Statement

by Susanne Baumann,

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and

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at the First Session of the Preparatory Committee for the
2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the
Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons,

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Mr. Chairman,

At the outset, please let me congratulate you to your election to the Chair and assure you of my delegation’s full support and cooperation. I would also like to align myself with the Statements to be delivered by the European Union and the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative.

As we begin this new Review Cycle with its first Preparatory Committee, we are faced with many challenges to disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation which require swift and determined responses:

We are first and foremost appalled by North Korea’s relentless and illegal quest for nuclear weapons, regardless of the suffering of its population cut off from the outside world, making it one of the biggest proliferation crises that the international community is faced with to date and threatening regional stability and international peace and security. Germany condemns the DPRK’s nuclear and ballistic missile activities in breach of international law in the strongest possible terms and calls upon Pjöngjang to immediately stop its illegal actions and fully comply with its obligations under all relevant UNSC resolutions. Ultimately, a comprehensive solution fully addressing all concerns about the DPRK’s illegal nuclear and ballistic missile activities will require talks about the DPRK’s programmes and should be
fully based on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) as the cornerstone of the international disarmament and non-proliferation architecture. In this context, Germany calls upon all States still outside the NPT to join the Treaty as Non-Nuclear Weapon States.

Mr. Chairman,

The threatening development of North Korea’s nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programmes strongly highlights the fact that nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament do not take place in a security vacuum, but must be assessed in the context of the current security situation. Europe is equally faced with major challenges to its security architecture especially since the illegal annexation of Crimea by Russia and the ongoing conflict in Eastern Ukraine.

Moreover, the ongoing disastrous war in Syria sadly shows that even the long-standing taboo of using Weapons of Mass Destruction as a means of warfare has been repeatedly broken. The international community must make all efforts to hold those responsible for the use of chemical weapons in Syria accountable. In this regard, we fully support the OPCW and the ongoing work of its fact-finding mission as well as the OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism.
Let’s be clear: There is no easy answer as to how to respond to the current major security challenges. With respect to nuclear arms control and non-proliferation, we have even gone through times of intensive debate as to whether nuclear weapons should be prohibited instantly to make this world safer. These issues were also thoroughly discussed in the Open-ended Working Group on Nuclear Disarmament last year in Geneva.

While many NPT members in this room have now embarked on negotiations of a legally-binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, others, like Germany, remain skeptical of such negotiations. We are convinced that concrete nuclear disarmament with real security gains cannot be achieved by negotiating a declaratory nuclear weapons prohibition. Only concrete, verifiable and irreversible nuclear disarmament steps involving the active participation of nuclear weapons’ states can help to achieve the goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world in line with Article VI of the NPT and ultimately make this world a safer place. Germany is fully committed to this goal.

That’s why Germany, together with its partners from the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative (NPDI), remains strongly committed to promote implementation of the 2010 NPT Action Plan and its multiple proposals to advance implementation of the NPT.
Mr. Chairman,

We welcome the steps that have already been taken, in particular the substantial reductions of the global stockpiles of nuclear warheads since the end of the Cold War. However, there are still too many nuclear weapons and much more can be done to increase transparency of the remaining nuclear arsenals. Germany calls for renewed dialogue and understanding between the US and Russia to engage in new disarmament talks, including talks about the future of the New START Treaty. We will host a side-event on the current state of strategic arms control presenting the results of the trilateral US-Russian-German Deep Cuts-Commission this afternoon at 5 pm.

Beyond the need for a continued bilateral disarmament process between the two biggest possessor states, many elements of the 2010 Action Plan can only be implemented through a successful multilateral effort. We want to see the CTBT enter into force. Germany is therefore engaged in the “Friends of the CTBT” which aims at bringing forward speedy entry-into-force of the CTBT.

Negotiations on an FMCT are long overdue. That’s why Germany, together with Canada and the Netherlands, co-sponsored a General Assembly resolution launching a new process of diplomatic efforts towards an FMCT, setting out a high-level FMCT expert preparatory group. Thereby, we aim
to overcome the long stalemate in the CD in Geneva. We feel reassured about our approach by the substantive discussions on the issue which took place in New York in March and would like to encourage all countries to follow the discussions closely. The co-sponsors stand ready to facilitate a continuous and transparent flow of information on the issue.

Moreover, a robust and credible verification regime of concrete nuclear disarmament measures which would help to establish confidence is needed. This includes our active role in the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification Initiative (IPNDV). From 6 to 8 March, Germany for the first time hosted a working group meeting of the IPNDV in Berlin.

All of these measures presuppose trust between partners and a cooperative setting based on reciprocity. This is also true with regard to the so-called Negative Security Assurances, which suffered a heavy blow after the breach of the Budapest Memorandum by Russia, which guaranteed the territorial integrity of Ukraine. Germany thinks that we should use this Review Cycle to strengthen existing security guarantees which are meant to protect Non-Nuclear Weapon States. Negative Security Assurances should become part of a binding treaty-regime, and thus contribute even more than today to improving the security environment of an overwhelming majority of countries.
Mr. Chairman,

Germany is convinced that the NPT is a very successful treaty which has strengthened the principle of non-proliferation and prevented many countries from pursuing nuclear options.

The best example is the diplomatic solution agreed between the E3/EU+3 and Iran in July 2015, the JCPoA, which is built on the NPT and its strict verification mechanisms exercised by the IAEA. Germany believes that continued strict implementation of the JCPoA by all parties based on full respect for the NPT is the best way forward to fully addressing the international community’s concerns about the exclusively peaceful nature of the Iranian nuclear programme.

Mr. Chairman,

Turning to the third pillar of the NPT, for Germany it is essential to underline that all three pillars of the Treaty are interrelated and mutually reinforcing. The inalienable right of state parties to the peaceful use of nuclear energy is assured under Art. IV of the NPT and this is a major reason why a functioning Treaty is benefitting all of us. In its essence, the third pillar is a matter of trust. Those who do not opt for the use of nuclear energy must be assured that those who do maintain the highest standards of nuclear safety and security.
Germany commends the IAEA for its crucial and invaluable work regarding the peaceful use of nuclear energy, including through its safeguards-system. Germany is, at present, the fourth largest contributor to the IAEA’s budget and has been operating its IAEA safeguards support programme for more than 35 years. Germany calls upon all States who have not yet done so to adopt the IAEA’s Additional Protocol and on all members to remain committed to the ongoing implementation of safeguards as well as appropriate and effective levels of nuclear safety and security.

Maintaining satisfactory levels of nuclear security is a truly global challenge, because the threat of nuclear terrorism has reached global dimensions. No one should assume that the threat only concerns those who actually use nuclear energy. Terrorism does not respect borders. So-called failed states add to the risks of nuclear materials falling out of regulatory control.

The Nuclear Security Summit process has drawn global attention to these challenges. Germany contributed to the process in the field of improving security of radioactive sources and the protection from cyber attacks against nuclear facilities. Much work needs still to be done. We welcome the IAEA’s readiness to fulfill its central role with respect to nuclear security and hope that the momentum can be maintained also in the NPT context.
Mr. Chairman,

The current challenges to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation might be difficult to address. But they certainly also clarify the areas where the NPT needs strengthening and perhaps reform to become an even more successful international regime. On the basis of this assessment, mindful of the general objectives of the Treaty, the Preparatory Committee should make recommendations on areas where further action is required with a view to turning this new Review Cycle into a success story for the NPT.

The German delegation stands ready to work with all parties to this end.

Thank you.