STATEMENT BY

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AT

THE FIRST SESSION OF THE PREPARATORY COMMITTEE FOR
THE 2005 REVIEW CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO
THE TREATY ON THE NON-PROLIFERATION OF
NUCLEAR WEAPONS

New York, 8 April 2002
Mr. Chairman,

We felicitate you upon your election as Chairman of this session. We congratulate you on your drawing up of what we assess to be an ambitious and comprehensive work programme. We have no doubt that your deft stewardship will help us accomplish our goals. We thank my good friend Jayantha Dhanapala for continuing to provide us outstanding support. I assure you that these endeavours shall have Bangladesh's fullest cooperation. We associate ourselves with the statement made by Ambassador Makmur Widodo of Indonesia on behalf of NAM. I take the floor, though, to make a few additional points.

Bangladesh unequivocally supports the NPT. This commitment flows from our Constitution. It binds us to strive for the renunciation of the use of force. Also for general and complete disarmament. Consequently we are signatories, ratifiers and State Party to the NPT, the CTBT and all other related MTs. We have consciously surrendered the nuclear option. We consider the NPT the sheet anchor for all efforts at nuclear non-proliferation and arms control. The NPT has doubtless had a constructive role in restraining horizontal proliferation. Without the treaty, the weaponry would spread to more countries. It has also had a modicum of success with regard to vertical proliferation. It has discouraged greater precision in ordnance making, and improvements that would heighten the propensity to use.

Nonetheless, some developments cause us concern. Detonations in my own region, South Asia, in 1998 are among them. The yo-yo situation in terms of political volatility, and the on-again off-again threats of crisis do little to boost our confidence. On our part, we have always urged calm. Furthermore, we have used every opportunity to persuade the two South Asian protagonists to accede to the NPT. Also to come within the ambit of appropriate international safeguards and monitoring arrangements. Hazards of unguarded and unnotified transportation by land, air, and sea of radioactive and nuclear materials in our region worry us. We express the hope that all concerned will perceive these dangers and cooperate to reduce tension, resolve their problems and work towards peace. Bangladesh would enthusiastically cheer this process.

All are aware that the Middle East threatens to be up in flames. In such a situation, nuclear weapons in the hands of Israel prove a grave danger. It could spur a regional arms race. The matrix of rationality on which the theories of deterrence were predicated may not operate in this fiery region where passions tend to run high. Non-accession to the NPT by Israel could eventually spell disaster. In that part of the world forces are often unleashed that later cannot be controlled.

Because of all this, we put our faith in the concept of Nuclear Weapons Free Zones. We see the treaties of Tlatelco, Rarotonga, Bangkok, and Pelindaba as positive examples. South Asia and the Middle East should follow suit. Concentric circles of such zones may be designed with the ultimate goal of covering the globe.

The end to the ABM should not precipitate a new race in nuclear arms. We are certain the major nuclear powers understand this, and are focused on it. The values that strategic thinking has evolved over years must not be adversely changed. These include assurances of no nuclear strikes against non-nuclear weapon states, and forgoing measures counter to the concept of the irreversibility of disarmament.
Some other developments that continue to be a source of concern are as follows:

- Total number of nuclear weapons deployed and in stockpiles continue to be ominous;
- Lack of agreed measures to reduce the operational status of nuclear weapons;
- The delay in coming into force of the CTBT;
- Failure of the Conference on Disarmament to establish an Ad Hoc Committee on nuclear disarmament to negotiate a phased programme for complete elimination of nuclear weapons within a definite time frame, including a Nuclear Weapons Convention;
- Lack of progress in efforts to negotiate a non-discriminatory multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable treaty banning production of fissile material; etc.

All Members must now seriously address these concerns. Bangladesh would underscore the special responsibility in this of Nuclear Weapon States. Also of States possessing large modernized defence structures and advanced defence related technology. Their role is critical. We urge them to shoulder their higher responsibilities. Also to redouble their efforts to overcome the current inertia. We need to make genuine progress in pursuit of the principles and objectives of the 1995 Rev Con. We need to bravely implement the 13 practical steps from the 2000 Rev Con. Together we must pursue in earnest the all important goal of general and complete nuclear disarmament under strict and effective international control as required by Article VI of the NPT.

Article IV must also be better implemented. It affirms the "inalienable rights of all parties to the treaty to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes without discriminations". Despite the passage of three full decades since the coming into force of the NPT, the hope of developing state parties to access nuclear technology for peaceful purposes remains an unfulfilled dream. Nuclear Weapons States should fulfill obligations undertaken. Erosion of confidence in their commitment does not redound to any one's benefit.

But this session proves that we still maintain our faith in hope. We may have set high goals for us. The vigor of our societies are preserved by our determination to achieve noble aims. But in the Midst of all such endeavours, we must be always aware that simple rules of discretion allow for the greatest stability. Balance favours equilibrium. Remember the ancient, but forever apt, observation about war by Thucydides. "When Athens grew strong" he said, "there was unease in Sparta". 