Cluster II

STATEMENT

by

Ireland

2019 Preparatory Committee Meeting of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)

New York, 3 May 2019

Check against delivery
Thank you, Chair.

Ireland is in full alignment with the statements delivered by the European Union and the Vienna Group of 10.

Chair,

For nearly fifty years, the non-proliferation provisions of the NPT, and our collective efforts to implement these obligations, have made our world a safer and more secure place for all. The Treaty has successfully limited the number of States possessing nuclear weapons and helped to establish a global norm against the use of nuclear weapons.

Since the Treaty was adopted, our understanding of the magnitude of the danger posed by nuclear weapons has significantly improved. It has become clear that the use of nuclear weapons – even in a ‘limited’ way – would eliminate any prospect of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Any nuclear weapon explosion would cause immediate threats to our fundamental needs, such as clean air and water and food security, as well as long-term damage to critical infrastructure, the environment and our health. Women and girls would be twice as likely as men and boys to develop cancer as a result of exposure to ionising radiation. This deepened understanding reinforces our view that every effort must be made to safeguard and continue the progress made under the non-proliferation pillar.

Chair,

The non-proliferation of nuclear weapons is an important commitment in its own right. But at the same time, we must acknowledge that three pillars of the NPT are interlinked and were designed to be mutually reinforcing. As the Secretary-General notes in his Agenda for Disarmament, ‘Backward movement on one side will inevitably lead to backward movement on the other.’ Ireland believes that the continued significance of nuclear weapons in security policies incentivises proliferation. The best way to protect the NPT – and its successes under the non-proliferation pillar – is to implement all provisions fully.
States Parties have built a number of supporting frameworks to aid the implementation of the NPT’s non-proliferation provisions. For example, today over 100 countries are included in nuclear-weapons-free zones. Such zones can play an important role in promoting regional and international peace and stability. They complement and reinforce the NPT, as do a number of other multilateral instruments. The range of coverage of nuclear weapon free zones is a powerful demonstration of the determination of the majority of states to eliminate nuclear weapons entirely.

Similarly, multilateral export control regimes can provide an important barrier to the spread of sensitive technology, and set the standard for responsible non-proliferation behaviour. We urge all partners to redouble their commitment to the export control regimes generally. In December last year, Ireland and Iceland successfully concluded our term as co-chairs of the Missile Technology Control Regime, which included an ambitious programme of outreach. Export control regimes are only as strong as their members’ commitment to them however, and the current vacancy in the chair of the MTCR is deeply regrettable. We look forward to New Zealand taking over the chair later this year.

The IAEA safeguards system also provides invaluable concrete assurances that nuclear activities remain exclusively for peaceful purposes. We urge States that have not already done so to conclude and bring into force an Additional Protocol without delay.

Chair,

The DPRK’s nuclear activities continue to pose serious challenges to non-proliferation. The openness to dialogue that has emerged over the last year has been welcome, but it is essential that words are substantiated by concrete actions. Any credible denuclearisation agreement should include signing and ratifying the CTBT, agreeing IAEA safeguards – and of course, a return to the NPT.
The IAEA continues to play an essential role in the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. We were pleased to note the recent findings of the IAEA, which declared Iran to be in compliance with the terms of the JCPOA for the fourteenth consecutive time. Despite significant challenges, the JCPOA continues to be an exemplary model of what can be achieved through effective multilateral diplomacy and political will. Ireland continues to strongly support the JCPOA and urges all parties to continue to comply fully with its terms.

Chair,

Ireland continues to strongly support the establishment of zones free from nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, in accordance with the 1995 resolution on the Middle East, which was essential to the agreement to indefinitely extend the NPT. Ireland will host a side event on 8th May with the British American Security Information Council (BASIC) to explore ways we can support progress on this long overdue commitment.

To conclude, Chair,

In order to safeguard the norm against proliferation enshrined in the NPT, the Treaty itself must remain robust and fit for purpose. This will require the full implementation of its interdependent provisions. As we are all aware, we face a number of challenges to multilateralism and to the rules-based order. Yet as we approach 50 years of the NPT, we are minded to note that this Treaty was negotiated at a time of severe international tension, when the widespread proliferation of nuclear weapons seemed inevitable. Ireland would urge all States Parties to remember that substantial progress can, and has, been made in difficult environments, for the benefit of all.

Thank you.