IRISH

Statement by

Mr. Jim Kelly
Deputy Permanent Representative and Head of Delegation

at the

First Committee – Nuclear Weapons Cluster
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Mr. Chairman,

My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the EU, the statement delivered by Sweden on behalf of the New Agenda Coalition, and that by Switzerland on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons. We would like to add the following remarks.

Mr. Chairman,

Two and a half years have passed since the 2010 NPT Review Conference agreed by consensus a comprehensive package of outcomes across the Treaty’s three pillars and in connection with the Middle East. At the same time, we are now two and a half years away from the next Review Conference, when NPT States Parties will once again decide how best to take forward the matter of fully implementing the Treaty. At this halfway point, I will focus my statement on three issues which Ireland believes will require attention during the remainder of the 2015 review cycle.

The first is confidence-building.

Mr. Chairman,

We know that failure over several decades to achieve sufficient progress towards the complete elimination of nuclear arsenals by the nuclear weapon states has led some States to claim that the NPT is inherently discriminatory: that it creates classes of “haves” and “have nots”. While we do not subscribe to this claim, we believe that if we do not achieve significant progress on disarmament, and soon, this perception of discrimination will exert increasing - perhaps intolerable - pressure upon the Treaty’s non-proliferation imperatives. We are deeply concerned by the challenge presented to the objectives of the NPT by the DPRK. We also believe that Iran must answer the many legitimate questions of the international community about the precise nature of its nuclear programme. We remain concerned that three States – India, Israel and Pakistan – choose to remain entirely outside the overwhelming global consensus on NPT adherence. To convince these States, and others that the NPT offers the blueprint for a world free of nuclear weapons, we must demonstrate our collective resolve and determination to achieve complete disarmament at the earliest possible opportunity.

The NPT did not create “haves” and “have nots”. Rather it created categories of “will disarm” and “will forego”. The “will foregos” have kept their side of the bargain, and we believe that progress in-kind from the “will disarms” is overdue.

Ireland does not accept that any of the NPT’s three pillars has an inherent claim to priority, or that more progress is required on the treaty’s non-proliferation agenda before progress can be achieved on its disarmament agenda. We have consistently maintained that disarmament and non-proliferation are mutually reinforcing but, frankly speaking, there has not been enough
progress on disarmament. The overwhelming majority of NPT States Parties took the
decision to foreswear nuclear weapons four decades ago. They did so in the reasonable
expectation that the nuclear weapons states would work with deliberate speed to eliminate
their arsenals within the temporary time and space which the Treaty gives to them for this
purpose. We are still waiting. Failure to make progress on disarmament is damaging the
Treaty and, as the present review cycle proceeds, Ireland will therefore join those NPT States
Parties – and we believe they are very many in number – who will look increasingly to the
nuclear weapons states to demonstrate that they are serious about fulfilling their Treaty
commitments to disarm.

We will also remain staunch in our support for early entry into force of the Comprehensive
Nuclear Test Ban Treaty. We believe that ratification of that Treaty by all nuclear capable
states which have not yet done so would represent an important confidence building gesture
along the road to complete disarmament.

Mr. Chairman,
The second issue which Ireland would prioritise within the 2015 NPT Review Cycle is
transparency. The 2010 Action plan committed the five nuclear weapons States to report on
the implementation of their undertakings under Action 5 to the third PrepCom session in
2014, so that the 2015 RevCon can then “take stock and consider the next steps.”

We would welcome substantive interim progress reports by the nuclear weapons states
between now and 2014. This would build confidence and would enable the wider NPT
membership to prepare a follow on set of Actions for the 2015 Review Conference.

Finally, Mr. Chairman,
I would like to mention briefly an old discussion which re-emerged anew at this year’s NPT
PrepCom meeting in Vienna. It concerns the humanitarian dimension of nuclear
disarmament. A generation has grown up since the end of the Cold War and, while the
tensions of the Cold war period have long dissipated, we face the threat to humanity which
existed half a century ago. This was acknowledged at the 2010 NPT Review Conference,
which expressed its “deep concern at the continued risk for humanity represented by the
possibility that these weapons could be used and the catastrophic humanitarian consequences
that would result from the use of nuclear weapons.”

As far back as 1955, the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons were considered by
people who actually knew what it meant. “The general public,” they wrote, “and even many
men in positions of authority, have not realized what would be involved in a war with nuclear
bombs....” They noted that while no one knows exactly how widely lethal radioactive
particles might be diffused if one bomb was exploded, (quote) “the best authorities are
unanimous in saying that a war with H-bombs might possibly put an end to the human race”

These were not the words of politicians or, diplomats, military men or activists pursuing an
agenda. They were the words of academics and scientists specialising in related fields who
understood, perhaps better than anyone on this planet at the time, the uniquely destructive power of atomic energy harnessed for military purposes: men like Albert Einstein and Linus Pauling; Joseph Rotblat and Bertrand Russel, to name but a few. Their conclusions are as valid today as they were sixty years ago.

Mr. Chairman,

This sobering assessment reminds us why we need renewed urgency in the disarmament of nuclear weapons. It reminds us why we need to close off any attempts to proliferate these wretched weapons or to achieve the means to do so. And it is why we demand of any state seeking access to nuclear energy for peaceful purposes full details of its nuclear programme through the IAEA safeguards system.

We believe that a discussion on the humanitarian dimension of nuclear disarmament will serve as a useful reminder that this is no abstract debate about Treaty implementation. A breach in the NPT could have catastrophic consequences for humanity for generations to come. For this reason, my delegation wishes to see the humanitarian theme developed as the present NPT review cycle progresses.

Mr. Chairman,

Ireland remains as intolerant of nuclear weapons as ever. In a debate in our national Parliament this summer, the long-standing cross-party support for nuclear disarmament and a world free of nuclear weapons was again reaffirmed. Ireland is especially protective of the NPT, which remains the world’s only bulwark against the danger of nuclear weapons, and we will continue to speak out in its defence on any occasion and to all interlocutors.

Our hope is that one day the NPT will not have a disarmament agenda; in other words, that it will not need one. That day, unfortunately, seems a long way off, and for this reason my delegation will be pressing for an ambitious outcome to the 2015 NPT Review Conference.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.