OEWG on taking forward nuclear disarmament

Statement of Belgium on the occasion of the presentation of the synthesis document of the first session of the OEWG

Mister Chairman,

Belgium supports the declaration read out by the Netherlands on behalf of the countries that have subscribed to the progressive approach paper and would like to give in this context a few brief and general comments on the synthesis document you have presented on April 21st.

First of all, my delegation would like to commend you and your team for your efforts in producing this paper. We realize it is a real challenge to do justice to the rich debate we have witnessed so far and to synthesize the various positions that have been expressed by delegations during the first session of the OEWG.

We recognize that this paper falls under your purview, Mister Chairman, and that we should not start discussions aimed at introducing amendments to the text. My delegation acknowledges that the paper tries to capture the full breadth of our discussion, but it may, at certain points, also reflect an interpretation of the positions that were expressed. We may in this respect not share the optimistic view that, and I quote, “the different approaches (for achieving and maintaining a world without nuclear weapons) may be more complementary than is often assumed”.

As one of the countries advocating the progressive approach we believe there is a significant difference between our position and that of a number of other delegations. Focusing on what is referred to in the paper as the “minimization point” provides insufficient grounds to conclude that there may be a point of convergence between the positions of various delegations with respect to effective legal measures. The focus for us is on identifying the measures that can effectively help us reach that minimization point, with the buy-in from the nuclear-weapon states. We have listed in this respect twenty-five measures in our paper, such as an early entry-into-force of the CTBT, the negotiation of an FMCT, a commencement of post-New START treaty negotiations etc.

Our approach thus is different from the three other ones listed in the synthesis document. Indeed, our approach is configured to present the most effective method to make progress on the “road to zero”, by presenting a wide range of measures, both of legal and non-legal nature. I wish to repeat here that our work should not be driven by a belief that there exists a legal gap which needs to be filled. The Non-Proliferation Treaty provides sufficient legal basis to guide us to a world free of nuclear weapons through negotiations in good faith.

Mr. Chairman,
We are convinced that the progressive approach is the most likely to lead to a constructive dialogue with all stakeholders and to produce concrete progress on the road to nuclear disarmament. The broader the support this approach garners, the higher the potential for effective results. We would like to prefer productive engagement to ideological confrontation in order to yield success.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.