STATEMENT
BY

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DURING THE THEMATIC DEBATE ON NUCLEAR WEAPONS

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Chairperson,

South Africa associates itself with the statements delivered on behalf of the African Group, the Non-Aligned Movement and the New Agenda Coalition.

South Africa joins others to warmly congratulate the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) for receiving this year’s Nobel Peace Prize. This well-deserved and timely award is a clear recognition of the active role played by the civil society organisations in the area of nuclear disarmament in pursuit of a world free of nuclear weapons.

History has demonstrated the immense, uncontrollable capability and indiscriminate nature of a nuclear weapons detonation, which reaches well beyond national borders, leaving a trail of death and destruction in its wake. The continued existence of these weapons remains a threat to humankind. The current international security situation in North-East Asia that is characterised by heightened rhetoric, further illustrate that the development, possession and use of these weapons does not enhance security, but rather constitute a source of international and regional insecurity.

Chairperson,

South Africa welcomes the adoption and opening for signature of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons this year. It is our hope that this Treaty, which stigmatizes and delegitimizes the possession of nuclear
weapons, will contribute towards strengthening the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime, leading to the total elimination of all nuclear weapons. Beyond the entry-into-force of this Treaty and working towards its universalisation, effort is required towards securing the full implementation of the commitments made by States Parties in fulfilment of their obligations under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), particularly the nuclear disarmament obligations that have been neglected for too long.

South Africa believes that continued nuclear weapons and missiles modernization programmes undermine and are contrary to the legal obligations and commitments in the NPT. Action is required to implement long-standing disarmament and non-proliferation obligations and commitments from the Review Conferences of 1995, 2000 and 2010 which include, amongst others, conclusion of a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and the entry-into-force of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). It is our hope that the 2020 NPT Review Conference will successfully address these issues.

In the above regard, a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices should remain a priority for the international community. Such a Treaty should serve both non-proliferation and disarmament objectives and would need to be credible and feasible. A ban on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons would be a step forward towards a world free of nuclear weapons and would reinforce the ideals of the NPT and complement the CTBT.
To conclude, Chairperson, it is apparent that nuclear weapons have no place in the current security environment as their use will have a dire humanitarian impact. Nuclear weapons, instead of deterring conflict and war, as some allege, remain a constant source of insecurity and driver of proliferation. The huge amount of public resources directed at the production and maintenance of nuclear weapons stand in sharp contrast to the resources directed towards socio-economic development, including the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Nuclear disarmament is not only a legal obligation, but also a moral and ethical imperative. In this regard, my delegation has the honour to again table for consideration resolution (72/number) entitled "Ethical Imperatives for a world without nuclear weapons", which will hope will be supported by the large number delegations.

I thank you, Chairperson.