SECOND SESSION OF THE PREPARATORY COMMITTEE
FOR THE 2010 REVIEW CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE TREATY
ON THE NON-PROLIFERATION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS
(28 APRIL – 9 MAY 2008, GENEVA, SWITZERLAND)

CLUSTER II

Statement by the Delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan

Geneva, 5 May 2008
Mr. Chairman,

Since this is the first time I am taking the floor, on behalf of the delegation of Azerbaijan, let me congratulate you on your election as the Chair of the Second Session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2010 Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). My delegation wishes to assure you of its full cooperation and support.

Mr. Chairman,

Today the NPT regime enjoys a great deal of attention from international community as far as the threats of nuclear proliferation and nuclear disarmament are concerned.

The Republic of Azerbaijan regards combating proliferation of weapons of mass destruction as one of the priorities of its foreign and security policy. It has signed and ratified the relevant international documents such as the NPT and Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and supports the efforts of the international community to complement existing mechanisms against ballistic missile proliferation.

Azerbaijan intends to facilitate effectively the prevention of proliferation of nuclear weapons in all its aspects, the process of nuclear disarmament, leading to the achievement of the final goal of full elimination of nuclear weapons, and thus, to further strengthening of international peace and security. Azerbaijan also intends to be actively involved in the efforts of the international community aimed at providing full implementation of the international regime on nuclear security. The existence of nuclear weapons, components and technologies in its wider neighborhood obliges Azerbaijan to actively participate in the implementation of all related agreements.

Situated at the major communication crossroads between the East and the West and the North and the South, in potentially turbulent and conflicts torn region, the Republic of Azerbaijan undertakes all necessary practical and legislative measures to prevent possible transfers through its territory of all components, materials and technology related to weapons of mass destruction, as well as means of their delivery.

Mr. Chairman,

Today the Caspian Sea region because of its geographical position and its energy resources is becoming ever more important on the political map of the world. At the same time this region is exposed to greater risks emanating from nuclear danger and radiological terrorism and accordingly to the related dangers.
Committed to the principles of establishing a universal and sustainable security regime and guided by the obligations under the abovementioned treaties and agreements Azerbaijan has repeatedly proposed the creation in the South Caucasus of a nuclear weapons-free-zone. However, this initiative cannot be carried out today because the major hurdle to implement this as well as other international efforts on nuclear non-proliferation are the ongoing ethnic conflicts in the region and, as one of their consequences, the continued occupation of around twenty percent of the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan by Armenia. As a result of this occupation significant parts of the territory and international borders are not under the control of the central Azerbaijani Government, and this in its turn increases the danger of illegal trafficking of nuclear materials in a still unstable region, often called as a “gray zone”.

The work on prevention of proliferation of nuclear weapons and illicit trafficking of nuclear and radioactive materials is carried out at present by the State Customs Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the State Border Service. For the conduct of strict control over the transit of goods, it is necessary to provide border customs points with modern technology. In this regard appropriate actions are carried out within the framework of our cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). In this connection, the Republic of Azerbaijan submitted to the Agency within the framework of the Technical Co-operation Program of the Agency the project for 2003-2004 titled "The struggle against illicit trafficking of radioactive materials".

Given the importance of strengthening work in the field of radiological and nuclear safety as well as the growing threat of nuclear terrorism it is recommended to create a National Center on Radiological and Nuclear Safety on the basis of the Institute of Radiation Problems of the National Academy of Sciences of Azerbaijan with the appropriate powers. Equipping this Center is envisaged in a future project of technical cooperation with the Agency.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman,

My delegation would like to welcome the recent ratification of the CTBT by Barbados, Colombia and Malaysia. We hope this positive trend would have tangible impact on progress towards the soon entry into force of the CTBT.

In this context, the Republic of Azerbaijan looks forward to a successful outcome of the 2010 Review Conference.

I thank you Mr. Chairman.