

# Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty

The 1970 Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) is the backbone of the international regime to stop the spread of nuclear weapons. Today, 189 countries are parties to the NPT, and the treaty's nonproliferation norms enjoy near-universal support. Parties to the NPT are split into two categories—nuclear weapons states (NWS) and non-nuclear weapons states (NNWS). The recognized NWS are the United States, Russia, China, France and the United Kingdom. Only India, Pakistan and Israel have never signed the NPT, while North Korea withdrew from the treaty in 2003.



Every five years a review conference is held to determine compliance, past implementation and ways to strengthen the NPT. The 2005 Review Conference was a failure and undermined support for the nonproliferation regime. Success at the 2010 Review Conference, beginning 3 May, will be essential to strengthen efforts to halt the spread of nuclear weapons and advance nuclear disarmament.

## Purpose

The core of the NPT is a set of principles to stop proliferation and encourage disarmament:

- States with nuclear weapons commit to eliminating their arsenals and agree to not spread nuclear weapons or the means to acquire them to other states.
- States without nuclear weapons promise not to seek or acquire them.
- In return, each state has the right to pursue and use peaceful nuclear technology.

The treaty also charges the IAEA with inspecting nuclear energy facilities, provides for safeguards for the transfer of sensitive nuclear materials and allows for the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones.

## Major Issues

A critical issue before the NPT is the relationship between disarmament and nonproliferation. These should be seen as two sides of the same coin. If non-weapons states make progress on controlling proliferation, weapons states will feel more comfortable about reducing stockpiles. Reducing stockpiles will build the cooperation needed among non-weapons states to prevent the further spread of nuclear weapons.

Countries that possess nuclear weapons, but are not parties to the NPT – India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea - create a difficult double standard. Drawing these states into the NPT or a verification and safeguards regime is a serious political and legal challenge for the treaty and its parties. Making withdrawal from the treaty a more serious offense and deterring future proliferators is also a priority for NPT parties. Additionally, fortifying safeguards that prevent energy programs from becoming weapons programs will be an important initiative for parties to the NPT.