



Key Issues for the 2026 NPT Review Conference

TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Gaukhar Mukhatzhanova

Transparency and accountability have emerged as one of the central topics of the current review cycle and one that many States Parties view as the main area where concrete progress is possible. In particular, States have focused their attention on ways to strengthen accountability through enhanced NWS reporting on nuclear weapons capabilities and policies and implementation of disarmament commitments. Despite a broad convergence of views, disagreements remained in the run-up to the Review Conference, including on the incorporation of interactive discussions of national reports into the formal review process sessions.

NPT States Parties have long recognized the importance of transparency and reporting. Step 9 contained in the [final document of the 2000 Review Conference](#) calls for “increased transparency by the nuclear-weapon States with regard to the nuclear weapons capabilities and the implementation of agreements pursuant to article VI,” while Step 12 commits all States Parties to regular reporting on the implementation of Article VI and subsequent disarmament commitments. Action 20 of the [2010 Action Plan](#) reiterates the reporting commitment for all States Parties, and Action 21 encourages the NWS to adopt a standard reporting form and agree on regular reporting intervals.

While the NWS did agree on a common reporting framework in 2014, the quality and quantity of reported information remained uneven among the five, and there has been no systematic review and discussion of the national reports by States Parties. [Draft final document of the 2022 Review Conference](#) addressed the issue and contained forward-looking steps, including regular presentations by the NWS of their national reports and allocation of time during the sessions of Preparatory Committee and at the 2026 Review Conference for a structured discussion on transparency and reporting.

The [2023 Working Group](#) on further strengthening the review process was unable to adopt [draft recommendations](#) due primarily to the disagreement on the transparency and accountability elements. However, States Parties took forward the debates on enhanced reporting during the rest of the review cycle, and different groupings have presented their proposals on the subject. These include papers by the [European Union](#), [the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative \(NPDI\)](#), and [Ireland, New Zealand and Switzerland](#).

The thrust of most proposals is that the NWS should submit regular reports on their nuclear arsenals and policies as well as on implementation of disarmament commitments, using an

improved standard reporting form, and that review process meetings should allocate specific time for interactive dialogue on these reports.

Differences of views among States Parties pertain to:

- Whether it is necessary to hold interactive discussions of national reports as part of the formal meetings (instead of informal side events);
- Whether NNWS, or a subgroup thereof, should have the same reporting obligation and whether time should be allocated for discussion of select NNWS reports, and
- Whether interactive discussions should be held under Main Committee I, which focuses on nuclear disarmament, or Main Committee III, which addresses the strengthened review process more broadly.

Of the NWS, [France and the United Kingdom](#) have taken the lead on the issue, with both States organizing side events and informal discussions on their draft national reports and expressing support for interactive dialogue as part of formal review process meetings. The United States has also been positive, if not as proactive, on transparency and enhanced reporting.

Russia, on the other hand, has [criticized](#) what it described as excessive focus on transparency and accountability, compared to other elements of strengthening the review process. It has [expressed scepticism](#) about any need to improve current reporting mechanisms and the common framework agreed by the NWS. [China](#), who has traditionally been the least transparent about its nuclear weapons capabilities, has also resisted proposals on greater transparency and institutionalized interactive discussions on the national reports.

Both China and Russia have insisted that for improved transparency, NNWS in “nuclear alliances” should report on the role of nuclear weapons in their security policies, alongside the NWS. While the Non-Aligned States have generally supported the idea, NATO and other US allies have argued that this approach would create a third category of States under the NPT, inconsistent with the Treaty’s definitions.

The disagreement between China and the US allies became the main reason for States Parties’ inability to adopt the draft decision on strengthening the review process, which included transparency and accountability elements, at the third session of the Preparatory Committee in 2025. One of the key challenges for the Review Conference would be finding a compromise to seal the progress made during the 11th review cycle on advancing transparency and accountability for nuclear disarmament.