United Nations conference to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination

Statement by Liechtenstein
upon adoption of a Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons

Georg Sparber, Chargé d'affaires a.i.
New York, 7 July 2017

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Madame President, distinguished delegates,

Today is a historic day, for the United Nations and the peoples around the world on whose behalf we have all committed to the UN Charter. We have come together after intense negotiations to adopt a treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons, in the firm hope that this will lead to their total elimination. This brings us back to the very beginning of the United Nations. In its first resolution in 1946, with fresh memories of the horrors of the use of nuclear weapons in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the General Assembly issued a call to eliminate nuclear weapons. This call has been repeated innumerable times, over many decades. Throughout all these years, it has been strongly promoted by those who have suffered the most from these weapons, the Hibakusha and the many victims of nuclear tests, as well as civil society movements across the world. They own an enormous part in today's achievement. Today, we close a gap in international law. After prohibiting biological weapons in 1972 and chemical weapons in 1993, we can finally say that nuclear weapons too, the most devastating weapons of all, are prohibited by a legally binding instrument open to all States. For Liechtenstein it was an honor to participate in this joint undertaking.
Madame President,
Our deep appreciation and our gratitude go to you, to your team and to Costa Rica, with its proud tradition for peace and disarmament, for the tremendous efforts in guiding us to this final version of the treaty, behind which we can unite and take ownership. Under great constraints you have succeeded in creating the conditions for our constructive deliberations while holding up the basic principles of multilateralism, inclusiveness and transparency. These principles also find their reflection in our treaty. I would also like to thank the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs and her team for their political support, technical expertise and enormous commitment to the process.

Madam President,
We have achieved a very good result that lives up to our high expectations at the beginning of this process. Its core provisions are both clear and comprehensive and do not leave any doubt about the aim of our endeavor. The treaty also reflects our aspiration to create a universal norm. We have not shied away from addressing the inherent complexities of this goal, which is what we ultimately must strive for. While we are under no illusion that it will be a lengthy process, the treaty offers an open door for nuclear weapon states that want to change course and join those who wish to prohibit nuclear weapons as the best way to safeguard against their use. Very importantly, we have recognized the need to work together to provide assistance to victims and committed to cooperate in that regard. Not least we have provided a good basis to continue this important process among States Parties and other interested stakeholders. With all this we have also achieved the broadest possible support for our treaty. We regret that it was not possible to have consensus on this text.

Madam President,
In this time of rising geopolitical risks and tensions, tremendous amounts of money, research and human resources are spent on nuclear weapons programmes, including for modernizing and upgrading arsenals. Our message today is clear: a large majority of States fundamentally disagrees with this course of action. Nuclear weapons continue to be an existential risk to
humanity and need to be abolished. Our treaty is a crucial contribution to that end, while we remain fully committed to the other elements of our nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime, in particular the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty, to which our treaty will be complementary and a political reinforcement. Liechtenstein is convinced of the potential of our treaty to help free the world of nuclear weapons. Today will be remembered as a significant milestone to achieve this aim.

Thank you.