

2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

17 May 2022

Original: English

New York, 1–26 August 2022

From pillars to progress: gender mainstreaming in the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

**Working paper submitted by Australia, Canada, Colombia,
Ireland, Mexico, Namibia, Panama, the Philippines, Spain, Sweden
and the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research**

Summary

The present paper takes stock of the discussions addressing gender considerations in nuclear policy that were held at the first, second and third Preparatory Committee sessions of the current review cycle of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. It suggests that the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons should consolidate and build on those discussions. Specifically, it encourages all States parties to acknowledge the relevance of gender perspectives in the Treaty by considering practical ways to promote women's participation and leadership in the Treaty, as well as by implementing a gender analysis in nuclear policymaking.

Why gender matters in the Non-Proliferation Treaty review process

1. Several countries from diverse regions raised the issue of gender and the Treaty at the first, second and third Preparatory Committee sessions of the current Treaty review cycle. Side events were held in all sessions and a record number of five working papers addressing the topic of gender in the context of the Treaty regime were submitted.¹ In 2019, over 20 statements delivered on behalf of more than 60 States parties addressed the relevance of gender perspectives to the Treaty.
2. In 2017, 2018 and 2019, the Chair's summaries and working papers underlined the importance of promoting the equal, full and effective participation and leadership of both women and men in the nuclear field, as well as the need to recognize the disproportionate impact of ionizing radiation on women and girls.
3. These developments demonstrate the growing recognition of the importance of gender considerations in arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament efforts. Among such considerations, gender roles shape how a person experiences conflict,

¹ [NPT/CONF.2020/PC.I/WP.38](#), [NPT/CONF.2020/PC.II/WP.38](#), [NPT/CONF.2020/PC.III/WP.25](#), [NPT/CONF.2020/PC.III/WP.27](#) and [NPT/CONF.2020/PC.III/WP.48](#).



affect access to medical attention in the aftermath of armed conflict and play a role in the long-lasting biological and physiological impacts of weapons on individuals. Gender also affects the opportunities to participate in arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament negotiations.

4. Research shows that women are systematically underrepresented in the Treaty review process, comprising, on average, only one third of accredited diplomats.² Furthermore, men are overrepresented as heads of delegations to a greater degree than would be expected, given the overall proportion of men and women. For instance, at the 2019 Preparatory Committee, approximately 76 per cent of heads of delegations were men and 24 per cent women, while attendees overall comprised 71 per cent men and 29 per cent women.

5. Improving gender equality among participants in the Treaty review process is highly desirable, as it has the potential to enhance the effectiveness of Treaty processes and their outcomes. Diverse teams are more innovative, take more sustainable decisions and are more effective in resolving impasses. It is also a question of fairness and equality. Women and men have the right to participate meaningfully in negotiations and shape the decisions that affect their lives.

6. The United Nations General Assembly has recognized the need to facilitate women's participation in our field, urging the States Members of the United Nations, the United Nations and others to "promote equal opportunities for the representation of women in all decision-making processes with regard to matters related to disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control".³

7. Beyond issues of participation, there are other areas of the Treaty in which gender roles are relevant. Across the three pillars of the Treaty, gender can affect exposure to nuclear risk; the impact of ionizing radiation resulting from nuclear weapons use; the ability to benefit from the peaceful uses of nuclear energy; and access to education and training in nuclear science and engineering.

8. This highlights the importance of gender analysis as a tool that can be used to design and implement policies in a gender-responsive way, making sure that both women and men benefit from policy development and are equitably involved in the development, implementation and review of policymaking.

9. A sample framework for conducting gender analysis in policymaking related to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy was presented in a working paper submitted to the third Preparatory Committee session.⁴ It included a series of questions to be considered in policy development, implementation and review to ensure that gender inequalities are not exacerbated and that equality and justice in gender relations are promoted, for example:

- (a) Have sufficient time, resources and expertise been allocated to address gender consideration in the proposed policy?
- (b) Are systems in place to collect, track and publish relevant data disaggregated by sex, gender and age?
- (c) Do women have equal access to education and/or technical and military training?

² R. H. Dalaqua, K. Egeland and T. G. Hugo, "Still behind the curve: gender balance in arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament diplomacy", UNIDIR, 2019. Available at <https://unidir.org/publication/still-behind-curve>.

³ See, for example, General Assembly resolution 75/48, as well as actions 36 and 37 of the Agenda for Disarmament.

⁴ See NPT/CONF.2020/PC.III/WP.27.

(d) Did women and men benefit equitably from the services and technologies provided by the policy?

(e) Has the policy identified opportunities to challenge gender stereotypes and increase positive gender relations through equitable actions?

10. Improving gender diversity in Treaty processes and encouraging States parties to integrate gender analysis into nuclear policymaking will strengthen the Treaty process.

Gender in the Non-Proliferation Treaty review cycle: what can be achieved in the Tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons?

11. At the Tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, States parties to the Treaty should ensure the full and equal participation of women in all decision-making processes related to the Treaty review process, including in informal discussions and also in more formal settings.

12. Additionally, Chairs of meetings should organize briefings to solicit ideas on how to improve gender equality, including the equal and effective participation of women and men, and explain why it matters; and should include these issues in outreach and communication documents.

13. A possible outcome document or working paper by the Chair of the 2020 Review Conference should consolidate and build on the discussions and conclusions on gender from the three Preparatory Committee meetings, including:

(a) An acknowledgement of the differential impacts that ionizing radiation can have on women and men;

(b) A call for States parties to ensure the full and equal participation of women in all decision-making processes related to the Treaty review process;

(c) A call for States parties to ensure that efforts are made towards a gender-balanced bureau in the next review cycle;

(d) A request for the Secretariat to collect, track and publish gender-disaggregated data and statistics on gender balance in delegations;

(e) A call for States parties to integrate gender analysis as a means to ensure that the differential needs of women, men, girls and boys are addressed in the Treaty review process;

(f) A call for United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research and the International Gender Champions Disarmament Impact Group⁵ to develop a toolkit that supports States parties in integrating gender perspectives in nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

⁵ The International Gender Champions Disarmament Impact Group was established in September 2018 and is co-chaired by Ireland, Namibia, the Philippines and UNIDIR. The Group seeks to promote dialogue, shared knowledge and the pursuit of concrete opportunities to advance gender-responsive action within multilateral disarmament processes.