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Joint IPNDV Working Group Meeting in Helsinki
March 5, 2019

Good morning and welcome to Helsinki and the Finlandia-hall. We appreciate highly that so many delegations have accepted our invitation to participate in this Joint Working Group Meeting of the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification. We are very delighted and honoured to host this meeting.

The Partnership is entering its fifth year of action. The clear progress and impressive results achieved during the past four years stand as proof of the value of the collaborative engagement between states with and without nuclear weapons. This collaboration serves a very good purpose and there are obvious reasons to continue the Partnership. Let us keep up the good work!

We live in a perilous world. Big power competition seems to be increasing and intensifying. The rules based international order is challenged in multiple ways. Hard won fundamentals and well-established norms are breaking down either by design or as collateral damage. Unpredictability is the buzzword used to describe today's international politics.

For smaller countries, and I count Finland to be one, these are arduous times. How do you best promote your own interests and improve regional and global stability in this kind of a world? One obvious answer is through collaborative partnerships, like the IPNDV.

International arms control and disarmament are in a particularly bad shape. The Russian non-compliance with the INF-Treaty and the subsequent announcement by the United States of withdrawing from the Treaty are a well-known case in point. Nevertheless, there is more to the dismal state of arms control, like the continued use of chemical weapons in Syria and even in Europe, as well as the prevailing problems with the conventional arms control in Europe. In addition, there has not been any progress in getting the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty to enter into force and starting negotiations on the Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty. This is surely not a springtime for arms control.

In a world of escalating tensions, lessened trust and malfunctioning international instruments, the importance of IPNDV and similar initiatives only increase. Even when the work in the IPNDV is considered technical, it serves also a very positive political purpose.

In this respect, I want to mention also the work of the Group of Governmental Experts to consider the role of verification in advancing nuclear disarmament. Although the focus of the GGE is different from the IPNDV, it also highlight the importance the international community puts on developing means of verification as a way of promoting nuclear arms control and disarmament.

Verification is and will be a key ingredient of taking nuclear disarmament forward. The IPNDV achieved great results in the Phase I addressing the very complex challenge of monitoring and verifying the physical dismantlement of a nuclear weapon. Phase II of the Partnership will build on the results and will focus on the verification of nuclear weapons declarations and reductions as well as identify and demonstrate a select number of key verification technologies identified in Phase I.

Despite the great work produced during Phase I, substantial challenges remain. However, I am confident that, the IPNDV has the required expertise and is well suited to identifying solutions for credible means and methods for nuclear disarmament verification.

Finland has been an active participant in the IPNDV since it started four years ago. Hosting this joint Working Group meeting is one proof of our commitment to the Partnership. Over the years, more than 30 countries have participated in IPNDV activities and we would like to see even more countries joining the Partnership. At the same time, we regret that two nuclear weapon states have left the Partnership, but let this not hamper or slow our work towards developing verification means for nuclear disarmament verification.

Once again, welcome to Helsinki! I wish you a productive and successful meeting over the coming days and down the road!