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Backgrounder on the P5 Conferences: London, Paris, Washington, and the Future

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At the Preparatory Committee for the 2015 NPT Review Conference, the United States reaffirmed its commitment to implement the 2010 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Action Plan as well as its obligations under Article VI of the treaty. In this connection, the United States announced it would host a third P5 Conference in Washington June 27-29, 2012, to continue discussions on how China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States, could work together on facilitating nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament.¹

Inception and contextual issues

This will be the third such P5 conference with specific reference to commitments under the 2010 NPT Review Conference's [Final Document](#) Action Plan. The meetings were originally proposed by the UK Defence Secretary at the Conference on Disarmament (CD) in February 2008² leading to the first *P5 Conference on Confidence Building Measures Toward Disarmament* in London, September 2009. The second meeting in Paris of June 2011 focused on the Action Plan, with some additional specific outcomes geared toward the 2015 Review Conference.

The P5 have other nuclear issues they are dealing with, as a group and with each other.

¹ State Dept. May/11/2012 on NPT Preparatory Committee Meeting of Parties to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) <http://vienna.usmission.gov/npt-2012.html>

² P5 London 2009 Statement on disarmament and non proliferation issues : <http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/news/latest-news/?view=News&id=20804873>

Chief amongst these issues is Iran's nuclear program. The P5+1 and Iran have just concluded another round of [negotiations in Moscow](#) with the agenda dominated by attempts to convince Iran to curtail uranium enrichment and come clean on past sensitive activities, in exchange for sanctions relief. But tension exists within the P5 on how to approach Iran. Russia and China have stated opposition to "any further unilateral enforcement measures" saying that additional sanctions due to enter force on July 1st would be "[counter productive](#)".³

China holds significant weight in this regard as Iran's largest trading partner, [holding bilateral talks](#) with Iranian leaders. China supports UN-backed efforts to establish a WMD-free zone in the Middle East, while itself still not becoming a signatory ([nor have any of the P5](#)) to the Southeast Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone (SEANWFZ).

The United States and Russia have also been involved in bilateral talks concerning missile defence in Europe. Presidents Obama and Putin met on the sidelines of the G20 conference in Mexico last week where the issue was discussed. However, Russian Presidential aide Yury Ushakov admitted that "it should be taken into account that Americans are now in the midst of a presidential campaign; important, crucial decisions are rarely taken in such circumstances."⁴ Indeed, the US election will weigh heavily on nuclear issues being discussed at the Washington conference.

The UK continues to engage [bilaterally with France](#), building upon their unprecedented *Declaration on Security and Defence Cooperation* while on the home front the Liberal Democrats, currently junior partner in the UK's coalition government, have committed to campaigning [against Trident](#) replacement in the next general election.

The five Nuclear Weapons States of the NPT have come into the process with issues that they perceive as priorities. For example, France has championed the issue of transparency, with the French ambassador to the Conference on Disarmament mentioning a "discussion on the issue of transparency and mutual confidence including on doctrines and nuclear capacities". But China has been uncomfortable with revealing details of its arsenal, possibly for fear of appearing weak toward other regional rivals. The UK appears to be focusing on issues of verification with a proposal in Paris to hold "discussions at the expert level on technical issues of verification"⁵ while also championing its work in the [UK-Norway Initiative](#). This is a research project on warhead dismantlement verification, highlighting cooperation between a nuclear and non-nuclear weapons state.

The five states are approaching these conferences with apparent unity despite differences and preferences on multiple issues. Like any P5 event there is much secrecy involved. But, generally speaking, the intention of these conferences is cooperation "at the level of Director Generals and Experts to take stock of the commitments undertaken during the NPT conference and to contribute to the preparation of the next review cycle for that treaty."⁶

³ Answers of Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs S.V. Lavrov to Mass Media Questions, Beijing, 6 June, 2012
http://www.mid.ru/bdomp/Brp_4.nsf/arh/2AE66310508D339144257A1C003322DD?OpenDocument

⁴ *Putin, Obama to discuss Missile Defense, Syria Settlement in Mexico* <http://missilethreat.com/archives/id.7558/detail.asp>

⁵ Eric Danon, Ambassador to Conference on Disarmament, Aug/4/2011

http://www.reachingcriticalwill.org/images/documents/Disarmament-fora/cd/2011/statements/part3/4August_France.pdf

⁶ Ibid

London 2009 Conference⁷

In London 2009, at the *Conference on Confidence Building Measures Toward Disarmament*, the P5 reiterated their enduring commitment under Article VI of the NPT and noted that these obligations apply to all NPT States. They stressed their intention to work with all States Parties to the NPT in creating the conditions to enable further progress under Article VI. They called upon all non-NPT States to work towards the same objective.⁸

A variety of issues were discussed in London, and some gained more clarity after the Paris conference. In relation to Article VI, at the London conference, the P5 **officially stated** progress made under the following headings:

Confidence-building and cooperation measures among the P5;

- The P5 shared definitions of nuclear terminology and information about their nuclear doctrines and capabilities for the purposes of common understanding.
- They made presentations on enhancing P5 strategic stability and building mutual confidence through voluntary transparency and other measures.⁹

Advancing international treaties;

- The P5 continued efforts aimed at early entry into force of the CTBT and achieving its universality, calling upon all States that have not yet done so to sign and ratify this Treaty.¹⁰
- They recognized that one key element in the effective implementation of Article VI is the negotiation of a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT).¹¹
- They emphasized the importance of the prohibition of chemical, biological and toxin weapons in realizing the objective of Article VI and urged all countries which have yet to do so to sign, ratify and bring into force the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention.¹²

Proliferation in Iran and North Korea;

- The P5 urged Iran to comply promptly and fully with the relevant UN Security Council Resolutions and with the requirements of the IAEA.

⁷ P5 London 2009 Statement on disarmament and non proliferation issues :<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/news/latest-news/?view=News&id=20804873>

⁸ Ibid

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ P5 statement to the 2010 Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference, UK mission to UN, para 7:

<http://ukun.fco.gov.uk/en/news/?view=News&id=22221160>

¹¹ Ibid

¹² Ibid, para 8

- North Korea was also urged to fulfill commitments under the Six-Party Talks, including the complete and verifiable denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula in accordance with the September 2005 Joint Statement.¹³

Securing nuclear material and export controls;

- The P5 recalled that the comprehensive safeguards agreement with an additional protocol should become the universally recognized verification norm, calling on all states to bring it, or a modified small quantities protocol, into force.¹⁴
- The states also committed themselves to: prevention of proliferation financing and shipments; strengthening export controls; securing sensitive materials; and to controlling transfers of intangible technology. The P5 reaffirmed support of the Nuclear Suppliers Group and Zangger Committee.¹⁵
- The group stated that the threat from non-state actors' ambition to acquire fissile material or nuclear weapons has altered the nature of the proliferation challenge. The P5 welcomed and joined President Obama's call to secure all vulnerable nuclear materials within four years.¹⁶

Paris Conference 2011

France held the second conference in Paris in June 2011 stating that it would "signal the start of a process of regular P5 consultations, with a view towards preparing for the next NPT Review Conference" in 2015.¹⁷ The P5 also stated (in the [most comprehensive P5 statement](#) on the conferences) that the conference was fulfilling Action 5 of the Final Document, which requires them to report on Action 5 progress to the 2014 PrepCom.¹⁸ Many of the same issues were discussed as in London 2009, but were reiterated with more specific recommendations and actions. In Paris, the P5 made further progress under the following headings:

Confidence-building and cooperation measures among P5:

- The P5 established a working group to be led by China for an agreed glossary of definitions of nuclear terms.¹⁹
- Agreed a P5 verification working group.²⁰
- Received expert commentary on the UK-Norway-Initiative. UK scientists and technical experts shared outcomes/lessons from the UK-Norway-Initiative in London on April 4th 2011.²¹

¹³ Ibid, para 10

¹⁴ Ibid, para 11

¹⁵ Ibid para 15

¹⁶ Ibid para 16

¹⁷ French embassy in India statement leading to 2011 Paris P5 conference: <http://ambafrance-in.org/P5-Conference-on-the-follow-up-to> (note: some wrong dates in statement)

¹⁸ P5 statement by Ambassador Susan F. Burk to 2012 NPT PrepCom, para 4: <http://vienna.usmission.gov/120503p5.html>

¹⁹ Ibid, para 5

²⁰ Statement by John A. Bravaco, U.S. Representative UN Disarmament Commission, Apr/4/2012

<http://usun.state.gov/briefing/statements/187495.htm>

Advancing international treaties;

- Called for states to uphold moratoria, but recognized that this was not a substitute for CTBT ratification.²²
- Reiterated support for immediate negotiations [at the CD](#) relating to an Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT) with a program based on the [CD 1864 program of work](#).²³
- Reported on the substantive progress made towards signature of the Protocol to the Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone (SEANWFZ) and confirmed commitment to continue working toward establishing the Central Asian Nuclear Weapon Free Zone.²⁴
- Welcomed a Conference in 2012 on the establishment of a Middle East WMD free zone.²⁵

Proliferation in Iran;

- Expressed concern at Iran's persistent failure to comply with its obligations under UNSC resolutions and to meet the requirements of the IAEA Board of Governors Resolutions.²⁶

Securing nuclear material and export controls;

- Reaffirmed, in relation to terrorism, the importance of full implementation of [UN Security Council Resolution 1540](#), as well as the international Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism.
- Urged States to accelerate their domestic approval of the 2005 Amendment to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material.
- Encouraged all States to apply the IAEA recommendations on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material and Nuclear Facilities.³⁵

Washington, and looking forward

Washington is hosting the third P5 conference *on verification, transparency, and confidence building*³⁶ from Wednesday to Friday (June 27-29). It will likely reiterate and build upon the issues of transparency, including terminology, and verification raised in the previous conferences with further detailed recommendations. But it will also have a heavier focus on the 2014 PrepCom for which it must report on Action 5 progress, with the French ambassador to the CD confirming that:

“we will meet in the context of the next Preparatory Committee of the NPT, but we have

²¹ statement by Ambassador Susan F. Burk to 2012 NPT PrepCom, para 5: <http://vienna.usmission.gov/120503p5.html>

²² Ibid, para 6

²³ Ibid, para 6: <http://vienna.usmission.gov/120503p5.html>

²⁴ Ibid, para 17

²⁵ Ibid, para 18

²⁶ Ibid, para 11

³⁵ Ibid, para 19

³⁶ Statement by John A. Bravaco, US representative UN Disarmament Commission, Apr/4/2012 <http://usun.state.gov/briefing/statements/187495.htm>

already decided to work on a number of specific issues. On the agenda is the question of confidence building measures concerning the issue of the response to nuclear accidents also concerning verification."³⁷

The conference may also touch on Iran, particularly in the context of the inconclusive Moscow talks between Iran and the P5 + 1, which agreed to continue talks at expert level, only days before an EU embargo on Iranian oil comes into force on July 1. However, these conferences have been more about actions by the P5 regarding their own cooperation rather than dealing with potential proliferation. In this regard, the momentum from the previous conferences will be difficult to continue without signaling concrete progress on disarmament.

Policy Recommendations for Washington

Building on the P5 process, these could include:

● Arms Reduction

- Commitment to a long-term aim of concluding a multilateral P5 agreement verifiably limiting the five states' nuclear arsenals, which could involve limiting US and Russian arsenals to 500 warheads each and China, Britain and France to 200 or fewer warheads each.³⁸
- Holding bilateral negotiations on reducing U.S.-Russian deployed warheads to bring them closer to the UK, French and Chinese numbers. This would open the door for substantive common reduction targets for all the P5.
 - In the United States there is bipartisan support among a growing number of current and former policy-makers for reducing the U.S. nuclear arsenal. General James Cartwright (ret), former vice chairman of the joint chiefs of staff and former commander of U.S. strategic forces, last month led a bipartisan panel calling for cuts to 900 warheads over 10 years.³⁹
- Involving all nuclear armed states in the negotiations, with the ultimate aim of bringing India, Pakistan, and unacknowledged nuclear power Israel into the NPT and the return of North Korea into the treaty.

● Confidence building and transparency

³⁷ Eric Danon, Ambassador to Conference on Disarmament, Aug/4/2011

http://www.reachingcriticalwill.org/images/documents/Disarmament-fora/cd/2011/statements/part3/4August_France.pdf

³⁸ Andrew Cottey Recommendations, p. 2: <http://www.basicint.org/publications/dr-andrew-cottey/2011/multilateralizing-nuclear-arms-control-agenda-p5-meeting-paris>

³⁹ Global Zero press release May 15th 2012 <http://www.globalzero.org/en/pressrelease/former-vice-chairman-joint-chiefs-staff-gen-ret-james-e-cartwright-issue-report-calling>

- The exact number of U.S. and Russian tactical nuclear weapons should be revealed in the interests of transparency, ahead of negotiations on their future removal.
- China should take proactive steps to reveal details of its nuclear arsenal. Its lack of transparency, and the potential for building up its arsenal “seriously hampers further nuclear arms reduction by Russia and the US.”⁴⁰
- In exchange for negotiations on US-Russian tactical and non-deployed warhead reduction, the UK and France should take further measures toward cooperation and transparency in their own nuclear arsenals as a first step towards further cuts. The French and UK could be at the forefront of championing cooperation and transparency both within the P5 and outside.
 - The UK-France summit in 2010 resulted in an unprecedented Declaration on Defense and Security Co-operation.⁴¹ This focused on joint capabilities and procurement as well as operations including ‘the sharing and pooling of materials and equipment including through mutual interdependence, the building of joint facilities, mutual access to each other’s defence markets, and industrial and technological co-operation.’⁴²
- France should use the new opportunity of a newly elected Socialist president and Socialist-dominated parliament to open up a national debate on the purpose and salience of nuclear weapons in the framework of its NPT obligations to disarm.
 - France has already adopted some disarmament measures by reducing the number of its nuclear warheads to 300 and irreversibly dismantling its land component, nuclear test sites, and fissile material production plants. However it is not expected to engage in further substantial reduction until the U.S.-Russian arsenals are significantly reduced.
 - Even in the absence of public debate on the French *force de frappe*, only 15% of French citizens justify the use of nuclear weapons in a war context while only 37% back them as a deterrent.⁴³
- As previously recommended by BASIC board member Andrew Cottey in his report before the last P5 conference in Paris, establishment of a formal annual ‘P5 Dialogue on Nuclear Arms Control, Disarmament and Non-Proliferation’⁴⁴.

⁴⁰ Russia and the Dilemmas of Nuclear Disarmament, June 2012: <http://www.imemo.ru/en/publ/2012/12009a.pdf>

⁴¹ Declaration signed by the UK and France following the UK-France Summit 2010 in London on 2 November 2010 <http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/uk-france-summit-2010-declaration-on-defence-and-security-co-operation/>

⁴² Declaration signed by the UK and France following the UK-France Summit 2010 in London on 2 November 2010, Art.7.a <http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/uk-france-summit-2010-declaration-on-defence-and-security-co-operation/>

⁴³ http://www.angus-reid.com/polls/27829/global_poll_finds_varied_views_on_nu

⁴⁴ Andrew Cottey Recommendations, p. 9: <http://www.basicint.org/publications/dr-andrew-cottey/2011/multilateralizing-nuclear-arms-control-agenda-p5-meeting-paris>

- Establishment of a parallel ‘track two’ P5 nuclear dialogue process involving think tanks and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to facilitate forward-looking discussion.⁴⁵

● **Advancing International Treaties**

- The P5 should actively assist the convening of the 2012 Conference on a Middle East WMD free zone in Helsinki.
- The UK and France could pursue a formal regional Fissile Material Cut Off Treaty in Europe, as a precursor for renewed discussions at the CD on a comprehensive FMCT.

● **Proliferation**

- Issuing a declaration that Iran must be prevented from obtaining a nuclear weapon while acknowledging Tehran’s right to a civilian nuclear program. The statement should emphasize the risk to global security from a future nuclear arms race across the Middle East which would undermine the NPT.

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⁴⁵ Andrew Cottey Recommendations, p. 2: <http://www.basicint.org/publications/dr-andrew-cottey/2011/multilateralizing-nuclear-arms-control-agenda-p5-meeting-paris>

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