Statement by H.E. Ambassador Carlo Trezza, Head of the Italian Delegation to the 2007 Preparatory Committee of the 2010 NPT Review Conference
Vienna, 30 April - 11 May 2007

Security Assurances

Mr Chairman,
we welcome this opportunity to discuss again the issue of security assurances in an NPT framework. This will allow us to clarify our positions and to better understand the positions of other countries. Together with its E.U. partners, Italy is ready to further consider this issue. Positive and negative assurances - as stated in the EU Strategy against the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction - can serve both as an incentive to foregoing the acquisition of Weapons of Mass Destruction and as a deterrent. Indeed, receiving assurances that nuclear weapons will not be used against them makes countries more comfortable in renouncing the acquisition of nuclear weapons in accordance with the NPT. Positive security assurances, that is the action taken by the five Nuclear Weapons States in the event that an NPT party is the victim of an act of, or object of, a threat of aggression in which nuclear weapons are used, can also make NPT non nuclear weapon States comfortable about renouncing to nuclear weapons.

Mr. Chairman,
in addition to being discussed within the NPT framework the issue of security assurances is also being raised at the Conference on Disarmament. NSAs are part of the CD agenda, and we support the recent proposal by the 6 Presidents of the CD which should allow the Conference to resume its institutional work. This text includes the proposal: “To appoint Ambassador Paranhos as Co-ordinator to preside over substantive discussions dealing with appropriate international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons”. We welcome the substantial work made so far under the able coordination of the distinguished Permanent Representative of Brazil to the Conference on Disarmament, Ambassador Carlos da Rocha Paranhos. Dealing with security assurances in the Conference on Disarmament makes some countries uncomfortable because the NSA concept is closely linked to NPT membership: we all know that not all CD members are party to the NPT. Italy shares some of those concerns.

Security assurances are not mentioned in the NPT text. However “Further steps” on security assurances are suggested in Decision 2 of the 1995 NPT Review and extension Conference. According to that document, “these steps could take the form of an internationally legally binding instrument”

In 1995, all five NPT nuclear weapon States have individually provided negative and positive security assurances which were noted by U.N. Security Council resolution
984 of 1995, adopted unanimously. In addition — and perhaps more significantly — NSAs are provided by nuclear weapon states within the framework of their legally-binding Nuclear Weapon free zones engagements. We believe that we should continue to pursue the NSA concept within the framework of Nuclear Weapon Free Zones, which could be extended to additional areas on the basis of arrangements freely entered into between States of the region concerned. Italy, together with its EU partners, also supports the creation of nuclear weapon free zones in the Middle East and in the Korean Peninsula. Although Italy abstained at the last years UNGA on the voting of a resolution on the creation of a NWFZ in Central Asia, we welcomed the decision in itself of establishing such a zone.

Mr. Chairman,

some countries do not consider the protection regime established by the above provisions to be sufficient: indeed, NSAs given within the UNSC resolution are seen by some as not legally binding. We are of a different opinion, since we claim the legally binding nature off all UNSC resolutions. On the other hand, NSAs given within the Nuclear Weapon Free Zones provisions are legally binding, but some of the NWFS treaties have not yet entered into force and such treaties do not cover the whole world. As a matter of fact, some of the most sensitive regions in the world from a security point of view, are not covered by Nuclear Weapon Free Zones provisions.

Mr. Chairman,

one could also explore elements of flexibility within the Negative Security Assurances concept itself. We are of the opinion that Negative Security Assurances should be granted only to countries party to the NPT. A country withdrawing from the NPT also forfeits its title to NSAs. We should also give more thought to the option of granting NSAs on a unilateral, plurilateral or regional basis. Some countries have made this request.

Today 183 non nuclear weapon States have joined the NPT; all of them could in principle receive security assurances deriving from UNSC resolution 984. But not all of them can benefit from NSAs deriving from NWFS. We submit that a numerical survey could be made of countries entitled to security assurances on the basis of the present international configuration.

Our views on these issues are synthesized and operationalized in the working paper submitted to the Preparatory Committee and contained in document NPT/CONF.2010/PC.1/WP.27.

We also suggest, to conclude, that all possible ways should be explored to strengthen the security assurances concept in this new NPT review cycle.