SWEDEN

STATEMENT

by

H.E. Eva Walder
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at the

Nuclear Weapons Cluster of the 72nd session of the UN General Assembly
First Committee
United Nations New York

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Mr Chairman,

First, let me warmly welcome the announcement that ICAN has been awarded this year’s Nobel Peace Prize. In addition to recognizing the crucial role of civil society, it sends a timely and powerful message regarding the need for progress on nuclear disarmament.

My delegation stated its views on nuclear disarmament in the general debate: the apparent lack of dialogue on nuclear disarmament between the nuclear powers and stalemate in nuclear disarmament negotiations; the on-going modernization of nuclear weapons; the nuclear arms build-up in South Asia; the DPRK’s nuclear and missile programmes and its flagrant violations of an increasing number of Security Council resolutions all give rise to great concern. So does the lack of progress on the necessary ratifications for the CTBT to enter into force. The high-level expert group on FMCT is a positive step, but substantive negotiations on such a treaty seem to remain a distant prospect. Allow me now elaborate on some of the specific challenges before us.

Mr Chairman,

The NPT remains the most important legal framework in the nuclear field. One of the most often heard phrases in this room is that it is the “cornerstone of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament”. Today, that proclamation is more valid than ever. It is mainly within the NPT process that true and effective multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation can be achieved. But to make progress, there has to be a political will.

The nuclear weapon states must fulfil their obligations under Article VI. They must also acknowledge that the NPT does not give them the right to possess nuclear weapons forever. All states parties must respect and implement with urgency their commitments undertaken at previous Review Conferences, especially those from 2000 and 2010.

Our objective must now be a successful outcome of the 2020 Review Conference. The preparatory process for the Conference came to a positive start in May this year under the praiseworthy leadership of the Netherlands. We must build on that momentum and direct our attention and ambitions on what can realistically be achieved. In order to be successful in 2020 we must be both ambitious and realistic.

It would be naïve to believe that all issues could be solved and that all disagreements would evaporate. That should not prevent us from trying to find common ground on the many issues where substantive progress could be made. Risk reduction, confidence-building, tactical nuclear weapons, transparency, verification and reporting are some areas where we see room for positive
developments. The upcoming preparatory committees in 2018 and 2019 have to reach substantive results. We simply must not allow the 2020 Review Conference to fail.

Mr Chairman,

In the Conference on Disarmament old mantras are being repeated. Delegations persistently state their willingness to enter negotiations, however, only on their selected issues and only on their own predetermined conditions. This seemingly never ending stalemate has been ongoing for over two decades. These developments, or rather the lack thereof, are understandably being openly questioned by a growing number of states as well as the civil society. We must collectively put an end to this vicious circle and reinstate the role of the CD as the negotiating body for multilateral disarmament.

Sweden, as one of the six rotating presidencies of next year’s session of the CD, is ready to play its part in facilitating an agreement on a substantive programme of work. We do not, however, have a magical solution. It is only through collective efforts and a true spirit of compromise and flexibility that the members of the CD can break the deadlock that has paralysed it for far too long. We can build upon the constructive discussions held in this year’s informal working group on the Way Ahead by using them as building blocks for real negotiations.

Mr Chairman,

The catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons are well documented and irrefutable. Sweden’s fundamental perspective on nuclear disarmament is the humanitarian one. That was our point of departure for the decision to participate in the negotiations on the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

The Treaty has now been adopted and the process of acceding to it has started. It is the subject of a heated debate. What cannot be denied is that there is a widespread and well-founded frustration with the lack of progress on nuclear disarmament and that the Prohibition Treaty process is an expression of that frustration. Above all, we must not let the disagreements on the ban poison discussions on the entire disarmament agenda. Let us agree to disagree and move forward.

For Sweden’s part, as we stated in our explanation of vote at the adoption of the Treaty, the conclusions of negotiations was the end of one phase of the process. We have now entered into the next phase a thorough analysis of the Treaty’s provisions and their impact at a national level on a wide spectrum of issues. These
include disarmament and other security and defence policy interests, national legislation, trade and research matters.

A decision on a possible signing of the Treaty will be made only after that analysis is concluded. Any decision to ratify and accede to the treaty will subsequently have to be taken by the Swedish Parliament.

Mr Chairman,

The active and equal participation and leadership of women in decision making and action is crucial in achieving peace and security. This is not least the case in the nuclear field as nuclear weapons have a disproportionate impact on women and girls, including as a result of ionizing radiation.

Mr Chairman,

It is far too easy to be pessimistic about nuclear disarmament in today’s challenging environment with a much polarised international community. Let us not make those dire straits obscure our common goal of a world without nuclear weapons. Let us leave the deadlocks on far too many issues and focus on what unites us – in this Committee and beyond.

Thank you.