

STATEMENT BY H.E. MR. MIROSLAV LAJČÁK

**MINISTER OF FOREIGN AND EUROPEAN AFFAIRS
OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC**

**AT THE CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT
HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT 2019**

*26 February 2019
Geneva, Palais des Nations*

Mr. President, Excellencies, distinguished delegates

First of all, let me congratulate you Mr. President, on assuming the Presidency. You can count on Slovakia's full support to move the work of the Conference forward.

And thank you to the previous Presidency of Ukraine, for your work at the helm of the Conference and tireless efforts to achieve consensus on the Program of Work.

I want to start by clearly acknowledging the fact that in the arms control and disarmament realm, we are not doing so well.

The multilateral arms-control and disarmament architecture has been deteriorating.

We all know that. That is no breaking news.

But the 2018 and the first weeks of 2019 marked a number of further setbacks.

1. We saw the Chemical Weapons Convention – a treaty born in this chamber – violated repeatedly, including by the use of a nerve agent on the European soil.

2. We are seeing the system of treaties eroding; the old bilateral deals as well as newer multilateral arrangements seem to unravel.

- JCPOA – the major nuclear non-proliferation success and a model case of multilateral diplomacy – is now basically on life-support.
- The INF Treaty - which eliminated some of the most destabilizing offensive weapons from Europe - is now close to a collapse.

3. And we see existing potential for nuclear instability.

This is a worrisome state of affairs that requires our urgent action.

Because tensions and uncertainty are growing, while trust and predictability are eroding.

Add the implications of the digital revolution on our societies, including on security and defense, that remain poorly understood.

The new and emerging technologies are not sufficiently reflected in current arms-control regimes.

We need to mobilize and refresh our search for solutions.

This situation must not continue – especially at the time of new vulnerabilities, interdependencies and challenges that are global in nature.

And it need not.

To this end, let me emphasize **3 key points**.

I. First - it need not, if we recommit to multilateralism.

Any road leading to a less regulated nuclear environment is perilous.

Walking back and reproducing arms races from unregulated decades of nuclear age does not serve anyone seeking peace and stability.

Such complex domain as arms-control, disarmament and non-proliferation needs rules.

Needs a strong architecture.

So now, first and foremost, we must honor the existing arms-control, disarmament and non-proliferation commitments.

They must be fully complied with, implemented and enforced. Rules must be respected.

And we need political will. Will to compromise, lead the dialogue, and work together.

These two ingredients are interrelated. There will be political will to compromise and negotiate new disarmament instruments only if existing agreements are fully complied with.

All the more disappointing it is to see the INF Treaty is on the brink of its collapse - after more than 30 years, despite intense diplomatic efforts by NATO and the EU countries.

However, any disarmament treaty respected by one party only - becomes unsustainable.

But we believe there still is time to save the INF.

Throughout the remaining five months, the United States and Russia should maintain channels for positive engagement on the INF open, while Russia has special responsibility to take transparent and verifiable steps towards full compliance with its treaty obligations.

Otherwise, we risk a domino effect in the other existing regimes.

II. Second - we need relevant Conference on Disarmament.

This Conference can be both the beneficiary and the contributor to the renewed commitment to multilateralism.

But to that end - we need to revitalize it.

And - I actually am cautiously optimistic, for the pragmatic approach we have taken on two years ago.

Through the formation of the five subsidiary bodies last year, we were able to lead meaningful discussions.

This work, including the adoption of four substantive reports, was a vital step forward and an important signal.

We should continue to build common ground and identify areas of convergence – so that we are better prepared for future negotiations when conditions are more conducive.

Hopefully - in a not too distant future.

We continue to emphasize the need to pay due attention to the enlargement of the membership and are ready to hold consultations on possible improvement of working methods of the Conference.

In this sense - the United Kingdom's draft proposal to establish subsidiary bodies and positions of special coordinators could offer a realistic and viable way forward.

Members must show strong political will and flexibility to compromise in order to achieve progress across the various Conference agenda items.

III. Third - we all need to do our part.

Slovakia, together with our Allies, will continue to support a progressive approach to mutually reinforcing legal measures and practical instruments to promote nuclear disarmament in a step-by-step manner.

No shortcuts can lead us towards the global zero.

Moreover, all countries in possession of nuclear weapons bear a special responsibility to make progress in the area of nuclear disarmament.

- Slovakia joins calls for a quick launch of negotiations on a Treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, on the basis of document CD/1299 and the mandate contained therein

We deem this matter advanced and ripe for negotiations in the Conference.

- Slovakia will also continue to be a staunch supporter of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test Ban Treaty (CTBT).

We support the verification capabilities under the CTBT regime to be ready and available once the Treaty enters into force.

- Next year will mark the 50th anniversary of the entry into force of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

As we move towards its 2020 Review Conference, all NPT State Parties must implement all assumed commitments.

It is also critical, that we continue to invest into efforts to promote the universalization of the NPT to make it a truly global instrument.

It is a shared responsibility of all NPT State Parties to make the 2020 Review Conference a success.

Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

This Conference remains the most important body for cooperation on disarmament and arms control.

It bears legitimacy and an essential purpose. We must do our best to move its work forward.

Find ways to build political will and trust. We owe it to the future generations.

As some say - it's two minutes to midnight.

Let's reverse the Doomsday Clock.

Thank you