STATEMENT BY ECUADOR IN THE THEMATIC DEBATE OF THE FIRST COMMITTEE ON NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT
(New York, 17 October 2017)

Mister Chairman:

Ecuador associates itself with the statements delivered by Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on behalf of UNASUR.

After the conclusion of the Open Ended Working Group on Nuclear Disarmament that met in Geneva during this year and the adoption of its recommendation, now reflected in a draft resolution under consideration of the First Committee with the sponsorship of Ecuador, we can say that this year will be remembered as important in relation with nuclear disarmament, as it will mark a before and an after.

In 2017 we will begin the process of negotiation of a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, with a view to their total elimination. This process will be authentically inclusive because, without conditions, will be open to the participation of all States, including those possessing nuclear weapons and States that participate in extended nuclear deterrence alliances. Open, then, to the participation of all States, unlike other non-proliferation processes with limited participation, but that are indeed proposed by some as legitimate and relevant in several draft resolutions presented to this Committee.

We are aware that an instrument prohibiting nuclear weapons will not disappear them immediately, but with the negotiation and adoption of this instrument, just as it happened with other weapons of mass destruction, the legal foundation and juridical standard for their elimination, would have been set.

The negotiation of this instrument is in conformity with article VI of the Non-Proliferation Treaty and will reinforce the regimes of non-proliferation and disarmament currently existent, for this reason we reject the arguments put forward by nuclear possessors and some of their allies who -without basis- affirm that the legal prohibition of these catastrophic weapons would weaken the Non-Proliferation Treaty. On the contrary, it will reinforce it, so we also manifest our disagreement with those that have argued that a
Prohibition Treaty would lead States to abandon the NPT. This dangerous argument is illogical and contrary to the facts and to the engagements expressed by the States that promote it.

We must also reject as inherently contradictory the arguments by this same States that affirm, on one hand, their engagement with nuclear disarmament and in the same phrase manifest that these weapons are necessary for their security. If these weapons are supposedly necessary for the security of a few States, then they should be necessary for all States. But Ecuador, alongside the vast majority of States, rejects this argument: nuclear weapons guarantee security to no one, and rather are a source of permanent insecurity for all of humanity.

We have heard in this room and in other disarmament fora the annoyance of Nuclear Weapon States because the reduction of their nuclear stockpiles has not been recognized. Yes, they’ve been reduced, but at the same time they are being modernized and made more efficient, without clear actions leading to their total elimination, for which very important resources will be used in the following years instead of using them for poverty reduction and for the implementation of the development goals.

After the entry into force of the Prohibition Treaty the work on nuclear disarmament must continue even more intensely because, of course, we have to negotiate a Fissile Material Treaty, we will have to determine the verification mechanisms for nuclear disarmament, we will have to agree on the timetable for the destruction of these weapons as a consequence of this prohibition; all this on the firm and safe foundation of their prohibition.

My delegation reiterates its deep disagreement with the statement contained in the joint statement by the Nuclear Weapon States that are parties to the NPT that the maintenance and stewardship of their nuclear stockpiles are compatible with their commitments with the NPT and the CTBT. This is manifestly wrong, since none of these instruments allows or authorizes the indefinite possession of nuclear weapons.

Ecuador rejects and condemns any nuclear test, which is why the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty must enter into force. In this regard, its entry into force will not happen through Resolutions adopted by bodies that have nothing to do with its workings, its entry into force will come about when the States that have not done it and are part of Annex 2 ratify it. We simply don’t need to keep on hearing calls on the part of these States to the entry into force of the CTBT, what they have to do is ratify it without delay.

To conclude, Mister Chairman, I must reaffirm Ecuador’s conviction that with the adoption of the Resolution “Taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations” we will have taken a necessary and substantial step to finally, 70 years after the first nuclear explosion, be able of rid ourselves forever of these weapons, which is
why we invite all States that truly believe in nuclear disarmament to vote in favor of this resolution, reaffirming their commitment with article VI of the NPT.