Statement by the Republic of South Africa during the Cluster 3 Specific Issues of Article X Debate during the Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

2 May 2018

[Check against delivery]

Thank you, Chairperson,

Allow me to make just a few comments on the issue under discussion.

The withdrawal provision contained in Article X of the Treaty acknowledges the right of sovereign States to withdraw from the NPT and is not an unusual provision in multilateral treaties. Article X of the NPT clearly provides that a State may withdraw from the Treaty in the exercise of its sovereign right in certain defined circumstances and in accordance with the procedures set out in this article. The question of withdrawal is therefore not an issue that is open to interpretation.

Care should be taken that proposals to interpret Article X do not create ambiguity. Such legal uncertainty is always undesirable and may undermine the Treaty itself. Loose interpretations of the provisions of the Treaty may well create greater uncertainties, or even loopholes, that will not serve the interests of the Treaty.

My delegation believes that through the faithful and balanced implementation of the Treaty, no State Party would feel the need to invoke Article X. Let us therefore work with renewed commitment towards the fulfilment of all Treaty provisions, including Article VI and the accelerated implementation of the solemn undertakings made in this regard during previous Review Conferences.

Let me assure you, Chairperson, that South Africa remains committed to strengthening the implementation of the Treaty in a balanced manner so as to preserve its credibility as the cornerstone of the nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation regime.

I thank you.