



THE NUCLEAR SECURITY SUMMIT-2016: EXPECTATION VS REALITY!

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EXPECTATION

“Nuclear Security ‘Architecture’ Momentum Needs Continuity”

The fourth Nuclear Security Summit (NSS-2016) is about to be in a few hours. This would also be the end of a two-day summit to be hosted by President Obama in Washington DC. This is also the homecoming for the NSS. The last three biannual summits were successfully conducted in the years 2010, 2012, 2014, and have reported various victories in the field of nuclear security. Broadly, the Nuclear Security Summits have not only raised the profile of nuclear security issues at a global level but have started a thread of ‘softer nuclear security issues’ that have witnessed a wilful participation of countries

The innovative concepts of ‘gift baskets’ introduced during the proceedings of the first Security Summit have indeed extracted voluntary nuclear security commitments from the participating countries and the ‘Sherpa meetings’ have become a unique platform to distil the

incongruities beforehand in order to shape the agenda more coherently during the NSS.

On the operational aspects, some of the achievements of the continuity of NSS have transcended into the successful securing of 3.2 metric tonnes of HEU from 13 countries. Additionally, work had reached near completion on national nuclear security commitments such as ratification of Amendment to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material (CPPNM/A) and the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism (ICSANT), and additional states have joined the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism. In the last quarter of the NSS journey, Pakistan has confirmed its ratification of the CPPNM-Amendment. This certainly marks a welcome change for Pakistan’s alignment towards the established measures related to the prevention, detection and punishment of offences related to nuclear material. Since 2009 various radiation detection equipments have been installed at 328 international border crossings, airports, and

seaports to combat illicit trafficking in nuclear materials. Several countries have pledged to establish Centres of Excellence (CoE) to provide international, regional, and domestic training on nuclear security, safeguards, and export control fundamentals and best practices.¹ The US-China CoE, established as the largest nuclear security centre in Asia Pacific recently came into operation in Beijing last week. All of this is aimed at strengthening the nuclear security regime.

An emerging consensus on the NSS beyond 2016 is shaping up. Indeed, Scholars who observe the issue closely have suggested various ways through which NSS could be extended post 2016. Biannual ministerial meetings followed by meetings of the heads of the states, periodic nuclear security conferences, and NPT review conferences as a platform to further the NSS agenda are some of the suggestions.

REALITY

“Might Retire as a Presidential Legacy”

Without underestimating the significant achievements of the NSS, a brutal scrutiny of the same is required. To start with, the question about completion of the tasks taken up by the previous NSSs such as CPPNM amendment looms largely unanswered. While the NSS-2016 recognises the necessity of action plan beyond 2016 and at present discussions on possible options for a post-2016 coordinating structure is ongoing amongst Sherpas, however, nothing is

finalised as yet. Because nuclear security is a journey and not a destination, taking forward the security behaviour of states by building a continued momentum is significant.

The nuclear security architecture at the end of 3+1 upcoming NSS in reality remains as a ‘patchwork’ that comprises of a range of bilateral, unilateral and multilateral efforts that lack any nodal point to assess the implementation. Organisations such as the IAEA and UN promote the NSS’s commitments and vision through their own mandate. The Summits have not been able to institutionalise a follow up apparatus for the action plans and communiqués released at the end of each summit. This gap becomes imperative to be bridged as in the current format NSS-2016 is the last summit to be held.

Out of many suggestions relating to the follow up of NSS agenda, a widely accepted idea is through the IAEA spearheading it. Given the expertise and scope of influence of the organisation, the option remains the most appropriate. However, challenges such as ‘IAEA’s limited advisory role’ and ‘finances’ are also identified as roadblocks by scholars.²

Additionally, a brief look at the report card for the ratification of the CPPNM amendment for the purpose of critical assessment is also required. As on March 18, 2016, 36 out of 94 contracting countries/organisations are yet to ratify the amendment to the CPPNM.

Interestingly the list of outliners includes the Russian Federation. Other few big names include Japan, Saudi Arabia, Denmark, Finland, Jordan, Libya, Norway, and few states from the Central Asian, Middle Eastern region.³ It is also worthy to note that two of the P-5's- the United States and France have only acceded to the CPPNM in the last two years. France is yet to ratify the CPPNM amendment. Considering, the NSS as an American President's progeny- the US's ratification to CPPNM amendment –which can be referred as the backbone of Nuclear Security Architecture- in the closing year is rather surprising. The ratification of the Amendment to the CPPNM remains significant as it is legally binding document. However, for this to materialise the ratification of 2/3rd of state parties is required. It implies 62 ratifications are needed.

Furthermore the Russian absence from the NSS is significant without which the NSS process cannot come to full circle. Russia has refused to participate in the NSS agenda, which makes for incomplete conversion of HEU from 63 Russian nuclear power plants. The country also has largest stockpile of HEU. This implies that approximately 700 tonnes of HEU is yet to be secured.⁴ As one of the P-5 and a participant to one of the most successful nuclear threat reduction programme (CTR), the Russian absence on any future nuclear security agenda of global in nature is would remain a setback for the final NSS.

In the next two days, the NSS would come to close as a Presidential legacy as despite remarkable achievements no new roles have been identified for states. The threat of terrorist securing vulnerable material led the NSS initiative for both the terms of President Obama. There is no indication from any Presidential candidate in the US about the future of the NSS. A discussion on newer/ future nuclear security threat perceptions is on the agenda for 2016. Approaches to reducing nuclear threats would be discussed, however to take the NSS beyond 2016 in an effective manner is only up to the participating states. One can only be hopeful that the range of documents like the communiqués, action plans, national statements and gift baskets that the 2016-NSS is likely to produce, should result in shaping the nuclear security architecture for the coming years.

(Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the position of the Centre for Air Power Studies [CAPS])

Notes

¹ NSS-2016, "FAQS", Official Website for the *Nuclear Security Summit -2016*, available at <http://www.nss2016.org/about-nss/frequently-asked-questions/>, Accessed on March 18, 2016.

² Manpreet Sethi, "Nuclear Security Summit Process: Progress and Prognosis", *Strategic Space, IPCS*, 1 March, 21, 2016, Available at <http://www.ipcs.org/article/south-asia/nuclear-security-summit-process-progress-and-prognosis-5002.html>, Accessed on March 24, 2016.

³ For Details see Amendment to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material

(CPPNM), *IAEA Document*, Available at https://www.iaea.org/Publications/Documents/Conventions/cppnm_amend_status.pdf, Accessed on March 28, 2016.

⁴ K. Iqbal, "The NSS Process: Letter Or Spirit", *The Nation*, March 28, 2016, Available at <http://nation.com.pk/columns/28-Mar-2016/the-nss-process-letter-or-spirit>, Accessed on March 28, 2016.

