STATEMENT BY
THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

IN THE

GENERAL DEBATE (ITEM 4) OF
THE SECOND SESSION OF
THE PREPARATORY COMMITTEE FOR
THE 2005 REVIEW CONFERENCE OF
THE PARTIES TO
THE TREATY ON THE NON-PROLIFERATION OF
NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Geneva, 28 April 2003
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Mr. Chairperson,

I take this opportunity to congratulate you on your assumption to the Chair of this PrepCom and assure you of my delegation’s full support. We have been encouraged by your preparatory work and liaison with various groups and delegations in the run-up to this meeting.

Mr. Chairperson,

South Africa is associated with the statement that has just been made by the distinguished Minister of Disarmament from New Zealand on behalf of the New Agenda Coalition (NAC). We are also associated with the statement that will be made on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned and Other States. We fully support and would reiterate the positions and approaches contained in these statements.

The South African delegation will also, in the context of national participation and in terms of groupings such as the NAM and the NAC, be addressing the specific issues identified for our cluster and specific time debates during the periods allocated in our programme of work for those issues. This statement, by our delegation, will consequently concentrate on general issues related to our work, and is focused on highlighting certain specific issues.

Mr. Chairperson,

We meet at the halfway stage to the 2005 Review Conference and should be in a position to gauge what progress is being made in the implementation of the decisions taken in 2000. Of particular importance in this process will be the reports that are to be submitted to this Preparatory Committee meeting, particularly on the issue of nuclear disarmament. A further point of emphasis that should begin receiving greater attention is the task that was given to the PrepCom by the 2000 Review Conference to address the important issue of security assurances, and to make recommendations on this to the Review Conference. We should also now be in a position to begin gauging how the further strengthening of the review process, which was agreed to in 2000, is working and whether we should not begin applying our minds on how the process can be further improved.

What we should definitely also attempt to ensure is that this PrepCom avoids the “non-interaction” between delegations that characterised the PrepCom’s last meeting. Substantive contributions and proposals have been prepared, and will be presented, by many delegations from all parts of the political spectrum represented here. If these contributions are only heard and then ignored, we are undermining the very essence of the strengthened review process as it was conceived, and agreed to, in 1995.

Mr. Chairperson,

The last year has not been one of the most successful for disarmament and non-proliferation in general or for the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in particular. While the decision by Cuba to become a party to both the NPT and Tlatelolco Treaty is warmly welcomed and congratulated, there is little else that can be regarded as
positive news. During the last year the States Parties to the NPT have in fact been faced by:

- The decision of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea to withdraw from the NPT and to restart its Yongbyon reactor without IAEA safeguards.
- A war that was undertaken on the stated basis of destroying weapons of mass destruction and the capabilities to produce these weapons.
- The ever-continuing deadlock in the Conference on Disarmament that prevents that body from undertaking the tasks that were delegated to it by the NPT Review Conference.
- Few advances in the implementation of the thirteen nuclear disarmament steps agreed to at the 2000 NPT Review Conference.
- An increasing threat of the proliferation of nuclear weapons capabilities.
- Continuing difficulties in achieving the entry-into-force of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty, despite the progress in the implementation of its international monitoring system.
- A continuing concern at the possible implications of the abrogation of the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty.
- The continued retention of the nuclear weapons option by those States that are not parties to NPT, and by the potential consequences of the number of these States being added to by the decision of North Korea to withdraw from the Treaty.
- The possibility that nuclear weapons can fall into the hands of terrorists as a result of a continued possession of, or aspiration to, nuclear weapons capabilities.
- The prospect that nuclear weapons may be used or threatened to be used, while recognising that the only complete defence against this prospect is the elimination of nuclear weapons and the assurance that they will never be produced again.
- The recognition that while de-alerting and reliance on substantively fewer deployed nuclear weapons has made gains in the Moscow Treaty, real disarmament has not been addressed.

Mr Chairperson,

It is South Africa’s belief that while substantial progress was achieved at the 2000 Review Conference in reaching an agreed framework for the implementation of the NPT, the States Parties cannot and must not approach the period following the Review Conference with an attitude of “business as usual”. The States Parties must work seriously to give credence to the undertakings that we made in the Treaty and to the consensus agreements that we have negotiated on the necessary steps to implement the Treaty. It would be a mistake for the States Parties to hold on to the limited number of positive developments that we have witnessed over the past year and to come to this Preparatory Committee to continue talking past one another. The test of the NPT’s effectiveness is not our ability to hold meetings, but rather to implement our Treaty and agreements, and to continue to work effectively for the achievement of all of the NPT’s objectives.

This is particularly so in the environment of 2003 when we have witnessed a war undertaken on the stated basis of destroying weapons of mass destruction (which include
nuclear weapons) and the capabilities to produce these weapons; when we have been confronted by a decision to withdraw from this Treaty; when the threat of nuclear terrorism is of increasing concern; when we are faced by emerging approaches to the future role of nuclear weapons as a part of new strategic doctrines; when we are frustrated by a lack of progress and even deadlock in achieving our agreed to objectives. After the sense of accomplishment that we all felt in the aftermath of the 2000 Review Conference, the NPT States Parties must confront the challenges that have arisen since then and take action to address them.

Our Preparatory Committee meetings should participate actively in this process. Since 1995, when the concept of the strengthened review process was first agreed upon, the Preparatory Committee meetings form an integral part of the Treaty's review process and therefore need to address the implementation of the Treaty and of the agreements reached in its context.

Mr. Chairperson,

It is questionable whether the present strengthened review, as agreed to in 2000, is having the desired outcome and effect that was envisaged. While it was conceded that every PrepCom was not a mini-Review Conference and that we had struggled to make substantive recommendations through the 1997, -98 and -99 PrepComs, the present format does not appear to have remedied that situation. The previous strengthened review process suffered from a lack of determination that prevented it from making substantive recommendations due to a "business as usual" or "procedural rather than substantive approach", which was being forced upon it. The current review process has, however, to date demonstrated an inability to provide for substantive inter-action between the States Parties. The outcome of the first PrepCom in the new 2000-2005 phase has again underlined the fact that States parties were not utilising the strengthened PrepCom effectively. The lack of inter-action that we are referring to applied both to (a) the consideration of the reports that had been submitted on the implementation of the provisions of the Treaty and on the agreements that had been achieved at the 2000 Review Conference as well as to (b) the substantive contributions and proposals that were being made. It consequently may be time to have a re-look at the strengthened review process decided upon at 2000 with a view to making all the PrepComs relevant steps in the build-up to Review Conferences.

To this end, the South African delegation will be submitting a working paper proposing language that can be considered in a further attempt to strengthen and improve the effectiveness of the Treaty's review process. In the period since the PrepCom last met the States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) have concluded their Review Conference. At that meeting, the BWC States Parties agreed to a decision that we believe the NPT States Parties should take note of, and which we should study to see whether it can be applied in our own strengthened review process.

The BWC decision included an element that is not apparent in the NPT process, namely, the ability to undertake substantive work. The inclusion of such an element in the NPT process would be fully consistent with the decision that was taken at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference. That decision determined that the Review Conference is, inter alia, tasked to identify ‘the means’ through which further
progress should be sought in the future and 'what' might be done to strengthen the implementation of the Treaty. The proposal that is being made would be for consideration and decision at the 2005 Review Conference. While having submitted the working paper at this PrepCom, it is not the intention of the South African delegation to pursue the issue at this meeting. We would request that delegations consider the content of the paper on the basis that our next PrepCom meeting in 2004 may consider making recommendations on the issue to the Review Conference and on the basis that the Review Conference itself will be looking at the strengthened review process as it did in 1995 and 2000.

Mr. Chairperson,

The issue of security assurances is long overdue. At the 1995 Review Conference we decided that further steps should be considered to assure Non-Nuclear Weapon States party to the Treaty against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons and that these could take the form of an internationally legally binding instrument. The 2000 Review Conference “agreed that legally binding security assurances by the five nuclear-weapon States to the non-nuclear weapon States parties ... strengthen the nuclear non-proliferation regime” and “calls on the Preparatory Committee to make recommendations to the 2005 Review Conference on this issue”. We have been given a task and only have this meeting and next year’s PrepCom to fulfill it.

With this in mind the New Agenda Coalition has submitted a working paper on “Security Assurances” which has attached a “Draft [Protocol][Agreement] on the Prohibition of the Use or Threat of Use of Nuclear Weapons Against Non-Nuclear Weapon States to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons”. South Africa had submitted an earlier proposal in this regard to the PrepCom before the last Review Conference, while Egypt, Mexico, Myanmar and Nigeria have also made earlier proposals.

The Heads of State and Government of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries have “reaffirmed that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.” They (also) reiterated their conviction that pending the total elimination of nuclear weapons efforts for the conclusion of a universal, unconditional and legally binding instrument on security assurances to Non-Nuclear-Weapon States should be pursued as a matter of priority by the Members of the Non-Aligned Movement. They stated that “(w)e need to substantively address this issue so that we can finalise our recommendations in time for the next Review Conference.” The Heads of State and Government furthermore emphasised the need for Preparatory Committee meetings to allocate specific time for deliberations on security assurances. This should be ensured at the next session of the PrepCom in 2004.

Mr. Chairperson,

While the last year has not been one of the more auspicious in the NPT’s history, we should not only focus on the down-side. We should also focus on signals and opportunities that have been identified in this period.
South Africa took serious note of the debate in and around the UN Security Council that surrounded the situation in Iraq. One of the points that was of particular note in that debate was the focus on weapons of mass destruction, which include nuclear weapons. The strong statements that were repeatedly made about the threat that is posed by weapons of mass destruction, about the need to eliminate this threat, about the need to destroy these weapons by many of the members of the international community and about the legitimacy of their possession, including by the Nuclear Weapon States, were statements that South Africa supported. It was of particular note that these statements focused on the horrendous consequences of the possession, proliferation and use of, or threat of use, of these weapons.

The threat posed by weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons, and the need to eliminate these weapons are all sentiments that South Africa agrees with, and which have been key elements of the participation of both the Non-Aligned Movement and the New Agenda Coalition.

It is our belief that the NPT States Parties must now move decisively to pursue the sentiments and commitments that were contained in these statements. It is our belief that given this now universal condemnation of the possession, proliferation and possible use of weapons of mass destruction, we should move even more decisively to implement the unequivocal commitment to nuclear disarmament that all of the States Parties committed themselves to in 2000 and to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons. As the NPT States Parties have recognised on many occasions, the only real guarantee against the use of any weapons of mass destruction anywhere, including nuclear weapons, is their complete elimination and the assurance that they will never be used or produced again.

Mr. Chairperson,

While nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction may be inanimate objects, and while it may be the inherent capacity that humankind has to choose between good and bad or between good and evil that would lead to the use of these weapons as instruments of war, mass destruction and terror, the fact remains that we do not have the capacity to change human nature. The capacity that lies within the purview of us -- as the States Parties to the NPT -- is to focus on the weapons and to work for their elimination in order that they will not be available to visit horrendous consequences on innocent masses of people, no matter what the nature is of the persons who may have wanted to use them. It is our task, in accordance with the unequivocal undertaking that was agreed upon for nuclear disarmament, to work for the elimination of these weapons and not for us to rely on the fickleness of the nature of human kind.

Mr. Chairperson, I thank you.