



**Briefing to the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva  
(by video conference from New York)**

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New York  
7 February 2019

Ambassador Klymenko, President of the Conference on Disarmament,

Distinguished delegates, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a privilege to once again address this august body, albeit remotely, and I thank the President for his kind invitation.

It was a pleasure to be in Geneva last week, to be able to interact with some of you and to witness first hand the importance you continue to attach to the cause of disarmament.

You do not see eye to eye on all issues, but I remain assured that you are all committed to our shared goals of the elimination of all weapons of mass destruction and to the strict regulation of conventional weapons in accordance with the principles of the United Nations Charter.

That commitment will likely be tested this year. 2019 will be a weighty year for the Conference on Disarmament.

As a global community we are beset by challenges. In the field of disarmament our progress has slowed to a crawl and is in imminent danger of suffering reversals. Instead of seeking to enhance what binds us, we tend to focus on what divides us.

Some of you argue that it is because of the global security context which is increasingly dire. The possibility of regional conflicts engulfing great powers is real. We are on the precipice of a multipolar qualitative nuclear arms race. At nearly two trillion dollars, military spending is reaching obscene peaks. Concerns about the potential for advances in science and technology to undermine our collective security are growing.

Yet despite this dismal picture, there are opportunities. And I know that many of you believe that disarmament and arms control efforts are critical to your own security. It is the prerogative of States whether to seize those opportunities and make the most of them.

In 2020, we will celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. The 2020 NPT Review Conference is a symbolic and important opportunity to make practical gains in strengthening the Treaty, but States parties must commence laying the ground for this outcome now.

The various groups of governmental experts, including those established by the General Assembly, are forums in which States can address some of the most pressing security issues of our day. On cyber security, autonomous weapons, and the militarization of outer space, States can work together to alleviate not only our current predicament, but also secure the world for future generations.

In seeking to find solutions to one of the key challenges to the achievement and maintenance of a world free from nuclear weapons, the group of experts discussing nuclear disarmament verification presents an historic occasion to take tangible steps forward.

The Conference on Disarmament can also contribute in 2019. The Conference's decision to establish subsidiary bodies in 2018 was much welcome. Those bodies provided forums for experts and policymakers based in Geneva and beyond to have frank and constructive conversations across the spectrum of concerns this body must deal with.

2019 provides an opportunity to build on the momentum sparked by those conversations – to take your deliberations further and to, inter alia, create a repository of knowledge and expertise, and provide a technical and substantive focus on the matters that are most germane to this body.

Your responsibility as the single disarmament negotiating forum has rarely been greater. I welcome the constructive deliberations generated by the draft proposal on the programme of work presented by Ambassador Klymenko. I sincerely hope it will generate a fruitful debate.

The Secretary-General has pledged his every effort to assist Member States in their endeavours to create a safer and more secure world. It is the reason why he launched his agenda for disarmament, *Securing Our Common Future*, here in Geneva.

As I have outlined to the Conference before, the purpose of the agenda is to support Member States. It covers three substantive pillars. Disarmament to Save Humanity, which focuses on the elimination of WMD. Disarmament to Save Lives, which focuses on the deadly effects of conventional weapons. And Disarmament for Future Generations, which seeks to preemptively engage with the new means and methods of warfare that are emerging from developments in science and technology.

The agenda is comprehensive but not exhaustive. Its 40 action items are focused foremost on practical measures that can be undertaken by UN entities in support of the efforts and initiatives of Member States.

The agenda has been developed through a process of multi-stakeholder dialogue, including discussions at the Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters, bilateral consultations with many governments, a high-level informational brainstorming meeting, and three consultative meetings with NGOs.

Overall, the response from Member States has been a positive one. As we move to the implementation phase of the Agenda, I am confident of the support of Member States, even if they do not agree with every element it contains.

I should stress that the implementation plan is a living document. The status of activities will be updated on a regular basis, and new steps and activities can be added as needed.

UNODA is currently tracking the status of 116 activities listed on the implementation plan. We have just completed our first quarterly review, the results of which are available on our website. And we are making good progress – more than a quarter (11 out of 40) of actions have seen significant updates.

The plan will be carried out with the political and financial support of Member States. To acknowledge this support and to promote widespread buy-in, for each action we will be identifying these States as champions or supporters. Such a designation will be limited to States taking on an active leadership role in implementing an action.

Thus far, eleven governments, from both the Global North and South, have formally stepped forward as champions or supporters for various actions. These include 23 out of the 40

actions and cut across all pillars of the Agenda. I expect additional Governments to confirm their support in the coming weeks.

UNODA looks forward to working with all Members of the Conference on Disarmament as we seek to provide the best possible assistance we can to your mission.

As we mark the 40th anniversary of the Conference on Disarmament, I would like to draw attention to the Secretary-General's remarks in Davos last month, and namely that at a time of significant, multiplying and interconnected challenges, we paradoxically see responses that are ever more fragmented and fissiparous, and therefore unlikely to succeed.

In times of crisis, we achieve success only when we work together. In 2019, I encourage you to exert your every effort to burnish the credibility of this forum for multilateral engagement at a time in which no discernable alternatives are in sight and disarmament efforts are so sorely needed.

I look forward to working with you in the months to come, and to our exchanges today.

Thank you.

