Statement by the Russian delegation in the First Committee of the UN General Assembly on “Nuclear Weapons” cluster

Distinguished Chair,
Distinguished colleagues,

Russia is committed to the noble goal of a world free of nuclear weapons. By implementing its obligations under Article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) we achieved a radical reduction of Russia’s strategic arsenal to the level of less than 15% of the maximum indicators of the times of nuclear arms race.

We are prepared to go along this way with the understanding that all further steps must be taken by all countries possessing the military nuclear potential. A realistic approach in this area implies the step-by-step process of nuclear weapons elimination with the strengthening of international security and stability and greater assurances for all its participants in their own safety and security. These principles are not peculiar to the Russian position only. They are consistent with the balanced
consensus arrangements earlier reached within the NPT review process, under which the nuclear disarmament must be carried out «in away that promotes international stability, peace and undiminished and increased security».

We are against any hasty or simplified measures in such a complex and sensitive area as nuclear disarmament. In this context we believe that the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) is an untimely and inefficient instrument, especially when we try to apply it to solve the urgent problems of international security.

Instead of promoting nuclear disarmament the TPNW undermines the NPT regime. Even now before it has entered into force, the TPNW created additional dividing lines between the States Parties to the nuclear non-proliferation regime. The existing global problems, however, require consolidated efforts of the international community at large.

The nuclear weapons is a deterrent to specific external threats. As long as they exist, many countries obviously will not be able to accept a total and unconditional abandonment of such weapons. Therefore, the Russian Federation has repeatedly called for creating appropriate conditions that would allow us to take practical measures to free the world from nuclear weapons. In moving towards the nuclear-weapon-free world we need to take into account the existing strategic realities. Let us emphasize in particular certain developments that are the result of the long standing and systemic efforts of the U.S.:

- development of global Ballistic Missile Defense;
- refusal to abandon the potential deployment of weapons in outer space;
- numeric and qualitative increase of imbalances in conventional weapons;
- development of the Prompt Global Strike concept.

We are especially concerned with the new U.S. Nuclear Posture Review which actually provides for the substantial increase of the role of nuclear weapons in military
planning. This document has announced the creation of low-yield nuclear weapons that would lower the threshold of the use of nuclear weapons. The NPR also envisages a return to the concept of a “limited nuclear war”. In essence the U.S. military thinking in nuclear field has rolled back a half a century when it was believed that a nuclear war was admissible and could be won.

Washington explains its policy towards large-scale strengthening of its nuclear potential by the reference to an alleged growing role of nuclear weapons in Russian doctrine. Nevertheless, neither the military doctrine nor the statements of political or military leadership of the Russian Federation contain such assumptions. Actually we reduced the role of nuclear weapons to the historic minimum.

We are concerned very much with the situation around the START Treaty. The President of the Russian Federation has confirmed our principled readiness to study the possibility of the Treaty’s extension. However, it cannot be done without addressing the remaining questions regarding the U.S. compliance.

We took note of the statement by President Donald Trump concerning possible US withdrawal from the INF Treaty made on 20 October, 2018. The Russian Federation will follow very closely the evolution of US approaches to this disarmament instrument which is vital for the global as well as European security.

The practical implementation of the statement by the US leader would be another shortsighted and extremely dangerous step by the United States for international peace.

The withdrawal from the Treaty would prove once again that the US political and military authorities prioritize their foreign policy goals by obsessively striving to ensure the US total military superiority over the rest of the world. But they are least concerned about such issues as strategic stability, international peace and global security.
We are also seriously concerned with the U.S. groundless accusations of Russia of the non-compliance with the INF Treaty in spite of justified claims of Russia against the American side in its respect. We are prepared to work together with our U.S. colleagues on the entire set of problems regarding the INF. We hope that we will be reciprocated.

On the whole, a more active Russian-American dialogue on the issues of strategic stability and international security is a priority task of a global scale. The relations between the two major nuclear powers cannot simply remain in the state to which they have been currently brought to. This is extremely dangerous.

We have conveyed to our partners, including at the highest level, our proposals to launch comprehensive arms control discussions.

The progress in nuclear disarmament would promote the stability of nuclear non-proliferation regime based on the NPT. The NPT sustainability is one of the Russian foreign policy priorities.

A guarantee of its success is the careful treatment of the NPT and responsible attitude to the balance of interests contained therein and obligations taken by all its Parties. Reaffirmation of those principles and of the permanent value of the Treaty and its essential historic role is the minimum that we simply must ensure during the current review cycle. It becomes particularly important given the 50th anniversary of the NPT entry into force that we will mark in 2020.

Unfortunately, we are approaching the final stage of the current NPT review cycle with a zero result with regard to the implementation of the 1995 resolution on establishing in the Middle East a zone free of the nuclear weapons and other WMD. Russia as one of the three co-sponsors of that resolution is seriously concerned with a lack of progress in addressing the tasks it assigns.

We believe that the UNGA draft decision on convening the Conference on WMDFZ submitted by the League of Arab States is a step in the right direction. We
urge the State Parties to treat this document with all seriousness. This draft is consistent with the goals and objectives of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East and does not contradict the interests of the States of the region. Russia is prepared to support this decision.

We regard the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) as a universal and effectively verifiable international instrument on the comprehensive ban of nuclear tests, which has no and could not have any alternatives. The obligations contained in the CTBT are a reliable guarantee of international security and stability.

The entry into force of this treaty should not become a hostage to a position of any of its State Party. A shortsighted policy of certain states can lead to a situation when the CTBT simply ceases to exist. However, not all the states are ready to objectively assess the current situation. We call on all parties responsible for the future of the CTBT to join this Treaty as soon as possible and so as to demonstrate their commitment to the goals of strengthening the regime of nuclear non-proliferation.

We consider as a serious mistake and a blow to the NPT regime the withdrawal of the U.S. from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Actions (JCPOA) which was the result of painstaking and difficult compromises. Russia intends to comply with its obligations under the JCPOA and, together with other Parties, to seek effective mechanisms to protect the trade and economic cooperation with Iran from the U.S. extraterritorial sanctions. We call upon the U.S. to abandon the policy of pressure against the countries that develop legitimate economic cooperation with Iran and not to hamper other Parties to JCPOA from fulfilling their obligations under this unique deal.

We positively assess the work of the high level Expert preparatory Group on the treaty banning the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices (FMCT) established in accordance with the UNGA resolution 71/259. The 2017-2018 discussions led to the adoption by consensus of the final report that confirmed the remaining differences with regard to the parameters of
the potential treaty. We note that the conclusions of the Group can serve as a food for thought for potential negotiations in the CD but they do not define positions of States.

The FMCT negotiations must be conducted only at the Conference on Disarmament within its balanced programme of work and in accordance with the document CD/1299, i.e. on the basis of the “Shannon mandate”. An attempt to avoid the abovementioned mandate or to move the negotiations to other fora would most likely disrupt the entire process or create a treaty without participation of the countries that would ensure its efficiency.

We consider as a lost opportunity the unwillingness of the South-East Asian States to sign in 2012 the Protocol to the Bangkok Treaty to provide security assurances to the participants of the NWFZ. Russia is open to consultations with the countries of the region on this issue.

We attach great importance to the final international and legal formalization of the NWFZs in Central Asia and Africa and we call on the U.S. to ratify as soon as possible the Protocols to the Semipalatinsk and the Pelindaba Treaties.

Finally, let me emphasize that Russian Federation continues to be open to a dialogue on the whole set of urgent issues of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament.

Thank you for attention.