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A Keynote Conversation with Ambassador Gustavo Zlauvinen

Speaker
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Moderator
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James Acton: Encourage you to grab a seat as quickly as you can. For the first of our keynote sessions it’s my enormous pleasure to introduce two of the most experienced diplomats in the non-proliferation and disarmament business. Our moderator for the next session is Ambassador Laura Kennedy. Laura has almost 40 years of experience as a foreign service officer. She’s now retired, but during her long career, she served in many positions related to non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament, including as the ambassador to the United States to the Conference on Disarmament and a member of two US delegations to the Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference.

She’s also just been appointed to Secretary Blinken’s International Security Advisor Board. She will be in discussions with Ambassador Gustavo Zlauvinen. He is currently president of the Argentine Foreign Service Association after a long and distinguished career as a diplomat from Argentina, including as the country’s deputy foreign minister. Over the course of that career, he served in many roles related to non-proliferation, disarmament and nuclear energy, including as the representative of the director general of the IEA to the United Nations and on the IEA Board of Governors.

Of course, the reason why he’s here today and what most of you will know him for is his role in one of the most important and, let’s be honest, one of the most thankless tasks in non-proliferation and disarmament diplomacy, that of president of the 10th Review Conference of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. To reflect on that experience today, it’s my enormous pleasure to welcome Ambassador Zlauvinen in conversation with Ambassador Kennedy.

Laura Kennedy: Thank you, James.

Gustavo Zlauvinen: Thank you.

Kennedy: Thank you, James. Let me say what a pleasure it is, not only to be back at this conference but back in person. I did have the pleasure of moderating a discussion with the ambassador some years ago before the rev con but we did it virtually. I even had a chance to ask him four questions when there was a debrief right after the conference and he was taking the questions while he was riding in the back of a car, but he always handled everything with a aplomb. Again, it's a real pleasure to do this in person. I think everybody here followed the rev con but in case
you were in Mars or something I'll just recall that although originally set for 2020, it was postponed maybe four times.

Then finally took place over four steamy weeks in August in New York, finally, after all those years no doubt to the relief of you, Ambassador. In all those years, I think there was a lot of concern predictions that the conference would be a disaster given the many difficult issues that split much of the community. In fact it resulted in a hard fought but almost universally accepted final documents. Of course, there were those final objections from the Russian delegation over text referring to the war on Ukraine.

There was a consensus minus one document, which covered all three pillars; text on the always difficult Middle East zone issue and agreement to hold a special working group to review the NPT process. I mentioned the Russian War on Ukraine. How did that figure in your handling of the review conference? Various aspects, for example, I noticed from afar that the Russian delegation was a lower level than previous ones. Did that have any effect on your ability to negotiate with them, especially in those final hours? Do you see any circumstances that might have allowed a different outcome?

Zlauvinen: Thank you, Ambassador. It's a pleasure to be today's conference and thank you to Carnegie for having giving me the invitation. Indeed I believe that the Russian delegations participation [unintelligible 00:04:42] Moscow's approach to the review conference was very puzzling from the very beginning. We knew that the review conference was going to be extremely, extremely difficult to manage and to reach a consensus agreement even before the invasion of Ukraine on 24th of February this year. We have already been working very hard with all delegations for two years and a half prior to the conference.

The expectations for most were very dim. They were very pessimistic in the sense that the [unintelligible 00:05:24] and positions not only between the nuclear weapon states and non-nuclear weapon states were [unintelligible 00:05:32] but also between the different groupings. Of course, the invasion of Ukraine and the aggressive approach by Russia on the threat of using nuclear weapons as well as the military actions against civilian nuclear facilities in Ukraine and even taking over those facilities like in Zaporizhzhia increase obviously the complexity of the review conference.

We were being predicted that the war in Ukraine was coming to cast a shadow on all issues related to the NPT and that the review conference was going to be taken hostage of that process. We at least the presidency and some delegations we tried to limit that impact of the war in Ukraine was going to have on the review conference. In that preparations in my engagements with the Russian side, both either directly with Moscow, with their Deputy Foreign Minister Ryabkov or the head of the Russian delegations in Geneva, Vienna and in New York, I was sending that message that we needed to encapsulate the impact of the war in Ukraine into the review conference.

Also, in particular I was trying to assess what was going to be the Russian's approach and attitude toward the conference itself. I always was given the assurances that the Russian delegation whichever was going to be, was going to be proactive, that obviously they were going to take the issue of Ukraine and any strong
statement by western delegations or Ukrainian delegations going to be met by the Russian delegation, that they promise that beyond that they wanted to be business as usual as it could be under the current circumstances.

Then it came a week before the conference, the issue of the visas for the Russian delegations to enter the US and there were some questions whether that delegation that originally was having Ryabkov the Deputy Foreign Minister as the head of the delegations and the director for Disarmament and Nuclear Affairs, Yermakov as the deputy head of delegations in the list. They never submitted the applications for the visas of the number one and number two of the delegations. In my discussions with the the US side as the host country, it was clear that they want to be issuing the visas provided that the Russians were to apply for all visas, which they didn't.

At the end of the day, they applied for visa for the rest of the delegations, but not for the two top diplomas in that. It was really puzzling why they were doing that. At the end of the day, they didn't send Ryabkov nor Yermakov, and the Russian delegations was headed by the Deputy Permanent Representative of the Russian mission in Geneva, as well as by the Deputy Director General for nuclear disarmament nuclear affairs at the Russian Foreign Ministry.

When I was informed the Russians' about the decisions, I thought it was a tactical maneuver maybe not to be under attack or expecting they are going to be under attack because of the Ukrainian war and therefore they didn't want to expose high level officials or maybe not to be forced to react more forcibly upon those attacks. We will never know why they decided not to send a high level delegation, but it didn't inflict on my interactions with the delegation and also I have other challenges of communications with Moscow directly. I don't think that was the problem for what happened at the end of the conference.

Kennedy: Okay, thank you. Granted that consensus was not achieved in the final document, but nevertheless it did produce an outcome minus one on a wide ranging series of, as I say, all the pillars. In your opinion, do you think that this outcome nevertheless gives the parties the latitude to build on what was achieved in that draft document rather than say simply declaring defeat and walking away, and what's also your sense from other parties about can we build on this consensus minus one outcome?

Zlauvinen: Sure. From the very beginning of my presidency, we stated that we didn't see that the measurement of success or not of a review conference should be done only by whether the review conference managed to agree by consensus on an outcome document. There are many ways to measure that success or lack of success, and it was not the only element.

I think we've proven right in the sense that although the document was not adopted because of Russia's opposition to some language, related to Ukraine, the rest of the paragraph, master consensus among all the delegations, including Russia, because they didn't object to the other elements of the document. Granted, no delegation was extremely happy with the document. It's the nature of multilateral negotiations, in particular, when a document had to be adopted by consensus which happens in only few fora worldwide. That makes the whole negotiation process much more
complicated. At the end of the day, you ended up with a minimum common denominator.

What we tried to do was the minimum greatest denominator, and I think we achieved that. I will say yes. I will say that even though the final document was not adopted by consensus because of Russia's opposition, I believe that there's much that can be built upon taking some very important elements of the document. I believe that as the reflection and reaction of the majority of delegations afterwards, I was approached by several of them saying that the document was good and it could serve as a good basis for further work.

Also, what I've been reading from I think tanks and civil societies about the document, it could be criticized on many fronts, but we proved that the system still works, we proved that for four weeks, all said parties were engaged in actual discussions, conversations, and negotiations on all issues on the full range of issues under the purview of the NPT not only on the NPT's actual obligations but also regarding commitments adopted at previous review conferences that it was an issue of contest before the conference.

I think we managed to resolve, not to resolve, but to handle many very intricate and complex issues like the Naval nuclear propulsion, the Middle East, and you name it, the many important issues that have been confronted at previous review conferences, but also new ones. I think just state parties managed to go through that discussion and negotiation process, which at the end of the day is the essence of a review conference. The review conference is about state parties meeting to discuss implementation of obligations, even in disagreement, but also just to look forward on what better [unintelligible 00:13:31] for the implementation of obligations. I think we have done that.

**Kennedy:** Great. Well, if I just interject myself, I must say I was very pleased to see that it included the Russian Federation, the United States commit to the full implementation of the New Start Treaty and to pursue negotiations in good faith on the successor framework to New Start before its expiration 2026. Any other elements that you might highlight in the disarmament pillar, safeguards, peaceful uses that the parties can build on?

**Zlauvinen:** I believe there are a couple of other important issues that should be taken into account from that document, from the negotiations themselves. One, it will be about the transparency process on the reporting by the nuclear weapon states under the NPT, and something had been decided in previous review conferences, and it's something that a great majority of state parties want to strengthen that. If you look into the document that was not adopted but it's the president's final document, it says that state parties agree that in strengthening the reporting process, we should be more on transparency, including on nuclear arsenals. That is the first time that China agreed on that word, nuclear arsenals.

They were totally opposed to that in previous review conferences and in these ones, and they were forced to accept this one. The second important issue was about nuclear risk reduction. I believe that it's very important under the current circumstances when we are facing the threat of a potential use of nuclear weapons
and the tension between great powers and therefore working towards reducing the risk of a nuclear weapon being detonated or being used is increasing in importance.

The document hinted at that, hinted at starting a process, a dialogue between non-nuclear weapons states and nuclear weapon states about what consists your definition of nuclear risk reactions, what should be the actions, agreed actions that you will include in that definition, and then which one could be the first actions that nuclear weapons states under the NPT could start taking towards a nuclear risk reduction. I believe that in themselves, there are important elements that state parties, and I understand the minister parties already working on how to follow up on those issues.

**Kennedy:** That's very interesting. I remember after 2010 when I was still in Geneva, the P5 was working among themselves to work on this reporting issue and I must say it was like pulling teeth. It's great to have that that fuller impulse. Sticking on disarmament, I think when I talked about before people who were predicting disaster in previous years, in particular, I think people were concerned that disagreements between those who support the TPNW and those who don't could undermine or even wreck the chances for an agreed outcome, but in fact, language was found. As you say, not everybody was happy, maybe nobody was, but that's the nature of diplomacy. I think you've identified some of the elements that accounted for the success, but elaborate on that if you want, and also I'd be interested in what lessons or encouragement you might have the broad NPT community to take forward on how to deal with these differing approaches, but still focus on how you implement Article 6.

**Zlauvinen:** Sure. I believe that the frustration by the great majority of state parties of NPT, the non-nuclear weapon states, is still over there. I believe that they're not happy with the result in the sense that, although throughout the conference there were many voices demanding the nuclear weapons states to do much better regarding pursuant implementation of Article 6 have not been done. I believe that nuclear weapons states took note about that growing discontent and frustration and that eventually could challenge the very regime of the NPT.

Of course, it was reflected to a certain extent in the outcome document. Granted, probably the non-nuclear weapon states would've preferred a much stronger and more ambitious language, but, again, as you say, it's the nature of multilateral negotiations and diplomacy. I believe that the voices were heard. I believe it's duly reflected in the document, could have been better, but that was the limit that we have to accept in the negotiations. Also, I believe that the TPNW state parties work in a very constructive way throughout the review conference. Several months before that, there was a very high concern in the sense that it will be the new clash.

That the new issue that is going to break the review conference was going to be about the demands by the TPNW state parties that a language in the final outcome document should be not only to take into account and accept the reality that the new treaty entered into force but also about the complementarity or working together between the two treaties, between the new treaty and the NPT. Of course, the reactions by those who oppose the TPNW, in particular, the nuclear weapon states and some allies, and everybody, including myself, we thought that it was going to be
the new clash. At the end of the day it was not. I believe it was not, because, as I said, the TPNW delegations were very constructive.

They presented a case, but they were ready to reach consensus on a language that could reflect to a minimum extent that new reality. Also, I believe that at the end of the day, the nuclear weapon states, in particular France, came to terms that it was impossible to stop that tide and for the language that I put together in the final document reflects that point of convergence. Still it's a long way to be discussed on that issue.

**Kennedy:** Ambassador, I just realized I neglected at the outset to remind people to please use the app to submit questions. I've still got a few more and then we'll open it up to the audience. Back to, again, largely disarmament. Obviously, there's lots of issues in there, but despite, I think the positives we've just been talking about, I still see among critics, among many states in the community, a sense that not necessarily just this rev con, but more broadly after two conferences that didn't result in outcomes, you've talked about transparency, and accountability and so on. A lot of people feel that the whole review process has become a cyclical and cynical display of what some people call performative diplomacy. That states can lose interest in the NPT process, that it could risk becoming as dysfunctional as dare I say at the conference on disarmament. What's your sense of this feeling, how widespread it is, and what can be done to prevent any perceived decay to this extremely valuable process?

**Zlauvinen:** No. There are many voices that point to that. That this punctuality of the review process itself, not only of the review conference because you have to remember that it's a whole review cycle. It's a five years review cycle that entails three preparatory conferences and the review conference. The delegations, the parties have the opportunities throughout that five years review cycle to engage among themselves and to discuss about all these issues. Granted, at the end of the day, if you don't have by agreement concrete actions to further implement obligations and the previous commitments, then it's like you feel, and the great majority, often the parties are feeling that we are not making progress.

That we got stuck. We got stuck in 2010 and probably it is true. Now, if you look into the current international security environment, one may reach the opposite conclusion and say that, "Well, it's amazing that still we are together." The nuclear weapon states are reconfirming their obligations at least under the treaty and that the system still is alive. It could be in a much disarray. It will depend from which angle you look into how the system works. Obviously, the system like any human system is not perfect and in particular, a system which contains 191 state parties.

It's one of the largest treaties, I think after the UN Charter ratified by such a large number of countries and, again, in which you have different national interests. You have, again, the nuclear weapon states, the non-nuclear weapon states, but if you look into those two categories, you have different positions. It's not that they're homogeneous positions including and in particular now are more than nuclear-weapon states, what they call the P5 Process in the NPT that traditionally was very unified.
They had their own different national positions, but at the end of the day, come the NPT Review Conference and they acted like a block or they have their own positions but they were very aligned to each other and they have a coordination process. Well, this is the first time because of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, that that P5 coordination process under the NPT didn't work. It was a P3 but then it was a P1 and P1 separately, Russia on one side and China on the other side. Also, that made the whole negotiation a bit more complicated because you didn't have one unified position by the nuclear weapon states and you can negotiate.

Also, if you look into the non-nuclear weapon states also it's that not a unified front because you have different groupings. You have those that are also party to the TPNW but also you have many non-nuclear weapons states that they are not party to the TPNW because of different reasons. Many of them because they are part of a military alliance, you name it, but also there are different approaches on how to pursue nuclear disarmament and many other differences of opposition. That makes now the negotiation process even more complex and that's why I believe that it's very important what we have achieved.

One thing we have achieved in the review conference is that it is a decision adopted by consensus that establish for the first time a working group on exactly that, on strengthening the review process. It's something that several delegations that have been pushing for the establishment of such a working group and it was always objected, in particular, by the nuclear weapon states. You know what? Now this time everyone agreed. Now it's up to state parties how best to use that working group. It may be not very ambitious but I think just it's a new tool that is over there and it's up to state parties to use it.

**Kennedy:** Do you have any thoughts about what would the year hints or I guess next spring whenever it's going to be about what might be usefully tackled or what some of the key issues are that you think states will want to pursue there?

**Zlauvinen:** These are my own views. I know that some state parties are already thinking about that. They're discussing about what will be the format of that working group. What will be the issues to be there? Always I thought that it could be used as a backdoor to start discussing more substantive issues. For example, on reporting, strengthen reporting, transparency, what I mentioned before including nuclear arsenals. It could be about what would look like if we started a process regarding nuclear risk reductions. I think just there are many important issues that it could be added into that working group.

**Kennedy:** Okay, well, we alluded earlier to the huge issue of Russia and its war on Ukraine and its effects around the world but more broadly, I think about the sharper geopolitical competition aside from Russia, China, which I think showed much sharper elbows at this review conference on issues like August and so on. Now, when you look at this geopolitical competition, maybe even to softer word for it, I don't think it's going to abate in the near term and certainly, the next review cycle starts right away. Any thoughts on how the states' parties your successor can manage this situation going forward?

**Zlauvinen:** I think there are many ways to tackle that but at the end of the day will depend on the political will by state parties to agree on that. I believe that what we
need more so now is that call by the great majority of state parties about pushing nuclear weapon states to do much better what they're doing even under current circumstances on nuclear disarmament. Nuclear disarmament is not going to happen next year or in the near future but we have to have that hope alive in the sense that it's an obligation, it's Article 6, it's over there, there's a commitment by nuclear weapon states to do so, and always it come with the excuse it's not the right environment, it's not the right conditions.

It may be so but you have to give something, some hope and some expectations, have to move forward that very complex and difficult process to the non-nuclear weapon states. At the end of the day, the NPT is a grand bargain. It's a grand bargain by which the great majority of state parties decided not to pursue nuclear weapons and exchange of that obligation by the nuclear weapons states that one day they're going to relinquish nuclear weapons. Well, it's a valid and just concept. If you delink that, there will be many state parties that may start thinking, "Then what is the value for my country that hasn't have or developed nuclear weapons for different reasons to be party to a treaty that is not giving us any benefits?"

Granted, the third pillar which is peaceful or the access to peaceful applications has been used and its benefits in many many state parties but it's not enough. It's an addition to the concept that one day the nuclear weapons states are going to be serious and engage in negotiations toward nuclear disarmament. This is what we're missing now. That is a conundrum. It have to be discussed, as I say, even under the current circumstances. When you look into what's going on in Ukraine and the threats by Russia, obviously, it's very threatening. It's very challenging.

In the mindset and the perspective of many non-nuclear weapons states that happen to be known in Europe and not directly affected by, the war in Ukraine, aside from the energy crisis and the food prices, the obligation is over there. I don't mind what's going on in Ukraine as it is, but still, the obligation is upon all nuclear weapons states, not only Russia but also the US and China. That is the frustration that is growing. I seem to be that always there is an excuse. There's always something happening somewhere in the world that will give a reason for the nuclear weapon state to say, well, this is not the right moment. I think how we break that dynamic is going to be relevant to the future of the regime.

**Kennedy:** Okay, well, very, very sobering words, but also I think a real charge to the community for the future. Let me turn at this point to my magic iPad and see what the audience has on its mind. Forgive me if I mispronounce anybody's name, but let's see. Oh, okay, I think there's one on the review process, but I think you've talked about the elements that we should focus on. There's clearly a lot of interest in this, so if you have any further to say on that, otherwise, I'll go to the next question.

**Zlauvinen:** Something I will add to what I already said about the review process is that as the president of the review reference, I was confronted with the decision on the last day when Russia informed me that they were going to block consensus if that language were to be retained. I saw no way out of that. I received some advice in the sense that, well, maybe I should call it for a vote. I thought it would be inappropriate for a president to make such a decision. I believe that there be a process in the preparation review process, state parties should look into that in the
sense that if in the future a president is confronted with that dilemma, what that
president should do?

Should call for a vote because technically you can't, in the sense that the NPT
Review Conference follows the rules of procedures of the UN General Assembly,
which normally adopts decisions or resolutions by voting. On a few occasions, they
do it by consensus. Technically, an NPT review conference could adopt a final
document by voting have never been done because you have the pros and cons. I'm
saying that decision should not be left only for the president.

My decision was I'm not going to take the decisions and therefore will continue with
the best practice is either adopted by consensus or is not. Even that concept of
which I like it, of consensus minus one that many are using. Technically that was it,
but I didn't hammer that. I didn't say, well, the document was adopted by consensus
minus one. It could be another way out, but I think this is something, a discussion
that the parties need to have, if not always will continue falling into the trap that a
review conference is not successful because they didn't adopt by consensus.

Kennedy: Okay. By the way, that was Angelica Liao-Moroz who had the follow-up
question on the working group. Again, on the structure, Toby Dalton, whom we all
know here asked about the structure of the review conference. The three pillars
which can be too siloed. In your experience, both this rev con and of course in your
previous experience, do you think the structure should be adjusted so there's more
connectivity between the three pillars?

Zlauvinen: I do believe so, but in particular because there are some duplications
and replications on issues dealt by minimum two of the pillars. There are some
issues that are being dealt by the Pillar 1 disarmament that also is being dealt by
pillar two issues. Under Pillar 2 they are also being dealt by pillar three, and
therefore you have different approaches because you have three different chairs.

An example in the [unintelligible 00:35:13] review conference was the issues
related to the military attacks by Russia on Ukrainian civilian nuclear power plants
that were discussed both under Pillar 2, which is on safe guards from that point of
view, but also under Pillar 3, which is nuclear peaceful applications under the sub-
chapters of nuclear safety and security. Therefore you have the same issues being
dealt by two different committees. If you look into the language of the draft reports,
not adopted, but draft reports by the chairs of main committees two and three, there
are some discrepancies. There are some redundancy replications, but also some
differences of language between one and two.

At the end of the day, I have to be the president myself. I have to merge it and see
whether you can combine them. This is just one example, but I fully agree with Toby
that something has to be done just to streamline the work of the main committees.
Also, I believe that the connection at the end of the day is being done by the
president. In my case, every morning we have had a bureau meeting with the chairs
of all the main committees in which each one describes briefly the work and the
actions. That helps in coordination in that sense. At the end of the day, each year his
or her own man or woman.
Kennedy: Okay, Jess Rogers asks following up on the possible progress in nuclear risk reduction, what measures and improvements do you urge the state parties to most urgently work on?

Zlauvinen: This is a tough question. There are many issues over there. Some people believe that it should be the alerting, but I was told by a couple of delegations that they happened to have nuclear weapons. That is not a good idea for different, practical measures, but also about the challenge of communications and many others. I think I wouldn't pick one particular one. I think that nuclear risk reduction have to be approached as a package. A number of measures have to be worked out together.

Kennedy: Okay, here's one from Oliver Meyer. Following up on our discussion earlier on TPNW, noting France was the last country to withdraw its objections to at least mention the TPNW and the one MSP in a final document. How difficult was it to convince France to take that step? Does language pave the way for more constructive engagement between the TPNW and NPT intercessional processes, and how can this be achieved?

Zlauvinen: Well, I'm not going to be disclose my negotiation with the French delegation.

Kennedy: Well, maybe if there's somebody from France who talk about it over a drink later tonight.

Zlauvinen: Have to give it to them at the end of the day when they have to, like many other delegations, they have to make a choice whether they're going to accept a text that I was proposing which in my mind, was the best option possible to reach consensus and agreed on that. They agreed on the language that I proposed. They were not happy, obviously, but they considered that blocking the whole process was more damaging than agreeing to that text and that could apply to many other allegations that I have to agree on language that I proposed that they were not happy on many other issues.

Kennedy: Okay, Heather Williams asks, a few non-nuclear weapons states and civil society groups indicated they were deeply unhappy with the draft document and that we should not view it as a near consensus document. Had Russia not objected, do you think any other states would've blocked consensus or would the draft have been an agreed final document?

Zlauvinen: No, everybody else [unintelligible 00:39:12]. No one else was going to object. I can assure that, yes. They could have raised their hands immediately after Russian delegation did it, and no one else did it.

Kennedy: Okay.

Zlauvinen: That's speculation. One can speculate one with another, but as president of the conference I was running the backdoor negotiations with each of the delegations, and I have the confirmation of all of them. As I say, no one was happy. That was the nature of the process. It was going to be a document that was going to
make all the delegations equally unhappy. I believe that is exactly what it was. Achievable.

Kennedy: Okay, an old colleague from Geneva from Japan, Michiru Nishida. Is he here? Hi, now I'm not sure which are coming in from the virtual audience or here but anyhow, good to see you. Anyhow, he asked, did you have a plan B in case negotiations were not going well? Did you and if not, why not?

Zlauvinen: That's a good question. It's something that [unintelligible 00:40:24] I think he was here this morning, he wrote an article in foreign affairs back in end of 2019, beginning of 2020. He and I we met in London for a meeting related to the review conference and he asked me about the same question and I say no, and I said, "Look, my plan B was to be the president of the review conference." Anyway but no, always I knew that if plan A was going to fail, we needed a plan B but I didn't want to be working on Plan B because it's like you're the teacher and you're telling your students there's not going to be a test, there's not going to be exams.

I'm going to give you a grade without examination. Then why do you think that the students are going to be compelled to study? No, they're not going to study. Absolutely. If I were to say from the very beginning I'm already working in Plan B but then I have to push them to work very hard to try to reach consensus on plan A, would they have really work hard to try to reach consensus on plan A? Of course, absolutely not.

Kennedy: As a parent myself I can certainly sympathize with that, the notion of having those exams out there. Noah Mayhew from Vienna asks, considering how contentious discussions on August have been, can you discuss how the language in the draft document was handled in advance of or at the rev con?

Zlauvinen: August was a new issue. I don't know. It didn't happen before in previous review conferences because it's a new development and of course in the preparation to review conference, the Chinese delegation was making it very clear there was going to be an issues of contention and it was. It was raised by the Chinese delegation throughout the review conference and obviously the Australian, UK and US delegations presented their own view but also there were a number of delegations in particular Indonesia that were picking up on that issue, and South Africa from a different angle.

The issue was dealt by the main committee. I think it was two, yes, I think so, but there was no agreement on the language. By the end of the review conference I decided to call for a small group of those delegations and I asked the chair of subsidiary body to the PR of Bulgaria in New York to facilitate that process and they came with the language that is reflected in my outcome document. That language was agreed by those delegations including China.

Kennedy: Gabrielle [unintelligible 00:43:34]. I'm not sure. Anyhow, Gabrielle asks what do you feel was the general reaction to the statements from civil society and NGOs? Do those statements truly have an impact on the process?
Zlauvinen: Maybe in the process, yes. I think we need more of civil society participation engagements during the review conference. I think many delegations were trying to be more open on that. Others, unfortunately, were not. I believe that the inputs by civil society are essential to keep the moral compass in the room. Not necessarily that is going to reflect it in our outcome document because then national positions and interests have a prevalence over that.

As I say, they’re keeping the moral compass on the process. I believe that there are a few reflections of that in the way that the discussions took place and in some elements of the document. Absolutely I will encourage even further civil society participation at the review conference. As I said, unfortunately, some delegations blocked their presence at the end of last week and the plenaries we held for the discussions of my draft document. The Russo procedures there was nothing I could do to change that.

Kennedy: Oh dear. Was that a large number? Were they on the record on this?

Zlauvinen: No because you need consensus. I ran informal consultations and I was told by some delegations if I were to present that for a formal decision, we’re going to block it.

Kennedy: Jamie Kwong asks, what do you think will be the primary issues that will impact the next rev con?

Zlauvinen: I think they will continue to be the usual suspects. As I said lack of progress on nuclear disarmament. I would say that the Middle East still will continue to be an issue. Maybe it’s losing, not the relevance but it’s losing the rhetoric among the interested parties but I believe that everything depends on what happened in Ukraine and obviously God forbid if nuclear weapons are going to be used, it is going to change dramatically exactly what are going to be the the main issues for the next review conference.

Kennedy: I actually had a question on the Middle East I was going to ask earlier, but given that, it was settled relatively in a non-contentious fashion. I’m sure there was certainly parties that were not happy but, given back to 2015 my last rev con when of course it was the issue that broke consensus there, what do you think accounted for the success, let’s say, this time around? Good advanced diplomacy between the key parties, the fact of the UN process going along so there’s actual a parallel treatment going on to this, all of the above, none? Again, can we expect that this will hold or this will become, again, a source of great dissension?

Zlauvinen: I believe it was the result of a combination of all those two elements. The fact that the UN conference on the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East a help for those parties of the region to show that there is some progress even in a separate track as some will define the UN process. There is a connection obviously between the two and therefore they felt that they were less under pressure by their own constituencies back home in the sense that the 1995 resolutions on establishment of such a sound under the NPT finally could show there is something somewhere moving along.
Obviously, some state parties from the region didn’t see that in that way. While recognizing the UN conference, they didn’t agree that it was [unintelligible 00:48:24] overlinking with the 1995 decisions and the views were that therefore there’s no progress at all in implementation on 1995 resolution decision. The tension was over there but it was not so much between the Arabs and the US in particular but it was among the Arabs and another state party from from the region in particular.

I believe that it was handled in the way that you say that. There was previous diplomatic negotiations in particular between two important actors. At the end of the day, those two actors that they were same ones that prevented the agreement in 2015 didn’t want to face the same problem. I think they didn't want to be in a position that they have to block

consensus. They didn't want to be blamed again in 2022 for blocking yet another outcome document and therefore they burned their fingers and they were more cautious and more

open to a language of compromise is exactly where we got it.

Kennedy: Ambassador, you referred to mandating smaller group discussions to tackle some of these issues. I've read of certain ones that took this on. I myself remember, for example, in 2010 the Egyptian Ambassador Maged Abdelaziz performed this function really quite remarkably. Although being at the Egyptian mission at 1:00 AM in the morning every night wasn't necessarily how you want to spend your time but it was a very valuable thing. Could you comment on the role of using these smaller groups so you don't have a plenary of 191 states? What were the pros and cons in other words? Did you have a lot of criticism from states that might not have been in those smaller groups? Were there ways to improve it by having somebody brief them and consult with folks who weren't in the room? Anyhow, how has this aspect of diplomacy worked?

Zlauvinen: I have a dilemma when preparing myself for the review conference and look into what my predecessor has done in previous review conferences. My own experience as representative for Argentina in a number of international conferences not only disarmament on many other issues and based on my own personal experience, I was very much opposed to small groups because if you're not in then you're forced to agree to a language that you are no participant in the negotiations drafting and having to be on other occasions.

I was not happy with that but also I understood that sometimes you cannot muster consensus in the negotiation of very complex issues in a plenary with 161 delegations. The question was how to balance both things. I was very reluctant to call for a source, those friends of the chair groups. What I did at the end of the day, when I saw that, at the end of the third week that it was almost impossible to muster consensus or at least a basis for a possible consensus, is that I asked the head of the Finnish delegation, Kullervo Manner, I think he's in the audience today, whether he will help facilitate not a small group, but a group of 20 delegations that will be a reflection of the different groupings and position from nuclear weapons states, non-nuclear weapons states, from Stockholm Initiative, from TPNW.
We drafted together very carefully. It was a mini plenary. Delegation, that they have their own constituencies in their own groupings, the regional groups, and the idea was to discuss everything. It was not a small group first. I was not to deal with one particular issue is that tried to clean up and move forward as much as possible with a full text and then I was going to use whatever and I've benefited so much.

My thanks to [unintelligible 00:53:02] and his team, all the other delegations that participated. I think they worked for 12 hours straight on Saturday, on Sunday they continue. Also, I was very open with that so I didn't hide. Other delegations came to me and said, "Why we're not involved." and I explained and say, "I can't get everyone. If not we'll go back to the plenary." What I did in parallel, I continued the plenary, and I deal with exactly the same draft, the same issues.

They know that my text was a combination of both things of what had been discussed and negotiated at the plenary, transparency, and then I fit in some new elements or some progress that was done in the smaller group. It was only the August issue that I call for a separate small group. No other small group was over there. There was some negotiations on additional protocol, but it was a decision by the state parties, some state parties themselves.

**Kennedy:** I see that James Acton and some others ask the same question. I was going to finish up with and that is, what advice would you give your successor, the president of the 11th Review Conference?

**Zlauvinen:** First, I will give an advice to the state parties to choose and elect the next president designate as soon as possible. I benefited tremendously because of the pandemic postpone the conference so I had two years and a half, maybe too long. I believe that the longer a president designate has to engage with delegations to conduct informal consultations, the better the president designate will be prepared. Also, the better delegations will know that person, he will know delegation person. At the end of the day you need that. As an ambassador, the person interactions at the end of the day are key.

Also, I would suggest that President designate to use the new technologies and what we benefited from the pandemic. I was forced to conduct a number of informal consultations virtually that before have never been done. When we did it with [unintelligible 00:55:14] my secretary general of the review conference, that there was tremendous work that we decided to conduct informal consultations, not by groupings, not only by Welke and then by NAM and then by Eastern European groups or group of one China. There was a traditional approach. We decided we have to do it virtually less to eat together. At the very beginning, the delegations, "No, no, no, how are we going to be meeting Welke and NAM? We have different views."

That's the whole idea. At the end of the day, delegations were extremely just pleased because it was extremely helpful, even though the President had to meet with, for example, with NAM, listen to NAM, then the following day you meet with Welke and they will say, "What did the NAM say?" Basically, you're passing messages, NAM is opposing this or that. To the NAM, Welke is going to push for this or that. What better if they listen to themselves and this all we achieve. In two years and a half, I think delegations listen to themselves and they knew exactly what to expect outside
of Ukraine but they knew exactly what to expect. That's why I believe that the President designate was better prepared but delegations were better prepared.

Kennedy: Well, let's hope that we don't have another COVID to give the next president that thing. As we bring this to a close, one, I want to apologize for the questions I was not able to get to because of time. To thank you for doing this today, the length of your distinguished career, of course, which you're still very much engaged in and the years you spent preparing for and managing this conference.

Before I ask for a big round of applause to thank you, also when you mentioned your tutor, his great work, all the folks in here who are delegates, the civil society, all the side events, it really is an extraordinary way to bring together the community. Let me just thank you for your extraordinary work that you put into this. This may not be usual, but I at least want to give you a big round of applause and thanks for your work.

[applause]

Zlauvinen: Thank you.

[00:57:56] [END OF AUDIO]