Statement
by
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Head of the German Delegation
at the
First Committee of the 66th Session of the United Nations General Assembly

Thematic Discussion on Nuclear Weapons

13th October 2011
(check against delivery)
Ms. Chairman,

1. As this is the first time I am taking the floor, I would like to congratulate you on the assumption of the Chairmanship of this year's First Committee. I welcome your intention to conduct our work in a spirit of openness, transparency and efficiency and assure you of the full support of my delegation.

Mr. Chairman,

2. Germany’s assessment of the current situation in the field of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation is a mixed one. We welcome the progress that has been made over the past 18 months: The forward-looking Action Plan agreed by consensus at the 2010 NPT Review Conference as well as the entry-into-force of the New START Treaty have undoubtedly created a positive momentum. At the same time there are, however, less encouraging developments, which we fear might mean that we could be losing the positive momentum we have seen. Therefore, the First Committee should not only provide an honest assessment of the challenges we are facing, but should in fact give an impulse to actually deal with these challenges. This does not only apply to regional cases of nuclear proliferation but also to the continued stalemate of the Conference on Disarmament.

3. In line with the EU Strategy against the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction, Germany remains dedicated to the principles and objectives of effective multilateralism, prevention and international cooperation.
4. Germany firmly subscribes to the long-term goal of a nuclear weapon-free world and supports all appropriate steps towards that goal. We would welcome a faster pace in nuclear disarmament and a reduced role of nuclear weapons in military doctrines. At the same time, we see progress in nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation as intrinsically linked.

5. Against this background, Germany considers the strengthening of all three pillars of the Non-Proliferation Treaty in a balanced manner to be one of the foremost tasks of the international community. The NPT has been serving as the cornerstone of the global non-proliferation regime, and as the foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament in accordance with its Article VI, and it provides an international framework for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. We thus call on all states that have not yet done so to join the Treaty as non-nuclear weapon states.

6. Germany is firmly committed to contributing to the implementation of the Action Plan agreed on at the last NPT Review Conference – both with its EU partners and with partners of the cross-regional Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative (NPDI). At NPDI meetings in Berlin on 30 April and New York on 21 September, NPDI members expressed their determination to promote implementation of the commitments made by all NPT member states by making practical contributions and proposals. They have already done so, inter alia, in the field of transparency with respect to the issue of nuclear disarmament reporting. With its EU and NPDI partners, Germany stands ready to actively contribute to the new NPT review cycle – also on issues that did not meet consensus in 2010.
7. Germany particularly welcomes the commitments undertaken by the nuclear-weapons States at the 2010 NPT Review Conference to undertake further efforts to reduce and ultimately eliminate all types of nuclear weapons. We would in particular like to see non-strategic nuclear weapons, which are currently not covered by formal arms control agreements, to be included in further disarmament processes. Furthermore, we see a positive role for transparency and confidence-building measures in appropriate fora, as they constitute intermediate steps in this direction.

8. Practical steps are also of crucial importance with regard to facilitating the implementation of the 1995 NPT Resolution on the Middle East. This is why we welcome the successful seminar organized by the EU in July 2011, as well as the IAEA Director General’s initiative to convene an IAEA forum on “Experience of Possible Relevance to the Creation of a Nuclear-Weapon-Free-Zone in the Middle East” in November as meaningful preparatory work for the convening of the international conference on the establishment of a Middle East free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.

9. Germany firmly supports the establishment of internationally recognized nuclear weapon-free zones, on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the states of the region concerned, as a means to reinforce the global non-proliferation regime and to contribute to nuclear disarmament. In this context, we welcome the recent renewed momentum regarding the South-East Asia Nuclear Weapons Free Zone.

10. Germany has decided to phase out the use of nuclear energy for electricity production with an even more ambitious timeline than envisaged before. The last German nuclear power plant will shut down by 2022.
Notwithstanding this decision, Germany remains a committed international partner in all matters concerning the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, and in particular in ensuring the highest possible safety and security standards. We fully respect the right of each nation to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. However, the consequences of nuclear accidents do not stop at borders and nuclear non-proliferation is of vital interest to all nations. Thus, the peaceful use of nuclear energy implies a shared responsibility. We have to further develop a global nuclear safety culture. Germany will continue to be a most committed and reliable partner within the IAEA and all other relevant international fora in this respect. The IAEA safeguards regime plays a key role in ensuring that nuclear energy is used in a peaceful way. We support that the IAEA Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement together with the Additional Protocol should become the universally accepted international verification standard.

Mr. Chairman,

I1. The international community continues to be faced with serious nuclear proliferation challenges. Grave concerns about the nature of the Iranian nuclear programme persist. Germany calls upon Iran to comply with its international obligations and to implement the resolutions of the UN Security Council and the IAEA Board of Governors in order to restore the international community’s confidence in the exclusively peaceful nature of its nuclear programme. Germany remains committed to work towards a comprehensive, negotiated long-term solution together with its E3+3 partners and the EU High Representative. Iran must now take a strategic decision to seriously address the nuclear issue. Our offer for dialogue remains on the table and we call on Iran to engage seriously in concrete
discussions over its nuclear programme. We also remain deeply concerned
by the persistent unwillingness of the DPRK to cooperate with the IAEA
and by its revelation of a uranium enrichment programme. We urge the
DPRK to comply with its international obligations under relevant
resolutions by the Security Council and the IEAA and to fulfill all
commitments made previously within the framework of the Six-Party-
Talks in order to create the conditions for their resumption at the earliest
possible date. Germany supported the decision of the IAEA Board of
Governors in June 2011 to report Syria’s non-compliance with its
Safeguards Agreement to the UN Security Council. Full cooperation with
the IAEA, compliance with its Safeguards Agreement and bringing into
force an Additional Protocol is crucial to resolve all outstanding issues.

Mr. Chairman,

12. Germany notes with deep regret and concern that the multilateral
disarmament machinery remains in a virtual state of paralysis. Worse yet, it
appears as if the Conference on Disarmament has moved even further away
from the adoption of a programme of work in the past months, when it had
actually agreed one in May 2009 by consensus, which, as a result of
objections of one member, could unfortunately not be implemented to this
day. Yes, the CD has an impressive historical record, but let us be honest:
After nearly 15 years of standstill it can now longer rest on its past laurels
nor can we be complacent about its looming continued impasse, when in
fact this protracted stalemate is undermining the security interests of the
international community as a whole. CD membership is a privilege that
comes with responsibilities. One of these relate to the use of the consensus
rule as a guiding principle to reach mutually agreeable solutions, and not as
a means to block singlehandedly even the very taking up of any substantive work. This is even more true in light of the well known fact that given the way the CD operates, states will be able to protect their security interest in the course of any possible negotiations.

13. Germany perceives negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other explosive devices (FMCT) as the next logical step on the multilateral disarmament agenda, and as such as a necessary intermediate step towards a world without nuclear weapons. The fact that a programme of work was endorsed in the CD by consensus in 2009 which stipulated the commencement of FMCT negotiations clearly demonstrates the existence of a broad international consensus in this regard. We actively participated in pertinent initiatives in 2011 by CD member states, in particular the side events convened by Australia and Japan, and we welcome the efforts undertaken by the P5 in advancing this issue. In view of the CD's persistent inability to start FMCT negotiations and substantive discussions on its other three core issues, we stand ready to consider new ways to turn the CD once again into a functioning institution in particular with a view to begin FMCT negotiations. In this respect, we express in particular our support for the forward oriented approach taken by the delegation of Canada in its draft FMCT resolution.

14. The Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) constitutes an irreplaceable pillar in the global disarmament architecture. Fifteen years since the opening for signing the CTBT has received nearly worldwide support. Its early entry into force would be a core element of advancing nuclear disarmament and remains a high strategic priority for Germany.
Mr. Chairman,

15. It is not enough for this Committee to repeat in its resolutions what it has said year in year out by simply re-stating agreed language. We have to do better than that: This Committee is called upon to make its contribution to international security in the light of present circumstances. The revitalization of multilateral disarmament in the CD is an urgent task which needs to be addressed.

Thank you.