

The NPT is the legal embodiment of a bargain made between the nuclear and non-nuclear states. The non-nuclear states agreed to forgo the acquisition of nuclear weapons (i.e., horizontal proliferation) in exchange for an undertaking by the nuclear states to halt the arms race in nuclear weapons (i.e., vertical proliferation). This agreement, the outcome of long negotiations, is clearly set out in Article VI of the Treaty:

“Each of the Parties to the Treaty undertakes to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a Treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control.”

It is the responsibility of Canada, and indeed all nations of the world, to work to strengthen the NPT. For adherence to the letter and spirit of the Non-Proliferation Treaty would result in a powerful non-proliferation regime guaranteeing the reduction, and eventual elimination, of nuclear weapons.

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As this overview indicates, there are no quick fixes in disarmament – but there are long term strategies and ongoing negotiations which have as their common goal security at lower levels of weapons, both nuclear and conventional. If the going is tough and seems slow, it is because the problems are excruciatingly difficult. In discussing the limitation or indeed dismantling of arms, we are dealing with the most intractable problems in the world.