Preparatory Committee for the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty
on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

Cluster I

Statement by Mr. Gerard Keown,
Director for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Ireland

Mr. Chairman,

Ireland aligns herself with the statements delivered within this cluster by the European Union and by Brazil on behalf of the New Agenda Coalition.

In our national statement during the General Debate, my delegation expressed the hope that the success of the 2010 Review Conference can be built upon with an ambitious outcome to the present review cycle in 2015. We believe that the process of mapping out where we want the NPT to be in two years time, and how we will get there, must begin now. Central to this will be an examination of what has been achieved since 2010.

It has always been my delegation’s view that the NPT must be implemented in a balanced way across all three pillars. It has become clear – indeed has been made clear by the wider UN membership at last year’s General Assembly meeting – that persistent underachievement in progressing the global disarmament agenda is no longer acceptable. For this reason, we believe it will be of particular importance that the twenty-two disarmament-related Actions agreed to in 2010 receive our careful attention within this cycle.

Mr Chairman,

Ireland is not persuaded by arguments to the effect that the fact that nuclear weapons have not been used in sixty-eight years means that they will not be used again. Nor do we believe that the dissipation of Cold War tensions reduces the prospects of their use.

The very existence of these weapons poses unacceptable risks: the risk of accident; of miscalculation at a time of crisis; the risk that these weapons will fall into the hands of a less stable State in which rational calculations about use and non-use may not apply. There is also, of course, the risk that these weapons could fall into the hands of terrorists for whom the concept of deterrence simply does not arise.

When we consider the vast progress which humanity has made since 1945, it seems incomprehensible indeed to us that we should tolerate, much less seek to justify, the continued retention of such uniquely destructive and dangerous weapons when we know they could, in an instant, change human life as we know it forever. Is this the best blueprint for security that we can devise?
The nuclear weapons age will not end until the last weapon is destroyed. Ireland firmly believes that we all have a role to play in making this happen. The nuclear weapons states of course bear a special responsibility to move the disarmament agenda forward. We welcome the steps they have taken thus far. However, only they can reduce and ultimately eliminate their arsenals and we encourage them to show leadership in moving quickly to do so. Of course, non nuclear weapons states also have a responsibility to promote the balanced implementation of the Treaty. All States can and should report on the steps they are taking to this end. In this respect, at the 2014 Preparatory Committee meeting, my delegation will report on Ireland’s implementation of the 2010 action plan, as set out in Action 20 of that Plan.

Mr. Chairman,

As a demonstration of the commitment to disarm, we believe that Action 5 of the 2010 Action Plan should receive particular attention. Under it, the nuclear weapons states have committed to accelerate concrete progress on the steps leading to nuclear disarmament. Its implementation will therefore be a key determinant of whether, in the wider sense, the disarmament elements of Action Plan can be judged to have been successfully implemented.

Action 5 covers such key aspects of disarmament as reducing stockpiles (which is also committed to under Action 3), and addressing the question of all nuclear weapons regardless of their type or location as an integral part of the disarmament process. Importantly, it calls upon the nuclear weapons states to enhance transparency and mutual confidence.

Ireland believes that the enhancement of transparency will be a critical element of success in 2015. We find it unacceptable that, forty three years after the NPT’s entry into force, we still do not know how many of these weapons require to be disarmed. We call upon the nuclear weapons states to move quickly to agree on and use a standard reporting form.

Concrete progress in a number of the areas covered by Action 5 would also go some way to addressing the many humanitarian concerns expressed by Governments at the recent Oslo Conference. These are important concerns, not expressed lightly. They are the concerns of the majority of UN member states.

Action 5’s call upon the nuclear weapons states to diminish the role and significance of nuclear weapons in military and security doctrines and concepts; to discuss policies that could prevent their use; to reduce the operational status of nuclear weapons systems, take action on de-alerting; and to reduce the risk of accidental use, would all represent significant confidence building steps. We expect to hear from each of the nuclear weapons states on the steps they have been taking to achieve this. It is a matter of regret that the nuclear weapons states were not present at Oslo to listen to these concerns expressed by Governments and civil society. The message from Oslo was nevertheless clear: humanity will be powerless to respond to the uniquely destructive power which a nuclear detonation would unleash. This was the message delivered again yesterday by our fellow NAC-member South Africa on behalf of seventy eight NPT States Parties. There is a growing voice from governments and civil society on this issue which should occupy a central place in our deliberations. It is crucial that those who choose to possess these terrible weapons heed these concerns and we encourage them to attend the meeting which our fellow NAC member Mexico will host next year.
Mr. Chairman,

Reporting will be a crucial element of implementing the 2010 Action Plan for all NPT States Parties, insofar as it seeks to address the transparency deficit. We will pay close attention to the reports that are submitted to see how States Parties are meeting their commitments under the Action Plan. We would expect each of the nuclear weapons states to submit comprehensive reports on the steps which they have taken to implement each of their undertakings, in particular, under Action 5. This will assist the 2015 Review Conference to take stock and consider next steps towards achieving the full implementation of Article VI. We encourage the nuclear weapons states to achieve the greatest possible transparency in this regard, going beyond the steps already taken, thereby building confidence in their commitment to disarm.

Mr. Chairman,

Progress on Action 6 of the Action Plan, which calls upon the Conference on Disarmament to establish a subsidiary body to deal with nuclear disarmament, would immeasurably strengthen the machinery for creating the disarmament agenda’s rule of law. Regrettably, the current impasse in the Conference on Disarmament is unlikely to produce such a body. Nevertheless, NPT States Parties can and should take every possible step to progress the discussion on disarmament. Together we represent an overwhelming majority of the wider UN membership, and each of us has undertaken, under Article VI, to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to nuclear disarmament. In the absence of immediate prospects for the implementation of a programme of work in the Conference on Disarmament, we urge all NPT States to engage with the Open Ended Working Group established by the General Assembly to develop proposals and take forward multilateral disarmament negotiations. While not fulfilling Action 6, this would demonstrate a commitment to revitalising the disarmament machinery and would support the aims of Action 6.

Directly related to this is, of course, Action 15, concerning the call for negotiations towards a treaty banning the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. Engagement with the Group of Governmental Experts established by the General Assembly to generate discussion around what such a Treaty might involve, can, without cutting across the Conference on Disarmament, support its work and hopefully help to remove the premium which has been placed on procedural rules as a means of determining substantive progress. Process should never trump substance.

We therefore call upon all States Parties, and particularly the five nuclear weapons states to engage with both of these initiatives.

Finally, Mr. Chairman,

We regret that the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty has still not entered into force. The importance and urgency of this Treaty’s entry into force has long been recognised – indeed it is the first of the Thirteen Practical Steps agreed to in 2000. By prohibiting nuclear explosions in any environment by anyone, the CTBT would represent a thin blue line between genuine peaceful uses and the development or qualitative improvement of nuclear weapons. Recent provocative acts by the DPRK, which we have categorically condemned, demonstrate the urgent need for this Treaty and Ireland asks the remaining Annex 2 states
whose ratification is needed to achieve its entry into force to sign and ratify the Treaty without delay. This is something on which States can and must show leadership. Please do not wait for others to act first.

While the CTBT has not yet entered into force, it represents an overwhelming international consensus against nuclear weapons testing that each of us has a duty to protect. We expect all States – including the DPRK – to respect this international consensus.

Mr. Chairman,

While all States Parties to the NPT must take responsibility for ensuring the Treaty’s full implementation, it is clear that only the nuclear weapons states can achieve disarmament. Progress on disarmament will strengthen in turn the non-proliferation regime. We can and must do more to get the disarmament commitments back on track, to begin the work leading to genuine disarmament negotiations, be they for a single, multilaterally negotiated instrument or a series of mutually reinforcing agreements. Ireland and its partners in the New Agenda Coalition have submitted two working papers – on nuclear disarmament and on applying the principle of transparency in nuclear disarmament – which, as with previous contributions from the NAC, we believe can contribute to our discussions going forward.

It is clear that, however we choose to take this agenda forward, we must act and we must act now. As UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon noted in his recent Monterey address, delay comes with a high price tag.

I thank you, Mr President.