STATEMENT BY

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1st Committee
Nuclear Weapons Debate

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Thank you, chairperson. The Netherlands aligns itself with the statements delivered by Australia on behalf of a group of countries and the NPDI. We would like to make some additional remarks.

Nuclear arms control is facing challenging times. Last month brought a stark reminder with the sixth nuclear test conducted by the DPRK. This test was preceded and followed by multiple ballistic missile tests. The Netherlands condemns this provocative behaviour by the DPRK in the strongest possible terms. These actions destabilize the region, are a threat to regional and global peace and security, and should therefore be ceased immediately. The regime should fully comply with its international obligations including the relevant UN Security Council Resolutions. In addition, the DPRK must return to compliance with its obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and IAEA safeguards, and sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

In addition, the international community faces tensions between nuclear possessor states, disagreements on how to make further progress on disarmament and how to ensure non-proliferation. Even the goal of a nuclear weapon free world is at risk of being obscured.

In a more insecure and challenging world, we need to redouble our efforts on nuclear disarmament. We need focus on our goals and persevere in identifying and pursuing steps to reach them. We therefore welcome this year’s awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize, which underlines the continuing importance of nuclear disarmament and the need to make steps forward.

Chairperson,

We all share the same goal: a world free of nuclear weapons. Having a common goal, a shared objective, helps create confidence in dialogue and keeps our differences in perspective. More than ever we need an honest dialogue about nuclear weapons, disarmament, and international security. Let’s concentrate on identifying our common interests, our shared concerns and understanding each other’s security perceptions. That includes acknowledging our different perspectives on the Treaty Prohibiting Nuclear Weapons, and finding a way to deal with them. Let us concentrate on measures that contribute to our common safety by reducing nuclear risks. Such measures are important building blocks for arms control and disarmament: mutual trust, stability and transparency.

Chairperson,

The Netherlands believes that we should focus our efforts on implementing and strengthening the NPT and the global disarmament and non-proliferation regime of which it is the cornerstone. The Netherlands chaired the 2017 PrepCom, focusing on transparency and inclusivity. We have tried, through a regional approach, to emphasize the importance of global ownership of the NPT. The discussions in Vienna at the first session of the NPT PrepCom proved that there are many issues we must address towards 2020 and beyond. However, we have also been able to identify a number of basic views on the NPT that are shared amongst its member states. These, we hope, will serve as a basis for further discussions. We now stand ready to cooperate with our Polish colleagues who are chairing the 2018 PrepCom.

The Netherlands remains committed to work on concrete measures to implement and strengthen the NPT regime. To that end, we strongly supported the establishment of the high-level preparatory group to make further progress on a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty, skilfully chaired by Canada. The Netherlands attaches great importance to an FMCT as a crucial step toward nuclear disarmament. The work of the high-level preparatory group, that commenced this year, will help bring us closer to negotiating the treaty.

Another such initiative is nuclear disarmament verification. The Netherlands will continue to play an active role in the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification and co-initiated the establishment of a GGE next year. There is lots of work to be done; work that must be done by Nuclear Weapon States and Non-Nuclear Weapon States together.

Chairperson,

Another prime example of what we can accomplish together is the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action: the path to this robust deal was a rocky one, but the agreement is a success. The Netherlands calls
on all parties to continue their rigorous implementation of this multilateral agreement in order to build trust, to strengthen the JCPOA and to overcome the hurdles that are part of all comprehensive and far-reaching deals.

To conclude, Chairperson,

The NPT review cycle, the discussions on an FMCT, work on verification, the JCPOA: they show that no matter the political circumstances, we can build confidence in the disarmament and non-proliferation regime by working on concrete and practical steps together.

And of course, more such steps towards non-proliferation and disarmament can and should be identified and pursued. We need to be creative in our thinking and come up with new ways forward. We need common goals as much as we need to be pragmatic and persistent. This First Committee can play an instrumental role in both respects. We stand ready to work with you to this end.