Statement by H.E. Ambassador Valery Voronetsky, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Belarus

Vienna, 30 April 2012
Mr. Chairman,

Allow me on behalf of the Delegation of the Republic of Belarus to congratulate you upon the election to the post of the Chairman of the First Session of the Preparatory Committee of the 2015 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference. I am confident that under your leadership the current session of the NPT Preparatory Committee will be able to provide a solid basis for the success of the 2015 Review Conference.

Our delegation associates itself with the statement made by Ambassador of Egypt on behalf of the Group of Non-Aligned States Parties.

Mr. Chairman,

Over more than 40 years the NPT has been a fundamental element of the international security and non-proliferation. A balanced promotion of all three pillars – disarmament, non-proliferation and the right to peaceful use of atomic energy – is a necessary precondition for strengthening the authority of the NPT.

Mr. Chairman,

Belarus was the first to renounce voluntarily and unconditionally the possession of nuclear weapons left on its territory after the break up of the Soviet Union. Removal of the nuclear arsenal was accompanied with reduction of conventional arms and total number of the Armed forces in accordance with the regional obligations. That process went on under severe economic conditions caused by collapse of the Soviet Union and consequences of the Chernobyl disaster.

Confirming our full commitments to the obligations under the NPT, we call upon not to lose sight of the strategic goal of the NPT – nuclear disarmament.

We welcome the start of implementation in 2011 by Russia and the United States of the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty which was signed in Prague in 2010. No doubts that this Treaty has already contributed to strengthening international security and strategic stability. At the same time, we are confident that future measures to reduce strategic nuclear weapons and means of delivery should envisage not only destruction of obsolete nuclear warheads and means of their delivery, but also commitments to stop further development of new types of nuclear weapons.

Mr. Chairman,

Obviously, political will, the so called ‘reloading’ was a vital factor for the conclusion of the new START Treaty. Multilateral nuclear disarmament is a more complex process, but yet not less important for peace, security and wellbeing. In this regard, we need ‘reloading’ of the multilateral diplomatic mechanism in the sphere of disarmament. Thus, the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva should conclude a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty, the ripe well issue. The conclusion of this Treaty could become a considerable collective contribution to the implementation of the commitments under Article VI of the NPT.

We are confident that the outlined headway in bringing into force the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty must be supplemented with continuing ratifications by the States listed in Annex II to the Treaty. We believe that only a universal legal international obligation can be a reliable barrier for testing of nuclear explosive devices all around the world.

Mr. Chairman,

Belarus holds firm position on the issues of strengthening of the non-proliferation regime. With the existence of terrorists' threat in the modern
world the risk of proliferation of nuclear weapons and nuclear related materials and
technologies is a major challenge to the international security and stability. Such
challenges require consolidation of efforts from the international community,
including consistent and indiscriminate cooperation in counteracting nuclear
terrorism and securing nuclear material.

We highly appreciate the role and positive input of the IAEA and its Director
General Mr. Yukiy Amano in strengthening the international nuclear non-
proliferation regime. In this regard our country attaches great importance to the
improvement of the IAEA safeguards system based on the provisions of the NPT.

Universality of the Convention on Physical Protection of Nuclear Material, the
Convention Against Nuclear Terrorism, and the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear
Terrorism could greatly contribute to decreasing the non-proliferation risks.
We acknowledge the role of the international export control regimes in this process,
such as the Nuclear Suppliers Group and the Zangger Committee. Belarus stands
for increasing the role of these regimes in the global non-proliferation system.

Mr. Chairman,

In the framework of the NPT review process specific role belongs to the issue
of the security assurances. Acquiring legally binding security assurances by the
Non-Nuclear-Weapon States brings trust and predictability in the relations among
the countries, contributes to strengthening of nuclear non-proliferation regime and
promotes the universality of the Treaty.

Lack of progress on this area causes the cascade of problems in the sphere of
nuclear nonproliferation, dilutes basis and spirit of the NPT. The assurances
contained in the United Nations Security Council resolutions 255 (1968) and 984
(1995) are mere political declarations by their nature. Furthermore, the assurances
include reservations, in fact repudiating the declarations and improving the
significance and prestige of possession of nuclear weapons.

The necessity to conclude a global legally binding international arrangement
providing unequivocal and unconditional assurances to non-nuclear-weapon states
against use or threat of use of nuclear weapons is ripe well. We believe that these
assurances should be given to the Non-Nuclear-Weapon States Parties to the NPT.

As it is known, Action 7 of the Plan of Action on Nuclear Disarmament
contains recommendation to the Conference on Disarmament to begin without delay
a discussion of effective international arrangements to assure the Non-Nuclear-
Weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, with a
possibility of developing an international legally binding document.

We stand for reestablishment in the CD of a special committee or a working
group to discuss and then to develop an international arrangement on assurances
to the Non-Nuclear-Weapon States.

Mr. Chairman,

In the context of the NPT, we attach particular importance to the trilateral
assurances which were provided to Belarus under the Budapest Memorandum of
1994 in exchange for the voluntary renunciation by our country of the possibility to
possess the nuclear weapons and acceding to the NPT as a Non-Nuclear-Weapon
State. The Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States
committed themselves to respecting independence and sovereignty of the Republic
of Belarus, in particular, not to exert any economic pressure on our country.

After the termination of the 1991 START Treaty which the Republic of Belarus
was a State Party to, these conditions have become especially important to us. In
particular, we welcomed the joint statement by the Russian Federation and the
United States which confirmed that the assurances fixed in the Budapest Memorandum would stay in force after 4 December 2009 – the date of termination of the first START Treaty. We noted with satisfaction that Action 8 of the Plan of Action on Nuclear Disarmament obliged the nuclear-weapon States to fully respect their existing commitments with regard to security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States.

Therefore we face the question: why, despite the fixed and repeatedly confirmed obligations, some nuclear-weapon States in practice ignore their commitments and resort to economic and political pressure on States which adopted a non-nuclear status in due time?

Mr. Chairman,

While comprehensively reviewing the NPT, we should remember that safeguarding exclusively peaceful use of nuclear technologies is one of the important objectives of the non-proliferation regime.

Nowadays we are witnessing increased attention to the development of peaceful nuclear technologies in various spheres, including energy production, healthcare, agriculture, environment protection, etc. The number of countries interested in developing national nuclear programmes is growing.

We are confident that the IAEA has all necessary tools to enable equal and indiscriminate access to all interested countries to nuclear energy benefits. Many of these tools already exist and should be accessible for the purposes of development. At the same time any State while pursuing its peaceful nuclear programme should act transparently and in accordance to the letter and spirit of its obligations under the NPT.

Mr. Chairman,

The issue of promotion of the NPT universality is acute today as never before. We remain concerned with lack of progress in this regard, given that some States that operate non-safeguarded nuclear facilities remain outside of the NPT.

In the course of the current review process due attention should be paid to regional aspects of the NPT implementation, notably, establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones. Success in realization of this task will undoubtedly strengthen the non-proliferation regime and contribute to nuclear disarmament. Stability in the Middle East is important for both regional and international security. Hence, establishment in this region of a zone free from weapons of mass destruction is a priority of the current review process.

It is also important to ensure a full value and effective functioning of the nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia, which requires signing and ratification of the Protocol by all five nuclear-weapon States.

In conclusion let me express hope that in the course of the current review process we will adhere to a flexible and rational approach to be able to reach a compromise on all issues related to the implementation of the Treaty, which in turn will provide a new impetus to the NPT and strengthen the global non-proliferation regime. From our side we will cooperate in a constructive manner to reach this compromise.

Thank you for your attention.