EXPLANATION OF VOTE AFTER THE VOTE BY SOUTH AFRICA ON RESOLUTION L.43

Thank you Chairperson,

I have requested the floor to explain South Africa’s vote on draft resolution L.43 entitled “United action towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons”.

Operative paragraph 12 of resolution L.43 makes reference to the question of security assurances in the context of UN Security Council resolution 984 of 1995. In this regard, I wish to place on record that the issue of security assurances continues to remain of great importance to South Africa. My delegation has often stated that genuine security cannot be achieved by the non-nuclear-weapon States abandoning the nuclear weapons option alone. Likewise, South Africa has always pointed out that the only guarantee against the use of nuclear weapons is their total elimination.

South Africa believes that security assurances are not some ultimate objective in and of itself. It is a pragmatic, interim and practical measure aimed at strengthening the non-proliferation regime and the objective of a nuclear-weapon-free world. My delegation does not believe that the security assurances granted under United Nations Security Council Resolution 984 are satisfactory, nor do we believe that security assurances granted in the context of the existing treaties for the establishment of nuclear-weapon free zones provide sufficient guarantees to all of the non-nuclear-weapon States.

Pending the total elimination of nuclear weapons, South Africa believes that efforts for the conclusion of a universal, unconditional and legally binding instrument on security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States should be pursued as a matter of priority. South Africa’s views on this matter are well known and my delegation’s insistence on the provision of legally-binding security assurances to States that have foregone the nuclear weapons option under the NPT is based on our belief that it would not only enhance the security of non-nuclear-weapon States under the Treaty, but also strengthen the non-proliferation norm.

The “Principles and Objectives for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament” adopted at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference recognised that steps should be considered to assure non-nuclear-weapon States party to the NPT against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons which could take the form of an internationally legally binding instrument. The Final Document of the 2000 Review Conference reflects the agreement of States Parties that legally-binding security assurances by the nuclear-weapon States to the non-nuclear-weapon States Parties to the NPT would strengthen the nuclear non-proliferation regime. The 2010 NPT Review Conference also recognised the legitimate interest of non-nuclear weapon States in receiving unequivocal and legally binding security assurances from nuclear-weapon States which could strengthen the nuclear non-proliferation regime.

Resolution L.43 unfortunately does not take into account any of the above. Nor does it recognize the aspirations of non-nuclear-weapon States for the provision of security assurances in the context of an internationally legally binding instrument. Instead, it only focuses narrowly on security assurances in the context of UN Security Council resolution 984, which is why my delegation abstained on it.

I thank you.