



## Opening Remarks of France at the IPNDV Annual Plenary Meeting Sydney, Australia - December 5, 2022

*Delivered by Ms. Lucille Sancho*

Minister,  
Distinguished delegates and colleagues,

Let me first sincerely thank and commend the Australian government for hosting us, as well as the teams from the IPNDV, NTI, ASNO and our US colleagues for all the work and preparations put into this week's full agenda. We are very pleased to meet in person here in Sydney after several postponements due to the pandemic and we are eager to continue the work undertaken at the last plenary meeting earlier this year in Brussels and in intersessional virtual meetings.

Dear colleagues,

First, I would like to seize this opportunity to recall the **importance France attaches to the works on the verification of nuclear disarmament (NDV)**. In our view, NDV is a central step towards the realistic and progressive elimination of nuclear weapons as per Article VI of the Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT). As such, President Macron, in his 2020 speech at the Ecole de Guerre, identified NDV as a key item in France's national agenda for nuclear disarmament, rooted in a pragmatic approach to nuclear disarmament as the only credible path towards a world without nuclear weapons. NDV is also a topic of common interest between Nuclear-weapon States and Non-Nuclear-weapon States: we witnessed this at the last NPT Review Conference, where Nuclear-weapon States and Non-Nuclear-weapon States alike proved keen to engage on this issue.

I would also like to stress the **necessary balance that needs to be found between successful and robust NDV mechanisms** able to increase confidence and trust that disarmament has taken place on the one hand, and **the full respect of non-proliferation obligations** that bound all States parties to the NPT as well as the **protection of national sensitive security information** on the other. France does not consider that the latter should impede in any way progress on NDV, but help us frame and enable a substantial, constructive and pragmatic dialogue engaging both Nuclear-weapon States and Non-Nuclear Weapon States.

France is sincerely committed to **fostering further dialogue** and continues to see great value in **practical exercises** on NDV. We strongly believe that these exercises can act as a strong catalyst for increasing confidence between Nuclear-weapon States and Non-Nuclear-Weapon States. In this regard, we are proud to have organized two NuDiVe exercises alongside with Germany. In these exercises, our approach has focused on the dismantlement of a nuclear warhead, which we consider the most relevant but also the most challenging step of nuclear disarmament verification. France still believes that this is where most of our effort should be concentrated. The NuDiVe exercises are, I believe, a good example of how





Nuclear-Weapon States and Non-Nuclear-Weapon States can work together and learn from each other and their respective national positions. They also contribute to build trust but also capacity to be better equipped to reflect on NDV. It is, all in all, proof that cooperation and good understanding between Nuclear-weapon States and Non-Nuclear-weapon States is not only desirable, but also very much valuable for all when it comes to nuclear disarmament. This inclusive and cooperative approach, which is at the core of the IPNDV's endeavours, will continue to guide our work and efforts regarding nuclear disarmament verification in all international fora.

In this regard, the IPNDV's pioneering work on nuclear disarmament verification has immensely contributed to providing the international community with a better understanding of the opportunities and challenges related to NDV.

The IPNDV has also been very successful in moving from a conceptual framework to a **practical one**. Taking into account a diversity of scenarios and contingencies, as we did last time in Brussels, has enabled us to collectively think further than we usually would have in a more formal framework. We are adamant to continue working on these two tracks, reflecting at the same time on conceptual issues while also experimenting them on the ground. Taking a broader perspective, France remains careful of the relation between verification, transparency and irreversibility. In our view, these three concepts, as interconnected as they may be, should be strictly differentiated, to guarantee that they are indeed implemented. We are confident that our future work in the IPNDV can manage this challenge. You can count on France's support and engagement to further advance our work on nuclear disarmament verification this week and beyond.

I thank you for your attention.

