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STATEMENT
by Valentin Rybakov,
Deputy Head of the Delegation of the Republic of Belarus,
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
9 April, 2002
Mr. Chairman,
On behalf of the delegation of the Republic of Belarus, please allow me to congratulate you on your election as Chairman of 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. We are confident that under your leadership the Committee will lay a solid foundation for a successful 2005 Review Conference. In your activities, you may rely on full cooperation and support of the Belarusian delegation.

Mr. Chairman,
The Republic of Belarus is convinced, that the NPT remains one of the most important elements of the system of global security and a key instrument in the efforts of the international community to prevent vertical and horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons. Modern realities and challenges demand a new level of responsibility in individual and collective decisions, taken by the States Parties to the Treaty.

For its part, the Republic of Belarus, having rejected, along with Ukraine and Kazakhstan, an opportunity to possess nuclear weapons, has made a significant contribution to strengthening the NPT and has been strictly observing all obligations under the Treaty and the agreements reached during 1995 and 2000 Review Conferences.

Mr. Chairman,
While supporting the global aim of eliminating nuclear weapons, we realize that it requires a realistic and balanced approach to the process of a step-by-step nuclear disarmament. Belarus welcomes disarmament efforts of the nuclear-weapons states. Further progress in reducing strategic nuclear weapons is required for maintaining global strategic stability. We call upon the two nuclear-weapons states possessing the largest nuclear weapons stockpiles to sign, at the earliest, a legally binding agreement on further irreversible reduction of strategic nuclear weapons and means of their delivery, which will undoubtedly facilitate the strengthening of international security and strategic stability.

The Republic of Belarus emphasizes the significance of achieving the universality of the Treaty through the earliest accession to it of the states possessing nuclear facilities not placed under the IAEA safeguards. In this connection we also support the efforts aimed at establishing in the Middle East of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.

Mr. Chairman,
The Republic of Belarus believes that nuclear disarmament should be complemented by practical steps in strengthening the nuclear non-proliferation regime. In this connection we welcome the efforts and initiatives taken in conformity with the relevant UNDC guidelines and aimed at strengthening existing nuclear-weapon-free zones and establishing new such zones in the regions where they do not yet exist.
The Republic of Belarus is convinced that all nuclear tests should be prohibited and once again calls upon the states, which have not yet signed or ratified the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty to do that at the earliest. We also call upon the Conference on Disarmament to start, at the earliest, specific discussions on the text of the treaty banning the production of fissile materials for weapons purposes.

Mr. Chairman,
The Republic of Belarus expresses deep concern over the Nuclear Posture Review of one of nuclear-weapons states recently made public. The Review undermines the basic provisions of the NPT and envisages the development of new types of nuclear weapons, which may lead to the resumption of nuclear testing. The Review considers a possibility of preventive nuclear strikes against a list of states, including non-nuclear-weapons states. Lowering the threshold for the use of nuclear weapons and expanding the circumstances and conditions for their use create a dangerous precedent.

As a Party to the Standing Consultative Commission set up under the Treaty on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missiles, the Republic of Belarus expresses its deep concern over the decision of the United States of America to withdraw from the ABM Treaty. The rejection of the ABM Treaty will inevitably lead to the development of new advanced systems of nuclear weapons, increased stockpiles of nuclear weapons and militarization of outer space.

Mr. Chairman,
In the context of new threats to global security the international community should pay special attention to the issues of nuclear terrorism and nuclear materials smuggling, control over transfers of nuclear materials and their accounting and physical protection.

Mr. Chairman,
The Republic of Belarus believes it extremely important to fully observe Article IV on cooperation in peaceful uses of atomic energy. Despite significant progress in ensuring nuclear safety, this problem remains urgent. As a country, which has suffered huge damage following the accident at the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Station, the Republic of Belarus welcomes and highly appreciates the efforts of the United Nations and individual countries, aimed at mitigating and minimizing the consequences of the disaster. In this connection, we highly appreciate last week’s visit to Belarus of Mr. Kenzo Oshima, UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and UN Coordinator for Chernobyl International Cooperation.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, allow me to express hope for a successful first session of the Preparatory Committee.
I thank you.