



That is something I intend to speak to today – how to ensure the NPT is fit for purpose to address the challenges it faces, and to the broader regime of which the NPT is rightly touted as the “cornerstone”.

And in today’s international climate, there are multiple challenges facing the NPT.

But it is easy to talk about challenges, so I also want to talk about opportunities for the NPT and the regime as a whole. For example, I believe this COVID-enforced hiatus is an opportunity. It provides more time to find convergences, overcome divergences and to engage in the dialogue between States Parties that is crucial to laying the ground for negotiations at the Review Conference.

For this reason, as President-designate I continue to engage in consultations with the States Parties through the

The key to the NPT's success has always been about balancing its multiple elements – the three mutually-reinforcing pillars of non-proliferation, disarmament and peaceful uses. Advances in one of these areas beget advances in others, but the opposite also applies.

So, why is the Review Conference important to overcoming the challenges to the regime while maximizing the opportunities? Due to its membership and the paralysis that has affected other bodies, the NPT review cycle has become the multilateral forum for nuclear disarmament and for dialogue on some of the most pressing international security issues. It brings together nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear weapon States from different regions to discuss a broad array of issues and to reinforce the myriad of tangible benefits derived from the Treaty. Its forward-looking nature also allows it to consider the emerging issues that will affect implementation of the Treaty in the future.

However, as I noted, the NPT and its regime currently face what I see as two sets of interlocking challenges. There are those that are internal to the Treaty and have been problematic for some time. Then there are those that are external and exacerbate internal dynamics.

The first set of challenges includes divisions over the pace and scale of nuclear disarmament, and the implementation of commitments given at previous Review Conferences – not least the commitment by nuclear-weapon States to the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals. The frustration and concerns over the pace of disarmament led many countries to negotiate the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which, as you may know, it is now also a point of contention among NPT parties.

The long overdue implementation of the 1995 NPT resolution to establish a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and all other Weapons of Mass Destruction also remains fraught. After all, it was this issue that broke consensus at the 2015 Review Conference.

Other ongoing challenges include how to address the issue of withdrawal from the NPT, as the case of the

The second set of challenges – the external issues – are developments that continue to impact the regime. Chief amongst these are global security conditions defined by poor relations between nuclear-weapon States and the absence of trust and confidence, coupled with the collapse of the nuclear arms control regime and the development of new nuclear weapons systems that are faster, stealthier and more accurate. Together with the return to prominence of nuclear weapons in national security strategies and rhetoric about nuclear warfighting, nuclear risks are reaching dangerous levels not seen in decades.

Rapid advances in technology have the potential to both increase nuclear risk and pose challenges to non-proliferation. For example, developments in cyber and outer space, as well as artificial intelligence have exposed potential new vulnerabilities such as the hacking of or otherwise interfering with command and control systems, or for other problems arising from unanticipated effects of technology, or for dangerous escalation possibilities as conventional and strategic domains are ever more closely intermingled.

In parallel, barriers to proliferation are being lowered by the manipulation of digital communications, such as the use of the so-called 'dark web' to support illicit procurement networks, and in advances in manufacturing, such as additive manufacturing or "3D printing", which dramatically reduces the footprint and, therefore, visibility,



