STATEMENT BY

THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROVISIONS OF
THE TREATY RELATING TO THE NON-PROLIFERATION OF
NUCLEAR WEAPONS, DISARMAMENT AND
INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY:
ARTICLES I AND II AND PREAMBULAR PARAGRAPHS 1 TO 3,
ARTICLE VI AND PREAMBULAR PARAGRAPHS 8 TO 12

(NEW YORK, APRIL/MAY 2004)

(CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY)
Mr. Chairperson,

My delegation wishes to associate itself with the statements made on behalf of the New Agenda Coalition (NAC) and the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) made in the general debate.

This intervention will focus on Articles I and II and preamble paragraphs 1 to 3 of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), Article VI and preamble paragraphs 8 to 12.

As stated on various previous occasions, South Africa believes that any presumption of the indefinite possession of nuclear weapons by the Nuclear Weapon States is incompatible with the integrity and sustainability of the nuclear non-proliferation regime and with the broader goal of the maintenance of international peace and security. It is our view that continuous and irreversible progress in nuclear disarmament, nuclear reductions, and other related nuclear arms control measures remains fundamental to the promotion of nuclear non-proliferation.

Mr. Chairperson,

The existence of an international network for the smuggling of technology, material and equipment that can be used in the development of nuclear weapons, as reported by the IAEA Director General at the Board of Governors meeting in March this year, has again highlighted the significant threats posed by the proliferation of nuclear weapons, as well as the possession of the capabilities to produce such weapons. While South Africa recognises and supports the inalienable right of all States to utilise the atom for peaceful purposes, we also believe that ownership of the capabilities that could be utilised to develop nuclear weapons places a special responsibility on the States concerned. Such States have the responsibility to ensure that the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), as the only internationally recognised, credible and competent authority, is able to verify with full confidence that nuclear capabilities are being used for peaceful purposes only, including through the mechanisms available under the Additional Protocol for strengthened safeguards. Therefore, States that possess the capabilities that could be used to develop nuclear weapons bear a concomitant responsibility to build confidence with the international community in their peaceful uses of nuclear energy, particularly those States that have developed full nuclear fuel cycles.

South Africa strongly supports the universal implementation of the Additional Protocol. In this regard, we have noted with concern that more than 40 States Parties to the NPT have not yet taken the first basic step before the Additional Protocol can be signed, that is to say the conclusion of a Safeguards Agreement with the IAEA as required by Article III of the Treaty. Those States Parties who still have to fulfill this step, are urged to do so without delay.
Another matter that remains of serious concern to my delegation is the continued retention of the nuclear weapons option by those three States that operate un safeguarded nuclear facilities and that have not acceded to the NPT, as well as by their failure to renounce that option. We therefore, once again, call upon these States to, promptly and without condition, accede to the NPT as Non-Nuclear Weapon States. They should also bring into force the required comprehensive safeguards agreements, together with Additional Protocols, for ensuring nuclear non-proliferation. In addition, my delegation would urge these States to refrain from any action that could undermine international peace and security and the efforts of the international community towards nuclear disarmament and the prevention of nuclear weapons proliferation.

Mr. Chairperson,

The Non-Proliferation Treaty is the cornerstone of nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation and remains the only international instrument that strives to not only prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons, but that also contains the legal commitment for their elimination. South Africa believes that the international community must redouble its efforts to achieve universal adherence to the NPT, strengthen the multilateral institutions responsible for disarmament and non-proliferation issues, and be vigilant against any steps that could undermine the determination of the international community, as a whole, to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

It is in this context that we remain deeply concerned about the decision, by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) to withdraw from the NPT. In terms of South Africa’s principled position on the peaceful resolution of disputes, we strongly support dialogue and a peaceful resolution of this situation. My delegation would urge the DPRK to reconsider its decision with a view to returning to the NPT without further delay and to ensure full compliance with its terms.

Regarding the nuclear capabilities being developed in Iran, my delegation has noted from the report by the IAEA Director General to the March 2004 Board of Governors that substantial progress has been made with regard to the implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement in Iran. In particular, my delegation welcomes the signing of the Additional Protocol by Iran on 12 December 2003 as an important confidence building measure. However, the report also highlights a number of issues that remain of concern and require further clarification. South Africa would urge Iran, to continue its full cooperation with the IAEA in order to provide the necessary clarification, to fully implement the Additional Protocol pending its ratification and we trust that this matter will be resolved soon.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairperson,

South Africa believes that the continued possession of nuclear weapons or the retention of the nuclear weapons option, by some States, by definition, increases the risk of these weapons falling into the hands of terrorists. The complete elimination of nuclear weapons
and the assurance that they will never be produced again remain the only assurance against their use. This should remain our ultimate goal.

I thank you.