Statement by Ambassador Antonio Guerreiro,
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Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of
Nuclear Weapons
General Debate

Mr. Chairman,

The Delegation of Brazil warmly congratulates you, Ambassador Peter Woolcott, on your
election as Chairman of this Preparatory Committee and pledges its full cooperation to
you with a view to a successful outcome of this meeting. Brazil fully associates itself
with the statement delivered by South Africa on behalf of the New Agenda Coalition.

We are now embarking upon the fourth strengthened review cycle of the NPT since the
1995 bargain was struck to extend the treaty indefinitely in exchange for the Middle East
resolution, the Declaration On Principles and Objectives and what was supposed to be a
more effective mechanism for reviewing the implementation of the treaty in all its
aspects. When Brazil acceded to the Treaty in 1998, it did so in the belief that it could
contribute to the fulfillment of that bargain. Much still remains to be done to achieve
this objective, but we will not shy away from our responsibilities, as dedicated members
of the NPT, to bring it about. The question we should ask ourselves now is whether the
basic inequality enshrined in the treaty has been, or is in the process of being, reduced.

True it is that since the height of the Cold War overall numbers of nuclear weapons have
decreased. But still much has to be achieved. It is simply not admissible that more than
20 years after the end of the Cold War nuclear weapons still continue to be an integral
part of military and security doctrines. Concepts like minimal possible deterrence or
undiminished security as excuses for the persistent possession of atomic weaponry are
simply not credible anymore. These concepts can only be interpreted as perpetuating
and legitimizing nuclear weapons forever. After all the world has always been and will always be an unstable environment. Waiting for a Kantian universal and perpetual peace to commit to forswear atomic weapons simply runs counter to the ultimate objective of the NPT, which is the total and irreversible elimination of nuclear weapons. We should all realize that the present discriminatory, and even invidious, state of affairs is unsustainable in the long run. An international order in which rights and obligations are the same for all participants is the only guarantee against challenges and attempts of disruption.

Mr. Chairman,

When they framed the NPT back in the 1960’s our predecessors were well aware that the order they were ushering in could not be by definition a perpetual one, if only because they envisioned different scenarios for the treaty 25 years after its entry into force. The decision made in 1995 to extend it indefinitely cannot conceal the unavoidable fact that if and when we approach the point of full compliance with Article VI of the NPT it will have to be superseded by a convention banning nuclear weapons, whereby the playing field would be leveled by imposing the same verification measures to all parties thereto.

It has often been stated that disarmament and non-proliferation are two mutually reinforcing processes. This statement is correct inasmuch as it asserts the equal importance which the international community should attach to both. It is not correct, however, should it be interpreted as though the same degree of effort and ingenuity is required to promote nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. They are, after all, in very different levels of execution. Non-proliferation was already delivered; it is a given. More than 40 years after the entry force of the NPT there is no record that a single NNWS party has developed a nuclear weapon, although we acknowledge that there are suspicions that a few might have attempted to do so. Therefore, from the point of view of non-proliferation, the NPT has been an astounding success, measured by all imaginable criteria, belying the minatory predictions advanced before the conclusion of the treaty. Far from me to suggest that there is room for complacency. We are confident that the International Atomic Energy Agency will continue to carry out with diligence and mettle the mandate entrusted to it by Article III of the NPT.
Mr. Chairman,

Brazil is not as naïve as to be deluded that nuclear weapons can be dismantled irreversibly overnight. We are fully aware that achieving this objective will take many years, probably decades. There will be many hurdles to overcome, like understandable backlogs, and suspicion to be turned into confidence, especially when arsenals move toward very low numbers and eventually to zero. But we need to see light at the end of the tunnel. A temporal horizon with time lines, however flexible, will be a significant contribution to whittling away the long term unsustainability of an order based upon the entitlement of a few and the disfranchisement of many.

The international community has been wise enough to ban the other two categories of weapons of mass destruction: biological and chemical. Yet it has been lackadaisical at best about the deadliest of all. Nuclear weapons were first developed to put an end to a war; arsenals increased dramatically to deter an enemy. Today there is no war to be ended by using atomic weapons and there is no enemy to deter. Has there ever been a more propitious time to put an end to the presently groundless addiction to nuclear weapons?

Mr. Chairman, at this general exchange of views the Delegation of Brazil decided to focus on what it considers the top priority of this meeting. In the more specific segments of this Preparatory Committee Brazil will make its views known on other important issues on our agenda, like peaceful uses, safety, security and, last but not least, the establishment of a Nuclear-Weapon-Free-Zone in the Middle East. Let me once again pledge to you the unwavering cooperation of the Brazilian Delegation and express our confidence in your wise leadership.

Thank you.