Statement by

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On behalf of the New Agenda Coalition

at the

3rd Session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

General Debate

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Mr. Chair,

I have the honour to take the floor on behalf of the members of the New Agenda Coalition (NAC): Brazil, Egypt, Mexico, New Zealand, South Africa and my own country, Ireland. At the outset, the NAC wishes to congratulate you on your assumption of the position of Chair of the third session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2015 Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to assure you of the full support and cooperation of the NAC during your term.

Mr. Chair,

The NPT was concluded almost half a century ago in the full knowledge of “the devastation that would be visited upon all mankind by a nuclear war and the consequent need to make every effort to avert the danger of such a war and to take measures to safeguard the security of peoples.” The risk that a nuclear weapon will detonate, whether by accident, miscalculation or design will persist as long as these weapons persist. That threat of devastation is what inspired our Foreign Ministers to found the New Agenda Coalition in 1998 and it is what continues to inspire the NAC to champion the cause of nuclear disarmament.

The NPT is the foundation of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime and a crucial component of global security regime. The central premise upon which the NPT was created is that nuclear weapons states legally committed themselves to nuclear disarmament in return for which non-nuclear weapon states legally committed themselves not to develop nuclear weapons; all States Parties also affirmed the inalienable right to pursue the peaceful application of nuclear energy.

In describing the NPT as a foundation, the NAC pauses to consider what has been built upon this foundation? The nuclear non-proliferation pillar of the Treaty has succeeded in limiting the horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons, non-proliferation provisions and obligations under the Treaty have been strengthened. Looking at the nuclear disarmament pillar, one must ask what has been accomplished to fulfil the disarmament provisions and obligations?

In 2010, the Review Conference expressed “deep concern at the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons” and reaffirmed “the need for all States at all time to comply with applicable international law, including international humanitarian law.” Since the Review Conference, a growing number of States have highlighted their concern in various fora, including the previous sessions of this Preparatory Committee and in the General Assembly.

In February this year, Mexico hosted the Second International Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons which aimed at further developing awareness and understanding of the catastrophic consequences of the use of nuclear weapons. That Conference, building upon the Conference hosted by Norway last year, demonstrated that no State, nor group of States, nor international agency could adequately respond to a nuclear weapon detonation, however it occurred. It was also made clear from research findings to date that the risk of a detonation occurring is far greater than had previously been perceived. We welcome the conference to be hosted by Austria later this year.
Given the scale of devastation that nuclear weapons are designed to inflict, that their consequences cannot be constrained within borders, the continued reliance upon them in security doctrines and concepts is unacceptable. It is all too obvious that security reasons are foremost among the motivations cited by those who aspire to acquire such weapons. Security reasons are therefore, in effect, an unintended invitation to proliferate. The NAC cannot but agree with the remark of the UN Secretary General at the beginning of last year that “there are no right hands for wrong weapons”, simply because the now proven risks associated with them are too great. Indeed, it is clear that the world has come far closer to a nuclear detonation than was previously known or believed. It is very evident to the NAC, and we believe to the overwhelming majority of States, that - as long as these weapons exist - the possibility of a detonation will remain. And so the only guarantee that this will not happen is the complete elimination of nuclear weapons.

Since the last meeting of the Preparatory Committee, there have been a number of developments which have clearly demonstrated the growing desire of the overwhelming majority of States for real and substantial progress on nuclear disarmament as most recently demonstrated at the conference in Nayarit. Just after the second session of this Preparatory Committee, the Open Ended Working Group to Take Forward Multilateral Nuclear Disarmament negotiations started its work. Some months later, the High Level Meeting on Nuclear Disarmament took place here in New York and was addressed at senior political level by many states. It is the view of the New Agenda Coalition that both of these meetings, which were mandated by overwhelming majorities in the General Assembly, are not just demonstrations of a desire for progress on nuclear disarmament but are supportive of the NPT and made positive contributions to our collective aim in this forum of delivering on the promise of the NPT: a world free of nuclear weapons.

In the founding declaration of the Foreign Ministers of the New Agenda Coalition in 1998, our Ministers maintained that the world could no longer remain complacent at the reluctance of the nuclear weapon states to take the fundamental and requisite step, to make a clear commitment to the swift and total elimination of their nuclear weapons and nuclear weapons capability. At the 2000 Review Conference, the nuclear weapons gave an unequivocal undertaking to “accomplish the total elimination of nuclear arsenals” which was reaffirmed by them in 2010.

The NAC would like to recall that the conclusions and recommendations for follow-on actions which were agreed by consensus included concrete steps for the total elimination of nuclear weapons that built on the practical steps agreed at the 2000 Review Conference. We recall that the 2010 Action Plan recommitted the NWS to accelerate progress on the steps agreed in 1995 and 2000 to advance the implementation of Article VI. As part of the 2010 Action Plan on nuclear disarmament all states parties committed to apply the principles of irreversibility, verifiability and transparency in relation to the implementation of their Treaty obligations. Irreversibility is a cardinal principle of the nuclear disarmament process which can only be guaranteed through the strict and transparent implementation of relevant legal and technical commitments.

We await the reports of the nuclear weapon states to this session on progress made with regard to their undertakings under Action 5 of the Action Plan. As the NAC noted in our Working Paper on the application of the principle of transparency to nuclear disarmament to the second session of the Prep Com, transparency has become closely associated with
accountability. Actions related to transparency are not only central for the credibility of any disarmament measures but also to measure compliance with the Treaty. We shall read these reports with interest in order to better enable us to take stock and consider next steps for the full implementation of Article VI.

Mr. Chair,

Pending the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, the NAC believes that nuclear weapon free zones make a valuable contribution to enhancing global and regional peace and security. While we are pleased that the majority of the world’s States are parties to such zones, the NAC emphasises the importance of the establishment of nuclear weapon free zones in areas where they do not exist, in particular in the Middle East.

In this context, we note all efforts aimed at advancing the goal of establishing a Middle East free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, including the Egyptian initiative of 28 September 2013 in this regard.

It is beyond doubt that the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East would provide benefits for the region but also more broadly. Though it is an integral element of the outcome of the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference, the Resolution on the Middle East remains unfulfilled. It is a matter of serious concern to the NAC that the Middle East Zone has yet to be established. It is crucial that a date in 2014 be fixed for the holding of the Conference, postponed since 2012, on the establishment of the Zone.

Mr. Chair,

The 2010 Review Conference affirmed the vital importance of the universality of the Treaty and called upon all States to promote universal adherence and not to undertake any activity that could negatively affect the prospects for universality of the Treaty. The NAC urges India, Israel and Pakistan to join the NPT as non-nuclear weapon states promptly and without conditions and we look forward to the accession of South Sudan as early as possible. Furthermore, The NAC urges the DPRK to verifiably dismantle any nuclear weapons, to return to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) without delay and to place all its facilities under comprehensive International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) verification.

Mr. Chair,

The 2015 Review Conference will mark twenty years since the indefinite extension of the Treaty. The presumption of indefinite possession can no longer go unchallenged, and we can no longer afford a selective approach to the implementation of the NPT’s provisions. Such an approach undermines the regime and serves to reinforce inequalities under the Treaty. We believe that the NPT must be fully implemented and strengthened. Challenges which are facing this Treaty at present can only be resolved with common purpose and through concrete action.

All States Parties must seize the opportunity of this PrepCom to begin work in earnest on the construction of a comprehensive legally-binding framework of mutually reinforcing instruments for the achievement and maintenance of a world without nuclear weapons. Such a framework should include clearly defined benchmarks, timelines, and be backed by a strong system of verification. We agree with the UN Secretary General that the time has come to strengthen the rule of law in this area, the commitment to undertake disarmament
negotiations in good faith must be honoured. Given the threat posed to all of humanity by these instruments of mass annihilation, it is time for us to act now.