Opening Statement to the 2014 NPT Preparatory Committee

By

Angela Kane
High Representative for Disarmament Affairs

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I am pleased to have this opportunity to address this third session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2015 NPT Review Conference. At the outset, I wish to congratulate Ambassador Enrique Román Morey on his election as Chairman of this session.

For several reasons, this third session of the Preparatory Committee has a special significance in the context of the strengthened review process for the Treaty. Its purpose is more than merely to complete any outstanding procedural preparations for the 2015 Review Conference. While the first two sessions considered principles, objectives and ways in order to promote the full implementation of the Treaty, as well as its universality, this third session must attempt to translate those into concrete recommendations to the Review Conference.

We are also at a crucial moment in the implementation of the action plan adopted at the 2010 Review Conference. I don’t think I can overemphasize the significance of that outcome. It gave new purpose to the engagement amongst the nuclear-weapon States, which committed themselves to accelerate concrete progress on the steps leading to nuclear disarmament. It also sparked major new interest in better understanding the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of the use of nuclear weapons.

In considering recommendations to the Review Conference, States parties will have to take stock of what has been accomplished since 2010 and to diagnose the obstacles that continue to inhibit progress towards our common aspirations.

One response to dealing with serious challenges is to lower expectations and to establish more modest goals. When it comes to dealing with the problems posed by the most destructive weapons ever developed, such a response would be clearly insufficient.

When the Eighteen Nation Disarmament Committee (ENDC) took up negotiations on the NPT in 1965, it had just spent three years negotiating various proposals for general and complete disarmament on the basis of principles agreed to in 1961 by the Soviet Union and the United States. Those principles were remarkable for their ambition. They foresaw that, as a consequence of the negotiations, States should be left with only such non-nuclear arms, forces, facilities and establishments that were agreed to be necessary to protect the personal security of citizens and to support a United Nations peace force.

As we are all aware, the ENDC and its successors were never able to resume negotiations on the basis of the 1961 principles. The NPT, however, did enshrine an international obligation to negotiate in good faith on effective measures relating to the cessation of the arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament as well as to a treaty on general and complete disarmament.

While general and complete disarmament has since been regarded as the ultimate objective of States, the arguably more modest objective of nuclear disarmament has remained the urgent priority. It is incumbent on all States parties to take bold steps to accomplish that goal in good faith and with the necessary level of ambition and resolve.

Of course, your review of the status of the 2010 action plan must also consider the other challenges facing the regime.

The facilitator and conveners have continued their efforts with determination for the convening of the Helsinki Conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction. Those efforts have greatly
benefitted in recent months from the constructive engagement of the States of the region in the series of multilateral consultations convened in Glion. As we work to build on the gains we have made, I continue to hope that the Conference will be convened as soon as possible in 2014. Naturally, I expect this issue will continue to be a high priority for States parties.

We have not seen any progress at all towards the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. Instead, we have witnessed more threats by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea to conduct further nuclear tests and its ballistic missile launches prompted a response by the Security Council.

We continue to see reports that certain States outside the NPT are building up their nuclear forces and fissile material stockpiles without restriction.

At the same time, on other challenges we have seen promising signs of progress. In that connection, I hope that the E3+3 and the Islamic Republic of Iran will be able to reach agreement within the next few months which restores confidence in the peaceful nature of Iran’s nuclear programme and provides the international community with necessary assurances.

I wish you all the best as you take stock of the current state of the regime and discuss the way forward for the full implementation of the NPT.

Thank you.