STATEMENT BY

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Mr. Chairman,

As this is the first time that I take the floor, please allow me to congratulate you on your election as chair of this Committee and to assure you of the full support of my delegation.

In addition to the statement of the European Union we like to make the following remarks.

Mr. Chairman,

Professor Einstein is believed to have said (quote) "I know not with what weapons World War III will be fought, but world war IV will be fought with sticks and stone" (end of quote). He was referring to the devastating effects of nuclear weapons. I think -for the right reasons- that Mr. Einstein was not worried about all the disarmament specialists and UNODA, who would be out of work, when sticks and stones would become the weapons.

The Netherlands is fully committed to the goal of a world without nuclear weapons and the NPT is the most important instrument to reach that goal.

The discussion on humanitarian consequences in Oslo reminded us of the devastating effects of nuclear weapons and therefore on the need to make progress towards the objective of further nuclear disarmament. The Netherlands considers attention for the humanitarian consequences of the use of nuclear weapons of great importance. Together with the security dimension, the humanitarian issue underpins our practical and sustained efforts aimed at achieving the shared goal of a world free of nuclear weapons. To underline the importance of this issue, we are supporting the joint statement on this matter which will be presented by Australia later during this thematic debate on nuclear weapons.

The Action Plan to which all NPT member states agreed to by consensus in 2010 contains actions on all three pillars: disarmament, non-proliferation and peaceful uses. Those actions are interrelated, are each important goals of their own and mutually reinforcing. Progress on non-proliferation helps to make progress on disarmament and vice versa. Disarmament and non-proliferation should go hand in hand. In cooperation with the other States of the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative NPDI), now twelve in total, we will continue to work on advancing the implementation of the 2010 Action Plan. At the High Level Meeting on Nuclear Disarmament the Netherlands Minister of Foreign Affairs, on behalf of the NPDI, urged all states and in particular the NPT nuclear weapon states and those states outside the NPT to take steps towards the speedy, final and total elimination of their nuclear weapons.

In our view the best path towards a world without nuclear weapons is through a step by step approach and by taking practical and concrete measures. Steps can be of a unilateral, a bilateral, a regional or multilateral nature.

Essential steps of a multilateral nature are the entry into force of the CTBT and a Treaty that stops the production of Fissile Material for military purposes.

While regretting that so far it has not been possible to start negotiations on an FMCT, we are looking forward to the work of the Group of Governmental Experts based on resolution 67/53 that will start its work in 2014. We stand ready to contribute in a constructive way to its success in any way we can. We would kindly like to thank all delegations who joined us at the side event today which we organized together with Canada and UNIDIR to look ahead at the work of the GGE.
Further steps

All nuclear weapon states and those states outside of the NPT can already now take practical concrete measures towards the total elimination of their nuclear weapons, including: greater transparency of their nuclear arsenals; further diminishing the role and significance of nuclear weapons in their military and security concepts, doctrines and policies; de-alerting their nuclear forces to help lower the risk of inadvertent use; and reducing and ultimately eliminating all types of nuclear weapons, both strategic and non-strategic, deployed and non-deployed, in a transparent, verifiable and irreversible manner.

Is there progress?

We do appreciate that there have been more regular meetings of the P5 on disarmament. We would appreciate if there would be debriefings in the CD or other disarmament fora. We hope that those meetings will have concrete results. I would like to quote the former Brazilian UN Representative Sergio Duarte here: "one cannot worship at the altar of nuclear weapons and raise heresy against those who also want to join the sect". We would appreciate more transparency and hope and wait for concrete steps on nuclear disarmament from all nuclear weapon states.

We welcomed the statement of President Obama in Berlin (19/6) on further disarmament steps by the US. Implementation of the new START Treaty is an essential contribution to nuclear disarmament. We believe that in the next round of negotiations on further reductions of nuclear arsenals between the US and the Russian Federation all types of nuclear weapons should be included, that implies also non-strategic nuclear weapons. Mutual reductions that take the different starting positions into account are a logical next step.

Last year there were a number of encouraging developments towards nuclear disarmament. The discussion on the humanitarian consequences of the use of nuclear weapons is one of them. It invigorates the drive towards global zero. At the same time, we should not lose sight of the importance of the effectiveness of our disarmament endeavors. We are looking forward to the conference in Mexico in February next year in which we will actively participate.

The Netherlands participated as a friend of the chair in the Open Ended Working Group on taking forward Multilateral Nuclear Disarmament Negotiations in Geneva. We were encouraged to see that a constructive and open discussion on nuclear disarmament is possible in which delegations were prepared to focus on common ground, rather than on differences. The building blocks or the elements we need towards a world without nuclear weapons, regardless of the approach one favors. We express the hope that we can further build on the positive outcomes of these meetings in a constructive, including and non-divisive way.

NL does not only emphasize the importance of disarmament and non-proliferation but also of reducing the broader risks connected to nuclear material including the risk of nuclear terrorism. In less than 160 days, the Nuclear Security Summit will begin in The Hague. During a side event here in New York, on October 7 our NSS-Sherpa gave an overview on the main objectives of the Hague Summit. My country's hosting of this event is in line with our tradition as a country of peace, justice and security. The Nuclear Security Summit is meant to give fresh impetus, at the highest political level, to global efforts to ensure nuclear security and prevent nuclear terrorism.

Regional issues

The Netherlands government has taken note with interest of the discussions and statements in the IAEA Board of Governors, and the message by the Iranian president, Mr. Rohani, in his speech at the United Nations General Assembly. The Netherlands welcome the words by Iran on what the Netherlands hope to be a new chapter of constructive engagement by Iran. The ball is firmly in the court of Iran. This is Iran's chance to make good on its intentions. We urge Iran to fully cooperate with the Agency and comply with its international legal obligations.
For two years the Netherlands has expressed its concern about the non-compliance of the Syrian Arab Republic with its safeguards obligations under the NPT. We welcome the Syrian decision to become a member of the OPCW. We hope this step will be followed by steps regarding the outstanding issues on its nuclear non-proliferation obligations. Notwithstanding the difficult situation in large parts of Syria, the Netherlands once again urges Syria to fully cooperate with the IAEA. It also calls on Syria to start the process to resolve all outstanding issues. In the present situation the Syrian authorities remain fully responsible for urgently remedying their non-compliance with their Safeguards Agreement.

The situation in the DPRK remains of grave concern. We condemn the 3rd nuclear test, of February 12th 2013. This test is a clear violation of international obligations and is a serious threat to regional and international peace, stability and security. The test only underscored the importance of the CTBT and of its earliest possible entry into force.

We are also concerned about the uranium enrichment program and on-going construction at the Light Water Reactor at Yongbon, where new activity has been reported. The Netherlands remain convinced of the essential role the Agency has in verifying the application of safeguards in the DPRK and urges the DPRK government to allow the early return of IAEA inspectors.

Mr. Chairman,

Disarmament, Non-proliferation and arms control are firmly rooted cornerstones of our foreign policy, with the Non Proliferation Treaty as its foundation and the Action Plan as our roadmap. The Netherlands will continue to make, including with our partners in the NPDI, innovative, practical proposals to implement the 2010 Action Plan and is ready to engage with other states to reach the final goal of a world without nuclear weapons.

Step by step, but more progress is needed towards the NPT Review conference.