Statement

by

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Thank you Chair,

Ireland wishes to align with the statements made by the European Union and South Africa on behalf on the New Agenda Coalition.

Chair,

Nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation are top foreign policy priorities for Ireland. Since joining the United Nations in 1955, Ireland has embraced a cooperative and multilateral approach to tackling the existential problems posed by the most destructive weapon ever invented. We are inspired by the belief that progress is possible and that their total abolition should be an imperative for humankind.

The NPT is regarded as one of the international community’s success stories: it has provided a solid foundation for the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime for five decades, and has significantly limited the spread of nuclear weapons. Ireland remains fully committed to working with all states to make progress across the three pillars of the NPT: multilateral nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

However, the continued relevance and effectiveness of the NPT is dependent on its ability to deliver on its original promise. This is fundamental to the credibility of the treaty and Ireland believes that the best way to protect the NPT is to fully implement its provisions.

All existing obligations and commitments made under the NPT, including Article VI; the decisions and resolution adopted in 1995, the unequivocal undertaking of the nuclear-weapon States to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals; the 13 practical steps, and the detailed 64-point Action Plan in 2010 remain fully applicable and their implementation is more urgent than ever. A reaffirmation of these commitments by all States should be the starting point, not the end goal of the 2020 Review Cycle. The New Agenda
Coalition resolution draws attention to these commitments and Ireland strongly urges all States to vote in favour of its adoption.

Chair,

Nuclear weapons represent a fundamental threat to collective security and they endanger the future of the planet and humanity as a whole. Ireland believes that current modernisation programmes, the continued reliance on nuclear weapons in military doctrines and an increase in threats of use of nuclear weapons threatens our collective goal of a nuclear weapon free world. Such actions could have unintended consequences. At a minimum they will exacerbate tensions in international relations, undermine trust and risk further nuclear proliferation.

The current status quo in relation to nuclear disarmament is unsustainable and in need of urgent change. Some States in this room believe that nuclear disarmament can only progress if and when national and international security conditions permit. In the short term, this approach is a recipe for stagnation and in the long term threatens the NPT itself.

The overwhelming risk posed by the possibility of a nuclear detonation - whether by accident, miscalculation or design — coupled with their catastrophic humanitarian consequences allows no room for complacency. We all share the goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world and we have, collectively, in this Committee and elsewhere, identified many steps and action plans on multilateral nuclear disarmament. But identifying the path to this goal is not enough — we also have to walk it. Plans must lead to action if they are to have any real effect. We cannot chase an elusive perfect security situation indefinitely. Such a utopia simply does not exist. Indeed, the greatest contribution we can make to improving international security is to demonstrate good faith in the implementation of our mutually agreed commitments and obligations.

Chair,
As long as nuclear weapons exist, their humanitarian consequences must remain a top priority on the international agenda. That is why we, together with our cosponsors, decided this year to again table a dedicated draft resolution, with only technical updates.

The humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons initiative ignited the political and diplomatic process, culminating in the adoption of the new Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons by 122 States on July 7, 2017.

The TPNW closes a legal gap in the nuclear disarmament architecture by establishing a robust prohibition on the only category of WMD not yet outlawed. The Treaty sends a strong message to the international community that progress must be made on nuclear disarmament, and that the continued existence of these horrific weapons cannot be tolerated. In accordance with past practice following the adoption of a new international treaty, Ireland, together with our cosponsors, have tabled a new and succinct draft resolution on the TPNW. We invite all States to support these two important resolutions and to consider co-sponsorship.

The TPNW commands strong international support and was driven, not only by interested states, but by grassroots civil society movements whose experience and advocacy was essential to its adoption. We are encouraged that, to date, it has received [69] signatures and [19] ratifications, keeping pace with other disarmament and non-proliferation instruments. Nevertheless, some states have called into question the compatibility of the TPNW with the existing disarmament and non-proliferation architecture. Ireland would like to very briefly address some of these issues and highlight the positive aspects of the Treaty.

Firstly, providing a legally binding framework for nuclear disarmament, the TPNW complements and bolsters the NPT. Specifically, the TPNW contains a reaffirmation of the NPT’s role as the cornerstone of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. It also reaffirms prohibitions already in place in the NPT and establishes a mechanism for
nuclear armed States to fulfil their obligation to pursue nuclear disarmament under article VI. Furthermore, the TPNW includes a number of ground-breaking provisions, including environmental remediation, recognition of the gendered impact of ionising radiation, and provisions for assisting victims of nuclear weapons testing and use.

With respect to IAEA safeguards, as a minimum standard, the TPNW requires States to maintain their existing safeguards arrangements. This means that, in the majority of cases, a comprehensive safeguards agreement (CSA) plus an additional protocol will be applied. This amounts to an even higher standard than for a new State joining the NPT.

In relation to the TPNW’s undermining nuclear deterrence, we must ask ourselves whether the use of the most catastrophic and indiscriminate weapons of mass destruction can ever be justified. The testimony of the hibakusha and victims of nuclear testing must surely convince us that no such circumstances exist and the answer must always be ‘no’.

Mr Chairman,

This time last year, Ireland expressed alarm and dismay that tensions on the Korean peninsula threatened a return to the brink of nuclear war. We are encouraged by the changed atmosphere and welcome inter-Korean summit and the direct talks between the DPRK and the US. However, these talks must be matched by concrete and practical action. The DPRK’s nuclear tests represent the only breach this century of the global norm against nuclear testing. As a step towards complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearisation, we urgently call on the DPRK to fully address international concerns related to its nuclear and ballistic missile programs, to return to the NPT, and to sign and ratify the CTBT without delay. All remaining Annex II States have a special responsibility to lead, without waiting for other States to ratify the CTBT.
Equally, we call for renewed leadership in making progress towards the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. The long overdue implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East would strengthen international peace and security, promote regional stability and bolster the provisions of the NPT. Overcoming the stalemate on this issue to find a practical way forward will require innovation, creativity and compromise.

Mr Chairman,

Ireland believes that the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) agreed between the E3+3 and Iran is a hugely significant non-proliferation agreement. It demonstrated what can be achieved through effective multilateral cooperation. As noted by the IAEA, Iran has complied with all obligations under the terms of the JCPOA, and we call on all parties to continue to fully implement all parts of the deal.

While Ireland maintains a policy of not using nuclear energy for the generation of electricity, we are conscious of, and greatly value, the societal benefits from the peaceful uses of nuclear technologies. The application of nuclear technologies can and do make very positive contributions in the areas of health, water management, agriculture, food safety and nutrition, energy and more broadly to the achievement of UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Chair,

The Secretary-General’s Agenda for Disarmament acknowledges that nuclear disarmament is fundamentally a question of saving humanity. During this session, we must remember that it is also a question of political will and moral courage. Our hope for this session is that together we can renew our commitment to seeing a world free from the threat of nuclear weapons. As we mourn the recent passing of Kofi Annan, we would do well to remember his words – that we cannot ‘encourage, or allow, any State to make its compliance with initiatives to
eliminate nuclear weapons... conditional on concessions from other States on other issues. The preservation of human life on this planet is too important’.

Thank you.