Second Session of the OEWG on Taking Forward Multilateral Nuclear Disarmament Negotiations

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Exchange of Views on the Way Forward

Mr. Chairman,

- My delegation wishes to thank you for your summary of our deliberations at this second session of the OEWG, as well as for the roadmap you have provided for the next stage of our work. Your summary clearly demonstrates that the Working Group has been implementing the unequivocal mandate contained in General Assembly Resolution 70/33 with substantive engagement and a renewed vigour not witnessed in our moribund disarmament machinery in the past two decades.

- The substantive output we achieved this week and the clear progress made are due in no small measure to your skillful stewardship of our deliberations. You and your team must be commended for your hard work in this regard. We must also commend you for your foresight in organising our work in manner that has allowed us to think and respond creatively to urgent task the before us: addressing concrete effective legal measures, legal provisions and norms that will need to be concluded to attain and maintain a world without nuclear weapons. We also appreciate the extensive manner in which you have prepared us to engage in a focused, substantive and meaningful way. Indeed, the presentations by the panelists, your Synthesis Paper and working papers for the various panels provided a sound basis for our deliberations.

- We also recognize the active and constructive engagement of Member States and civil society alike, including through the rich contribution of working papers, in the deliberations. For our part, my delegation is pleased for the opportunity to participate actively in this second session and to add our voice to the deliberations. We therefore reiterate our appreciation for sponsorship programme that facilitated the participation of a wider cross
section of countries, in keeping with the open and inclusive nature of this OEWG.

- Mr. Chairman, I turn now to the substantive output that we were able to achieve this week. As your summary shows, we succeeded in identifying the essential elements that would comprise legal measures, legal provisions and norms that will need to be concluded to attain and maintain a world without nuclear weapons. An important step for my delegation with respect to the substantive aspect of our work is that we were able to clearly identify and elaborate on the key elements for an internationally legally binding instrument prohibiting nuclear weapons, including its goal, scope and obligations. This has provided much clarity and the building of a common understanding of the elements for a prohibition.

- Indeed, our deliberations on elements effectively showed that pursuing a comprehensive ban on nuclear weapons is the next realistic step on our collective path to attain and maintain a world free of nuclear weapons. This conclusion was further reinforced by the substantive and very fruitful exchange of views on possible legal pathways to take forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations.

- In light of the foregoing, I therefore wish to highlight the recommendations contained in Working Papers (WP.15) and (WP.34) and reiterate our request that they be submitted in your report to the General Assembly. Allow me in this connection, to repeat the core of these recommendations:

  - to begin a multilateral process for the negotiation of a legally binding instrument for the prohibition of nuclear weapons towards their total elimination.

- As we indicated previously, we see no reason why we cannot begin negotiations immediately. To this end, we also reiterate our request that the recommendation contained in Working Paper (WP. 34) “to convene a Conference in 2017, open to all States, international organizations and civil society, to negotiate a legally-binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons“, be included in your report to the General Assembly.
Mr. Chairman as part of the “credible majority” of non-nuclear weapon States, Jamaica has been clear about the imperative and urgency of making progress on our nuclear disarmament commitments and the need therefore for a global prohibition on nuclear weapons, as the next achievable step to taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations. However, we recognize the misunderstanding and apprehension that some delegations harbour about this next realistic step, as repeatedly reflected in their statements and working papers.

In fact, this misunderstanding and sense of apprehension have been manifested in a circuitous defence of the traditional measures of the step-by-step/building-blocks approach. We appreciate that major a factor contributing to resistance to change is often the fear of the unknown and apprehension to depart from a known course of action, even in the face of failure. But we daresay that a global prohibition on nuclear weapons is not an unknown – as mentioned during the course of our deliberations - “history has shown that a key element for the elimination of scourges created by humanity has been their prohibition”.

Moreover, our deliberations in this OEWG, particularly on elements, have shown that precedence exists to guide us in pursuing a global prohibition on nuclear weapons. Such precedence includes the Chemical Weapons Convention, Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention and nuclear-weapon-free-zones treaties.

As we said earlier, it would be helpful to hear from the sponsors of the “progressive approach”, their specific concerns and apprehensions about the various proposed elements of a treaty banning nuclear weapons. Which provisions would pose the greatest problems, for example, for States that are members of nuclear alliances?

My delegation also reiterated in our intervention on Wednesday that the steps or building blocks that make up the “progressive approach” are all perfectly sensible, and would indeed be “effective measures” if they were taken. But they have not been taken – some for over 20 years now – so there is simply no way they can be considered as “effective”. Agreeing to recommend them yet again will not change this.
- Rather, the OEWG needs to make recommendations that go beyond what has already been agreed. The Working Group should, therefore, focus on new steps that can be taken, even without the participation of the nuclear-armed states.

- Negotiation of a treaty banning nuclear weapons, as we have already extensively put forward, is one such step. This step can and should be pursued alongside the measures of the “Progressive Approach”, and will help to move those measures forward.

- Mr. Chairman, in response to unfounded comments that this process to take forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations and in particular, the pursuit of a global prohibition on nuclear weapons is irresponsible, reckless and will undermine the NPT, let me reiterate for the record that Jamaica is an ardent supporter of the NPT. Importantly, we have been committed to the full and effective implementation of its three pillars and to its universality. It is for this reason that we can no longer remain complicit, as the fundamental goal of a world free of nuclear weapons remains little more than a mirage and the credibility and relevance of the Treaty comes under increasing threat due to the lack of implementation of the unequivocal obligations and commitments in the disarmament pillar of the Treaty.

- We too have fears, Mr. Chairman; fear for our security; fear for our survival. Indeed, we fear that the “grand bargain” which enabled the coming into the being of the NPT, which is not being implemented in both letter and spirit as well as the backtracking on commitments freely undertaken, keeps us on the brink of massive nuclear violence and threatens the very survival of humanity. As a small island developing State, the prospects of a nuclear detonation, whether by design or accident, is unimaginable. Our deep concerns about the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons have been voiced time and time again.

- We have therefore reached our “minimization point”, to borrow a term from the so-called “Progressive Approach”, in accepting the status quo. The Humanitarian Initiative gives us, as the international community of States
large or small, developed or developing, nuclear armed or non-nuclear weapon States and civil society, an opportunity to pursue a new approach to accelerate our collective efforts to rid the world of nuclear weapons. The principles of equality and justice are at the core of this new approach.

- Indeed, the Humanitarian Initiative has mobilized the human element for action on nuclear disarmament and in so doing, has brought onboard a more diverse group of actors. As my colleague Maritza Chan of Costa Rica said during the 2015 NPT Review Conference, “it is indisputable that democracy has come to nuclear disarmament. Vienna, Nayarit, Oslo as well as the first and this second OEWG have proven, that we the non-nuclear weapons States have a say in nuclear disarmament issues. Our voice matter. We have agency. And with the agency of non-nuclear weapon States another fundamental element of democracy has emerged, i.e. inclusiveness.

- Mr. Chairman, as I will end my tour of duty shortly and given that today is therefore the last time I will participate in the OEWG, I crave your indulgence to depart from my national statement to offer some brief reflections.

- The first comment I wish to make is the underscore the value and importance of disarmament and non-proliferation education. In 2005, I was privileged to get accepted into the UN Disarmament Fellowship Programme, which provides an invaluable opportunity to enhance the knowledge and skills of the fellows for participation in the arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation efforts of their respective countries and the UN in the maintenance of international peace and security. Thanks to this Programme, I was able to visit Hiroshima and Nagasaki and to hear firsthand the appeal of the Hibakusha “never again”. I took their appeal with me and this week, I have welcomed the opportunity provided by my participation in the OEWG to not only represent my country but to also contribute to efforts to ban and eliminate nuclear weapons, in response to their appeal.

- The Disarmament Fellowship also exposed me to the words of a former Under-Secretary General for Disarmament Affairs, and I quote:
“disarmament is not just about arms. It must be mainstreamed into the daily life of people as it is about people”. Mr. Chairman, “disarmament is about people”! The visit to the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki reinforced the centrality of the human element to any disarmament efforts.

- A final observation I wish to make, Mr. Chairman, is about the relationship between gender and disarmament. In so doing, I wish to stress the importance of the recognizing and operationalising the link between gender and disarmament which can contribute to the achievement of disarmament goals. Success in disarmament requires that attention is given to all stakeholders, and that their knowledge, experiences, perceptions of security or threats to security, priorities and needs will influence disarmament activities on the ground.

- Integrating gender perspectives will allow us to bring a human security/humanitarian approach, as well as an interdisciplinary/multidimensional approach and move us away from the “failed state - centric isolationist” posture. This narrow perspective of the security - military and male-domination view- as we know does not contribute to peace and security. Instead it perpetuates a cycle of security and conflict and allows for the spending of $1.7 trillion dollars on militaristic solutions. However, the very complex and integrated security challenges of today cannot be addressed by this narrow perspective.

- As I leave the field of disarmament, I am encouraged by the increasing active participation of female delegates who are contributing to driving change in the disarmament arena, who are a changing the narrative and demanding a more equal, peaceful and nuclear free world.

- In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, “never again”; let us take forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations; let us ban nuclear weapons!

I thank you.