Statement of the Netherlands
delivered by
H.E. Robbert Gabriëlse, Permanent Representative to the
Conference on Disarmament
at
the seventy-third session of the General Assembly, 1st Committee
on
Nuclear Weapons

New York, October 2019
Thank you, chair.

This is the last gathering of the First Committee before the 2020 NPT Review Conference. Let me start on a positive note today: I sense that there is a shared urgency amongst us here, and I sense that there is a willingness to take action.

As the Netherlands is part of the NPT chair’s bureau, we have been closely involved with the preparations for the Review Conference. These preparations involve many partners and stakeholders, cover all the regions of the world, and generate good energy and good ideas going forward.

And, as we will be chairing Main Committee III during the Review Conference, we witness firsthand the willingness of NPT member states to discuss the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. Constructively and forward-looking.

On disarmament, verification work continues steadily and has seen some good dialogue between nuclear-weapon states and non-nuclear weapon states. In IPNDV, which we were proud to host this year, but also in the GGE, which adopted its consensus report. The Netherlands is one of the countries sponsoring a resolution this year that sets out a path forwards to continue this important work.

The past NPT PrepComs have seen constructive and fruitful discussions on risk reduction, on transparency, and on the need to strengthen the NPT review cycle to make it more effective and efficient. The Netherlands will do its utmost to capitalize on this momentum.

We will continue our work on risk reduction measures with our colleagues from both nuclear-weapon states and non-nuclear weapon states, as well as with our colleagues from academia and think tanks.

We are encouraged by the start of the creating the environment for nuclear disarmament process and look forward to the next steps. The Netherlands will play an active role as co-chair of the working group aiming to increase incentives for further action on nuclear disarmament. This is not a replacement of existing disarmament commitments, it is not finding new conditions: we aim to identify actions that will make the international climate more conducive to disarmament.

The Netherlands will keep advocating for the entry into force of the CTBT as well as for the start of negotiations of an FMCT. Much good work has been done in recent years. We call for the start of negotiations in the CD without preconditions.

Many of us work together on these and other important steps to improve our international security through nuclear arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament. Including, among others, in the context of the IAEA. But despite these efforts, the overall picture is not improving.

Bilateral arms control between the US and Russia is under pressure. The INF Treaty forms a telling example. We regret that Russia took no demonstrable steps to return to compliance with its obligations under the INF Treaty since NATO Allies
first raised concerns in 2015. Russia bears sole responsibility for the demise of this important treaty. Looking forward, we attach the highest importance to the New START Treaty as a crucial contribution to international security and to the objective of Article VI of the NPT. Through its robust verification mechanism, this Treaty increases predictability and mutual confidence amongst the two largest nuclear weapon States, thus limiting strategic competition and increasing strategic stability. The extension of the New START Treaty beyond 2021 is key, and will allow the negotiation of a bilateral successor instrument covering additional nuclear systems and additional parties. We urge Russia and the US to take appropriate steps in this direction.

Regional developments do not improve the picture. We regret the US decision to withdraw from the JCPOA, an important multilateral success in the field of nonproliferation. We call upon Iran to return to full implementation of its nuclear related commitments. We call upon all parties to implement UNSC resolution 2231, including the elements relating to ballistic missile activities. The Netherlands has taken note, with deep concern, of the repeated missile tests conducted by the DPRK. The Netherlands strongly condemns all such activities, which are in violation of UNSC Resolutions and pose a serious threat to regional and international security and stability.

Chair,

Heading towards the 2020 RevCon, there’s a lot at stake for all of us. The NPT needs a successful review conference; we need to strengthen its implementation. And we can blame each other and point fingers, sure, but that will in the end not help us much. We will have our disagreements and disputes. But when it comes to nuclear weapons, that should not get in the way of finding a way forward based on our shared interests. When it comes to nuclear weapons, we all simply have far too much to lose.