STATEMENT
Cluster I: Disarmament

by

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2013 Preparatory Committee meeting of the
Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

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INTERVENTION
Premier groupe de questions : Désarmement

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Réunion du Comité préparatoire (2013) de la Conférence
d'examen du Traité sur la non-prolifération des armes nucléaires

Genève, le 25 avril 2013
Mr. Chairman,

In 1961, at the height of the Cold War, Canadian Prime Minister John Diefenbaker addressed the issue of nuclear weapons stating, "The explosion of such a diabolical device would be a brutal offense against humanity for which there can be no justifiable excuse, either in terms of defence or of simply common sense. No one can deny that continued experimentation of these devices will ultimately lead to a war measured in megadeaths."

Against this backdrop, Canada has consistently pursued a step-by-step process that halts the spread of nuclear weapons, reduces existing stockpiles and irreversibly eliminates them. Three years ago, NPT States Parties agreed on a series of ambitious actions to help realize this objective. We have made some progress in this regard, but more work remains to be done.

Canada shares the concern expressed in South Africa's earlier statement about the catastrophic humanitarian consequences that would result from the use of nuclear weapons. Canada welcomed the March 2013 conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons held in Oslo, as an opportunity for valuable fact-based discussions on these consequences and on humanitarian preparedness for a nuclear weapons detonation. We welcome the offer of Mexico to convene a follow-up conference on this issue.

Canada welcomes the efforts of the Nuclear Weapon States to continue to draw down their nuclear weapon stockpiles since the 2010 RevCon, including US/Russia efforts to implement the New START agreement, and the UK's and France's unilateral nuclear reductions as a part of their updated national defence reviews. We hope that by 2015 there will be further reductions in all categories of nuclear weapons. To ensure further progress, confidence building measures and transparency will be key. Canada urges the Nuclear Weapon States to continue their efforts to implement the 2010 Action Plan. We would welcome further briefings from the Nuclear Weapon States about the recent Geneva meeting, particularly any concrete outcomes.

Disarmament and transparency is not only the responsibility of the five Nuclear Weapon States. Canada has been working with its partners in the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative to propose practical measures to implement the 2010 Action Plan, including means to address issues of standard reporting by Nuclear Weapon States and the role of nuclear weapons in defence doctrines. In an effort to promote greater transparency, Canada has again submitted two national reports which highlight, among others, our efforts to promote disarmament. Reporting is something all States Parties can and should do, both Nuclear- and Non-Nuclear Weapon States, to indicate that NPT commitments are being implemented.

Mr. Chairman,

We have sought, along with the vast majority of the members of the Conference on Disarmament, to end the long stalemate in that body. Canada very much regrets that the most recent proposal for a programme of work outlined in CD/1948 was unable to achieve consensus. A return to work in the CD is essential to ensure progress on nuclear disarmament, notably on actions 6, 7 and 15. It is particularly regrettable that one non-NPT state continues to reject any proposal that would start negotiation of a treaty banning the production of fissile
material for nuclear weapons while it continues to not only produce fissile material but has increased its capacity to do so.

Last fall, faced with the protracted deadlock in the CD, an overwhelming majority of UN General Assembly members voted in favour of resolution 67/53 that, among other things, created a Group of Governmental Experts that will make recommendations on possible aspects that could contribute to a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons. Canada hopes that States Parties will use the UN Secretary General’s request to submit their views by May 15 for views ensure that their voices are heard on this important issue. A verifiable treaty addressing fissile material is the only way to ensure that the production of such material for use in nuclear weapons is permanently halted. In the meantime, Canada calls on all states that have not done so to declare a moratorium on fissile material production.

Non-Nuclear Weapon States also have a role to play in reducing and securing potential sources of fissile material, including separated plutonium and highly enriched uranium (HEU). Canada has spent $450 million to further nuclear security globally since 2002, through the Global Partnership, including $9 million to shut down the last dedicated plutonium producing reactor in Russia. Canada’s Global Partnership Program has also contributed to the conversion of HEU fuelled research reactors in Mexico and Vietnam to enable them to use a non-weapons useable material, low-enriched uranium.

Another important element to achieve the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons is a fully in force Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). As the widely-condemned and provocative actions of North Korea illustrated in February, the destabilizing effects of nuclear weapons testing remain a clear danger to both regional and international peace and security. Canada continues to play an active role in encouraging further signatures and ratification of the Treaty with a view to achieving its entry into force as well as its universality. We call on all States that have not yet done so to sign and ratify the CTBT as soon as possible and without condition. Canada also continues to play an active role in advancing the CTBT’s robust verification system, which again displayed its capabilities to detect the signs of the North Korea’s third nuclear test. In October 2012, Canada finalized a contribution arrangement with the CTBT Organization for the provision of equipment and operational training to strengthen the Organization’s on-site inspection capabilities that will be another valuable measure against nuclear tests once the Treaty’s entry into force is achieved.

Mr. Chair,

Despite the overwhelming demand for nuclear reductions, disarmament does not and cannot take place in a vacuum. It must be accompanied by strict adherence by all States Parties to their non-proliferation obligations under the NPT. As such, the continued non-compliance by Iran, North Korea and Syria with these obligations jeopardizes the continuation of disarmament efforts by the Nuclear Weapon States. It is the responsibility of all States Parties to ensure that progress is made across all three pillars of this Treaty if we hope, one day, to achieve our final objective.

Thank you.