Cluster II Specific Issue:
Regional Issues, including with respect to the Middle East and Implementation of the 1995 Middle East Resolution

Statement by

Mr. Jamie Walsh
Deputy-Director, Disarmament and Non-Proliferation
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

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Check against Delivery
Thank you, Mr. Chairman,

Ireland fully aligns itself with the statement made by the European Union under this cluster.

Mr. Chairman,

The topics under discussion within the remit of Cluster II’s specific issues are some of the most fundamentally challenging for the NPT. Weapons of mass destruction have no place anywhere in our world but are a particularly destabilising presence in what are often complex and delicate regional relationships.

In that regard, I wish to emphasize Ireland’s support for the establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems in the Middle East. We firmly believe that the path for action as set out in 2010 Final Document remains the most promising basis on which to proceed.

We are disappointed that the conference has yet to be convened, but we are by no means resigned. We strongly urge the co-convenors and regional states to work face-to-face and reach agreement as soon as possible on all necessary arrangements for the conference.
We understand and share the serious concern voiced by some delegations at the slow pace of progress. But we should not lose sight of the valuable preliminary work that has been achieved by the Facilitator and his team. The outcome of those efforts cannot be discarded.

All States parties to the NPT have an obligation to work towards convening the conference as soon as possible. As my delegation highlighted in our statement to Cluster II, the NPT is built upon a series of delicate bargains. Reaching consensus at review cycles is also reliant on carefully crafted, sometimes fragile agreements. Adherence and commitment to those agreements is fundamental to the continued trust we place in the NPT itself. Without the package of decisions agreed at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference, it’s impossible to see how the indefinite extension of the NPT could have been approved.

We have a responsibility therefore, within the NPT framework, to continue our efforts to carve a path forward. The more difficult the issue, the greater priority and more consistent attention we should devote to it.

In this regard, my delegation reiterates its call to establish a dedicated resource that would ensure engagement, momentum and continuity is maintained throughout the Review Cycle. This should include documentation to be considered by a wide group of experts and officials. The resources for this endeavour would be a matter for the UN and the UN Secretary General to decide but Ireland will be a firm supporter of any decision that accords the necessary priority to this issue.
My delegation together with BASIC, will host a side event on the zone to explore the possibilities that exist on 1 May. It’s important to remember that civil society can play a key role in this process and we welcome and encourage their engagement.

Mr. Chairman,

Ireland warmly welcomes the positive outcome of the inter-Korean summit and prospect of further direct talks between the United States and the DPRK. From our own experience in Northern Ireland, we know that diplomacy and dialogue are the only routes to a meaningful and lasting peace. Of course, that dialogue must be backed by concrete action and, in this regard, we call on the DPRK to fully address international concerns related to its nuclear and ballistic missile programmes. It can do so by returning to the NPT and implementing IAEA Comprehensive Safeguards and by signing and ratifying the CTBT without delay. The end result will, we hope, be the complete denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula which would represent a major gain for the disarmament and non-proliferation regime.

Mr. Chairman,

Ireland firmly believes that Nuclear Weapon Free Zones across the globe can play an important role in promoting regional and international peace and stability. We have much to learn from these regional agreements and from the positive example of the JCPOA. They demonstrate what is possible when genuine and focussed multilateral efforts are directed at what are portrayed as intractable differences.
Faithfulness to our past commitments is essential for building trust in the regional context. It is vital if we are to ensure the regional disputes of today do not become the global conflicts of tomorrow.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.