments. The Stockholm Initiative (which includes 12 Western European states which have established and/or supported the initiative) offers a stepping stones approach to pursue nuclear disarmament and risk reduction which could appeal to a broad range of NPT states parties. The working groups of the United States' initiative 'Creating an Environment for Nuclear Disarmament' have also been a novel avenue through which Western European states can discuss risk reduction measures, improving dialogue on threat perceptions, enhancing best practices for non-proliferation and disarmament mechanisms and institutions and capacity building for future generations, among other

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<sup>137</sup> Victor Jack, "France mounts 'aggressive' nuclear push with eye on EU industrial plan," *Politico*, 17th February, 2023, <https://www.politico.eu/article/france-aggressive-nuclear-energy-push-eu-industrial-plan-renewables/>.

<sup>138</sup> European Commission, "2050 long-term strategy", [https://climate.ec.europa.eu/eu-action/climate-strategies-targets/2050-long-term-strategy\\_en#:~:text=The%20EU%20aims%20to%20be,AgreementEN...](https://climate.ec.europa.eu/eu-action/climate-strategies-targets/2050-long-term-strategy_en#:~:text=The%20EU%20aims%20to%20be,AgreementEN...).

<sup>139</sup> European Union, "Statement on Nuclear Risk Reduction - Panel Discussion Conference on Disarmament," 23rd March, 2023, [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/un-geneva/statement-nuclear-risk-reduction-panel-discussion-conference-disarmament\\_en?s=62](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/un-geneva/statement-nuclear-risk-reduction-panel-discussion-conference-disarmament_en?s=62).

<sup>140</sup> European Union, "Statement on Nuclear Risk Reduction - Panel Discussion Conference on Disarmament."



issues.<sup>141</sup> All of these initiatives can serve to bolster the NPT review cycle discussions, as well as allow Western European states additional regular opportunities to engage internationally on nuclear issues.

## Recommendations

1. Urges the United Kingdom and France to refrain from vertical nuclear proliferation to demonstrate that they are committed to risk reduction and ultimately fulfil their obligations under Article VI of the NPT.
2. Encourages Western European states that are EU members to utilise the EU's norm-shaping power to advance risk reduction measures and disarmament. Although a number of Western European states are engaged in these multilateral fora, all of these states could play a role in initiatives such as the Stockholm Initiative and Creating an Environment for Nuclear Disarmament.
3. Encourages Western European states to strive to bring a working strategy on the question of whether the region will adopt nuclear energy as a long-term tool for reaching net zero greenhouse gas emissions. It is suggested that Western European states approach the summits of the European Political Community as an avenue to address these issues on a continent-wide level. If Western Europe identifies its common position on nuclear power, it can better focus efforts for access to technologies which fit the region's goals. The institutions of the EU are urged to clarify their position on the extent to which nuclear energy will make up a significant portion of EU energy consumption and how infrastructure will be used to ensure an equitable just transition across member states.

## Conclusion

The consultation found that Western European early career researchers in nuclear issues are broadly concerned about the direction of Western Europe but have hope for the collaborative power and potential the region holds. The consultation participants particularly stressed the need for the Western Europe region to come together and decide its joint future both for Western European security and energy sovereignty. They saw great potential in Western Europe's ability to encourage normative shifts in the international security environment and contribute towards nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation, risk reduction and responsible use of civil nuclear technologies through various multilateral fora within Europe and among other international regions. To this end, the recommendations made as a result of this consultation could bolster efforts towards these vital obligations under the NPT.

## Acknowledgements

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<sup>141</sup> Shannon Bugos, "CEND Establishes Two-Year Work Program," *Arms Control Association*, January/February, 2020, <https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2020-01/news/cend-establishes-two-year-work-program>.