Statement by
H.E. Dr. Toufiq Ali
Ambassador & Permanent Representative of Bangladesh
at the Second Session of the Preparatory Committee
for the 2005 Review Conference
of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
Geneva, 29 April 2003

Mr. Chairman,

Please accept my delegation’s warm felicitations on your election. I am confident that your wisdom and able stewardship will guide our deliberations to a successful outcome. I would also like to congratulate other members of the Bureau.

We associate ourselves with the statement made by Ambassador Rastam Mohammed Isa of Malaysia on behalf of NAM States Parties to the NPT.

For over thirty years, the NPT has been the most important and widely accepted instrument for non-proliferation. Nuclear weapons, however, still remain singularly the most dangerous threat to humankind and to civilization. Now, perhaps more than ever before, we are faced with daunting challenges from nuclear non-proliferation. Against the backdrop of an ever-changing political and strategic environment, and unfolding of events that threaten world peace and stability, the 2005 Review Conference (RevCon) should form the platform for a sincere effort to realize the goals of nuclear non-proliferation.

As a State Party to the NPT, Bangladesh has consciously given up its option to go nuclear. Our unequivocal support for the NPT and commitment to its consolidation and implementation in all its aspects flows from our constitutional obligations to the principles and objectives of general and complete disarmament. We remain convinced that the NPT remains a key instrument in halting both vertical and horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Bangladesh remains committed to pursue universal adherence to the NPT. The Treaty is short of only three more accessions to reach universality. We call upon States that are yet to join the NPT to make a renewed commitment towards the goal of universalization of the Treaty and urge them to become parties to the NPT and CTBT without delay and without conditions.
Bangladesh's commitment to general and complete disarmament is total. We have made a conscious and unilateral decision to become a party to almost all major international instruments pertaining to disarmament. We were the first country in South Asia to sign the CTBT. We attach great importance to the entering into force of the CTBT and call upon states that have not signed or ratified to do so without delay and with conditions. Till such time that the Treaty comes into force, it essential that international moratorium on nuclear testing be maintained.

We have concluded safeguards agreement with the IAEA, including the Additional Protocol, to further contribute to a non-proliferation regime. We call upon those State parties that have not yet done so to conclude safeguards agreement with the IAEA and further strengthen its capacity to verify compliance. The IAEA has a significant role in international safeguards and in providing technical assistance and the promotion of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. This dual responsibility of IAEA, we believe, needs to be further strengthened.

Some recent developments, such as Cuba’s accession to NPT, give us grounds for hope. On the other hand, the decision of the Democratic Republic of Korea to withdraw from the treaty raises renewed concern. We are, however, encouraged to see the commencement of negotiations and dialogue amongst all concerned parties, and we sincerely hope that the DPRK would soon be able to return to the fold of NPT.

For us in South Asia, the nuclear capability of our two neighbours, India and Pakistan, is a matter of grave concern. The two countries have fought three major wars in the last few decades, and there still remains tension along the borders. Bangladesh hopes that, through dialogue, the two countries can peacefully resolve their differences. We are encouraged by their decision to impose self-moratorium on further nuclear testing. Bangladesh hopes to see them acceding to monitoring arrangements and to place their nuclear facilities under comprehensive IAEA Safeguards.

In the backdrop of continuing tension in the Middle East, it is even more important that the goals and objectives of the 1995 resolution be realized. As long as one country in the region remains outside the nuclear non-proliferation regime and does not accede to nuclear safeguards arrangements under the NPT, the region would not be rid of the threat of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction.
We are apprehensive of changes in the policy of certain nuclear weapon possessor countries that appear to be retracting from their commitments not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapons states. We believe that the unilateral pledge made by Nuclear Weapons States and reaffirmed by Security Council resolution 984 (1995) has been an important element for states not to pursue the nuclear option. It is therefore critically important that renewed and vigorous efforts be taken, on a priority basis, to conclude a universal, unconditional and legally binding instrument to provide security assurances to Non-nuclear weapons states. This would, we believe strengthen the non-proliferation regime. It may be recalled that at the 2000 Review Conference, it was agreed that "legally binding security assurances by the five nuclear weapons states to the non-nuclear weapons States to NPT would strengthen the non-proliferation regime". We hope the Preparatory Committee would be able to make recommendations on security assurances to the 2005 RevCon.

Bangladesh strongly supports regional approaches to nuclear disarmament including establishment of Nuclear Weapons Free Zones (NWFZs) in South Asia, in the Middle-east and in other parts of the world. Establishment of NWFZs greatly contributes to regional confidence building measures and reduces threat to security of non-nuclear weapons states. The conclusion of the regional treaties are indeed positive and concrete steps towards the objective of the global nuclear disarmament. The decision of the five Central Asia countries to sign the Central Asia Nuclear Weapons Free Zone Treaty shortly also deserves our commendation. The Chair's factual summary at the conclusion of the First Prep Com indicates that over a hundred countries subscribe to nuclear free zones in one area or another. With such support, it should be possible to establish more nuclear weapons free zones.

Despite the passage of three full decades since the coming into force of the NPT, the hope of the developing state parties to access nuclear technology for peaceful purposes remains an unfulfilled dream. Nuclear weapons States should fulfill obligations undertaken for the effective implementation of Article IV.

Failure of the Conference on Disarmament (CD), to establish an Ad Hoc Committee on nuclear disarmament to negotiate a phased programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons within a definite time frame, including a Nuclear Weapons Convention is a continuous source of concern for us. We are disappointed at the lack of progress in the CD to negotiate a non-discriminatory, multilateral, and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile
material for nuclear weapons and other explosive devices. At the same time, there has been very little forward movement forward towards total elimination of nuclear weapons and total number of nuclear weapons deployed and of stockpiles that remain.

Lack of progress on the full implementation of the practical steps adopted at the 2000 Review Conference has been disheartening. The 2005 RevCon presents us with yet another opportunity to move the process forward. It would be our sincere hope that every effort would be made to make this a truly effective and sincere exercise in our ultimate goal of general and complete nuclear disarmament. On our part, we are support your goals of achieving this objective.

I thank you.