First Committee: Thematic Debate – Nuclear weapons

STATEMENT on behalf of the Nordic countries by
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Mr./Madame Chair

I take the floor on behalf of the Nordic countries - Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden and my own country Iceland.

This thematic debate in the First Committee takes place under the shadow of international tension. We are witnessing that weapons of mass destruction are being used. We are confronted by one UN Member State defying the non-test norm of nuclear weapons.

It is more important than ever to find ways to build confidence among nations. We must facilitate progress in disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control, and enhance our collective security.

We are at a critical juncture in nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. There is a broad agreement on the overall objective of full elimination of nuclear weapons, but there are clearly divergent views on how to achieve and maintain a world without these deadly weapons.

This was clearly demonstrated in the Open-ended Working Group on Nuclear Disarmament, which regrettably could not reach consensus on its report to the UN General Assembly. Despite the lack of agreement, the deliberations in the Working Group demonstrated a strong commitment to move nuclear disarmament forward.

The commitment towards nuclear disarmament has been further strengthened through the fact-based approach to the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear detonations, intentional or not. The whole purpose of the humanitarian initiative is to ensure that mankind will never experience another Hiroshima or Nagasaki again. A wide range of mutually reinforcing measures need to be taken, including the following:

Firstly, we need to do whatever possible to reduce the risk of any use of nuclear weapons. That implies reducing the role of all types of nuclear weapons in security policies as well as reducing operational readiness of already deployed weapons. The Nordic countries therefore recommend the resolution on de-alerting, and hope that all Member States can support this resolution. Secondly, we must do whatever possible to secure all sensitive nuclear material from falling in the wrong hands. Thirdly, and most importantly we must mobilize all political will to reduce existing stocks of nuclear weapons with the view to achieve their full elimination.

Indeed, it is only through full elimination that we are able to remove any risk of use. Such a process will necessarily take time. We need to get the States possessing these weapons engaged in negotiating new generations of disarmament agreements.

The Nordic countries are committed to this endeavor. We will actively work for a world free of nuclear arms and to promote the implementation of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), to be a driving force for non-proliferation and disarmament with a view to the balanced, mutual, irreversible and verifiable elimination of nuclear weapons, and on these grounds to take a long-term perspective in working for a legally binding framework to achieve this goal.

We are convinced that the upcoming Review Cycle of the NPT provides an opportunity to reaffirm the Article VI obligation and the outcome documents of the 1995, 2000 and 2010 review
conferences, including the unequivocal undertaking by nuclear weapons states to eliminate their nuclear weapons. The Review Cycle should identify additional steps on how to speed up the process towards zero.

While states possessing nuclear weapons shoulder a particular responsibility to move the disarmament agenda forward, non-nuclear weapons states must contribute as well. Verification of nuclear disarmament is one area where we see a constructive partnership emerging between nuclear-armed states and those without such weapons. This partnership fosters trust and confidence that disarmament commitments will actually be fulfilled. The Nordic states therefore recommend the resolution on Nuclear Disarmament Verification, and we hope for the support of all Member States for this resolution.

In a number of other areas, there are clear opportunities to develop and consolidate common grounds, such as non-proliferation, promoting the culture of nuclear security, advancing the CTBT, sustaining regional nuclear weapons free zones and moving forward on fissile material treaty.

In the lead up to the NPT 2020 Review Conference, we should seize every opportunity to make progress towards our common goal. At these times, with proposals on the table on which we may have different perspectives, it is important also to focus on what unites us.

This week marks the 30th anniversary of the Reykjavik Summit between General Secretary Gorbachev and President Reagan, which triggered a series of events that moved us on a path toward a safer and more secure world. As Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said in Reykjavik last week, "Let us muster the tenacity to look over the horizon and create a world free of nuclear weapons".

Thank you.