Statement by

H.E. Ms. Patricia O’Brien
Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Ireland
to the United Nations, Geneva

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

Cluster 1

New York, 30 April 2014

Check against delivery
3rd Session of the
Preparatory Committee for the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on
the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
Cluster I
Statement by H.E. Ms. Patricia O’Brien,
Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations Geneva
On behalf of the New Agenda Coalition

Mr. Chair,

I have the honour to take the floor once again on behalf of Brazil, Egypt, Mexico, New Zealand,
South Africa and my own country, Ireland, as the New Agenda Coalition.

Mr. Chair,

In 1998, when the New Agenda Coalition was launched, the Foreign Ministers of the NAC were
motivated to press for greater progress on nuclear disarmament by (quote): “the continued threat
to humanity represented by the perspective of the indefinite possession of nuclear weapons by
the nuclear-weapon States, as well as by those three nuclear-weapons-capable States that have
not acceded to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, and the attendant possibility of use or threat of use
of nuclear weapons.” In establishing the NAC, our countries were insistent that, having been
freely entered into, existing treaty rules, specifically Article VI of the NPT, must be honoured.
The bargain at the heart of the NPT compact is not being honoured. Yet the risks persist, risks
that are common both to all of us individually and, collectively, to all of the Governments
represented at the UN.

Mr. Chair,

NAC’s agenda was and remains very clear. It is a fact that the only absolute guarantee that
nuclear weapons will never be used again - and that their catastrophic humanitarian impacts will
never be experienced again by innocent civilians - is through the total elimination of these
weapons and the assurance that they will never be produced again. This requires a legally
binding framework of “effective measures”. Article VI specifically demands this.

The New Agenda Coalition asserts that the key to maintaining the integrity and sustainability of
the global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime is through the elaboration of a
multilateral “comprehensive and legally binding framework committing all States to a world free
of nuclear weapons, ... implemented in an unconditional manner and backed by clearly defined
timelines and benchmarks”.

Mr. Chair,

At this Preparatory Committee meeting, it is Ireland's privilege now to present on behalf of the New Agenda Coalition our working paper entitled “Article VI designed to help assess the practical options suggested in the wider discourse on nuclear disarmament as potential "effective measures" for the completion and fulfilment of Article VI. This builds upon the NAC’s working paper submitted to the Open Ended Working Group to take forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations.

The available options must all be explored and tested against the requirements of Article VI. These include a comprehensive Nuclear Weapons Convention, a Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty, a framework arrangement of mutually reinforcing instruments which would establish the key prohibitions and obligations essential for the achievement and maintenance of a world without nuclear weapons, and any hybrid arrangement of provisions which would achieve the same ends.

It is for all States to consider options that meet Article VI’s demand for effective measures.

Looking briefly at the models suggested in our working paper, a comprehensive Nuclear Weapons Convention would offer the certainty and predictability of a detailed framework model for WMD elimination with which we are already familiar. A Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty, by leaving space for the subsequent elaboration of the detailed verification and other necessary technical arrangements on a case-by-case basis, would seem to offer a flexible model for the subsequent accession of weapons-possessing States on terms they could negotiate with the Ban Treaty organisation. A framework model would offer a basis for the assembly of mutually reinforcing measures to complete a framework for the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons. A hybrid model would offer a basis for exploring how constituent elements of these and perhaps other options suggested might be utilised to achieve the same ends.

There is no requirement in Article VI that "effective measures" for the fulfilment of that Article be situated within the NPT, which means that all States, NPT and non-NPT States alike, could engage with and join the "effective measures".

Mr. Chair,

Concerns about the catastrophic humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons have been with us since the first use of these weapons. These concerns were a motivating factor in establishing the NPT; they remain a motivating factor in insisting that its provisions are implemented in full. Since the first meeting of this Preparatory Committee of this review cycle of the NPT in Vienna two years ago, States have been presented with a growing body of cogent and compelling evidence of the scale of devastation that would be unleashed by a nuclear weapon detonation, regardless of the circumstances of the detonation. This includes evidence presented by experts at two International Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons in Oslo last year and again at Nayarit earlier this year, to which all States were invited, and the living and graphic testimony of several survivors of the devastating explosions at Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945.

The NAC is pleased to present its working paper entitled “Humanitarian Consequences of Nuclear Weapons: Known Risks and Consequences”. In this paper the NAC shows that evidence has pointed to a pronounced lack of capacity within States and international
organisations to react in any meaningful way to the immediate aftermath of a detonation, such
that States would be completely overwhelmed and rendered incapable of assisting their own
citizens. It has thrown further light on the calamitous longer-term trans-boundary consequences
of a detonation - for human health and survival, for agriculture and food production, for our
environment and ecosystems, and for the socio-economic development of nations and our
economies. It has reminded States that quite aside from the possibility of an intentional
detonation there remains an ever present risk of a detonation through accident, miscalculation or
error given the inherent fallibility of any system put in place to manage nuclear weapons. As
long as these weapons exist, so too exists the possibility of an unintended detonation.

Mr. Chair,

The NAC’s third working paper entitled “Nuclear Disarmament” demonstrates that the present
stalled pace of nuclear disarmament is placing the NPT under increasing and intolerable
pressure. An approach which presses the Treaty’s non-proliferation agenda with vigour and
urgency while persistently failing to establish a functioning framework for complete nuclear
disarmament, as agreed, adds to this pressure. This is not helped by defence doctrines that
suggest that nuclear-weapon States and nuclear alliance States are entitled to retain and/or rely
upon what is described as a “credible” or “minimum” deterrent nuclear weapons capability as a
necessary means of ensuring their security, potentially in perpetuity. Nor is it helped by
"strategic context" claims that international security conditions are not at present conducive to a
world without nuclear weapons. The situation is further exacerbated by ongoing nuclear weapons
modernisation programmes (amounting to a de facto qualitative nuclear arms race) and by the
continued forward deployment of nuclear weapons on the territory of non-nuclear-weapon
States.

The 2010 Review Conference re-emphasized the commitment to apply the principles of
irreversibility, verifiability and transparency in relation to nuclear disarmament measures.
Through action 5 nuclear-weapon States provided undertakings to take specific measures on
nuclear disarmament. The New Agenda Coalition looks forward to reading the reports on these
undertakings when all are made available.

The New Agenda Coalition sees a direct causal link between the retention of nuclear weapons
and possible attempts to acquire them. The dynamic of an arms race has always been that
possession provides the incentive for acquisition; proliferation only begets further proliferation.

Mr. Chair,

States would do well to avail themselves of the benefit of civil society and academic expertise in
nuclear disarmament discussions. The excellent and thought provoking presentations during the
civil society segment of this meeting remind us, yet again, of the strong contribution they make.
The NAC would like to see earlier, more systematic and better engagement by States with civil
society on disarmament issues.
Mr. Chair

States know and cannot ignore the consequences and ever-present and increasing risks of continued collective inaction on nuclear disarmament. A status quo built on heightened risks and consequences is just not acceptable. This raises important and unavoidable policy choices for all States. The NAC submits its working papers to assist States in their consideration of this issue. We would expect, Mr. Chair, that our contributions to this Preparatory Committee meeting will be appropriately reflected in its outcome.

Thank you.