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STATEMENT BY
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to the Conference on Disarmament

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Statement by the Netherlands in the First Committee of 66th Session of the UNGA Thematic Debate on Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Chairman,

Last year saw significant progress on non-proliferation arms control and disarmament. At the Review Conference, for the first time in many years, consensus was reached among the NPT parties. The result was a bold new Action Plan. As UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon said at the 2010 Conference, 'The world still lives under the nuclear shadow.' It is still there. Now we need initiatives to continue in the spirit of the 2010 Review Conference and remove that shadow.

The Netherlands will continue to make innovative, practical proposals to implement the 2010 Action Plan. Non-proliferation, disarmament and arms control have always been and will remain cornerstones of Dutch foreign policy, with the Non-Proliferation Treaty as our foundation and the Action Plan as our roadmap towards the next Review Conference in 2015. This is an essential part of our commitment to strengthen international law and security. For us, non-proliferation, disarmament and arms control are facets of the same diamond.

The Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) remains the cornerstone of the nuclear non-proliferation system, the essential foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament in accordance with its Article VI and an important element in the further development of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. In view of current proliferation risks, we are convinced that today the NPT is more vital than ever. We must preserve and strengthen its authority and integrity.

Mr Chairman,

The Netherlands is a member of the Group of Ten countries that launched the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative (NPDI), which links these issues. This group was convinced that we need focus on the practical implementation of the NPT Action Plan.

At our ministerial NPDI meetings in Berlin and New York this year, we decided to press for greater transparency in the way nuclear weapons states report their disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation efforts. At the same time we have stepped up our efforts for universal application of the IAEA’s Additional Protocol. This is vital to ensure that nuclear activities remain peaceful. For us the combination of a comprehensive safeguard agreement and an Additional Protocol is the current standard for verification.
The Netherlands supports safeguards on a bilateral basis through our Member States Support Program and only a few weeks ago, minister Rosenthal announced a voluntary contribution of € 100,000 to the Agency’s efforts on the universalization of the Additional Protocol.

Together with other NPDI countries we are currently working on further innovative and practical proposals to implement the Action Plan.

To advance the global non-proliferation, disarmament and arms control and agenda The Netherlands believes it is vital that an agreement is reached on a way to overcome the continued deadlock in the International Conference on Disarmament, which has kept us from starting negotiations on a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty. The start of these negotiations is long overdue.

The Netherlands wants to move forward, preferably within the Conference on Disarmament, but is prepared to pursue alternative routes. The Netherlands is willing to give the CD another chance to agree on and implement a work programme, but only if at the same time preparatory work on alternatives is done in parallel and a clear deadline is set. That is why The Netherlands together with South-Africa and Switzerland submitted a resolution on the HLM-process. The Netherlands also firmly supports the Canadian draft FMCT-resolution.

Mr. Chairman,

The Netherlands is committed to universalizing the CTBT and promoting its early entry-into-force. We recognize the security and civil benefits of the CTBT verification system, including the International Monitoring System and feel that the scope for expanding civilian use of the Monitoring System in other areas of early warning and emergency response should be explored. We will continue, together with other NPDI states, to utilize diplomatic opportunities to urge states to sign and ratify the CTBT.

The Netherlands remains committed to ensuring the best safety, security and non-proliferation conditions by countries wishing to develop in a responsible way, their capacities in the field of peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

The IAEA’s role in strengthening nuclear non-proliferation, in guaranteeing the safety and security of nuclear energy and in advancing nuclear technology to the benefit of all, cannot be overestimated. Therefore it is crucial that the Agency is equipped with the resources required to ensure it has the authority, expertise, and the resources needed to fulfill its mandate. In this regard we welcome the agreement on the new budget for 2012-2013. We also welcome the adoption last year of the new Medium Term Strategy, which solidly addresses the challenges and priorities, and which contains a clear commitment to effectively and efficiently carry out the Agency’s tasks in the coming years.
We join the international call for elevating the safety of nuclear power plants to the highest level and strengthening nuclear safety measures worldwide and welcome the outcomes of the High-level Meeting on Nuclear Safety and Security convened by the UNSG on 22 September. The Netherlands also notes the importance of the work undertaken concerning multilateral approaches to the nuclear fuel cycle.

Mr. Chairman,

The international community continues to be confronted with major nuclear proliferation challenges, in particular, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Syria and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. We must be united in standing up to these challenges, and take resolute action in response.

We have noted with deep concern the latest report of the Director General of the IAEA which confirms that the Islamic Republic of Iran, in violation of its obligations, continues to expand its enrichment activities, including by increasing its capacity of enrichment to 20%. The Agency is increasingly concerned about the possible existence in Iran of past or current undisclosed nuclear-related activities involving military-related organisations, including activities related to the development of a nuclear payload for a missile, about which the IAEA continues to receive new information.

Iran continues not to cooperate sufficiently in order to enable the Agency to provide credible assurance about the absence of undeclared nuclear material and activities in Iran, and therefore to conclude that all nuclear material in Iran is for peaceful activities. We urge Iran to address all the IAEA’s outstanding concerns and to respond positively and through concrete actions to the request by the Agency for engagement and to grant prompt access to relevant locations, equipment, documentation and persons.

The Netherlands continues to be gravely concerned about the Iranian nuclear programme. Iran must suspend all its enrichment activities and heavy water related projects, including research and development, fully implement its Safeguards Agreement, bring into force the Additional Protocol, and fully cooperate with the IAEA in order to clarify all outstanding issues, in particular those from the latest IAEA report, which give rise to increased concerns about possible military dimensions to its nuclear programme. Iran must comply with its international obligations and implement the resolutions of the UN Security Council and the IAEA Board of Governors.

The Netherlands supports the efforts of the EU High-Representative together with the representatives of China, France, Germany, Russian Federation, UK, US to engage Iran in a meaningful diplomatic process. The key objective remains for Iran to enter into meaningful talks without preconditions. The door for dialogue remains open and we call on Iran to enter into such talks to reach a negotiated settlement.
The Netherlands is seriously concerned about the non-compliance by the Syrian Arab Republic with its Safeguards Agreement. The Netherlands welcomed the decision of the IAEA Board of Governors adopted in June 2011 to report this matter to the UN Security Council. The Netherlands urges Syria to fully cooperate with the IAEA to resolve all open questions, to comply with its Safeguards Agreement and to bring into force an Additional Protocol as soon as possible.

The Netherlands reiterates its grave concern at the decision made by the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to cease all cooperation with the IAEA. The Netherlands remains extremely concerned regarding the revelation of the DPRK uranium enrichment programme: These activities represent another violation of DPRK international obligations. The DPRK must comply, without delay, with all its international obligations under the relevant resolutions of the UN Security Council and the IAEA, and demonstrate its willingness to implement previous commitments through concrete actions, which would create an environment conducive to the resumption of the six-party-talks aimed at achieving the verifiable denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

Furthermore, the Netherlands supports the conference in on the establishment of a Middle East free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction to be held in 2012. In the run-up to this conference, we stand ready to play an active role wherever useful.

Mr. Chairman,

Serious challenges remain in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation and we must face them with resolve. The Netherlands continues to work towards a world free of nuclear weapons but realizes that this goal will not be reached overnight. Nevertheless we firmly believe that with a prudent and step-by-step approach next generations will live to see it.

Thank you.