

Open-ended Working Group taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations

On Monday, 22 February 2016, the open-ended working group (OEWG) on taking forward multilateral disarmament negotiations, established by the General Assembly pursuant to resolution A/RES/70/33, commenced its substantive session in Conference Room XIX at the Palais des Nations, Geneva.

The mandate of the OEWG is to substantively address concrete effective legal measures, legal provisions and norms that will need to be concluded to attain and maintain a world without nuclear weapons (operative paragraph 2).

It is also mandated, in operative paragraph 3, to substantively address recommendations on other measures that could contribute to taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations, including but not limited to:

- (a) transparency measures related to the risks associated with existing nuclear weapons;
- (b) measures to reduce and eliminate the risk of accidental, mistaken, unauthorized or intentional nuclear weapon detonations;
- (c) additional measures to increase awareness and understanding of the complexity of and interrelationship between the wide range of humanitarian consequences that would result from any nuclear detonation.

At its opening meeting, the OEWG elected by acclamation Ambassador Thani Thongphaki (Thailand) as Chairperson. The OEWG also heard a statement delivered by former Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan.

In accordance with its indicative timetable for the first session (see below), the OEWG then commenced its first panel discussion, which addressed the substantive issues contained in operative paragraph 2. Its objective is to assess in depth relevant existing international legal measures, provisions and norms as well as to identify all elements in this regard that are necessary for multilateral progress towards a nuclear-weapons-free world.

During the exchange of views on Monday and Tuesday, Panel I sparked a lively, interactive and substantive exchange of views among the participating representatives of States and civil society. The discussions addressed a variety of issues, including what would constitute “effective legal measures” and what many view as a “legal gap” in the international legal framework for nuclear disarmament. Various views were expressed on the feasibility of and possible options for legal instruments on nuclear disarmament. On Wednesday, 24 February, the OEWG will conclude its exchange of views on the items allocated to Panel I.

Commencing on Thursday, 25 February, Panel II will deal with the substantive issues contained in operative paragraph 3. Its objective is to address other measures that could contribute to taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations, including the three sub-items reflected in that paragraph.

At the end of the first session it is anticipated that the Chairperson will provide additional information on the forthcoming sessions of the open-ended working group, including the elaboration of recommendations to the General Assembly.

The first session will continue until 26 February. The second session is scheduled to take place from 2 to 13 May and the third session is scheduled to take place for a total of three days during the week of 22 August.

Indicative timetable for the first session of the Open-ended working group on taking forward multilateral disarmament negotiations

Monday, 22 February 2016	
10:00 am – 11:00 am	Opening of the session Election of the Chairperson Adoption of the agenda Organization of work
11:00 am – 1:00 pm	Taking stock <i>Results of the open-ended working group in 2013</i> Ambassador Elayne Whyte Gomez, Permanent Representative of Costa Rica <i>Developments in the field of nuclear disarmament since 2013^a</i> Mr. Tim Caughley, United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research Exchange of views
3:00 pm – 6:00 pm	Panel I on substantively addressing concrete effective legal measures, legal provisions and norms that will need to be concluded to attain and maintain a world without nuclear weapons Ms. Gro Nystuen, International Law and Policy Institute Ms. Rebecca Johnson, Acronym Institute for Disarmament Diplomacy Ms. Kathleen Lawand, International Committee of the Red Cross ^b
Tuesday, 23 February 2016	
3:00 pm – 6:00 pm	Panel I Exchange of views (<i>cont.</i>)
Wednesday, 24 February 2016	
3:00 pm – 6:00 pm	Panel I Exchange of views (<i>cont.</i>)
Thursday, 25 February 2016	
10:00 am – 1:00 pm	Panel II on substantively addressing recommendations on other measures that could contribute to taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations ^a <i>(a) Transparency measures related to the risks associated with existing nuclear weapons</i> Mr. Tariq Rauf, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute
3:00 pm – 6:00 pm	Panel II (<i>cont.</i>) <i>(b) Measures to reduce and eliminate the risk of accidental, mistaken, unauthorized or intentional nuclear weapon detonations^a</i> Ms. Beyza Unal, Chatham House Mr. Pavel Podvig, United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research
Friday, 26 February 2016	
10:00 am – 1:00 pm	Panel II (<i>cont.</i>) <i>(c) Additional measures to increase awareness and understanding of the complexity of and interrelationship between the wide range of humanitarian consequences that would result from any nuclear detonation^a</i> Mr. John Borrie, United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research
3:00 pm – 6:00 pm	Panel II Exchange of views (<i>cont.</i>) Other measures ^a Wrap up by the Chairperson The way forward in preparation for the May session ^a

^a To be followed by an exchange of views.

^b Represented by Mr. Lou Maresca on 23 February.