Statement by Ambassador Cristian Istrate
Chair-designate of the Main Committee II of the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

UNGA First Committee
Thematic Debate – Cluster 1 Nuclear Weapons
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Mr. Chairman,

Since this is the first time that I take the floor, I would like to congratulate you and your bureau on your election and assure you of my delegation’s full cooperation in successfully fulfilling the task you set out for this session of the First Committee of UN General Assembly.

I take the floor in my capacity as successor of Ambassador Cornel Feruta from Romania, the Chair of the second session of the Preparatory Committee of the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which was held in Geneva from 22 April to 3 May 2013, and as Chair-designate of the Main Committee II of the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT.

Ambassador Feruta is no longer in a position to continue the task he was entrusted with last year, and I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the great effort he has put into ensuring the necessary conditions for a successful meeting, as well as in attempting to reflect the thrust of the debates in the Chairman’s factual summary. I would also like to express my gratitude to the States Parties of the Eastern European Group for endorsing my nomination to replace him. I hope to count on the support of all States Parties in this important endeavour.

Mr. Chairman,

At the outset, I would like to express my conviction that PrepCom II contributed significantly to take the process forward towards PrepCom III and the RevCon. It generally went out according to expectations, in spite of a climate before and during the session which was considered to be challenging, with a certain negative potential. We must, indeed, not lose sight of the fact that the NPT review process does not take place in a political vacuum. The international community continues to face old as well as new challenges in the areas of nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. All this has put a stamp on the NPT review cycles and this time around is not going to be any different!

The work of the PrepCom II rested largely on the solid foundation reflected in the conclusions and recommendations for follow-on actions – the so-called Action Plan – adopted by consensus at the 2010 Review Conference. The Chair Summary aimed to cover in a balanced and comprehensive manner all the three pillars of the NPT. The main drive was to keep the balance between the pillars and relevance of all issues to all NPT States parties.

Yet, PrepCom II signalled that the expectations of many states parties are still high on nuclear disarmament pillar. Concerns were raised about continued reliance on nuclear weapons in security doctrines, high alert levels, lack of transparency and reporting standards, lack of time frames for nuclear disarmament, and continued modernization of nuclear weapons, delivery systems, and related infrastructure. Also, the issue of non-strategic nuclear weapons was mentioned, with the stress on reduction or elimination rather than transparency. As it has been agreed upon, achievements in implementing disarmament
measures from 2010 Action Plan will have to be presented at PrepCom III, in 2014. This is both a deadline to deliver and an opportunity to assess progress.

Specific cases related to compliance were addressed during the session in Geneva. The aim of the Chair was not to identify definitive solutions to all the delicate issues on the agenda, but rather to create a context that would allow states to tackle all these issues in a non-divisive way. As we go through the current NPT review cycle, one can expect that compliance with NPT, as well as the related implementation of IAEA safeguards, will continue to be central to the process.

The debate regarding humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons recalled the deep concern with respect to the "unacceptable harm" that would result from a detonation of nuclear weapons, including the wider and long-term impact on socio-economic development. 78 states joined the statement on humanitarian consequences during PrepCom II.

The Chair expected, since the pre-sessional contacts, that the issue of the Conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction was going to be one of the most problematic points, due to the complexity of the subject and the frustration shared by many states for the postponing of the December 2012 meeting in Helsinki. But a widely recognized view during PrepCom II was that as long as we make sure we don't go backwards, hiccups and delays can always be overcome. And that is something we have to make sure to continue to press on for all of us to stay on the course.

Mr. Chairman,

I would like to point out, in particular, the enhanced interaction between States Parties and the civil society, in a new format which was pioneered during the last session of the PrepCom. The role of NGOs and think-tanks in raising awareness on topics such as nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, as well as their ability to shape the public agenda, are very important for furthering our shared goals of strengthening the NPT regime, and their engagement should be further encouraged and supported.

Mr. Chairman,

By way of conclusion, I should say that PrepCom II was an important stage to acknowledge that the goal of a world "free of nuclear weapons" is widely recognized, the consensus for non-proliferation is building in the international community and the demand for peaceful applications of nuclear energy is outstanding, alongside with practical steps to enhance nuclear security and safety.

Despite serious challenges, the NPT remains at the heart of the global non-proliferation regime, and an essential instrument of our collective security. It is crystal clear that the review process would be strengthened if the States Parties can deepen their solidarity on the Treaty's fundamental purposes, while demonstrating flexibility and compromise on the means to achieve their goals. If we are to ensure that the 2015 Review Conference will genuinely fulfil all our aspirations, we should strive to act together.

I would like to assure you all that I intend to continue in the same spirit and manner as my predecessor and see my role as facilitator and honest broker. I shall remain all times available to any delegation or groups wishing to meet with me and my team.

Let me express the hope for a very successful third session of the NPT RevCon. The circumstances of today are quite different from those which existed six months ago and recent developments as well as on going discussions have the potential to set the stage for a positive and fruitful end of the review cycle. I wish ambassador Enrique Román Morey great success and I assure him of my delegation's full support in discharging his important task.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.