STATEMENT by the delegation of Ukraine at the Third session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2020 NPT Review Conference

Nuclear disarmament and security assurances (cluster 1)  
(New York, 02 May 2019)

Mr. Chairman,

Ukraine attaches high importance to this cluster. We look forward to practical progress on achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament.

This year marks already 25th anniversary since Ukraine abandoned its nuclear capability and acceded to the NPT in 1994 as the sovereign non-nuclear State.

We acceded to the Treaty, considering it as a solid bulwark against proliferation which includes the framework of legal restrictions, safeguards, export controls, international cooperation, and other mechanisms. We assumed that this combination would substantially enhance the individual security of every State, as well as global and regional security.

Our confidence in this framework was heightened by the extended positive and negative security assurances to Ukraine provided by the three depository states of the Treaty – Russia, the United States, and the United Kingdom. The depository states underlined their commitment to Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity by signing the so-called “Budapest Memorandum” in 1994.

I will quote only a few commitments reaffirmed in this document:
- “to respect the independence and sovereignty and the existing borders of Ukraine”;
- “to refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of Ukraine”;
- “to refrain from economic coercion designed to subordinate to their own interest the exercise by Ukraine of the rights inherent in its sovereignty”;
- “not to use nuclear weapons against any non-nuclear-weapon state party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, except in the case of an attack on themselves, their territories or dependent territories, their armed forces, or their allies, by such a state in association or alliance with a nuclear weapons state”.

However, twenty years later, one state-signatory, the Russian Federation, violated almost every point of the Budapest Memorandum by launching terrifying by its scale armed aggression against Ukraine.
Dispute on the perception of the Russian threat to the territorial integrity of Ukraine is no more on the agenda as 2019 marked already the fifth anniversary of the start of Russia’s armed aggression against my country. Launching the aggression, the Russian military units temporarily stationed in the Crimean peninsula under the respective Black Sea fleet agreements with Ukraine were reinforced by the notorious occupation forces sent by air and sea from the territory of the Russian Federation. They seized administrative buildings and key infrastructure facilities, Ukrainian military, police and border guard compounds and bases. With full military control over the Crimean peninsula, Kremlin proceeded with conduct of a shameful farce of so-called “people’s referendum” under the barrels of Russian guns, intended to provide a false legitimacy to occupation and attempted annexation. Ironically, after the barrage of denials of Russia’s direct military role, one year later the Russian President publicly admitted the deployment and use of regular Russian troops for the purpose of illegal occupation of Ukraine’s Crimea.

Russia’s breach of the Budapest Memorandum on security assurances to Ukraine has significantly undermined the international efforts of non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The regional repercussions, stemming from the Russian invasion and occupation of the Crimean peninsula, manifest in rapid transformation into a huge military base threatening security and stability in the entire Black Sea region.

It is the right time to acknowledge that the ‘security assurances’ provided by the nuclear-weapon state so far proved their inefficiency. The Budapest Memorandum politically bounded Ukraine’s denuclearization to the respect for its territorial integrity by the nuclear powers.

Continued violation of this commitment will provide ample rhetorical bulwark to proliferators in favour of a nuclear deterrent as a remedy for both nuclear and conventional military threats.

To dissuade such a risk, the international community will have to invent a more convincing offer than a security assurance. There must be a solid mechanism of taking a violation to responsibility.

Mr. Chairman,

Another serious challenge for the international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation process is North Korea’s nuclear and ballistic missile programs.

The fact that the DPRK is the only country to have conducted nuclear tests in the 21st century proves the necessity of giving a legal effect to the statement of this country on its interest to join international efforts for a comprehensive settlement.
The country, which until recent days has been moving closer to having a fully functional nuclear arsenal, should not only show its interest in resumption of negotiations, but to embark on the irreversible path of transforming commitments into deeds as well.

It is regrettable that the latest news coming from the DPRK prove the continuation and further development of this State’s nuclear programme.

Let me reiterate Ukraine’s clear position in this regard – the DPRK cannot have the status of a nuclear weapon State in accordance with the NPT.

As we reaffirm our commitment to a peaceful, diplomatic and political solution, there could be no question on lifting the existing sanctions until full compliance of the DPRK with the norms of the international law.

All appeals ‘to ease the sanctions’ are aimed not at creating the ‘atmosphere of mutual trust’, but dangerous misbalance in the existing international security system. All claims to ‘provide security assurances’ to the DPRK as a response to the expressed intention to renounce its nuclear programme are nothing but twisted perception of letter and spirit of the NPT.

In order to prevent the possible nuclear threat, we must be united to ensure full responsibility for any violation of the international law – no matter whether it was done by a recognized nuclear weapon state or one wishing to gain such a status.

Ukraine remains ready for substantial work with all states on this matter with an aim to ensure positive changes in the current situation and move closer to denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

**Mr. Chairman,**

Ukraine consistently stands for reducing the nuclear arsenals, stopping the modernization of nuclear weapons, and overall decrease of nuclear weapons' role in military and strategic doctrines of states.

Therefore, we call on all states, possessing nuclear weapons, to apply the principles of irreversibility and verifiability to disarmament process. Ukraine believes that such states have to commit themselves to reducing the role of nuclear weapons in their national security strategies.

We also believe that irrespective of different positions on the means to achieve the total elimination of nuclear weapons, identifying and developing practical and effective measures of nuclear disarmament verification and monitoring will foster confidence and facilitate efforts to achieve and maintain a safer world without nuclear weapons.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman