

## 8. Nuclear arms control and non-proliferation

### Overview

*The year 2011 saw continued political momentum behind treaty-based approaches to arms control and disarmament as well as multilateral initiatives to prevent the spread of weapons of mass destruction and capabilities to produce them. It was highlighted by the entry into force of the Russia–United States New START treaty, which mandated additional reductions in the two parties’ strategic offensive nuclear forces (see section I in this chapter). The parties implemented on schedule the inspections, data exchanges, notifications and other measures set out in the treaty’s cooperative monitoring and verification regime. This regime represents one of the main achievements of New START because it preserves and extends previous treaty arrangements for increasing the transparency and predictability of the former cold war adversaries’ nuclear forces. In establishing this regime, New START continued an arms control process through which Russia and the USA have redefined their strategic relationship.*

*International efforts to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons remained a top priority in 2011. Two states—Iran and Syria—came under intensified scrutiny during the year for allegedly concealing military nuclear activities, in contravention of their commitments under the 1968 Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). A three-year investigation by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) concluded that a building in Syria destroyed by an Israeli air strike in 2007 was ‘very likely’ to have been a nuclear reactor that should have been declared to the agency (see section II). The IAEA reported that it had credible evidence that Iran had pursued nuclear weapon-related activities in the past and said that some of the activities might still be continuing (see section III). The difficulties encountered by inspectors in both countries led to renewed calls to expand the IAEA’s legal powers to investigate NPT states parties suspected of violating their treaty-mandated safeguards agreements, even beyond those set out in the Model Additional Protocol.*

*The unresolved Iranian and Syrian nuclear controversies raised further doubt about the efficacy of international legal approaches, in particular the role of the United Nations Security Council, in dealing with suspected or known cases of states violating important arms control treaty obligations and norms. During 2011 Iran continued to defy five Security Council resolutions, adopted since 2006, demanding that it suspend all uranium enrichment and other sensitive nuclear fuel cycle activities. A divided Security Council failed to take action on Syria’s nuclear file after the IAEA Board of Governors had declared the country to be non-compliant with its safeguards agreement. In the view of some observers, the lack of action set the stage for future contro-*

*versies about the suitability of extra-legal measures, including the pre-emptive use of military force, in addressing proliferation concerns.*

*In East Asia, the diplomatic impasse over the fate of the nuclear programme of North Korea remained unresolved (see section IV). Preliminary discussions aimed at restarting the suspended Six-Party Talks on the denuclearization of North Korea made little progress, despite renewed contacts between North Korean and US diplomats. The legal and normative challenges posed by North Korea to the global non-proliferation regime were underscored by reports that the country had been involved in covert transfers of nuclear and ballistic technologies to third countries on a larger scale than previously suspected.*

*In an important development in long-running efforts to strengthen supply-side controls on the transfer of sensitive nuclear fuel cycle technologies, in June the Nuclear Suppliers Group reached a controversial consensus agreement to tighten its transfer guidelines for uranium-enrichment and plutonium-reprocessing equipment and technology (see section V).*

*The risks of nuclear terrorism and the illicit diversion of nuclear materials continued to be the focus of high-level political attention around the globe. Several measures were adopted to strengthen or enhance existing legal and regulatory arrangements aimed at increasing the security of nuclear materials and facilities worldwide (see section VI). Among these was an agreement by the Group of Eight (G8) to extend the 2002 Global Partnership against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction—an initiative which has supported cooperative projects aimed at addressing non-proliferation, disarmament and nuclear security issues. In addition, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1977, which extended by 10 years the mandate of the committee established under Resolution 1540 to monitor and facilitate states' compliance with their obligations under the resolution.*

*As 2011 ended, the prospects for making new advances on the arms control and disarmament agenda remained unclear. Much unfinished business remained on that agenda, in particular the opening of the long-stalled negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty and the bringing into force of the 1996 Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. There were also questions about the next steps in Russian-US arms control after New START. Both sides acknowledged that making further cuts in their nuclear arsenals would require expanding the bilateral agenda to address tactical nuclear weapons and non-deployed warheads as well as broader strategic stability issues. The most prominent of the latter related to ballistic missile defence, which was the focus of an intensifying dispute between Russia and the USA in 2011. There was also recognition that deeper cuts in their respective strategic nuclear arsenals would require bringing the other NPT-recognized nuclear weapon states into a multilateral nuclear arms-reduction process.*