



Permanent Mission  
of the Federal Republic of Germany  
to the United Nations  
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## **Statement by**

**Ambassador Michael Biontino**

**German Statement on the Humanitarian Consequences  
of Nuclear Weapons  
During the First Committee's Thematic Discussion on  
Nuclear Disarmament**

Mr. Chairman,

Let me at the outset congratulate you on your election as the chair of the 1<sup>st</sup> Committee and assure you of the full support of my delegation to your work.

Let me make a few remarks on Germany's views with regard to nuclear disarmament. Of course, I associate myself fully with the statement delivered by the European Union earlier in this debate.

Germany is a staunch supporter of the ultimate goal of achieving complete and verifiable nuclear disarmament. Unfortunately, it is quite clear that this goal will not be achieved over night. Still, we are deeply convinced that the whole international community has a responsibility to make every possible effort to achieve progress towards this goal.

Nuclear arsenals have been reduced dramatically over the last two decades. New START is being implemented according to schedule. In light of the crisis in Crimea and Ukraine, this is good news, even though the latest numbers on warheads and delivery vehicles are rather disappointing. The offer made by President Obama in 2013 in Berlin provided a much needed perspective for further and credible progress. The process of further reductions should be continued in a follow-up disarmament round to New Start.

We are well aware of the fact that the strategic context in the aftermath of the illegal annexation of Crimea and the ongoing crisis in Ukraine are not making such talks any easier. On the contrary. But even in the much more difficult times of the Cold War, Arms Control was making some headway. Hence, new talks should be given a chance, the sooner the better. It bears repeating that Article VI is not just a recommendation, it is an obligation.

Obviously, such talks cannot take place in a vacuum. But they offer a venue for each side to also raise its concerns regarding strategic stability. Thus, in Germany's assessment, objections based on security-concerns should not prevent talks from taking place. In fact, they should be part of the agenda. Germany holds the view that new talks should also include strategic and substrategic, deployed and non-deployed nuclear weapons, as demanded by the NPT-Action Plan.

For Global Zero to become a reality, new determined action is necessary. Global Zero cannot be achieved by fiat, it can only be achieved by steps improving the security environment, enhancing confidence and trust between partners. As the NPT Action Plan states clearly, intermediary steps are also of great importance. To mention but two examples, the Nuclear Weapon States have issued negative security assurances to all States in compliance with their obligations under the Non-Proliferation Treaty. From our point of view, the significance of these assurances has suffered in light of recent events. It would be important to have them reiterated, possibly in connection with the upcoming NPT Review Conference. The role of nuclear weapons has been reduced in many security doctrines, e.g. in NATO's. These are all contributions on which we can build in our efforts to achieve our joint goal – a world without nuclear weapons.

These are also contributions to addressing the widespread concerns regarding the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of a nuclear weapon's detonation. These risks and consequences will be high on the agenda of at the upcoming Conference in Vienna. Germany is looking forward to participating in this debate. In Germany's understanding, this debate is aiming at strengthening the NPT rather than sidelining it or establishing a new forum for banning nuclear weapons. As important as the humanitarian issues are, progress can indeed only be made by dealing with the security dimension as well. In this sense, it is unfortunately true that there are no short cuts to Global Zero.

From our point of view, today the risk of a nuclear war is much lower than at the heyday of the Cold War when tens of thousands of weapons were targeting each other. At the same time, the risk of terrorists acquiring nuclear weapons or nuclear devices has considerably increased. This is one of the reasons why it is so important to equally strengthen the non-proliferation regime and nuclear security. Disarmament and Non-Proliferation are two sides of the same coin. Therefore, it is of crucial importance to redouble our efforts to implement the NPT-Action Plan in all its aspects.

In Germany's assessment, the best path towards Global Zero is to pursue realistic, verifiable, irreversible steps or building blocks which can be addressed in parallel. Germany calls for the the entry into force of the CTBT and the immediate commencement of negotiations on a Treaty banning the production of Fissile Material. What was said earlier on a new disarmament round is equally true in the context of an FMCT: The security concerns of some partners should be part of the negotiations, but not prevent much needed progress. If the deadlock in the CD is not overcome soon, the legitimacy of the existing multilateral disarmament machinery will be increasingly put into question. Germany hopes that such a marginalization of the CD can still be prevented.

To sum up, it will take sustained, high-level political will and commitment by all NPT Member States to achieving our common goal of Global Zero. Germany is fully committed to remain an engaged partner in this process.