

Réunion : Comité préparatoire de la Conférence d'examen du TNP

Date : 30 avril 2012

Durée : 6'31'' (114 mots/minute)

Orateur : Représentant de la Suisse

Difficulté : \*\*

Éléments à fournir :

ICRC International Committee of the Red Cross	CICR Comité International de La Croix Rouge
NPDI Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative	Initiative sur la non-prolifération et le désarmement

FOR TRAINING PURPOSES ONLY

Mr. Chairman,

Serious concerns related to humanitarian dimensions of nuclear weapons have been voiced repeatedly. When the horrific consequences of their use became apparent in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the International Committee of the Red Cross took a clear position calling for the abolition of these weapons of “extermination”.

The sheer horror of use of nuclear weapons in 1945 was later reflected in the NPT’s Preamble, which makes reference to the quote “devastation that would be visited upon all mankind by a nuclear war and the consequent need to make every effort to avert the danger of such a war and to take measures to safeguard the security of peoples” end of quote.

If such weapons were to be used again, be it intentionally or accidentally, immense humanitarian consequences would be unavoidable. In addition to the immediate fatalities, survivors of the horrendous effects of a nuclear explosion would endure immeasurable suffering. International organizations providing emergency relief would be unable to fulfill their mandates, as the ICRC has already concluded. Studies have shown that the radiation released by even a single nuclear weapon affects populations, agriculture and natural resources over a very wide area and constitutes a threat for future generations. Further studies conclude that even a “limited nuclear exchange” – in itself a contradiction in terms – would provoke a global climate change with serious and long-lasting impact on the environment and food production, which could cause a global famine affecting over a billion people.

Mr. Chairman,

Nuclear weapons have the destructive capacity to pose a threat to the survival of humanity and as long as they continue to exist the threat to humanity will remain. This, coupled with the perceived political value and prestige attached to these weapons, are further factors that encourage proliferation and noncompliance with international obligations. Moreover, it is of great concern that, even after the end of the Cold War, the threat of nuclear annihilation remains part of the 21st century international security environment.

The utility of these instruments of mass destruction to confront traditional security challenges has been questioned by many States as well as civil society experts. Moreover, nuclear weapons are useless in addressing current challenges such as poverty, health, climate change, terrorism or transnational crime. It seems at least questionable to use vast financial resources each year for maintaining, modernizing and expanding nuclear arsenals in times of decreasing funds available for social welfare, health care or education. The choice should be clear.

Mr. Chairman,

In addition to the grave humanitarian concerns, the use of nuclear weapons also raises important legal issues. Nuclear weapons are unique because of their destructive capacity and because of their uncontrollable effects in space and time. All rules of international humanitarian law apply fully to nuclear weapons; those rules notably include the rules of distinction, proportionality and precaution, as well as the prohibition to cause superfluous

injury or unnecessary suffering and the prohibition to cause widespread, severe and long-term damage to the environment. Recently, the Council of Delegates of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement adopted a Resolution emphasizing not only the incalculable human suffering resulting from any use of nuclear weapons but also stressing that it is difficult to envisage how any use of nuclear weapons could be compatible with the rules of international humanitarian law.

Mr. Chairman,

It is of utmost importance that these weapons never be used again, under any circumstances. The only way to guarantee this is the total, irreversible and verifiable elimination of nuclear weapons, under effective international control, including through the full implementation of Article VI of the NPT. All States must intensify their efforts to outlaw nuclear weapons and achieve a world free of nuclear weapons. Civil society plays a crucial role in raising the awareness about the dramatic humanitarian consequences as well as the critical IHL implications of nuclear weapons.

The full implementation of the NPT 2010 Action Plan as well as of previous NPT outcomes is an important step in this regard. For this review cycle, it is essential that the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons are thoroughly addressed. We call on States Parties, especially the nuclear weapon States, to give increasing attention to their commitment to comply with international law and international humanitarian law. This should also be adequately reflected in the outcome of the 2015 Review Conference.

Thank you for your attention.

FOR TRAINING PURPOSES ONLY