

## POSITION PAPER

**Committee** : United Nations General Assembly

**Country** : The Republic of South Africa

**Agenda** : Reducing Nuclear Danger

**Delegate** : Lavanya Karki



The Earth is everyone's home and its security is being threatened by nuclear danger, which has been a major cause of concern for many decades now. With the end of the Cold War a decade ago, there is no justification for thousands of nuclear weapons to be maintained in a state of hair-trigger alert, creating unacceptable risks of unintentional or accidental use of nuclear weapons. This could have catastrophic consequences for all humankind and may threaten the economic and social fabric of societies and kill and maim civilians, all too many of whom are women and children. The danger is a clear and present danger. It is a fact that there have been several instances of near accidental launch, often triggered by incomplete or inaccurate assessment of available information. These events demonstrate the error prone character of maintaining large arsenals in a state of high alert. It is imperative that even as we work in developing requisite political will, in the interim, the international community accept the need for urgent practical steps that will diminish nuclear dangers.

The United Nations has been forthcoming in reducing nuclear danger. Many important treaties like *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)*, the *Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT)*, and the *Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons* have been established. Other commendable efforts include NPT Review and Extension Conference, UN Millennium Summit on September 8, 2000 and IAEA's Safety Standards, which provide the fundamental principles, requirements and recommendations to ensure nuclear safety. Further, The General Assembly declared the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons (26<sup>th</sup> September) in December 2013, in its resolution 68/32. However, no treaty or resolution has been able to achieve nuclear danger free-world yet.

South Africa's support for reducing nuclear danger is an integral part of the Nation's foreign policy. In 1989, South Africa became the first and only country to have had nuclear weapons, disarmed them and signed the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. South Africa also passed the *Non- Proliferation of weapons of Mass Destruction Act*, which prohibits South African citizens from assisting in any program related to construction of nuclear weapons. South Africa has ratified the *Convention of Physical Protection of a Nuclear Material*, *Convention on Early Notification of a Nuclear Accident*, *Convention on Nuclear Safety* etc. South Africa has been the

forerunner to prevent nuclear dangers and has led the movement for complete disarmament of nuclear weapons.

As a former nuclear threshold power, The Republic of South Africa feels it has the technical and diplomatic expertise to play a bridging role between Non-Nuclear Weapon States (NWSS), on the one hand, and the Nuclear Weapon States (NWS), on the other. As one of the largest producers of Uranium and a growing producer of nuclear energy, South Africa is committed for peaceful use of nuclear energy for the betterment of humankind.

*“Apartheid South Africa, as a part of its national security policy, embarked on a nuclear weapons program. Democratic South Africa sees the international and regional security being achieved by complete nuclear disarmament.”* These words of Alfred Nzo, the former South African Foreign Minister, capture in essence the nuclear policy of South Africa, which represents the world’s first instance of nuclear rollback, a state which has unilaterally and voluntarily relinquished nuclear weapons.

Today, South Africa is the only country in the world which is at an advantageous position of mediating between Nuclear Weapon States and Non- Nuclear Weapon States to ensure lasting peace in the world through complete nuclear disarmament and the prevention of nuclear dangers.

The Republic of South Africa advocates an incremental approach policy towards nuclear disarmament. Following are the solutions we propose-

1. Enforcing binding security assurances for Non-Nuclear Weapon States through legally- binding treaties.
2. Nuclear Weapon states must provide detailed information regarding their progress on nuclear disarmament, which should be checked by the establishment of a Review Committee.
3. All member states must ratify the Conventions on Nuclear danger, including *Convention on Physical Protection of Nuclear Material*, *Convention on Early Notification of a Nuclear Accident* and *Convention on Nuclear Safety*.
4. Strengthening and full adherence to IAEA safeguards agreement by all member states of UNGA.

**LET PEACE PREVAIL!**

**SOURCES:** Govt. of South Africa website- <https://www.gov.za/> UN resolutions from official UN website – <https://www.un.org> and inferences from *Strategic Analysis: A monthly journal of the IDSA*.