First Committee

Nuclear Weapons

Statement by
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As delivered
Mr Chairman

Creating a world safe from nuclear weapons remains one of the international community's most urgent priorities. My delegation has already registered its views on the imperative for implementation of nuclear disarmament commitments through the statement of the New Agenda Coalition, delivered by the distinguished representative of South Africa during the General Debate. The focus of New Zealand's efforts on nuclear issues will continue to be the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. In looking towards the 2010 NPT Review Conference, we will be concentrating on nuclear disarmament, transparency and confidence building measures, the de-alerting of nuclear weapons, revision of nuclear doctrine, and effective safeguards against proliferation, as areas of priority.

We believe that one of the areas on which the NPT should be able to make substantive progress during the current review cycle is transparency and confidence building measures. We are pleased to see that momentum is growing in support of greater transparency, including in the work of this Committee, and we welcome the increased efforts undertaken in this respect by some nuclear weapons States over the past year.

As part of the New Agenda Coalition we have supported ideas on systematised nuclear accounting within the NPT as a way to increase transparency. A reporting mechanism regarding national arsenals would be a substantive confidence building measure if nuclear weapon States were to provide, for example, further clarity as to the current status of their holdings, as well as future plans for down-sizing and the reduction of reliance on nuclear weapons in national and regional security doctrines.

The de-alerting of nuclear weapons would help to give confidence to non-nuclear weapon States that expanded roles for nuclear weapons in security doctrines are not being developed. It is of concern to New Zealand that some nuclear weapon States continue to advocate the doctrine of nuclear deterrence, which reinforces the perception that, for them, nuclear weapons will continue to remain a long-term strategic component of national security. New Zealand absolutely rejects this proposition. The best way to pursue national and collective security is to work towards a global security environment in which nuclear weapons have been eliminated.

New Zealand is a core co-sponsor of a number of resolutions relating to nuclear weapons in this Committee, which reflects our strong commitment to achieving the goal of nuclear weapon free world. South Africa has already spoken on behalf of the New Agenda Coalition, and we expect that a high level of support will continue to be demonstrated for the Coalition’s annual nuclear disarmament resolution in this Committee.
Together with Switzerland, Chile, Malaysia, Nigeria and Sweden, we will again present a resolution on decreasing the operational readiness of nuclear weapons systems. As highlighted by the Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission in 2006, one of the greatest risks of nuclear catastrophe comes from the estimated thousands of nuclear weapons which remain on high alert status. Ensuring that all nuclear weapons are removed from high alert, as we work towards the total elimination of nuclear arsenals, would help build confidence and be a significant improvement for our collective security. We anticipate that the resolution will continue to receive widespread support, and hope that additional States will move to demonstrate their support for the initiative in this its second year.

New Zealand is pleased to be a core co-sponsor of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) resolution, with Mexico and Australia. It is imperative that this treaty enters into force as soon as possible, and we welcome the ratifications of Colombia, Barbados, Malaysia and Burundi over the past year. Universalisation of the CTBT should be a collective goal of the international community. In particular we urge those Annex 2 States that have signed but not ratified, to ratify the Treaty without delay. We hope that States will again demonstrate their strong support for the Treaty by voting for this resolution.

New Zealand is also proud to work with Brazil on a resolution calling for a nuclear-weapon-free Southern Hemisphere and adjacent areas. Nuclear weapon free zones are a powerful symbol for demonstrating the strong collective will that exists to eliminate nuclear weapons. They can act as disarmament measures, and also contribute to non-proliferation efforts. We hope that this resolution will once again pass by an overwhelming majority.

It is in our common interest to ensure that peaceful uses of nuclear technology remain accessible to all States while at the same time ensuring that such technologies do not contribute towards the proliferation of nuclear weapons. It is important therefore that peaceful nuclear activities are conducted within the framework of a robust system of safeguards. New Zealand attaches great importance to ensuring that the International Atomic Energy Agency has all of the tools necessary to undertake this essential work. In this regard, we recognise the vital role of the Additional Protocol, which, together with the Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement, forms the contemporary verification standard.

New Zealand is a strong and active supporter of the Proliferation Security Initiative, and we hosted a major international PSI exercise last month. Our firm support for this initiative is consistent with our long-standing commitment to preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, their delivery systems and related material. New Zealand was also pleased to join the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism last year, and continues to be an active participant in the G8 Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction.