

1987 Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty concluded between the United States and the Soviet Union, and to the high hopes that a Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) would be signed shortly. They also emphasized the progress in negotiations on reducing conventional forces in Europe, and the relaxation of tensions between East and West.

Led by Mexico, however, a number of non-aligned countries argued that, at the centre of the nuclear disarmament provisions referred to in the Preamble and Article VI of the Treaty, lay the obligation of the NWS to make progress towards a comprehensive test ban. The furthest that the United States was willing to go in accepting this linkage was to propose a sentence in the Final Document which would "note" the negotiations under way between the United States and the Soviet Union to reach agreement on verification measures in order to permit the ratification of two existing treaties -- the Threshold Test Ban Treaty and the Peaceful Nuclear Explosions Treaty of 1976.

Despite efforts to find compromise language, the deadlock on this issue persisted to the end of the Conference. A dramatic last-ditch effort by the President sought to use essentially the same formula as that used in 1985 -- that is, acknowledging in the final draft differing views on the fulfilment of obligations under Article VI. The President's compromise draft failed to achieve the approval of Mexico and Iran when it was presented to the plenary meeting in the final hour of the Conference. There was, therefore, no Final Document.

In the aftermath of the Review Conference, a number of states, including the United States, chose to emphasize the constructive work of the Conference and to minimize the significance of the failure to agree on a Final Document. On the other hand, the absence of a Final Document appeared to nullify some of the work of the Conference. For example, supplier states such as the Soviet Union, Belgium and Italy, which had accepted draft agreements calling for full scope safeguards as a condition of supply, indicated afterwards that, in the absence of a Final Document, they no longer considered themselves bound by the negotiations.

Finally, the Review Conference was widely regarded as setting the scene for the 1995 Extension Conference. Insofar as progress towards a comprehensive test ban continues to be the principal criterion used by leading non-aligned states, such as Mexico, to measure NWS compliance with Article VI, the conclusion of the 1990 Conference suggested that the outcome of the 1995 Extension Conference would be uncertain. More immediately, the debate about nuclear testing pointed ahead to the Partial Test Ban Treaty Amendment conference, scheduled to convene in New York at the beginning of January 1991.

In the spring and summer of 1991, the non-proliferation regime was both reinforced and threatened. On 30 May, France, which did not sign the Partial Test Ban Treaty or the NPT, announced