D and NP Education Remarks, May 4

1. Thank all countries that took the floor this morning to emphasize the importance of D and NP Education in the pursuit of a world free of nuclear weapons. In particular, thank the delegations of Mexico, Japan, and Nicaragua for calling attention to the WP on the subject I introduced earlier this week. Given the large number of countries that have spoken about the issue of D and NP Education, I would hope that the outcome document from the OEWG will reflect their recommendations;

2. What we need, however, is not support in general, but very specific actions. The representative from Japan, for example, made note of an unusual conference we convened in Monterey last month with high school students and teachers from Russia, Japan and the United States—what we call the Critical Issues Forum. While the meeting was a great success and demonstrated how the subject of D and NP can readily be mastered by high school students, what is shocking is that other than the 15 schools represented at the meeting, there are practically no other high schools in the world today that have offer classes that focus on either disarmament or nonproliferation. I ask each of you here today, to check with your capitals about this statistic, but I would bet that few if any of you will be able to report that high schools in your countries offer students any opportunity to study the subject that we are focused on in Geneva. How then, can we change this situation? It will require not only the fine words of representatives from foreign ministries, but collaboration between the MFAs of the world and their counterpart Ministries of Education.

3. My second point is to encourage us to recall and to endorse several key recommendations from the original UN Experts Group study, including the need to supplement formal classroom training with on-the-job training and internships, which may be conducted at IOs, national governmental agencies, NGOs and research centers. In addition, member states should be encouraged to include parliamentarians and/or non governmental advisers on delegations to UN disarmament and nonproliferation related meetings such as this OEWG, as well as meetings of the First Committee and the NPT review process. Some of you already do so, but many more should follow suit.

4. My third point, which also follows from a recommendation of the UN Expert Group is to encourage pedagogy that emphasizes participatory learning and makes use of role-playing and simulation exercises. In my four decades of teaching, I found no other pedagogy as effective in stimulating empathy and “seeing with the eyes of others.”

5. Finally, Mr. Chairman, I would like to suggest that in the future we have a panel of young people—high school students, undergraduates, or graduate students—including those from the NWS—speak to the assembled delegations. The high school meeting we held in Monterey last month also focused on the subject of nuclear risk reduction, and, the sophistication of the young presenters was remarkable. I believe it is vital that we hear their hopes and fears and suggestions from these young people. They actually might teach us something!