Remarks by Mr. Yerbolat Sembayev, Ambassador-at-Large, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, at the Open-ended Working Group on nuclear disarmament (Geneva, May 12, 2016)

Dear Mr. Chairman,
Your Excellencies,
Colleagues, members of civil society,

As this is the first time I am speaking at the Open-Ended Working Group, let me congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, on your assumption of this important post. I am confident that under your skillful and expert guidance the work of our group will issue the adoption of a harmonized and substantive outcome document.

Appreciating the necessity of taking additional steps to discuss issues of nuclear disarmament, we have supported the resolution of the UN General Assembly on the establishment of an Open-ended Working Group to advance the process of multilateral negotiations on nuclear disarmament.

This platform has the support of a vast majority, so its potential cannot be ignored. We urge all states with nuclear weapons states to take part in this dialogue.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In September 2015 in New York, the President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev speaking at the UN General Assembly called on the international community "to make the construction of a world without nuclear weapons a major goal of humanity in the 21st century."

By the centennial anniversary of the UN, nuclear weapons should be a part of history. By 2045 one hundred years after the devastating bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki the world should be free from the nuclear threat.

In this context, I would like to draw your attention to the Manifesto "The World. 21st Century" proposed by President Nazarbayev within the framework of the Nuclear Security Summit in Washington. The current document and the program set out in it “21st Century: A world without wars" are a wake-up call of the international community on the scope of its lethargy and indifference. A copy of the Manifesto can be found at the entrance to the hall.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We all need a consistent and relentless movement towards peace, completely free from nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction. An important step in this direction has already been made. On December 7, 2015 the UN General Assembly adopted Kazakhstan’s initiative, the Universal Declaration on the Achievement of a Nuclear-Weapon-Free World. Supported by the majority of UN member states it was an important step towards the adoption of a legally binding international instrument on the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons. We intend to pursue its universalization.
Kazakhstan as no one else knows about the power and influence of civil society on policy decisions. Thanks to the will of people and active work of the International anti-nuclear movement "Nevada-Semipalatinsk", by Decree of President Nazarbayev the Semipalatinsk test site was permanently closed 25 years ago. This is the first and so far the only case of this occurring in the world. The young state then voluntarily renounced the possession of the fourth in the world potential of nuclear weapons and their means of delivery. This decision prompted the leading nuclear powers to declare a moratorium on nuclear testing.

In 2009 the UN General Assembly resolution initiated by Kazakhstan was adopted by consensus to declare August 29 - the date of the official closing of the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site – as the International Day against Nuclear Tests.

In support of our common efforts the "ATOM" project ("Abolish testing. Our mission") was initiated by Kazakhstan. Its mission is to consolidate global civil society to take more active action against the nuclear threat by signing our petition.

We note the high importance of the process that began with conferences on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons in Oslo, Nayart and Vienna. As a country that has experienced all the disastrous consequences of nuclear explosions we have fully supported the humanitarian pledge put forward by the Austrian side.

Around 500 nuclear explosions which were carried out at the Semipalatinsk test site are still leading to the tragic humanitarian consequences.

Earlier Kazakhstan has already come out with the initiative to create a special international rehabilitation fund. Thus, the principle of collective responsibility of the nuclear Powers for the damage caused by nuclear explosions would be implemented.

This year we mark 20th anniversary since the opening for signature of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, but it still has not entered into force. Kazakhstan as co-chair of the Conference together with Japan in accordance with Article 14 of the Treaty would make every effort to bring it into force as soon as possible. At the recent Nuclear Security Summit in Washington the leaders of Kazakhstan and Japan issued a joint statement in support of the Treaty.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons remains the cornerstone of the nonproliferation regime. However, as noted by President Nazarbayev in his book "Epicenter of Peace" the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in 1995 indicates that the nuclear powers should "forever" negotiate on disarmament, and therefore will never be able to disarm. This situation suits the nuclear-armed countries, but it is a serious concern of the majority of members of the international community. The logic is simple - if you do not set deadlines for the destruction of nuclear weapons, they will continue to exist indefinitely.

Kazakhstan is calling for negotiations for a Comprehensive convention on nuclear weapons, which would prohibit and eliminate nuclear weapons within a specific timeframe in an irreversible and verifiable manner. As well as addressing the
elimination of nuclear weapons within the framework of the future Treaty, it is also necessary to adhere to a proportional approach.

As a member of the Semipalatinsk treaty Kazakhstan is also sympathetic to the initiative to convene a Conference in 2017 to negotiate a legally-binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons proposed by nine countries from nuclear-weapon-free-zones. However, we share concerns that a simple ban is not enough for nuclear disarmament and an integrated approach with a view to the elimination of nuclear weapons is necessary. In addition we support the view that this document should contain elements on assistance to the victims of nuclear weapons.

Nuclear-weapon-free-zones are patches of security blanket thrown over our planet. It must not be forgotten that 116 Member States of such zones represent the majority of UN member states.

At the same time we call for enhanced efforts to establish such a zone in the Middle East.

Mr. Chairman,

Now we are seeing a trend towards the revival of deterrence doctrines in the politics of a number of states.

A bet on nuclear deterrence lowers confidence and as a result - the lack of trust increases the risk of confrontation.

The world stands on the brink of another arms race, which is confirmed by the latest data on the growth of global defense spending, including to modernize nuclear arsenals.

Many nuclear powers give priority to the issue of non-proliferation, leaving the question of nuclear disarmament for the indefinite future. In this context, the relevance of the proposed approach is saved by the President of Kazakhstan - non-proliferation by non-possession. It includes three principles - non-proliferation by non-deployment, non-proliferation by banning tests and, finally, non-proliferation by non-possession.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our nation has shown the way forward towards a more secure future. We urge the whole world to follow the example of Kazakhstan and other countries that have embarked on the path of disarmament.

Thank you for your attention!