STATEMENT
BY
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DURING CLUSTER I: SECURITY ASSURANCES

THIRD SESSION OF THE
PREPARATORY COMMITTEE FOR THE 2010 REVIEW
CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE TREATY ON
THE NON-PROLIFERATION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS

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STATEMENT BY THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA ON THE ISSUES OF SECURITY ASSURANCES

Thank you, Chairperson,

At the outset, I would like to restate South Africa’s firm belief that irrespective in whose hands they are in, nuclear weapons provide only illusionary security and that the continued possession of nuclear weapons or the retention of the nuclear weapons option by some States exacerbates the possibility of these weapons falling into the hands of terrorists and of their use. We further believe that the only complete defence against this prospect is the elimination of nuclear weapons and the assurance that they will never be produced again.

Chairperson,

The NPT is the primary nuclear non-proliferation agreement in terms of which the non-nuclear-weapon States have foregone the nuclear weapons option it follows that security assurances should be provided under the NPT. The granting of legally binding security assurances to the non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the NPT would fulfil the NPT’s bargain to the States that have voluntarily given up the nuclear-weapons option by becoming Parties to the Treaty.

South Africa continues to hold the view that the negotiation of security assurances within the NPT context – as opposed to some other forum – would provide a significant benefit to the NPT parties and could also serve as an incentive to those who still remain outside the Treaty. In addition, South Africa also believes that security assurances rightfully belong to those States that have foresworn the nuclear-weapons option, as opposed to those who still prefer to keep their options open. These long-held views were also reiterated in South Africa’s explanation of vote during the recent 2008 First Committee vote to explain my delegation’s abstention on the resolution entitled “Conclusion of effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons”.

Mr. Chairperson,

The demand for negative security assurances is not new. It was raised at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference and is also an integral part of Final Document adopted at the 2000 Review Conference.

Whilst it may be true that the issue is a complex one, it cannot be said that sufficient material does not exist to enable us to address the matter without further delay. In this regard, States parties will be aware that the partners of the New Agenda Coalition already in 2003 submitted a working paper on security assurances, as well as a Draft Instrument on the Prohibition of the Use or Threat of Use of Nuclear Weapons against Non-Nuclear-Weapon States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. This paper contains key questions and elements that would need to be addressed on the question of an internationally legally binding instrument on security assurances. As such it addresses issues such as the identification of the States providing security assurances, the nature and scope of the security assurances being provided, the identification of the beneficiaries of security assurances, the elements that would need to be included in an internationally legally binding instrument and the format in which security assurances would be provided.

Such an instrument would recognise the legitimate concern of non-nuclear-weapon States that, in conjunction with their adherence to the NPT, their security will be safeguarded. It will also be a manifestation of the efforts to avoid and avert the danger of nuclear war, to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons, and facilitate international co-operation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Most importantly, it would strengthen the nuclear non-proliferation regime and confirm the importance and role of the NPT and its indefinite extension.
Mr. Chairperson,

The issue of security assurances is long overdue in this forum. The concerns of non-nuclear-weapon States about their vulnerability from the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons remain unchanged. It is clear that the matter belongs under the NPT umbrella within the context of the Strengthened Review Process of the Treaty and that there is no dearth of material for the NPT States Parties to use for this work. South Africa believes that now is the time to ask without any further delay in finalising the granting of legally binding security assurances to the non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the NPT.

I thank you.