Statement on behalf of the Group of Non-Governmental Experts from Countries Belonging to the New Agenda Coalition (NAC-NGO Group): Summary

Delivered to the Third Preparatory Committee for the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), 28 April – 9 May 2014 in New York

29 April 2014

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Introduction:
I am speaking on behalf of a Group of non-governmental experts from New Agenda Coalition countries (NAC) including the Egyptian Council for Foreign Affairs; Pax Christi - Ireland; the Mexican Council on Foreign Relations; the New Zealand-based Peace Foundation Disarmament and Security Centre; and the South Africa-based Institute for Security Studies.

The Importance of the NPT:
While the NAC-NGO Group continues to strongly believe (as many of us in this room do) in the importance of the three pillars of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), we also concede (and call on others to openly recognise) the NPT’s failure to make significant progress towards achieving all of its objectives. The current discourse on the catastrophic humanitarian impact of nuclear detonations, highlights the vital importance to humanity of the NPT’s goals to achieve complete nuclear disarmament, prevent proliferation, and ensure that nuclear technology is only used for peaceful purposes.

The obligation to pursue in “good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects” has not been achieved. Indeed, many of the agreements reached in 1995 which led to the NPT’s extension have also not been met – including and importantly, the resolution on the Middle East.

While the 2010 Review Conference, through the adoption of an action plan by unanimous consensus, provided some hope to us all, many of us were also fully aware that its true success could only be measured through the full implementation of all the obligations and commitments
agreed to. This is true for the 2010 Review Conference as much as it is for all previous review conferences.

**The Resolution on the Middle East:**

The fact that the Helsinki process has not yielded any significant results is not only sad but in many senses unacceptable. Unacceptable because despite arduous negotiations during the 2010 Review Cycle between concerned delegations particularly the Egyptian and US delegations and the appointment of a facilitator by the UN Secretary General, the holding of the first conference was called off. To exacerbate this, despite the adoption by the UN General Assembly on 5 December 2013 of a resolution (A/RES/68/39) calling on the UN Secretary General and the Co-sponsors to convene such a conference, no new date has as yet been set.

We need to therefore ask ourselves are we preparing for the failure of this review cycle?

**Positive Developments since 2010:**

Having said that, there is also little doubt that there have been many positive developments since 2010. I will not repeat all of these here, but they include amongst others:

i. The establishment and subsequent report of the open-ended working group “to develop proposals to take forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations for the achievement and maintenance of a world without nuclear weapons”;  

ii. The convening of the High-Level Meeting of the UN General Assembly on Nuclear Disarmament on 26 September 2013, which expressed support for a comprehensive convention on nuclear weapons that would “remove the scourge of these weapons of terror once and for all”;  

iii. The Nuclear Security Summit process, while not being a perfect methodology, which has managed to place the issue of preventing nuclear material from falling into unauthorised hands on the highest possible diplomatic and political agenda of many States;  

iv. The recognition by a majority of States – both NPT and non-NPT States Parties – and civil society, that the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons detonations is a fundamental and global concern and is one that ought to be at the core of all deliberations on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation;
v. The Inter-Parliamentary Union, representing 164 parliaments including those of most of the nuclear-armed States, adopting a resolution by consensus calling for the elimination of the role of nuclear weapons in security doctrines and the start of negotiations on a nuclear weapons convention or package of agreements; and finally,

vi. The on-going work by various civil society groups all over the world – some engaged in cutting-edge research, others in advocacy such as Abolition 2000, ICAN and Global Zero as well as groups that interact with parliamentarians and mayors such as Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament and Mayors for Peace.

Remaining Challenges:
As NGOs with constituencies that overlap with those of our governmental representatives, we can no longer in all good conscience continue to laud these achievements in isolation from the many challenges that remain – including, inter alia:

i. The general terms of Article VI of the NPT being interpreted by Nuclear Weapon States (NWS) as not binding them to any specific timeframe to undertake their obligations under the Treaty;

ii. The lack of a Programme of Work in the Conference on Disarmament (CD) despite the many calls (nay pleas) from States both within and external to that body and global civil society;

iii. The non-attendance of the Nuclear Weapons States (NWS) at the 2013 Norway and 2014 Mexico conferences on the potential humanitarian impacts of nuclear weapon detonations - exacerbated by their dismissive statements that these meetings and discussions are mere distractions from existing non-proliferation initiatives;

iv. The fact that despite the rhetoric emanating from the remaining countries whose ratifications are required for the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty to enter into force, very few have actually done so.

Conclusion:
i. We thus share the conviction that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only guarantee against the use or threat of use of such weapons either by States or non-States;

ii. We join the participants of both the Oslo and Nayarit conferences on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, in expressing our deep concern that the effect of a nuclear detonation would be far-reaching - going beyond national borders, causing indiscriminate human suffering, profoundly affecting socio-economic development and negatively impacting on our sensitive environment;

iii. While we concur with the outcome of the Nuclear Security Summit in Den Hague, in calling for greater international co-operation in preventing the unauthorised access to nuclear and radiological material by criminals and other non-state actors, we also must agree with the Joint Statement issued by Algeria, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Egypt, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Philippines, Singapore, South Africa, Ukraine and Vietnam, at that Summit that, ‘only the complete, verifiable and irreversible elimination of all nuclear weapons could offer the international community a long-standing and sustainable solution for the provision of larger security in the nuclear field’.

As such and to avoid failure:

i. We thus support, in particular, the proposal for a legally binding instrument to prohibit and eliminate nuclear weapons (Nuclear Weapons Convention), which would enable full implementation of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation obligations of the NPT – this approach would strengthen and supplement the NPT, and not undermine it;

ii. The various nuclear disarmament programmes of action submitted to the Conference on Disarmament (CD) over the years by the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) should be revisited – including those proposed in 1996 and 2010 – as well as the numerous propositions put forward by the New Agenda Coalition (NAC) in various relevant fora;

iii. We commend the Nuclear Security Summit process as an example of the high level commitment required to enhance and sustain the momentum towards the achievement of a nuclear-weapons-free world;

iv. And therefore propose that leaders of Nuclear Weapon States join with leaders of Non-Nuclear Weapon States in a series of Nuclear Disarmament Summits with the aim of
achieving and implementing a global agreement or package of agreements to prohibit and eliminate nuclear weapons;

v. With reference to the P5+1 discussions and negotiations regarding elements of a comprehensive agreement on Iran's nuclear programme, a clear linkage between this initiative and the process to achieve a WMD-free zone in the Middle East, should be made so that the realisation of a regional zone free of weapons of mass destruction can move forward in a more holistic and integrated manner. In addition, we call on the P5+1 to provide formal and consistent feedback on the progress being made in the negotiations to all countries of that region.

vi. Finally, we appreciate and fully support the New Agenda Coalition (NAC) as a champion of nuclear disarmament and therefore commend to all NPT States Parties, nuclear armed states outside of the NPT as well as global civil society, NAC’s working papers to the 2014 NPT Preparatory Committee meeting on nuclear disarmament, humanitarian consequences and the fulfilment of Article VI of the NPT.

Thank you.