Statement

by

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Open Ended Working Group on Nuclear Disarmament

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Mr Chair,

- Clearly, the debate about nuclear weapons has a humanitarian, but no less clearly a security dimension which cannot be ignored. It is this inter-relationship that should condition the elaboration of “effective measures” as stipulated in Article VI of the NPT, which is and should remain the core element in our work towards nuclear disarmament and proliferation.

- It is from this angle as well that we approach “effective legal measures” as stipulated in OP 2 and “other measures” as stipulated in OP 3 of GA Res. 70/33 entitled “Taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations”.

- Nuclear weapons can only be abolished as a result of negotiations leading to verifiable actions on the ground. Mutual trust between partners is the necessary condition for further progress. It is not realistic to expect that “effective” nuclear disarmament can advance without engaging those States that possess nuclear weapons.

- “Concrete effective legal measures, legal provisions and norms” are very broad term, which do not give final clarity what form exactly those measures shall take in terms of substance. They only have to be “effective” and “concrete” We would suggest, therefore, that all binding agreements, be it legally or politically, would fall under this category

- From this perspective, the 2010 NPT Action Plan remains valid and should be fully implemented by all NPT members. It is obvious that the Action Plan still offers benchmarks for the years to come by providing concrete guidelines for the next steps to take. It particularly reaffirms the “unequivocal undertaking of the nuclear weapon States to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals leading to nuclear disarmament, to which all States parties
are committed under article VI". Action 5 of the Action Plan spells out that the nuclear weapon States “commit to accelerate concrete progress on the steps leading to nuclear disarmament”.

- It is against this backdrop that we welcome the ongoing successful implementation of the New START Treaty between the United States and the Russian Federation.

- However, a new disarmament round between the United States of America and the Russian Federation should begin as soon as practicable. This new round should include sub-strategic nuclear weapons. Germany appreciates that the offer made by President Obama in Berlin is still on the table - despite the changing security environment - to seek negotiated cuts with Russia and to further reduce deployed strategic nuclear weapons by up to one third.

- This would be an important step to fulfil the obligations of Article VI of the NPT, and it would mean an important signal to all nuclear weapons states to reduce their arsenals and to open the way to future multilateral disarmament negotiations. We urge the US and Russia to engage in a new round of negotiations and advance further steps in line with the principles of irreversibility, verifiability and transparency.

- We urge all nuclear States and other states possessing nuclear weapons to declare a moratorium on developing new warheads, new types of nuclear weapons, and on upgrading existing nuclear weapons or developing new missions for nuclear weapons.

- The Conference on Disarmament should return to substantive work. As a matter of priority, it should address effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons with a view to elaborating recommendations dealing with all aspects of this issue, not excluding an internationally legally binding instrument.

- We want to see the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty enter into force sooner rather than later. In the 21st century, there is neither the space nor any reason for nuclear tests. The existing moratoria on testing are welcome, but a legally binding treaty is urgently needed.

- We support all efforts to launch negotiations on an FMCT, preferably in the CD, but we are also open for alternative fora if this turns out be the only practicable way and meets with sufficient support. We agree that negotiations should begin without further delay. The work of the Group of Governmental Experts provides an excellent basis.

- We support the valuable work of the IAEA and its indispensable safeguards system. We also call upon all states which are working with nuclear energy and have not yet done so to negotiate and ratify an Additional Protocol with the IAEA as soon as possible. The Additional Protocol of the IAEA should become the universally accepted verification norm.

- Both the CTBT, the FMCT and universally accepted IAEA safeguards would be part of a set of effective measures to attain and maintain a world without nuclear weapons.
Alongside with the NPT, crucial multilateral “building blocks” already exist: for example, the Partial Test Ban Treaty, the Outer Space Treaty, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Sea Bed Arms Control Treaty and the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism.

WMD free zones should be established on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned. They constitute an important intermediate step towards the ultimate goal, namely complete disarmament. Given the seriousness and urgency of the situation, we are of the view that the Middle East is a priority region for the establishment of such a zone. But progress is only possible if the States of the region are willing to engage in dialogue and if the interests of all States are being taken into consideration.

Thank you, Mr Chair.