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

PLENARY SESSION: CLUSTER 1

STATEMENT BY H.E. TIM CAUGHEY, AMBASSADOR FOR DISARMAMENT

3 MAY 2004

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY
New Zealand has long been outspoken on the need to eliminate all nuclear weapons. We have never been in any doubt about the horrendous impact and long-term consequences of the use of these weapons, and the testing of nuclear devices in the Pacific region has led us to insist repeatedly that nuclear weapons have no place in our world.

As our Minister of Disarmament made clear during the general debate we share the view of many that non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament are two sides of the same coin, that they are mutually reinforcing.

New Zealand's expectation in ratifying the NPT was that, conscious of the Treaty's effort to forestall proliferation, the nuclear weapon States in implementing Article VI would do so to the letter and spirit of its overall objective, which as stated in the preamble was to "achieve at the earliest possible date the complete and total cessation of the nuclear arms race and to undertake effective measures in the direction of nuclear disarmament".

The NPT was brokered not as has been asserted here last week on a single premise in relation to access to peaceful uses of nuclear energy but on the additional premise that in return for non-nuclear weapon States foregoing all rights to nuclear weapons, the nuclear weapon states would undertake negotiations on nuclear disarmament. To discount this fundamental element is, in effect, to contradict the ICF's Advisory Opinion as well as to diminish the Treaty as a whole.

The 1995 and 2000 Review Conferences agreed on the centrality and urgency of concrete nuclear disarmament measures for the implementation of the NPT. The 13 Steps agreed to at the 2000 Review Conference charted a course by which to achieve nuclear disarmament. Let us remind ourselves that they were articulated and styled as "practical steps", not lofty goals.

The 2005 Review Conference will be measuring how far those steps have taken the States Parties since 2000 towards their objective. One year away from the Review Conference we can make some preliminary if necessarily abbreviated assessments.

The determination of Member States and the Provisional Secretariat of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty's Organisation to maintain the momentum towards the entry into force of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty has been demonstrated by the valuable work done in building the International Monitoring System. But, the non-entry into force of the CTBT places a premium on sustaining the momentum on nuclear testing. The deterrrental impact of any resumption of testing on efforts to prevent proliferation scarcely need to be spelled out here.

We have appreciated the positive statements made by China in regard to the importance of the early entry into force of the CTBT. While these statements offer encouragement, a timeframe for China's implementation of the necessary legislation to ratify the CTBT would provide greater reassurance. We urge the United States to review its approach to this essential element of the non-proliferation regime.
We along with many other Member States welcomed the significant moves made last year by China and Russia that should have helped pave the way for the Conference on Disarmament to agree to a programme of work including nuclear disarmament. But the 8-year deadlock remains.

We have already acknowledged that the Moscow Treaty is a positive step towards a more constructive relationship between Russia and the United States, with potentially significant reductions foreseen by those States in the numbers of deployed strategic nuclear warheads. Introducing the principles of transparency, verifiability and irreversibility will, however, be needed if the agreement is to be more than pulling back weapons from deployment and taking them off alert.

Regrettably, despite other significant efforts such as the co-operative threat reduction, the Trilateral Initiative seems to remain the victim of a lack of political will. To underline its importance we believe that this step needs to be the subject of a clear timeline. We welcome the IAEA’s readiness to work on what should be a straightforward and relatively economical process in implementing the Trilateral Initiative.

We welcome the working papers submitted by the United Kingdom so far on verification and look forward to those discussions being brought into the current NPT Review Process.

While the traditional focus of nuclear disarmament has been on strategic weapons, there is increasing awareness of the threats posed by non-strategic weapons and their susceptibility to misuse or theft. These factors combined with the need to ensure their central and safe storage call for greater priority to be placed on addressing non-strategic weapons in legally binding agreements.

Reporting is one means of creating greater trust and confidence between States parties. The growing increase in information provided by the NWS is welcome acknowledgement of the need for transparency. The systematic submission of such information in reports on the record would be a small but significant step in demonstrating their respect for the NPT and its objectives.

The “unequivocal undertaking” given by the NWS to “accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals” was reaffirmation of the urgent need for nuclear disarmament as an obligation to be acted upon, not an ideal. To date we have seen neither systematic nor progressive efforts by the nuclear weapons states to implement this most fundamental obligation. We will be looking very closely over the next year at implementation efforts on all these steps in readiness for a full accounting when we meet again at the Review Conference in May 2005. For the reasons set out by my Minister in her general debate statement we believe that an accelerated process of negotiations on nuclear disarmament is imperative.