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

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Statement by

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Mr. Chairman,

At the outset, I would like to congratulate you on your election as Chairman of the Third Meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the 2015 Review Conference of the NPT. Let me assure you of our full cooperation and support for your efforts to lead the work of the PrepCom to a successful conclusion. Brazil hopes this meeting will help us move closer to the ultimate goal of eliminating nuclear weapons.

My delegation associates itself with the statements delivered by Costa Rica on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States and by Ireland on behalf of the New Agenda Coalition. In addition, I would like to make the following points:

While fully committed to the objectives of the NPT, Brazil, as many other States, has always been critical of the asymmetrical obligations deriving from the Treaty. We understand that these asymmetries will only be reverted with the balanced implementation of the Treaty. In this context, from a Brazilian perspective, the main purpose of any review cycle, including the current one, should be to ensure the NPT's full implementation in all of its pillars, so as to reduce its basic inherent asymmetry. We therefore reject any attempt to further increase the imbalance between the rights and obligations of nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States.

Throughout this Review Cycle, we have been hearing voices upholding the existence of a crisis in the non-proliferation regime. If there is a crisis in the NPT, it is mainly due to the failure to disarm, rather than due to actual proliferation. As a matter of fact, in the 44 years after the entry into force of the NPT, the non-nuclear-weapon States have kept their commitment of not acquiring nuclear weapons.

On the other hand, we identify a clear compliance deficit on the part of the five nuclear-weapon-States, which have not lived up to their commitment under Article VI of the NPT of pursuing negotiations in good faith on a Treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control – which the ICJ has recognized as an obligation in its 1996 Advisory Opinion on the Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons. Nor do they seem to be willing to give any concreteness to the 2000's unequivocal undertaking to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals. We stress that the indefinite extension of the Treaty in 1995 cannot in any way be interpreted as permission for the perpetual possession of nuclear weapons.

Unilateral or bilateral initiatives to reduce nuclear arsenals, positive as they may be, do not amount to effective nuclear disarmament, for they are not irreversible, verifiable or transparent. Cuts in arsenals are quickly offset by qualitative improvements in nuclear forces, by the modernization of nuclear weapons and their delivery systems and by the roles ascribed for nuclear weapons in national defense doctrines. The ultimate goal of a world free of nuclear weapons can only be reached by means of a universal, comprehensive and non-discriminatory treaty negotiated in a truly multilateral process.
Nuclear disarmament is not only a legal commitment already subscribed to by nuclear-weapon States, but it is also the most effective measure against nuclear proliferation. As long as a limited group of countries considers itself entitled to possess nuclear weapons, there will always be a risk that other States or non-State actors may try to acquire or develop such weapons. No efforts to strengthen nuclear security will suffice to reduce this risk. Therefore, progress towards nuclear disarmament is key to the long term sustainability of the regime and to the preservation of international peace and security.

Nuclear disarmament is also a socioeconomic imperative. Even in spite of the current global financial constraints, nuclear-weapon States (NWS) continue to invest large sums in order to maintain and modernize their nuclear arsenals. It is estimated that half the amount annually invested in nuclear arsenals would be enough to achieve internationally agreed development goals on poverty reduction, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015. From this perspective, nuclear disarmament is not only a rational economic measure, but would represent a much required course correction with a view to addressing root causes of instability in the long run. This discussion is all the more relevant as we engage, in parallel, in the post-2015 Agenda discussions.

Mr. Chairman,

To ensure the vitality of the NPT regime, it is essential that all of its commitments be respected. We regret that the Conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction has yet to be convened. All efforts must be exerted towards convening the Conference without further delay. We commend the ongoing efforts of the Conference Facilitator, Ambassador Jaakko Laajava of Finland. We must bear in mind that this issue was part of the bargain which allowed the indefinite extension of the NPT in 1995. It is our firm hope that the recent positive developments in the region regarding the Iranian nuclear program and Syria's accession to the CWC – and the ongoing dismantling of its chemical weapons – will contribute to holding the Conference as soon as possible.

Mr. Chairman,

The NPT undoubtedly faces a critical juncture. We cannot continue to pretend that we live in a 1960s-like world, where security reasons could be invoked to justify nuclear deterrence doctrines and approaches. The world has changed. In this context, Brazil is encouraged by some positive developments, which may help bring back a correct perspective to disarmament debates. One of them is the humanitarian process. Both the Oslo and Nayarit Conferences contributed to reinforce the perception that urgent action is needed to prevent the global humanitarian catastrophe which would result from any nuclear detonation. Brazil looks forward to the Third International Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, to take place in Austria later this year.
We are hopeful that the humanitarian process could produce a major breakthrough and be translated into concrete multilateral action towards nuclear disarmament. Another significant development was the adoption by the UN General Assembly of Resolution 68/32, which calls for the urgent commencement of negotiations, in the Conference on Disarmament, for the early conclusion of a comprehensive Convention on nuclear weapons. Let me stress that Brazil sees the CD as the appropriate forum for these negotiations because any such efforts must include all States possessing nuclear weapons. We would not, however, object any negotiating process that could take place within the United Nations framework, as in the UN General Assembly.

Brazil believes that both initiatives – the humanitarian process and the GA Resolution 68/32 call for a Nuclear Weapons Convention – should be seen as convergent and complementary. They both convey the same messages: firstly, that humankind can no longer accept that its future continue to be jeopardized by the whims of a small number of nuclear-weapon States; and secondly, that we may be running short on time to make the necessary decisions to ensure that our world will be forever spared from a nuclear Armageddon.

I thank you.