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Statement by Ambassador J. Eufkaaihkan of Mongolia
in the thematic debate on nuclear disarmament

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Mr. Chairman,

I will touch upon two issues: cooperation with IAEA and promotion of NWFZs.

Cooperation with IAEA

Like many others, my delegations would like to underline the important role that IAEA is playing as the only internationally recognized competent authority responsible for verifying and assuring compliance of States with the international safeguards regime established by the NPT and enriched by NWFZ treaties. As the Director-General of the Agency has recently pointed out, “the focus of safeguards is ... shifting from mechanical verification of declared nuclear material to an information driven system aimed at understanding and assessing the consistency of information on a State’s nuclear program as a whole.” However, in order for the Agency to fully fulfill its obligations and further strengthen the effectiveness of the safeguards system, it needs the support and cooperation of all its member States, the same States that are represented in this Committee.

Effective nuclear verification requires, as we all know, four basic pre-conditions: state-of-the art technology, timely access to all relevant information, sufficient human and financial resources and adequate legal authority. Though the Agency is working hard to meet these pre-requisites, my delegation believes that the international community, on its part too, needs to work to strengthen the Agency’s legal authority by promoting universalization of the NPT, scrupulous and balanced implementation of its provisions, and making sure that all the parties to the NPT bring into force the required comprehensive safeguards agreements with the Agency and conclude Additional Protocols with it. This would enable the Agency to fully perform its functions of the “watchdog”. Otherwise the Agency would not be able to provide full assurances about State activities, nor credible assurances regarding the absence of undeclared nuclear material or activities.

Support of nuclear-weapon-free zones

It is generally accepted that as concrete regional measures, nuclear-weapon-free zones (NWFZs) play an important role in nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. Today the entire Southern Hemisphere is nuclear-weapon-free. However, it should be pointed out that NWFZs are still in the phase of establishment and consolidation, and face considerable challenges. As the Secretary-General of the United Nations pointed out last August, while 2/3 of the world’s States are signatories to NWFZ treaties, the majority of the world’s population still lives in countries that possess nuclear weapons. Moreover, two out of five regional zones are yet to enter into force and a considerable number of members of zones is still yet to bring the required safeguards agreements into force.
On the other hand, nuclear-weapon states (NWSs) need to provide effective guarantees to non-nuclear-weapon States that they will not use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against them. Just like the provisions of the NPT treaty, to be credible, the security assurances should be legally based, clear and unconditional. In the case of NWFZs, NWSs need to either sign or ratify the protocols to the relevant NWFZ treaties, or modify or withdraw altogether reservations and unilateral interpretations that affect the denuclearized status of the relevant zones.

An important objective is to promote the establishment of new zones where necessary and feasible. Last decade has seen establishment of only one additional zone – in Central Asia. We agree with the view that the effectiveness of NWFZs could be greatly promoted by better coordination and cooperation between existing zones, and by prompt entry into force of the African and Central Asian NWFZ treaties. It is our hope that the second NWFZ conference, scheduled for 2010, would mark an important step in this regard as well as in contributing to a productive and successful outcome of the 2010 NPT revcon. Following the decision of the first NWFZ conference held in 2005 in Mexico, Mongolia has established its national focal point to deal with NWFZ-related issues. The focal point has already established formal relations with the focal points of other NWFZ treaty agencies. In order to contribute to the preparations for the second conference, Mongolia has offered to host a meeting of the focal points in spring 2009.

More than three decades have passed since the General Assembly had mandated and considered a comprehensive study on NWFZs in all its aspects, and almost a decade since it adopted guidelines for establishing new NWFZs. My delegation believes that the changing political environment, the need to make progress in consolidating the existing and establishing new zones in some regions, especially in the Middle-East and North-East Asia, calls for a new comprehensive independent study on NWFZs. The study could be asked to evaluate the role that the existing NWFZs have been playing so far, what role NWFZs can play separately and jointly in the future in promoting the goals of nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament, in conflict prevention and confidence-building, and what are the challenges and how they could be addressed, etc.

Mongolia’s commitment to the cause of NWFZs is underlined by the fact that it is working to establish a single-State zone bearing in mind its exceptional location. Last year Mongolia presented a draft trilateral treaty to its neighbors that is intended to define and institutionalize that status. The main provisions of that draft, content-wise, are similar to the treaties establishing regional NWFZs, reflecting at the same time its unique geographical location and friendly relations with its neighbors. On the margins of this Committee’s meetings my delegation held informal consultations with the representitives of its neighbors on how to move further this issue. My delegation expresses the hope that in due course we would be able to report to this Committee on the outcome of these consultations. Bearing that in mind, my delegation will be tabling a draft resolution of procedural nature and is expressing the hope that it would be adopted, as in the past, by consensus.