STATEMENT BY

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FIRST SECRETARY

ON

THEMATIC CLUSTER: NUCLEAR WEAPONS

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Thank you Mr. Chair.

Trinidad and Tobago aligns itself with the statement delivered by Jamaica on behalf of the Caribbean Community under this cluster.

At the outset, we would like to point out that there has been a deadlock in nuclear disarmament.

Last year’s Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty failed to produce an outcome document, and most of the commitments of the 2010 Action Plan remain fulfilled. The overwhelming annual expenditure in nuclear weapons is increasing, mainly to finance costly modernization programs. This is more reminiscent of an arms race than of disarmament.

Other steps towards achieving disarmament have failed to materialize: The Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty is now 20 years old and has yet to enter into force. The Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty would be effective in prohibiting the production of fissile material, but negotiations in this regard are yet to be launched in the Conference on Disarmament, which has been paralyzed for many years and lacks universal membership. Furthermore, we have called for increased transparency regarding arsenals and the verification of reductions through the IAEA, but verification processes continue to be solely bilateral and unilateral.

Mr. Chair,

Trinidad and Tobago believes that continued lack of progress in disarmament is an affront to multilateralism. The regime of mutual trust is hindered when some States disregard their own obligations, while demanding other States to fulfill theirs. Article VI of the NPT mandates to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures to nuclear disarmament, hence, there is an unequivocal obligation by the Nuclear Weapons States party to the NPT to disarm.

We emphasize that nuclear weapons have no place in security doctrines. The use or threat of use of nuclear weapons constitutes a crime against humanity and a violation of international law, including international humanitarian law and the Charter of the United Nations. The outdated paradigm of national security must be replaced by one of human security.

In light of their unacceptable risks, nuclear weapons must be stigmatized. They must be seen as a menace. The prestige of a country should not be associated with its destructive capability, but rather, with its ability to build and maintain peace.

Thankfully, there is now a shared understanding that the responsibility of nuclear disarmament lies not only on nuclear weapons States, but on the entire international
community. Trinidad and Tobago is proud to be among the majority of States that comprise the Humanitarian Initiative and that have endorsed the Humanitarian Pledge.

We welcome the final report of the Open Ended Working Group that recently met in Geneva, in particular, the recommendation to commence negotiations in 2017 for the prohibition of nuclear weapons. As noted in this report, a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons would “contribute to the progressive stigmatization of nuclear weapons”, which would strengthen the taboo against such weapons and reinforce the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Trinidad and Tobago fully supports this approach, for experience with other weapons of mass destruction has shown that outlawing a particular weapon is a necessary first step towards their elimination.

It is clear that an overwhelming majority of states now supports negotiations in 2017 for a treaty banning nuclear weapons and that said majority regards such a treaty as the most viable option for immediate action on nuclear disarmament, which is ever more crucial and urgent in this challenging international security environment.

A treaty banning nuclear weapons would not only complement current norms and reinforce existing legal instruments, including the NPT, but it would also close loopholes in the current legal regime that enable States to participate in activities associated with nuclear weapons or to claim a perceived benefit from their existence. We strongly reject the argument made by a few states that a ban treaty would undermine the NPT. Rather, it would strengthen the NPT by fulfilling the obligation set out in Article VI. Furthermore, Trinidad and Tobago considers that a ban treaty would break the deadlock that has existed for so long in nuclear disarmament. It would open the door for progress on other worthy initiatives, such as the Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty and the entry-into-force of the CTBT; and, most importantly, it would be decisive step towards the elimination of nuclear weapons by demonstrating unity among the vast majority of states in rejecting these weapons as morally and legally unacceptable.

Mr. Chair,

Trinidad and Tobago supports the draft resolution “Taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations”, which establishes a mandate for negotiations in 2017 on a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons.

It is incumbent upon all nations to eliminate the threat of nuclear annihilation and procure a world free of nuclear weapons. The time has finally come to prohibit the worst weapons of mass destruction. Let us take this brave step forward.

I thank you.