

# Deadlines for nuclear-armed states and nuclear hosting states

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Mr President, distinguished delegates, civil society colleagues,

I will speak on the issue of deadlines for nuclear-armed states and nuclear hosting states that need to be set by this meeting.

I am trained as a physicist and work as a disarmament scientist at the Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg and as part of the Program on Science and Global Security at Princeton University. Together with my colleague Zia Mian, we have studied the issue of deadlines and published our analysis in academic journals.<sup>1</sup> I will be happy to provide the articles to anyone who is interested.

This Meeting of States Parties needs to set two deadlines.

First, under article 4.2, “A State Party that owns, possesses or controls nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices shall immediately remove them from operational status, and destroy them **as soon as possible but not later than a deadline to be determined** by the first meeting of States Parties.”

Second, a deadline for states joining the treaty while hosting nuclear weapons of another country, as stipulated in Article 4.4. In our research, we found that there are four important aspects that could inform these decisions:

- 1) *Process*, including the necessary steps to achieve the respective treaty obligations
- 2) *Infrastructure*: The tools, facilities and sites required for the process
- 3) *Potential difficulties*: Extraordinary problems that could delay completion
- 4) *Time*: How long does it take to destroy / remove weapons?

## Deadline for nuclear-armed states

Weapon dismantlement is common practice in nuclear-armed states for weapon maintenance and modernization.

The *infrastructure* for nuclear weapon dismantlement exists. Facilities used for weapon manufacturing and assembly already are used for weapon dismantlement. Nuclear-armed states joining the TPNW could immediately start the process of dismantlement.

Since 1945, nuclear-armed states have dismantled an estimated 110,000 nuclear weapons. This corresponds to a global average rate of nearly 1500 dismantlements per year. At this rate, the current global stockpile of about 13,000 weapons could be destroyed in less than a decade.

Our research included more detailed analysis of the dismantlement history of individual states which suggests a similar result: Weapon destruction is possible in less than ten years. Actual times could be even less since additional dismantlement capacity becomes available once a state ends its nuclear weapon maintenance and modernization activities.

My first recommendation regarding article 4.2: A deadline of ten years for nuclear weapon destruction could be applied to each nuclear-armed state.

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<sup>1</sup> Moritz Kütt & Zia Mian (2019) “Setting the Deadline for Nuclear Weapon Destruction under the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons,” *Journal for Peace and Nuclear Disarmament*, 2:2, 410-430, DOI: [10.1080/25751654.2019.167447](https://doi.org/10.1080/25751654.2019.167447)

Moritz Kütt & Zia Mian (2022): “Setting the Deadline for Nuclear Weapon Removal from Host States under the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons,” *Journal for Peace and Nuclear Disarmament*, DOI: [10.1080/25751654.2022.204640](https://doi.org/10.1080/25751654.2022.204640).

In our understanding of what the destruction of a nuclear weapon means, we used the simple criteria that all the components would have to be altered or destroyed so that they could no longer be used in a weapon.

As nuclear-armed states only have a single, or at most two, facilities for weapon dismantlement, unexpected events, such as a serious accident during weapon dismantlement could upset the planned schedule for the destruction process.

Hence, states may have to seek an extension for the deadline for nuclear weapons destruction and modification of the time-bound plan for the elimination of their weapon programmes. Such a request for extension would need a detailed explanation to explain the exceptional difficulties and how they would be overcome. Any such request would have to be approved by the TPNW member states.

### **Deadline for nuclear hosting states:**

The removal of weapons from hosting states is common practice by nuclear-armed states. In our research, we studied past cases of U.S. and Soviet weapon removal from Cuba, the former German Democratic Republic, Taiwan, Hungary, the Republic of Korea and Greece.

In all these cases, after a decision was taken, the *time* to fully remove nuclear weapons was less than 90 days.

Today, there are believed to be a total of about 100 nuclear weapons stationed in five non-nuclear weapon hosting states. Were these states to join the TPNW, these weapons would have to be removed within the deadline to be decided at this meeting.

It is known that the weapons currently stationed abroad are regularly returned to the possessor state for maintenance and modernization. This means that the infrastructure for removal is available. This infrastructure includes, for example, special aircraft, trained crews and safety regulations.

My recommendation regarding article 4.4: A deadline of 90 days should be feasible for each of the current nuclear weapon hosting states.

No potential problems can be foreseen that would require the provision for an extension.

In conclusion, the TPNW states very clearly that the actions proscribed in articles 4.2 and 4.4 are of the highest priority: Weapon removal should be prompt and the destruction of weapons should be done as soon as possible. Therefore, the proposed deadlines should only be seen as the upper limits.