Statement of Finland

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Thematic Debate on Nuclear Weapons

Statement by
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(check against delivery)
Finland subscribes to the statement of the European Union and to the statement delivered by Australia on behalf of a group of countries. Let me deliver following national remarks.

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty is a resounding success. It is a cornerstone of international peace and security. It has prevented nuclear weapons from spreading in the world. A vast majority of countries have committed themselves to never possess or acquire nuclear weapons. At the same, the NPT has made it possible for millions to benefit from peaceful applications of nuclear technology. Not least, the NPT lays the foundation for nuclear disarmament, eventually paving the way to our common goal, a world free of nuclear weapons.

The 50th anniversary of the NPT in 2020 deserves to be a celebration of this success story. However, we cannot ignore the challenges we are facing. The rules based order is challenged, treaties are not respected, big power relations have deteriorated and the pace of nuclear disarmament is dismally slow.

Article VI of the NPT provides a permanent and universally recognized framework for pursuing nuclear disarmament. Nuclear disarmament requires verifiable and irreversible steps by the states possessing nuclear weapons, whether parties to the NPT or not. Especially the Russian Federation and the United States bear a unique responsibility as holders of the overwhelmingly biggest nuclear arsenals.

The INF Treaty is landmark agreement that abolished a whole category of weapons in Europe. It is an important part of the international arms control architecture and has a significant role for European security.

We have long been worried about the plausible Russian violation of the INF Treaty. We are disappointed that the parties have so far not been able find a solution to the compliance allegations and we regret the US decision to withdraw from the Treaty.

We encourage the Russian Federation and the United States to avoid nuclear arms race and to continue their dialogue on strategic stability with a view to extending the New START Treaty and to achieving further reductions in nuclear arsenals.

Nuclear disarmament is a gradual process. In this respect, we call on all nuclear weapons states to take concrete action in nuclear disarmament. Let me highlight some actions and matters where we believe it is possible to make tangible progress in the coming years.

First, increase transparency concerning nuclear weapons. There are many ways to do that and let me highlight just one: national reporting in the NPT review process. A practical step could the proposal by the Group of Eminent Persons for Substantive Advancement of Nuclear Disarmament to convene a session in the third NPT Prepcom, at which nuclear-
weapon states would explain their national reports followed by an interactive discussion with other States Parties.

Second, pursue and conclude arrangements on Negative Security Assurances. In our view, non-nuclear weapons states that comply with their NPT obligations have a legitimate right to receive legally binding negative security assurances from nuclear-weapon states. While we recognize the value of the unilateral declarations by nuclear-weapons states in this respect, we think that it is time to move forward and develop unilateral declarations to a multilateral arrangement. This would make a huge difference in adding trust and confidence for the international community and especially for the NPT.

Third, address the issue of non-strategic nuclear weapons in Europe. To our understanding, these weapons are not operationally deployed on a day-to-day basis as the actual nuclear weapons are kept separated from their delivery vehicles. It would make sense to codify current practices into a verifiable arrangement. First step could be unilateral declarations confirming the current situation, followed by verifiable bilateral and multilateral arrangements at an appropriate time.

Concrete steps in transparency, negative security assurances and concerning non-strategic nuclear weapons would be tangible nuclear disarmament deliverables in the NPT Review Conference in 2020.