Statement by a meeting of non-governmental experts from countries belonging to the New Agenda Coalition

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The Group of non-governmental experts from NAC Countries met again during the third preparatory session of the 2010 NPT Review Conference, in New York. The group believes strongly in the importance of the Review process and notes that the conjunction of events has created favourable conditions for states to cooperatively achieve the objectives of the NPT.

This session of the Preparatory Committee is taking place in a very propitious moment. The policies being followed by the new US and Russian administrations create a more favourable climate for the implementation of the NPT, in which disarmament and arms control would lead to a world free of nuclear weapons, as called for by President Barak Obama in his address in Prague last April.

The Group notes the continued relevance of the NPT, and its three pillars: disarmament, nonproliferation, and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

A number of recent initiatives and processes have also helped to open the door for progress on disarmament. The UN Secretary General has urged the nuclear-weapon states in particular to undertake negotiations on effective measures leading to nuclear disarmament either through a framework of separate, mutually reinforcing instruments or within a nuclear-weapons convention, backed by a strong verification system.

The 2006 Report of the Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission; the “Reykjavik revisited” initiative from senior statesmen in the United States; the nuclear disarmament laboratory initiative in the UK; the re-energizing of the Seven Nation Initiative; the
Nuclear Threat Initiative; the “Global Zero” initiative; the Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Commission and others echo this call to disarmament.

Concrete, transparent and verifiable steps are now needed urgently. The highest priority should be given to:

- The entry into force of the 1996 Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). Apart from being a value per se, the ratification of the Treaty by key states would create a positive chain reaction in other areas.

- Steps to diminish the role of nuclear weapons in security policies and military doctrines in order to create the conditions for phasing out of short-range nuclear weapons and the withdrawal of all nuclear weapons from foreign soil and to pave the way for nuclear disarmament.

- The negotiation of a new treaty before the expiry of START I, which would ensure continuity in strategic arms control and lay the foundation for further reductions. Negotiation of a follow-on agreement should begin in 2010.

- A treaty that verifiably ends the production of fissile materials for weapon purposes. This should be negotiated without further delay at the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, along with deliberations and negotiations on other aspects of the work programme.

- Building on the momentum created by the entry into force of the Nuclear Weapon Free Zone in Central Asia. Entry into force of the Pelindaba Treaty is within reach. Additional NWFZs freely agreed in specific regions could play a role in preventing proliferation, building regional security, reducing the role of nuclear weapons and promoting disarmament in the Middle East, North East Asia and the Arctic.

At the Review Conference in 2000, the New Agenda Coalition was instrumental in inspiring and winning consensus support for 13 steps vital for the implementation of the treaty. Practically all of them remain fully relevant and urgent, and therefore also need to be taken.

The risk that non-state actors might acquire or develop nuclear devices must be reduced. All countries are obliged under international law to ensure that non-state actors do not use their territory to engage in mass impact terrorism. The International Convention for Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism should be universally adopted and implemented. All states should take appropriate steps to ensure that they retain secure custody of sensitive materials, equipment and technology and to prevent its diversion from peaceful purposes, whether at home or in other countries. We recognize that some countries may require assistance in implementing these obligations.

We are witnessing the emergence of new interest in nuclear power. This requires the strict observance and fair implementation of Article IV of the NPT. It is vital that such a development go hand in hand with measures to prevent the risk of proliferation.
The time is ripe for a comprehensive and inclusive global dialogue to develop a modern and effective system of regulation that would be binding on the nuclear industry worldwide. The dialogue should include participation by the nuclear industry as it expands, consolidates and internationalizes. Cooperative business models could reduce the risk of military break-outs from civilian programmes, but they cannot reduce the responsibility of states to embed multilateral nuclear approaches (MNAs) within a more modern network of international regulations.

The internationalization of the nuclear fuel cycle should create a more democratic global model that allows all parties involved in a project to participate in decision making concerning the supply of enriched fuel. The International Atomic Energy Agency could play a key role in this process.

Where there are questions outstanding about the level of compliance with the NPT further efforts need to be pursued to find non-violent diplomatic solutions to remaining problems. In the period before the 2010 Review Conference particular attention must be paid to the situation regarding Iran.

It remains important to work for universal participation in the NPT, including efforts to bring North Korea back into the NPT, and moving India, Israel and Pakistan to join the Treaty. Security and peace-building policies, including at a regional level, which take away the motive to acquire or retain nuclear arsenals and that reduce the risk of nuclear weapons being used should be a matter of high priority. Making the Middle East a Zone Free of Weapons of Mass Destruction, in accordance with the 1995 NPT Review Conference Middle East Resolution, is one example of a regional approach to achieve this end.

The Group proposes that preparations begin to open the way for a decision to convene a UN High Level Conference on disarmament, non-proliferation and terrorist use of weapons of mass destruction after the 2010 Review Conference. When convened, the Conference would build on the experience of previous thematic World Conferences.

The Group has confidence that the Review Conference will take place in circumstances far more conducive to success than those which existed in 2005.