Statement of the Netherlands
delivered by
H.E. Robbert Gabriëlse, Permanent Representative to the Conference on Disarmament
at
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on
Nuclear Weapons

New York, 22 October 2018
Thank you, chairperson.

The Netherlands associates itself with the statements delivered by the European Union, Australia on behalf of a group of countries and Philippines on behalf of the NPDI. We would like to make some additional remarks.

Nuclear weapons have again been at the forefront of global politics this year. We all know that the issue is of perennial importance and urgency.

There have been both positive and negative developments. Sitting here last year, the nuclear threat on the Korean Peninsula loomed large. It is good to note that on this front, we have seen a significant improvement in the situation. On the other hand, we have unfortunately seen a withdrawal by the US from the JCPOA, which we regard as vital for international security.

In similar vein, the Netherlands regrets the intention of the US to leave the INF treaty. Whilst it is indeed very likely that Russia has been in violation for some time, this treaty remains a landmark arms control treaty of great importance both to stability and security worldwide and to the arms control regime. We therefore urge Russia once again to address our compliance concerns in a substantial and transparent way, and hope the parties to this treaty will come to a negotiated solution.

Mr. Chair,

For us, like so many others, the centerpiece of our efforts to curtail the threat of these weapons is the NPT, which is the multilateral solution to a problem that is too big for any of us to address on our own. Both the North Korean issue and the Iran deal illustrate the centrality of the Treaty. The DPRK’s nuclear activities were under international safeguards mandated by the NPT, until it withdrew from the Treaty. Regarding Iran, the NPT has formed the indispensable legal framework within which the JCPOA could be negotiated.
The NPT is about to head into a crucial period. 2020 marks the 50th anniversary of the Treaty’s entry into force, and in April next year we will gather here for the last PrepCom before the 10th NPT Review Conference. The Netherlands will work with our partners, especially in the bureau of the chairs, to make the 2020 Review Conference a success. Right now, that means we fully support our Malaysian colleague as chairman of the 2019 PrepCom.

However, not only the Chair, but all of us are responsible for formulating a shared vision of the Treaty and its implementation. We need to start thinking ahead of what we want from the NPT regime over the next 5, 10 and 50 years. That includes a vision on how to progress with nuclear disarmament. And here, we need leadership from the nuclear-weapon states. For example we call for increased transparency regarding nuclear arsenals, which we regard as a crucial first step of the disarmament process. Moreover, we must discuss whether more can be done in the field of improving communication lines, training of personnel, sharing information and increasing decision time in order to minimize the risk of nuclear weapons use.

Mr. Chair,

The Netherlands also renews its call for the entry into force of the CTBT. As our Minister of Foreign Affairs emphasized at the recent ministerial meeting, the CTBT has lost none of its relevance. Putting a definitive end to nuclear weapons testing is essential to preventing the development and further spread of nuclear weapons.

In our view, the FMCT is ripe for negotiations and we were encouraged by the overdue but constructive discussion in Subsidiary Body 2 of the Conference on Disarmament, which I was honored to chair. The in-depth substantive discussion illustrated a number of points on which general agreement seems possible. This followed the successful conclusion of the High-level expert preparatory group process. The report of that
group together with the report of the previous GGE brings us a step closer to our goal of an FMCT. We should harness the momentum to continue making progress.

Mr. Chair,

The resumption of the P5 process is a good start, as all progress begins with dialogue. And we welcome the progress that is being made in the field of nuclear disarmament verification, in the UN group of experts as well as in the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification.

Last but not least, we welcome the invitation by our US colleagues to start a dialogue on creating circumstances conducive to nuclear disarmament. I would like to reiterate our readiness to have this dialogue.

To conclude, Mr. Chair,

2020 may still seem like it’s a while from now. But it is not. In 2020, we must review what we have done and decide what we are going to do in the future. We all must bring something to the table; that’s how negotiations work. And there’s precious little time to do that.