Canada's Cluster III Statement – 10 May 2007

Mr. Chairman,

Peaceful nuclear cooperation is one of the foundational ‘bargains’ upon which the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons was established. Access to nuclear energy for peaceful purposes was, in Article IV of the Treaty, explicitly linked with conformity to the non-proliferation requirements of Articles I and II. While Article III is not specifically mentioned in Article IV, it is nevertheless relevant as it directly identifies the means by which States Party’s Article I and II commitments are verified.

Since we last met at the 2005 Review Conference, a notable number of states have expressed an interest in obtaining the benefits of nuclear power, while several more are expanding their nuclear programs and refurbishing existing reactors. Additional peaceful applications of nuclear energy in the areas of health, agriculture and industry are also being discovered. At the same time, States Party must address serious proliferation and non-compliance challenges. Thus, we stand at a moment of great opportunity but also of great risk. At this juncture, the value of the NPT is reconfirmed for us and we are reminded of the need to preserve the inherently delicate balance between the pillars of the Treaty.

As we move forward toward what has been called a nuclear renaissance, with all the promise it holds, we must ensure that we take all necessary steps to ensure that there is no increased risk of nuclear weapons proliferation associated with nuclear energy’s expansion. Fortunately, the infrastructure necessary to facilitate expanded peaceful nuclear cooperation while addressing non-proliferation concerns already exists and is being strengthened and expanded on an ongoing basis. On the 50th anniversary of its founding, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) continues to serve NPT members via its promotion and facilitation efforts on the one hand, and its efforts in support of Article III on the other. The safeguards regime implemented by the IAEA is critical to facilitating nuclear cooperation by assuring IAEA Member States that other members are in compliance with their obligations. Expanded adherence to the Additional Protocol can only increase the benefits of the safeguards regime for all States Party in this regard.

Complementing the IAEA’s activities is the international export control regime and the extensive array of nuclear cooperation agreements between NPT States Party which place reciprocal non-proliferation obligations upon recipients of bilateral nuclear transfers. Canada currently has 26 Nuclear Cooperation Agreements covering 43 NPT States Party. As the world’s largest producer and supplier of uranium for civilian nuclear energy programs and of radioisotopes for medical and industrial applications, we maintain a vital interest in preserving international nuclear cooperation and in ensuring it does not contribute to nuclear weapons proliferation or non-peaceful uses.
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Canada continues to invest in the international development, and peaceful applications, of nuclear energy. To this end, Canada contributes more than $2 million annually to the IAEA’s Technical Cooperation Fund. We are also actively engaged, both within and outside the IAEA context, in applying our nuclear expertise in agriculture, medicine, industry, waste management, and other areas for the benefit of all NPT States Party.

Concerns about climate change and diminishing non-renewable resources have led to international consideration of further investments in nuclear power. Canada, like many other nations here today, is actively considering an expansion of our nuclear energy capacity and we certainly recognize the promise that nuclear energy holds. However, States Party must approach developments in this area prudently to ensure that all associated proliferation concerns are addressed. In this regard, we welcome the various proposals made in recent years and months which could provide states with the benefits of nuclear power without the infrastructure, security, financial, and liability burdens and potential proliferation risks of obtaining a full nuclear fuel cycle. This wide range of proposals was most recently discussed at the Special Event held in conjunction with the IAEA General Conference in 2006. We look forward to receiving the comprehensive report of the IAEA examining these proposals.

Canada supports efforts to develop new mechanisms to augment the reliability of access to nuclear fuel which address both peaceful uses and non-proliferation concerns and ensure commercial competitiveness. Such multilateral fuel cycle initiatives should be based on criteria that recognize the circumstances of countries, such as Canada, that have exemplary non-proliferation credentials and which have legitimate economic or fuel cycle justification for preserving future uranium processing options. We also remain supportive of the work currently underway to increase the proliferation resistance of reactors, while recognizing that there can be no technological substitute for robust multilateral verification.

In closing, Canada is fully supportive of the greatest possible enjoyment of the benefits of nuclear energy for NPT states that are in full compliance with their Treaty obligations, and will continue to work domestically and internationally to preserve and strengthened the global mechanisms which facilitate nuclear cooperation while preventing nuclear proliferation. A further elaboration of our ideas on this topic can be found in Working Paper 41 which we have submitted to this conference.