Cluster I

Statement by

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Check against Delivery
Thank you, Mr. Chairman,

Ireland fully aligns itself with the statements under this cluster made by the European Union and New Zealand on behalf of the New Agenda Coalition.

Mr. Chairman,

2018 is a year of notable anniversaries. As many States have highlighted, it marks the 50th year since of the opening for signature of the NPT. It is also the 60th anniversary of the first of the so-called ‘Irish Resolutions’ that eventually led to the negotiation of the Treaty. In the speech introducing the Resolution in 1958, Ireland’s then-Minister for External Affairs unambiguously set out the ambitious aim of the Treaty; to establish ‘a permanent ban’ on the proliferation of nuclear weapons as ‘a step towards their total abolition’. As we conduct our work under this cluster and indeed throughout the remainder of this Review Cycle, we should recall that the seed of the NPT itself had, at its very core, the objective of complete nuclear disarmament.

While the NPT has developed over its 50-year history to become one of the most successful multilateral instruments in history and is the backbone of the non-proliferation regime, its original promise of disarmament remains unfulfilled. Claims that there is an equivalence of achievement with regard to multilateral nuclear disarmament compared with the non-proliferation and peaceful uses pillars of the NPT are simply not credible. On the contrary, the imbalance across the three pillars is growing and should be a cause of deep concern for us all.
The indefinite extension of the NPT in 1995 was not a mandate for the indefinite retention of nuclear weapons. The unequivocal implementation of the disarmament provisions of the Treaty must result in a non-discriminatory environment where all States eventually obtain the status of non-nuclear-weapon State. The achievement of this status should be pursued not only in good faith but with vigour and urgency.

Yet, nuclear weapons are still at centre of some States Parties’ security doctrines; they are still being developed and modernised; and they still pose an existential threat to the survival of humanity. Even more worrying is recent discourse about ‘new missions’ for ‘new nuclear weapons’. Make no mistake, such a development would result only in new tensions and new instabilities; jeopardising and undermining the spirit and purpose of NPT itself.

Mr. Chairman,

2018 marks another important anniversary for Ireland in the Disarmament calendar. It is 20 years since the formation of the New Agenda Coalition; a group dedicated to the advancement of nuclear disarmament. This year’s NAC working paper details the commitments from States Parties that have been made over the course of the NPT’s history in relation to nuclear disarmament, including the Thirteen Practical Steps agreed in 2000 and the 2010 Action Plan. These documents set out concrete, ambitious benchmarks, with a realistic roadmap towards a world free of nuclear weapons. As with the Treaty itself, there can be no question of reneging on these consensus agreements and the time to implement them is now.
Indeed, there are immediate steps which can be taken, including increased transparency on the part of the nuclear-weapon States, risk reduction measures and the de-alterting of deployed systems. We also call on all the nuclear-weapon States, particularly the United States and Russian Federation to redouble their efforts with respect to bilateral nuclear weapon reductions.

A treaty banning the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons would be a further significant step forward and we welcome the Conference on Disarmament’s adoption of its important decision on working arrangements. We hope this will lead to a resumption of substantive work and the revitalisation of the Conference on Disarmament.

The entry into force of the CTBT would also constitute a significant concrete achievement for the disarmament regime. While welcome, a moratorium on nuclear testing cannot substitute for the entry into force of a legally binding instrument banning future testing. Ireland again calls on the remaining Annex 2 states to ratify the CTBT immediately and unconditionally.

Mr. Chairman,

Nuclear weapons are the most powerful and most indiscriminate weapons of mass destruction ever invented. It is without doubt that their use again would have catastrophic consequences and cause a humanitarian and environmental crisis to which there could be no adequate response. This was the driving factor that led to the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear
Weapons by Ireland and the vast majority of UN Member States in July last year. Indeed the adoption of the Treaty by such a large majority is a clear signal to the nuclear-weapon States that we are no longer willing to accept that it is they who set the pace and agenda for nuclear disarmament.

As a founding member and in many respects a guardian of the NPT process, it has always been our consistent position that the TPNW and the NPT are fully compatible and, indeed, complementary. After all, both the TPNW and the NPT have the same goal at their core – the abolition of nuclear weapons. Involvement in one in no way precludes participation in the other. Indeed, the NPT expressly envisaged, in Article VI, a separate and related treaty on general and complete nuclear disarmament under strict and effective international control.

We are proud that the TPNW acknowledges the disproportionate effects on women and girls of nuclear weapons and it is extremely encouraging to hear gender issues referenced numerous times in the opening days of this conference. It must be mainstreamed into the NPT discourse from the dual viewpoint of the disproportionate impact of ionising radiation on women and girls and the evident need for women's voices to be heard clearly and given equal weight in the nuclear weapons debate.

Disarmament is a cross cutting issue with direct relevance to Climate Change and the Environment; Sustainable Development; Humanitarian objectives and aid; Gender Equality; Migration; Cultural Heritage and Cyber Security. We
simply must step outside of narrow security concerns. In this regard we warmly welcome UN Secretary General Guterres’s new disarmament initiative which we hope will restore the role of disarmament as an integral component of global efforts to maintain international peace and security.

Mr. Chairman,

The argument has been repeatedly made that security conditions are not ripe for further progress on disarmament. Indeed, the increasingly uncertain international environment and the erosion of the fundamental tenets that underpin our multilateral, rules-based system is profoundly disturbing. But it should be the fire that drives us rather than a cause for resignation. Ireland firmly believes that disarmament can facilitate an improvement in the international security environment. Hope, not fear must be our motivation.

It is with this in mind that I would like to mention one last anniversary; 2018 marks 20 years since the Good Friday Agreement was agreed. Despite entrenched positions and deep-set divisions, it brought a negotiated and lasting peace to the island of Ireland; something that, at times, didn’t seem possible. Irish poet and Nobel Laureate, Seamus Heaney perfectly captured the atmosphere when he wrote that “We lived deep in a land of optative moods, under high, banked clouds of resignation”. The same atmosphere can often take over disarmament discussions. It is our duty throughout this review cycle to roll away those clouds.

Thank you.