STATEMENT
BY
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RESIDENT REPRESENTATIVE/GOVERNOR
OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA TO THE IAEA

FIRST PREPARATORY COMMITTEE FOR THE
2015 REVIEW CONFERENCE
OF THE PARTIES TO THE TREATY ON THE NON-PROLIFERATION OF
NUCLEAR WEAPONS

CLUSTER I: NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

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VIENNA

Check against delivery
Chairperson,

South Africa wishes to associate itself with the statements delivered on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and the New Agenda Coalition.

As stated during the General Debate, my delegation recognizes the significance of the outcome of the 2010 NPT Review Conference, which not only reconfirmed the continued validity of the outcomes of 1995 and 2000, but also agreed on an extensive Action Plan aimed at accelerating the implementation of all Treaty provisions under all three Treaty pillars.

We also stated that the agreement reached in 2010 was not a recognition that States Parties were satisfied with the progress made in the implementation of past agreements, but that it illustrated our collective commitment to the objectives of the Treaty and the urgency that is required towards fulfilling these solemn undertakings. Of particular importance was the reaffirmation of the unequivocal commitment by the nuclear-weapon States to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals and agreement to apply the principles of transparency, irreversibility and verifiability in fulfillment of Treaty obligations.

It is in this spirit that we will approach the work that needs to be undertaken in preparation for the 2015 Review Conference.

Chairperson,

Despite some positive announcements, not much concrete progress has been achieved in the area of nuclear disarmament.

We, nevertheless, welcome the steps taken towards the implementation of the New START agreement between the Russian Federation and the United States that would reduce operationally deployed strategic nuclear weapons. In this context, we recall the commitment made in the 2010 Action Plan to continue work on achieving deeper reductions in nuclear arsenals and welcome the positive statements recently made by leaders in this regard. It is important that such cuts should address all nuclear weapons, irrespective of their type or location. Reductions are indeed vital to removing the excessive destructive capabilities developed during the Cold War, but do not substitute for concrete, transparent, irreversible and verifiable nuclear disarmament measures.

The development of new categories of nuclear weapons and their delivery systems provide a clear indication that some of the NWS continue to harbour aspirations for the indefinite retention of these instruments of destruction, contrary to their legal obligations and political commitments. South Africa believes that we can only effectively address the threat posed by nuclear weapons through inclusive, multilateral processes. Universal adherence to, full implementation of and compliance with the relevant multilateral instruments are therefore required.

South Africa appreciates the information that has been provided by some of the nuclear-weapon States about their nuclear weapons arsenals and the implementation of their nuclear disarmament objectives. Beyond the reporting obligations agreed to in 2010, we would encourage all five nuclear-weapon States to further increase their efforts to enhance transparency and to build confidence among States Parties.
Chairperson,

My delegation is deeply concerned about the continuing stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament which undermines its credibility and raises questions about its continued relevance. It is imperative that the work of this body is revitalised so that it can again fulfil its mandate as the world's single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum.

In context, we remain committed to the soonest resumption of substantive work, including through the establishment of a subsidiary body that would deal with nuclear disarmament and one that would commence negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons that would serve both disarmament and non-proliferation objectives, as agreed to in the 2010 Action Plan. My delegation will remain actively engaged with a view to seeking solutions and compromises that would make it possible for the Conference on Disarmament to finally commence substantive work.

The Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) as an important measure to accomplish our common goals of nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. We welcome the ratifications of Indonesia, the first Annex II to ratify since 2008, the Central African Republic, Ghana, Guatemala and Guinea, Trinidad and Tobago and the signature of Niue, since the adoption of the 2010 Action Plan. Though the CTBT has yet to enter into force, my delegation looks forward to the realisation of the commitments made to this effect by particularly Annex 2 States, among others, the United States and China.

Chairperson,

It remains South Africa's firm conviction that nuclear weapons do not guarantee security, but rather detract from it. As long as these weapons exist, humanity will continue to face the threat of catastrophe. The continued retention of nuclear weapons, including by the States that operate unsafeguarded nuclear facilities outside the NPT, continue to be of concern to my delegation. For as long as these weapons exist there may be other that will seek to acquire them.

Nuclear weapons also consume billions, which could be better directed to assisting countries to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, thereby ending poverty, inequality and underdevelopment. Let us recall the wise words of the late President of the African National Congress, Mr Oliver Reginald Tambo, who over twenty-five years ago spoke of the link between disarmament and development. In this regard, he argued that "...the achievement of peace...requires that the world community should abolish underdevelopment and guarantee the social progress of all peoples...As long as the super-rich pour enormous resources into the development of weapons of mass destruction, it will be impossible banish hunger".

The continued threat of nuclear weapons and the enormous humanitarian consequences of the possession and use of nuclear weapons require all of us, States and members of civil society, to respond appropriately. It is in context, that my delegation associated itself with the statement delivered yesterday by Switzerland on behalf of a group of concerned states from various regions around the world. We need to ensure that the horror of 1945 is never repeated and that humanity is finally freed from the curse of these weapons of mass annihilation. This cannot be achieved through a selective focus on the non-proliferation provisions of the Treaty alone. After 42 years since the entry-into-force of the NPT, the world can no longer be complacent about the continued threat posed by nuclear weapons and the lack of implementation of the
disarmament obligations flowing from Article VI of the Treaty towards the total elimination of all nuclear weapons.

The Treaty and the outcomes of its Review Conferences need to be respected if we are to ensure the continued vitality of this instrument. Measurable progress on nuclear disarmament must therefore be a major determinant in achieving and in sustaining international security. South Africa will therefore continue to support all efforts aimed at the achievement of a world free from all weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons.

I thank you, Chairperson.