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IDSA COMMENT

Nuclear Security Summit: An Assessment

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The Hague Nuclear Security Summit concluded with a Communiqué in which the participants took stock of the progress made in nuclear and radiological materials and called for further strengthening of international "nuclear security architecture" and "nuclear security culture". The nuclear security architecture consists of various legal instruments, international organizations and their initiatives as well as 'good practices' in the area. In addition, there were a number of additional pledges[1] on nuclear security announced by different countries.

The Nuclear Security Summit process began with the first NSS in Washington in 2010 held at President Obama's initiative and has now grown into a vast activity with multiple stakeholders.

The focus of the first summit was to secure nuclear material and radiological substance in order to prevent them from falling in the hands of terrorists. The second summit held in Seoul in 2012 in the wake of the Fukushima nuclear disaster, carried forward the process initiated in Washington. It also focused on the need for tackling nuclear security and nuclear safety in a "coherent manner" thus blurring the distinction between the two. A great deal of attention was paid to securing Highly Enriched Uranium (HEU) and "separated plutonium".

The recent Hague Summit maintains the continuity with the earlier summits building upon the work already done. Following the Seoul Summit, it deals with topics like the strengthening of the international nuclear security architecture, enhancing the role of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), safety of nuclear materials including highly enriched uranium, separated plutonium and other radio-active resources and materials, nuclear security and safety, illicit trafficking of nuclear materials, nuclear forensics, information security, nuclear transportation etc. The Hague communiqué is, however, much longer (36 paras) and detailed as compared to the Seoul Summit communiqué of 13 paras.

Following the "Stuxnet' worm attack on the control system of Iranian centrifuges, the issue of cyber security has occupied centrestage in nuclear safety security discussion. The Communiqué talks specifically of the "growing threat of cyber-attacks" and their potential impact on nuclear security and calls upon the states and private sector to take appropriate measures to secure their facilities.

Overall, the Hague Communiqué does not break any fresh grounds but it pushes the states to take greater responsibility for nuclear security. There have been calls on the sidelines of the summit for consolidating the fragmented international nuclear security legal regime for converting voluntary commitment by states to legally binding commitments on nuclear security. Suggestions have also been made to states for incorporating the IAEA guidelines on nuclear security and safety in national legislations.

Gift Baskets

[1] The pledges, including those in the Communiqué, are voluntary. The only difference is 'Communiqué' has been agreed by all the participating countries.

The Communiqué is an agreed document representing the lowest common denominator of views. It is interesting to examine the "g**ift baskets"** or the separate pledges undertaken by countries or a group of countries at the summit. The process of "gift basket" pledges began in 2012 and has continued in 2014. For instance, the US issued 15 joint statements, South Korea 10 and Japan, Kazakhstan and the UK 9 each. Among the P-5, Russia and China did not undertake any pledge. Pakistan signed one pledge while India did not undertake any. Earlier, India had pledged to offer a Global Center for Nuclear Energy Partnership (GCNEP) which it has fulfilled. These pledges cover a range of subjects such as maritime supply chain security, transport security, nuclear smuggling, nuclear forensics, global minimization of nuclear materials etc. Such pledges given out by states indicate their preferences with regard to different aspects of nuclear security. They also build pressure on other states to join such initiatives.

India and Nuclear Security

India has been a victim of international terrorism for many decades and is deeply concerned at the clear and present danger prospect of nuclear terrorism. India is an active and enthusiastic participant in the nuclear security process. The Prime Minister attended the first two summits while the Hague Summit was attended by the External Affairs Minister. India has to take care of its ambitious nuclear energy programme. It cannot afford to compromise with its credible minimum deterrent which is dependent upon the production of adequate amount of fissile material. Yet, India has taken a number of steps to strengthen the nuclear security regime. In a national progress report, India has indicated that it is a party to 13 universal instruments to combat international terrorism. It is also an active participant in UN and other mechanisms as evident in the implementation of 1540 UNSCR. It has equally strengthened its national legal framework and is fully committed to international cooperation having established a Global Centre for Nuclear Energy Partnership (GCNEP) which has organized a series of national & international training programmes. The Indian progress report says that "the enriched uranium based fuel in the APSARA nascent reactor has been placed in a "safeguarded facility". The Apsara reactor will henceforth use low-enriched uranium as a fuel. The report stresses that India's "closed nuclear fuel cycle", based on "reprocess-to-reuse", is an inherently safer process. The report also points out that India has developed an "advanced heavy water reactor based on LEU and thorium with new safety and proliferation resistance features". India has contributed $ 1 million contribution to IAEA's activities.

Future of Nuclear Security Process

The next nuclear security summit will be held in Washington in 2016. This is likely to be the last summit in the process. Thereafter, the IAEA will most likely play the nodal role on nuclear security issues.

The process of building nuclear security is a tedious one. First, a large amount of nuclear and radiological material needs to be secured in thousands of facilities around the world. Second, there are differences among key countries on issues like "peer-review" of nuclear material. Third, the IAEA has been deficient in resources. Fourth, the issue of reducing or limiting the nuclear fissile material is a sensitive one on which states hold different views. The original commitment of securing nuclear material in four years has not yet been achieved. The danger of nuclear terrorism remains palpable.

In the years to come, a lot more activity on nuclear security can be expected. Much of it will arise from the commitment taken by states at the three nuclear security summits and the voluntary pledges undertaken by different countries. A good deal of pressure from civil society and think tanks on nuclear security issues can be expected. One area of their focus would be minimization of nuclear fissile material and India will also encounter pressure in this regard, particularly from

foreign civil society organizations and think tanks. The demand to reduce fissile materials products will be made on India as well. India has already got the policy of credible minimum Deterrence. However, the best solution lies in global nuclear disarmament because unclear reduction for national needs will always be contested.

Views expressed are of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the IDSA or of the Government of India.