Statement
by
H.E. Ambassador Carlo Trezza
Head of the Delegation
of
the Republic of Italy
to
the Third Session of the Preparatory Committee
for the 2005 NPT Review Conference

(Cluster I)

New York, 30 April 2004

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Mr. Chairman,

let me first subscribe fully to the statement made by the Presidency of the EU both in the general debate and in this specific “cluster”. As many other countries, Italy shares the objectives enshrined in art VI of the NPT and encourages negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control. Disarmament is indeed one of the pillars of the NPT. We understand the aspiration of those who advocate more efforts to eliminate nuclear weapons and we will continue, together with our EU partners, to encourage the progress made towards systematic and progressive efforts towards disarmament.

Much still has to be done to reach the above objectives but it would not be appropriate to minimise or dismiss what has been done until now. It is calculated that the overall number of nuclear warheads at the end of the cold war was around 60,000 whereas it is estimated that they are currently around 30,000. This figure is still excessive with respect to today’s security and deterrence necessities and further reductions should be made. We have welcomed the conclusion of the Moscow treaty between the Russian Federation and the USA on strategic offensive reductions. We also encourage all states concerned to start negotiations of non-strategic nuclear weapons. An international agreement banning the production of nuclear materials for nuclear weapons would strengthen not only non-proliferation but also disarmament and thus international security.

Mr. Chairman,

we believe that rather than concentrating on what has not been done in the field of nuclear disarmament in the past, we should focus on what should be done in the future and on what is being done at present. A special attention should be given, from this point
of view, to a new international co-operative approach which goes under the name of "Co-operative Threat Reduction" and which is addressed in principle to all weapons of mass destruction. Several delegations, including the EU Presidency, have made reference to this issue during the general debate. I would like to be more specific. Since we are in an NPT framework, I shall concentrate my attention on the nuclear implications of this initiative. The significant reductions of nuclear weapons through plurilateral, bilateral and unilateral nuclear disarmament and arms limitation treaties and processes in the past decades have brought to the attention of the international community that disarmament engagements are meaningless unless the weapons involved are either physically destroyed or appropriately disposed of.

During the past decades the enormous technical and financial problems connected with the actual elimination of nuclear arsenals, have come to the surface. A recent interesting study by UNIDIR indicates that the costs of dismantling weapons should be considered as part of the overall cost of production of armaments.

In the past decade, the United States, Russia, the European Union (and many of its member States on a national basis), Japan, Canada and other countries have worked together - under the CTR initiative - to secure and dismantle nuclear, biological and chemical weapons materials, carriers and infrastructure. The culminating moment of this initiative took place in Kananaskis, Canada in June 2002 when the leaders of the G8 countries announced a "Global Partnership" against the spread of weapons of mass destruction. Participants at the Summit pledged to raise up to 20 billion US dollars over the following ten years to address these WMD threats and in particular to "prevent terrorists, or those who harbour them, from acquiring or developing nuclear, chemical radiological and biological weapons; missile and related materials equipment and technologies". In addition to these important financial pledges, the G8 leaders also agreed on a comprehensive set of non-proliferation principles as well as on guidelines
designed to remove obstacles that had hindered the realisation of similar projects in the past. In the “Guidelines for new or expanded co-operation projects” it is stated that the G8 will work in partnership, bilaterally and multilaterally, to develop, co-ordinate implement and finance, according to their respective means, new or expanded co-operation projects. The main purpose was to address non-proliferation, disarmament, counter-terrorism and nuclear safety (including environmental) issues, with a view to enhancing strategic stability, consonant with the international security objectives and in support of the multilateral non-proliferation regimes. The priority concerns were the destruction of chemical weapons, the dismantlement of decommissioned nuclear submarines, the disposition of fissile materials and the employment of former weapons scientists. Other countries that were prepared to adopt the principles and the guidelines were invited to enter into discussion on participating in and contributing to this initiative. The G8 would be willing to enter into negotiations with any other recipient countries, including those of the Former Soviet Union, prepared to adopt the guidelines, for inclusion in the Partnership.

Mr. Chairman,

at a time in which nuclear proliferation is a growing threat to international peace and security and the risk that terrorists may seek to possess either fissile material or even nuclear weapons, the Co-operative Threat Reduction should be considered as a new, additional way to address the problem of nuclear proliferation and disarmament.

We believe that the nuclear component of the Co-operative Threat Reduction initiative is relevant to the NPT process and strengthens the Treaty both under art 6 and under article 1. The deactivation of thousands of deployed nuclear warheads under this programme are effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race and to nuclear disarmament not only under the NPT but also under the Principles and objectives of 1995 and the 13 practical steps of the 2000 NPT Review Conference.
Moreover many of the measures undertaken under the CTR, such as dismantlement of nuclear submarines, efforts to convert military stockpiles into a form no longer usable in nuclear weapons, respond to the objectives laid down in art. 1 and 2 of the Treaty.

The CTR deals with highly sensitive materials and equipments; most of them have traditionally been held secret by countries which had, in the past, confronted each other. The fact that they have now become the object of international co-operation enhances transparency and confidence as contemplated in point 9 of the 13 practical steps. It thus strengthens trust between states and facilitates the cessation of the manufacture of nuclear weapons as foreseen in the preambular part of the Treaty. Moreover the CTR accelerated the nuclear arms reduction process, facilitated the accession to the NPT by a number of countries thus strengthening the nuclear non-proliferation regime.

On the basis of the above mentioned considerations Italy submits that the CTR process should be acknowledged and welcomed as an instrument of effective nuclear disarmament and nuclear non proliferation within the NPT review process.