

R E P O R T
on
the Tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty
on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
by Masamichi Kamiya¹
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Introduction

The Tenth Review Conference (RevCon) of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) was convened at the United Nations (UN) headquarters in New York from August 1st to August 26th, 2022. The RevCon was originally scheduled to take place in April 2020 but delayed until August 2022 due to the pandemic of COVID-19.

As were widely covered by the press reports worldwide, the RevCon has failed to adopt a final outcome document by consensus the same as the RevCon in 2015².

The author of this report did visit the UN building in New York to observe the first week (August 1st- 5th) of the RevCon and then watched the web broadcasting by the UN Web TV from August 22nd to 26th to observe the final week of the Conference³.

The following is a brief report of the 10th RevCon, beginning with brief accounts of the NPT, its objectives and the ways how the RevCon to be run.

What is NPT?

Avoiding the emergence of additional nuclear weapon states, the NPT was signed in July 1968 and ratified in March 1970. The NPT allows China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States to possess nuclear weapons as nuclear weapon

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² The main reason of the failure in 2015 was caused by the divergent views existed on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other Weapons of mass destruction *and* on the ways to negotiate a treaty on the prohibition of nuclear weapons.

³ The web broadcast was not offered between August 23rd and 25th since all the sessions in that period were designated as 'closed.' But, from around 6:00pm to 11:30pm (New York time) on August 26th, the final session of the RevCon was broadcasted.

states and prohibits other Parties to the Treaty from possessing them⁴. In view of this discriminatory nature, the NPT is sometimes labeled as *a discriminatory treaty*. This international treaty entertains the largest number of the ratifications by the states parties, next to the UN Charter and obliges all the ratified states “to pursue negotiations in good faith” for nuclear disarmament under Article 6⁵ of the NPT.

The NPT is composed of three pillars, which are nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and peaceful uses of nuclear energy. In the past RevCons, the adherence to Article 6 obligation by the nuclear weapons states was the most prioritized issue. In addition, the adherence to the non-proliferation obligation was also another important matter in the review process with a view for example to nuclear developments of Iran (Islamic Republic of) and North Korea (the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea). Being illustrated by the views of many NPT parties⁶ that the peaceful uses of nuclear energy are an inalienable right, the third pillar is also another important issue in the process of the RevCon of the NPT. It is often argued that such industries as medicine, agriculture and the environment, which are important components of a nation’s infrastructure, are to be more efficient with the utility of nuclear technology.

What is RevCon?

Article 8 (3) of the NPT states that through the submission of the proposal by a majority of the Parties, a review conference is convened every five years so that the parties to the Treaty can review the adherence to and the operation of NPT. In addition, Article 10 (2) of NPT defines: “25 years after the entry into force of the Treaty, a conference will be convened to decide whether the Treaty shall continue in force indefinitely or shall be extended for an additional fixed period or periods. Under this provision, the NPT Review and Extension Conference was held in 1995, and the indefinite extension of the Treaty was agreed. Since then, the RevCon takes place every five years.

The four weeks of the RevCon are composed of: general debate in Week 1; sessions carried out by three main committees and by three subsidiary bodies on nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and peaceful uses of nuclear energy respectively in Week 2 and 3; and plenary sessions in Week 4. During the final week, the parties to the

⁴ Article 9 (3) states: “...a nuclear-weapon State is one which has manufactured and exploded a nuclear weapon or other nuclear explosive device prior to January 1967.”

⁵ This article stipulates: “...to pursue negotiations in good faith...on general and complete disarmament.”

⁶ They are parties to the NPT, which belong to the Non-Aligned Movement.

Treaty negotiate for the adoption of a final outcome document by consensus. It is also a tradition in the RevCon that ‘NGO Session⁷’ is added to the final segment of the general debate.

How to evaluate the non-adoption of a final document?

The main factor of the non-adoption of a final document was Russia’s persistent opposition to consensus to be reached at the final stage of the RevCon. Throughout the deliberations of the Conference, quite many parties to the Treaty condemned Russia’s aggression to Ukraine, claiming that its act was against international law, in particular the UN Charter and that its oppressive maneuver to control the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant was undoubtedly an unacceptable military action. Russia’s opposition was the strong reaction to those accusations.

Like the last RevCon, the RevCon 2020 held in 2022 was not able to adopt a final outcome document as has been pointed out in the preceding paragraph. Some argue that it was failure. But some asserted that the non-adoption of a final document might be the failure of ‘adopting a consensus document’ but not necessarily be the failure of the ‘RevCon itself.’ In fact, the representative of the US government said after the voting for/against the proposed final document: “We agreed more than we disagreed,” valuing the deliberations of the past four weeks. Also, the representative of Sri Lanka stated: “Failure is a success in progress.” These words are an illustration of how the parties to the Treaty are determined to re-commit themselves to the advancement of nuclear disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation and peaceful uses of nuclear energy, taking the seemingly negative outcome as an opportunity for moving forward.

Positive outcomes in the RevCon

The RevCon 2020 was the first one since the adoption of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in September 2015 and the entry into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) in January 2021. During the Conference, as a result, quite a few states⁸ expressed their view that military expenditures ought to be

⁷ In this RevCon, the 20 representatives of NGOs made their oral statements, including Mr. Tomihisa Taue, the Mayor of Nagasaki City on behalf of Mayors for Peace.

⁸ In particular, the developing states, which suffer from poverty and the fragile social infrastructure, expressed this view.

diverted to the endeavors in achieving SDGs, and many states emphasized the compatibility between NPT and TPNW, while asserting that the objectives of NPT would be achieved because of the entry into force of TPNW⁹. These are some characteristics of the RevCon this year in comparison with the last nine ones.

Non-nuclear weapons states argued that the main cause of the deterioration of international security environment was the existence of nuclear weapons themselves. This argument is their strong response to the rhetoric always used by nuclear weapons states that an environment for nuclear disarmament would not be nurtured unless international security environment is improved. As such, the rhetoric of nuclear weapons states was spotlighted.

Taking the conciseness of this report into consideration, the author of this report regrets that he cannot offer the detailed accounts of the positive outcomes. Instead, he just numerates them as follows. They are the reaffirmation of the NPT as the cornerstone of nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation regime; the assertion that the use and the threat of use of a nuclear weapons is against international law; the request of the fulfillment of what were agreed at the RevCon in 1995¹⁰, in 2000¹¹ and in 2010¹²; the acknowledgement of humanitarian impacts and the catastrophic consequences having analyzed through scientific evidences once a nuclear weapon is detonated; the necessity in halting the modernization of nuclear weapons; the reduction of nuclear risks¹³; the misgiving about nuclear sharing; the promotion of multilateral arms control *including China*; the importance of multilateral disarmament machineries; the importance of dialogue and political will; the moral and ethical imperatives for nuclear disarmament; the guaranteeing of negative security assurances, etc. The RevCon discussed these important matters one way or another during the four-week Conference.

In addition, both the emphasis of the importance of gender perspectives for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation *and* of further engagement of women and the youth

⁹ It is a custom in the RevCon that the like-minded parties form a group, through which they try to influence on the negotiation. In the RevCon this year, the ‘group of TPNW Supporting States’ was formed and actively engaged.

¹⁰ In this RevCon, such three decisions as the indefinite extension of NPT, the strengthening of the review process and the principles and objectives of NPT were agreed, and one resolution on the Middle East was adopted.

¹¹ Thirteen practical steps as unequivocal undertakings were adopted in the RevCon in 2000.

¹² Sixty-four plans of actions for nuclear disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation and peaceful uses of nuclear energy were adopted at the RevCon in 2010.

¹³ For instance, the reduction of nuclear risks includes re-evaluation of nuclear doctrines, the re-thinking of the extended deterrence policy and the de-alerting of nuclear warheads.

in nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation efforts ought to be listed as additional positive outcomes of this RevCon. Furthermore, it was also another positive result that this RevCon paid its attention to ‘disarmament and non-proliferation education..

It is noted that China expressed its view that no international agreement has reached for the policy of Japanese government to release *contaminated water* to the Ocean, which is stemming from the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant *and* that nuclear sharing by the US with some allied states in the form of extended nuclear deterrence (*so called* nuclear umbrella) shall be against Article 1 and 2 of the NPT. China also expressed its concern about AUKUS¹⁴. The AUKUS is a military alliance by US, UK and Australia, by which both US and UK give their assistance in building a submarine, which is propelled by nuclear energy. China stressed that the AUKUS is not compatible with Article 4 of the NPT, which stipulates the provisions on the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

Ways to move forward

It was decided that the next RevCon would be convened in New York in 2026 and that the first preparatory committee (PrepCom) would be held in Vienna in 2023, the second PrepCom be in Geneva and the third be in New York in 2025. The Parties to the NPT will embark upon their preparation towards the Eleventh RevCon of the NPT.

At the same time, the proposal by the President¹⁵ to establish a ‘working group’ to strengthen the review process was approved. This proposal was highly welcomed by the NPT parties, hoping that the proposed working group would find a way out of mannerism to run an NPT RevCon routinely.

On January 3rd, 2022, five nuclear weapon states issued *Joint Statement of the Leaders of the Five Nuclear-Weapon States on Preventing Nuclear War and Avoiding Arms Races*. During the RevCon this year, several states quoted one sentence from this Joint Statement, namely “**a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought.**” The participating governments in the 10th RevCon except several maybe have been reminded that the only way to prevent nuclear weapons from being used is the total elimination of those weapons, while envisioning a world free of nuclear weapons.

¹⁴ The word AUKUS is composed of the parts of three countries’ names.

¹⁵ H.E. Ambassador Gustavo Zlauvienen, the government of Argentina, served as the President of the 11th RevCon.

Conclusion

Although the 10th RevCon of the NPT resulted in no final outcome document, it does not necessarily mean the ‘failure’ of the Conference as a whole. The footnote 2 on Page 1 of this report indicates the two specific factors, which caused the failure of adopting a consensus document at the RevCon in 2015. Afterwards, however, the TPNW was signed in 2017 in reality, and an international conference on a Middle East Free Zone of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction began being convened since 2019 because of the subsequent constructive meetings at the UN and elsewhere. This fact may be a proof that that a failure will bring about a blossom later.

As has been pointed out earlier, the three PrepComs will be convened in 2023, 2024 and 2025, and the Eleventh RevCon of the NPT will be held in 2026. In parallel with the governmental initiatives from now to the next RevCon, *Religions for Peace*, its regional bodies and national chapters are urged to be engaged in pragmatic activities for the elimination of nuclear weapons not only at the RevCon itself and during the preparatory process towards 2026.

The endeavors of *Religions for Peace* are required to be carried out through its partnerships with the likeminded governments, non-governmental organizations and civil society organizations, groups and individuals, who share the common objective for a world free of nuclear weapons. *Religions for Peace* entertains its partnerships with Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament (PNND), International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs and Mayors for Peace, etc. Making use of these partnerships, *Religions for Peace* is destined to contribute in practical manners to the creation of a world free of nuclear weapons.

It was stressed at the RevCon that to set a ‘platform of dialogue’ up is necessary for nurturing momentum for nuclear disarmament. The importance of dialogue is in fact one factor so that an environment for nuclear disarmament gives rise to. It is viewed in this context that the people of the faith communities are accustomed to be a driving force for providing a platform of dialogue. In this endeavor, it must not be forgotten by the constituencies of *Religions for Peace* that gender perspective and positive engagement of women and the youth are taken into consideration in their work for the elimination of nuclear weapons.

It is true that much are required to be done by governments in the field of nuclear disarmament¹⁶. There are some other avenues, however, which can be pursued by non-governmental actors. ‘Advocacy’ is the one, to which the latter can contribute. For instance, *Religions for Peace* Japan has issued statements several times to the government of Japan, in which it strongly urged the government to re-examine the Japan’s policy of the *extended deterrence*. Such an action cannot lead directly to the reduction of the number of nuclear warheads. But it surely contributes to the reduction of the utility of nuclear weapons and the reduction of ‘threat’ stemmed from those horrible weapons.

Disarmament, nuclear disarmament in particular, was really the central issue focused at the First World Assembly of *Religions for Peace* held at Kyoto Japan in 1970. The author of this report believes that it will never change for the years to come. Taking the historic significance of the *Religions for Peace* movement into account, the people of faith, who are being associated with *Religions for Peace*, shall fully bear their moral and ethical imperatives in mind for the realization of a world free of nuclear weapons.

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¹⁶ For example, the reduction of the number of warheads and the control of delivery systems depends fully on governments’ policies.