STATEMENT
BY
SOUTH AFRICA

ON THE
THEMATIC DEBATE: NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT
FIRST COMMITTEE

DEDelivered by
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Chairperson,

The threat posed by nuclear weapons is real and few would disagree that the possibility that nuclear weapons could be used represents a continued risk to humanity. We must therefore guard against talking of nuclear weapons as purely inanimate objects, reciting numbers growing or numbers diminishing.

It is accepted that the only real guarantee against the use of such weapons is their complete elimination and the assurance that they will never be produced again. However, the onus to effect nuclear disarmament -- that is to say getting rid of nuclear weapons -- primarily rests on those States that possess such weapons.

South Africa believes that ignoring the interrelationship between nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation would be at our own peril. The longer nuclear weapons exist, the longer the world will have to wait to be free from the use or threat of use of such weapons. The longer fears will persist that such weapons could also fall into the wrong hands.

Nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament are mutually reinforcing processes that will require continuous and irreversible progress on both fronts. In addition, it has been agreed that nuclear disarmament is not part of some “ultimate” objective, but a milestone to be reached on the way to the real objective of the disarmament process, namely general and complete disarmament.

Chairperson,

In South Africa’s view, there can be no doubt that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) remains the foundation of nuclear disarmament.

The 2000 NPT Review Conference consensus agreement on the “unequivocal undertaking by the nuclear-weapon States to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals leading to nuclear disarmament to which all States parties are committed” was only intended to be a first step in this process. To fulfil their obligations under the Treaty, both the nuclear weapon States and the non-nuclear weapon States were to implement the practical steps for systematic and progressive efforts to eliminate nuclear weapons.

If we fail to ensure that agreements reached are implemented and fulfilled, the danger exists that the Treaty will continue to follow a circular path of continuous attempts to again and again reach agreements on issues that had been agreed to and dealt with previously. Stark examples of this practice are the 1995 and 2000 agreements calling for signatures, ratifications and the early entry into force of the CTBT, which must now again be promoted; the 1990, 1995 and 2000 agreements on security assurances, which must now also again be promoted.

South Africa continues to believe that multilaterally negotiated legally binding security assurances must be given by the nuclear weapon States to all non-nuclear weapon States Parties. This will be pursued at the NPT Review Conference in the context of working papers circulated at PrepCom meetings on "Security Assurances".
South Africa therefore strongly supports the establishment of a subsidiary body at the 2005 Review Conference to give particular attention to the issue.

However, pending the conclusion of negotiations on security assurances, the nuclear weapons States should fully respect their existing commitments in this regard.

Chairperson,

The Treaty must be implemented in all its aspects without favour or prejudice. It is not prudent to hold onto any privilege or favoured right to the detriment of the Treaty as a whole. No aspect should be allowed to lag behind any other. No aspect should be more strictly enforced or require stricter implementation than any other. As a multilateral instrument, which was negotiated and equally agreed to by the members of the international community, all aspects of the Treaty must be implemented equally.

My delegation also wishes to associate itself with the earlier statement made by Sweden on behalf of the New Agenda Coalition (NAC).

I thank you.