Statement by

H.E. Deborah Geels
Permanent Representative of New Zealand
to the International Atomic Energy Agency, Vienna

at the

2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation
of Nuclear Weapons

Main Committee II

New York, May 2015

*Check against delivery*
Mr Chairman

An effective international non-proliferation regime is essential if we are to achieve a world without nuclear weapons. The NPT’s safeguards system provides assurances of member states’ compliance, transparency and accountability. These help to create the stability and confidence necessary for the realisation of the Treaty’s goal—a world free of nuclear weapons.

New Zealand’s comprehensive safeguards agreement with the IAEA came into force in 1972, and our Additional Protocol in 1998. New Zealand conducts only very minor activities subject to safeguards: we have no nuclear weapons, energy generation, or reactors, nor do we produce uranium or other relevant materials. But we continue to seek ways to strengthen the application of safeguards. We were pleased to sign up to the modified Small Quantities Protocol last year and have also joined the Asia-Pacific Safeguards Network to further facilitate the sharing of best practice in the region.

New Zealand believes that an Additional Protocol should always feature as a condition of new supply arrangements for nuclear and associated material and encourages all countries that have not yet done so – particularly those with significant nuclear activities – to conclude and bring into force an Additional Protocol with the IAEA without delay.

Mr Chairman

The integrity of the IAEA’s verification activities is fundamental in assuring New Zealand and other NPT States Parties that nuclear activities are being undertaken for solely peaceful purposes.

In that regard, New Zealand warmly welcomes the recent announcement of the Lausanne agreement between Iran and the P5+1, which opens the way for a comprehensive final agreement that will contribute positively to regional stability in the Middle East. New Zealand fully supports the P5+1 process, and was pleased to make financial contributions to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) for the implementation of the Joint Plan of Action. We commend the leadership shown by all parties at this latest round of talks and hope the current goodwill and momentum can be converted into a comprehensive agreement by 30 June. We recognise the significant verification role that the IAEA will play and the importance therefore of its engagement in providing technical advice in the negotiations to ensure an implementable outcome.
New Zealand is, however, disappointed to see no evidence of any positive change in North Korea’s nuclear activities. The DPRK’s continuing operations at Yongbyon, missile launches and breach of both Security Council and IAEA Board resolutions seriously undermine the international non-proliferation regime. New Zealand calls on North Korea to abandon its nuclear and missile programmes, and instead to focus its energy and effort on improving the lives of its citizens and engaging constructively with the international community.

Mr Chairman

New Zealand places a high priority on nuclear security and is an active supporter of a range of initiatives aimed at countering the proliferation of nuclear and associated materials. These comprise domestic activities, including hosting an IAEA International Physical Protection Assistance Mission, as well multilateral engagement in the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism, the Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction, the Nuclear Security Summit, and the Proliferation Security Initiative.

As a member of both the Nuclear Suppliers Group and, since 2013, the Zangger Committee, New Zealand also emphasises the importance of effective export controls to international non-proliferation efforts. With other members of these groups, New Zealand works to coordinate and strengthen global export control measures for materials and dual-use goods that could be used in a nuclear weapons programme.

Mr Chairman

New Zealand is a strong advocate of nuclear-weapon-free zones. They help both to build the regional confidence that underpins peace and stability and to reinforce the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty by providing further collective rejections of nuclear weapons. It is a noteworthy achievement that 60% of the world’s states are now covered by nuclear-weapon-free zones, including every state in the Southern Hemisphere. This is a powerful demonstration of the collective will that can exist at a regional level to rid the world of nuclear weapons. Pending the total elimination of nuclear weapons, useful work can be done to support the establishment of additional Zones.

In this connection, we welcomed the reaffirmation at the 2010 NPT Review Conference of the 1995 Resolution on the Middle East and the agreement to convene a Conference in 2012 on establishing a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. New Zealand regrets that notwithstanding significant efforts the conference has not taken
place. We hope that the groundwork will yet be able to be completed for a robust agreement living up to the NPT outcomes of 1995 and 2010.

Mr Chairman

The NPT plays a crucial role in global efforts against nuclear proliferation. New Zealand is pleased to play its part in supporting nuclear safety, security, safeguards and peaceful uses, but regrets that progress on strengthening non-proliferation has not been matched by progress on nuclear disarmament. This lack of progress on disarmament undermines the mutually-reinforcing nature of the three pillars and challenges the credibility and integrity of the NPT. We can and must do better.

Thank you.