

FACT SHEET

THE CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT AND NEGATIVE SECURITY ASSURANCES

In 1978, the final document of the First Special Session of the General Assembly devoted to Disarmament asked in its paragraph 59 that the nuclear-weapon States “pursue efforts to conclude, as appropriate, effective arrangements to assure the non-nuclear weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.”

Starting in 1979, the Conference on Disarmament (CD) included in its annual agenda the issue of negative security assurances (NSAs). These would be guarantees by the five nuclear-weapon States recognized by Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against states that have formally renounced them. Several working groups of the CD took over this agenda item from 1979 until 1994 with varied outcomes, and without arriving at a legally binding instrument.



Security Council 1995

NSA Declarations

In April 1995, the five NPT nuclear-weapon states provided pledges on NSAs to non-nuclear-weapon States parties of the NPT. These unilateral declarations were reflected in Security Council resolution 984 (1995), which also welcomed the intention of certain States that they would support and provide assistance to any non-nuclear-weapon State that became a victim or was threatened by acts of aggression in which nuclear weapons were used, so-called “positive security assurances.” These unilateral commitments were a part of efforts to obtain the indefinite extension of

the NPT and were reconfirmed by Decision 2 adopted at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference.

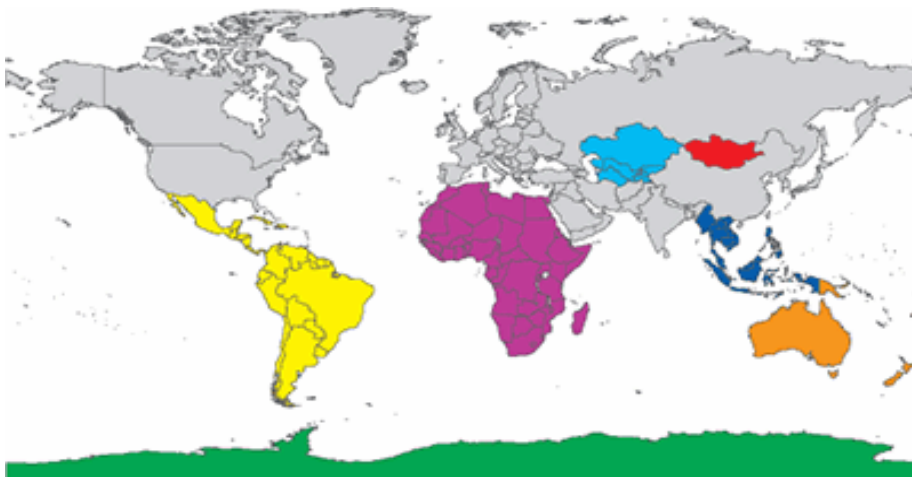
“Noting United Nations Security Council resolution 984 (1995), which was adopted unanimously on 11 April 1995, as well as the declarations of the nuclear-weapon States concerning both negative and positive security assurances, further steps should be considered to assure non-nuclear-weapon States party to the Treaty against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. These steps could take the form of an internationally legally binding instrument.”

In 1998, the CD re-established an Ad Hoc Committee on negative security assurances. Its mandate was to negotiate “effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons”. While addressing this issue, the Committee took into consideration the nature and scope of existing NSAs, United Nations Security Council resolution 984, and declarations of nuclear-weapon States concerning protocols to nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties and their interpretative statements. In 2014 and 2015, the CD conducted structured and substantive

discussions on the topic in informal meetings (CD/2021). In June 2017, the Working Group on the “Way Ahead” established by the CD (CD/2090) was holding substantive discussions on the topic.

NSAs and Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones

The issue of security assurances was not fully resolved during the negotiations of the 1968 Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). The non-aligned, non-nuclear-weapon States called for the inclusion in the Treaty of a firm guarantee by the nuclear-weapon States not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear countries not having nuclear weapons on their territory, or even under any other circumstances. Ultimately a different approach prevailed. At that time, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America took the position that the matter of security assurances should be pursued “in the context of action relating to the United Nations, outside the NPT itself but in close conjunction with it”. As a result, no specific provision on security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States was included in the Treaty. Instead, action was taken in unilateral statements and in the Security Council.



Nuclear-weapon-free-zones: Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (Treaty of Tlatelolco); African Nuclear-Weapon -Free Zone Treaty (Treaty of Pelindaba); South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty (Treaty of Rarotonga); Treaty on the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone (Bangkok Treaty); Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia; Mongolia’s Nuclear-Weapon-Free Status; and Antarctic Treaty.

In contrast, the five treaties establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones (NWFZs) in inhabited regions, include inter alia protocols for the nuclear-weapon States to provide legally binding negative security assurances to the zonal States, even though the nuclear-weapon States have attached exceptions and conditions to them.

Today, 115 states belong to five regional nuclear-weapon-free zones (NWFZ). Four regional treaties exclude the deployment or possession of nuclear weapons in virtually all the Southern Hemisphere. Additionally, Mongolia has declared its nuclear-weapon-free status.

The establishment of internationally recognized nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among States of the region concerned is regarded as enhancing global and regional peace and security, strengthens the nuclear non-proliferation regime and contributes towards the realizing the objectives of nuclear disarmament.

For more information: www.unog.ch/cd/nsas