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SECURITY ASSURANCES
Statement

By
Ambassador Christian Faessler
Permanent Representative of Switzerland
to the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva
Mr Chairman,

From the beginning, the question of security assurances given by the nuclear-weapon states to non-nuclear-weapon states has been at the heart of the NPT. Non-nuclear-weapon states rightly consider that by acceding to the Treaty they made a concession which should be compensated by legally binding security assurances.

The climate of mistrust prevailing during the Cold War put a brake on the readiness of the nuclear-weapon states to include in the NPT a commitment never to use nuclear weapons. The three nuclear-weapon states at the time, i.e. the United States, the Soviet Union, and the United Kingdom, however, gave the assurance that the question of negative security assurances would be examined within the framework of the United Nations, and, although outside the NPT in close conjunction with it. Since then, they have given varying kinds of security assurances to different groups of States Parties to the NPT but outside the framework of the Treaty.

Unilateral security assurances were given by the five permanent members of the Security Council in resolution 984 of 11 April 1995 when the NPT was extended. Security assurances have also been given by the nuclear-weapon states within the framework of international agreements on the creation of nuclear weapon-free zones. This is the case in Latin America, the Caribbean, the South Pacific, Southeast Asia and Africa.

Mr Chairman,

Although my country welcomes the existence of these security assurances, it is clear that when provided outside the NPT they are only a partial solution, one which is not entirely satisfactory. I would like to mention the following specific problems in this respect:

- Firstly, security assurances provided outside the NPT by the nuclear-weapon states are generally subject to reservations by the latter. China is the exception, having given its assurances unconditionally. As we know,
these reserves concern the right to use nuclear weapons in certain circumstances.

- Secondly, several nuclear-weapon states are continuing to develop highly sophisticated nuclear weapons which could be used against a non-nuclear-weapon state. The continued development of nuclear weapons technology makes less credible the security assurances given by nuclear-weapon states.

- Thirdly, countries which, like Switzerland, are situated outside nuclear weapon-free zones cannot benefit from security assurances given within the framework of regional agreements. This places them in a position of inequality.

- Fourthly, the nuclear-weapon states seem more inclined to give security assurances to States Parties which have failed to comply with their obligations under the NPT than to those which have been scrupulous in their respect for the Treaty.

Mr Chairman,

My delegation considers that the non-nuclear-weapon states parties to the NPT have a legitimate right to legally binding assurances from the nuclear-weapon states. This is a key issue of the NPT and one of the most important items on the agenda for the 2005 Review Conference, as was acknowledged in the final document of the 2000 Review Conference.

Thank you for your attention.