STATEMENT by TURKEY

at the Thematic Debate on NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

68th SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

FIRST COMMITTEE

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Mr. Chairman,

Our common aspiration remains a world without nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. We were among the delegations that expressed strong support to this objective during the High Level Meeting of the General Assembly on Nuclear Disarmament, organized by NAM. We were encouraged by the strong expression of support for this aspiration.

The Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) remains the centerpiece mechanism towards this aspiration, even though it does not always function as effectively as we would have desired. Turkey believes that an equal and balanced treatment of the three mutually reinforcing pillars will solidify the integrity and credibility of the NPT regime.

The extent the Nuclear Weapon States are able to fulfill their disarmament commitments impacts its success. In this context Turkey welcomes and supports all calls by nuclear weapon states towards further reductions. At the same time, strict adherence by all NPT states to their non-proliferation obligations, also affects the credibility of the regime. Finally, the right to peaceful uses of nuclear energy needs to be upheld. Naturally this right comes with relevant international obligations.

However, some countries still unfortunately remain outside this regime. We support its universalization, as well as its effective implementation in good faith and consistency.

Mr. Chairman,

We acknowledge the international safeguards system of the IAEA as the fundamental tool in global non-proliferation efforts. In this context, Turkey recognizes the need for further strengthening and universalization of the Agency's verification authority. We regard the comprehensive safeguards and the Additional Protocol of the IAEA as an indispensable verification standard, and call on all States, that have not yet done so, to sign, ratify and implement them as soon as possible. We believe that strengthening the safeguards system and promoting the Agency's role and finances are also essential for the sustainability of the NPT regime in the long run.

It is our firm belief that States in full compliance with their safeguards obligations should have unhindered access to civilian nuclear technology, as provided for in the NPT. In our view, this would only contribute to the further strengthening and universalization of the NPT regime. Having said that, we must also ensure that all requisite steps be taken so that there will be no diversion of nuclear programs from peaceful to military uses.

On the other hand, Turkey strongly believes that the cessation of all nuclear weapon tests constitutes an indispensable measure to achieve both nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. In this regard, we stress the centrality of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) in achieving these objectives. Moratoria are certainly important confidence-building instruments. Yet, for an important issue like nuclear testing, legally binding treaties are indispensable.

The international community has spent enough time waiting for the Treaty to enter into force. We once again encourage all states, especially Annex II states, to ratify the Treaty, as soon as possible.

The underground nuclear test conducted by North Korea on February 12th this year, threatening efforts towards international peace and security, was a stark reminder of the importance of the Treaty, its ratification and universalization.
Creating conditions for a world without nuclear weapons, and other weapons of mass destruction, is a major investment towards a safer world and undiminished security for all. Turkey remains deeply concerned by the possible humanitarian catastrophes for humanity, should these lethal weapons be ever used, intentionally or accidentally. We, therefore, supported and actively participated in the Oslo Conference on the “Humanitarian Consequences of Nuclear Weapons”. We are looking forward to making further contributions at the upcoming meeting in Mexico.

Mr. Chairman,

Turkey is part of the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative (NPDI) along with eleven other countries from all around the globe. The NPDI is proving to be a Middle Powers Initiative that promotes the implementation of the consensus outcomes of the 2010 Review Conference. We continue to make our share towards the advancement of the goals of non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament.

We are past the half-mark of the current NPT Review Cycle and the next Review Conference is approaching fast. But we are not yet able to put the sufficient building blocks on the existing Treaty basis, commitments are overlooked and promises for the present review cycle are not upheld.

I am specifically referring to our promise to the world to hold an International Conference for the establishment of a Middle East free from all weapons of mass destruction in 2012. Despite the challenging conditions that exist in the region, international community, in particular the conveners, should not spare any effort to organize this conference as soon as possible. The success of the Review Cycle is very much dependent on the realization of this project.

The postponement of the Conference was indeed regrettable. But we still see it “a missed deadline”, not a “lost opportunity”. Turkey expects the Conference to be convened as soon as possible and urges all States of the region to participate in it in a spirit of cooperation and flexibility. To this end, Turkey’s support Facilitator Ambassador Laajava and his team is unwavered.

Mr. Chairman,

Turkey remains fully committed to a diplomatic solution to the Iranian nuclear issue, through peaceful means and dialogue. We encourage and firmly support negotiations as the only avenue to a lasting solution.

The positive statements made by the parties, following the P5+1 talks held in Geneva on 15-16 October are encouraging. We are pleased that the next round of talks will be held soon. We believe that periodical meetings based on a concrete timetable will be useful in maintaining the momentum.

We encourage parties to maintain an open minded and forward looking approach, and to concentrate on future prospects, discussing nuclear issues as a topic of cooperation.

Mr. Chairman,

The Conference on Disarmament has a special responsibility in the contemporary disarmament agenda. We should strive to maintain the relevance of the Conference by fulfilling its fundamental task. In this regard, we still keep our hope that the Conference will resume substantive work as early as possible. The CD needs to be revitalized, in order to reassume the unique negotiation role with which it is mandated. Turkey believes that the Conference possesses the mandate, membership and the rules of procedure in order to effectively discharge its duties.
We see the recently established Informal Working Group as an indication of a shared goal of the need to come up with a consensual Program of Work urgently.

Moreover, it is our firm belief that starting negotiations on Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty will be a significant building block. It will further pave the way for parallel advances in the other core agenda items, including nuclear disarmament, negative security assurances and the prevention of arms race in outer space.

Thank you.