

Tenth NPT Review Conference Webinar: Safeguards in the 21st Century
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High Representative Nakamitsu
Deputy Director-General Aparo
Excellencies
Distinguished delegates
Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a pleasure to participate in today's virtual event. I want to thank the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs and the International Atomic Energy Agency for co-organizing this thought-provoking webinar.

Since the NPT'S entry into force fifty years ago, safeguards have been the glue that has held the Treaty together. This is because safeguards provide the most obvious and tangible security benefits for States Parties to the NPT – the verifiable knowledge that the peaceful uses of nuclear energy are not being diverted to nuclear weapons programmes. That the NPT's safeguards are monitored by the IAEA, whose impartiality and technical expertise are above reproach, only enhances those benefits.

As we have heard today, the non-proliferation assurances provided by the safeguards system also facilitates the third “pillar” of the NPT – access to nuclear science and technology, the positive applications of which are a boon to so many of the world's peoples, including through fighting this terrible pandemic that continues to sow misery in so many countries.

For fifty years now, the safeguards system has held strong. One hundred and seventy-five countries have adopted Comprehensive Safeguards Agreements, and every country that does so bolsters our shared international and national security. I have no doubt that such success is beyond even what the drafters of the NPT could have foreseen five decades ago.

But as we approach the Tenth NPT Review Conference, we must make sure that these gains are not taken for granted.

In today's ongoing technological revolution, many new or evolving technologies face the same dilemma that precipitated the creation of the nuclear safeguards system – how to facilitate extraordinary benefits while mitigating possible dangers. Technological developments have exposed potential vulnerabilities in the non-proliferation regime, but as has been highlighted by our panellists, they also provide many opportunities to strengthen the NPT so that it remains fit for purpose as the cornerstone of the disarmament and non-proliferation regime while ensuring the benefits of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, and a pillar of international peace and security.

My role as president-designate of the Tenth NPT Review Conference is to facilitate a balanced outcome that strengthens implementation of the Treaty across all three of its pillars: disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

Acknowledging the success of and States Parties' enduring commitment to safeguards, and vigilance in their implementation, will be fundamental to such an outcome.

This is in the interest of all NPT States Parties.

Being a treaty with almost universal adherence, the NPT Review Conference, whenever it is held, is an important venue to discuss challenges to the non-proliferation regime and its safeguards system and to reach agreement on the most effective measures to address those challenges, in the context of the overall implementation of the Treaty. It is also the appropriate venue for discussions by experts on opportunities for how emerging opportunities – including those presented by technology – can be exploited.

More broadly, the Review Conference is also the appropriate place for all States Parties to reaffirm their support for the IAEA and its management of the safeguards system, and their commitment to ensuring that the system is supported, both politically and financially.

This is especially important given the increasing expansion of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and its applications for energy, health, agriculture, drinking water, protection of fisheries, understanding climate change and oceans, and many others, and thus helping realizing the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

Our expert panellists have demonstrated today why we need events such as this. They have provided insights and ideas that I hope can help form the genesis of the discussions and the basis of the agreements that we will need at the Review Conference.

I look forward to working with you all as we seek to strengthen the NPT and its backbone – the safeguards system.

Thank you.