General statement by the Nordic countries

Preparatory Committee for the 2020 NPT Review Conference.

First session, Vienna, 2-12 May 2017

To be delivered by H.E. Ms. Bente Angell-Hansen, Permanent Representative of Norway to the International Organizations in Vienna

Mr. Chair,

I take the floor on behalf of the Nordic countries - Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Sweden and my own country Norway.

The preparatory process of the NPT 2020 Review Cycle takes place in a particularly challenging international security landscape. We are witnessing the use of weapons of mass destruction. We are confronted by the DPRK carrying out nuclear weapons- and missile tests, thus defying the international community. There is growing concern that nuclear weapons may gain more prominence in security doctrines. Prospects for new arms control achievements are discouraging.

The 2020 Review Conference will commemorate the 50th anniversary of the entry into force of the NPT as well as the indefinite extension of the treaty 25 years ago. The NPT established a fundamental global pact. There can be no doubt that the NPT has served us well. It remains the first line of defense against the spread of nuclear weapons. And it provides the framework for disarmament efforts. We cannot allow failed review conferences to become the pattern. The stakes are too high. We have to join forces to ensure and safeguard the continued relevance of the Treaty.

In March, negotiations on the prohibition of nuclear weapons started in New York. The Nordic countries have different views on this process. Yet, we are at one on the fundamental value of the NPT as a cornerstone for international peace and security. As we embark on a new review cycle, our focus is on what unites us, rather than on what divides us. Only through a constructive exchange of views and dialogue, and seeking to identify points of convergence, may we set the stage for a constructive review cycle.

This Review Cycle should reaffirm the Article VI obligation, as well as the outcome documents of the 1995, 2000 and 2010 review conferences - including the unequivocal undertaking by nuclear weapon states to eliminate their arsenals. We must close any possible proliferation loophole. Furthermore, we must reaffirm the undisputable right for peaceful uses of nuclear technology, in a safe and secure way. The need to implement the treaty and past outcome documents of review conferences particularly applies to the 2010 Action Plan. This document provides a pathway towards fulfilling all three pillars of the NPT:
- Action 1 and Action 2 reaffirm the overall objective of the NPT of achieving a world without nuclear weapons, as well as the principles of irreversibility, verifiability and transparency. A key deliverable would be further reductions in the nuclear arsenals. Unfortunately, prospects are currently not good. The INF Treaty is under pressure. We are deeply concerned about reports on possible non-compliance and encourage the parties to the treaty to make full use of its Verification committee. We consider the New START as an historic achievement, but we regret that it has not proven possible to initiate follow-on talks comprising all categories of nuclear weapons. Evidently, there is a need to restore confidence. Verification may contribute to that end.

- Action 19 of the 2010 plan of Action further calls for improving transparency and verification capabilities related to nuclear disarmament. Against this background, the Nordic countries welcome various initiatives in the field of nuclear disarmament verification, such as the International Partnership on Nuclear Disarmament Verification, which brings together nuclear weapon and non-nuclear weapon states to develop a mechanism for verifiably dismantling nuclear weapons. Other important contributions are the UK-Norway initiative, the recent initiative comprising UK, US, Norway and Sweden - The Quad Nuclear Verification Partnership. The Nordic countries were among the lead sponsors of the General Assembly resolution on Nuclear Disarmament Verification, adopted by an overwhelming majority. It is now vital that this resolution is followed-up, through the contribution by UN Member States on their views on nuclear disarmament verification and the commencement of a Governmental Group of Experts next year. Progress on nuclear disarmament verification would be an important deliverable to the 2020 NPT Review Conference.

- Action 5 of the NPT 2010 outcome document calls for the acceleration of certain concrete steps leading to nuclear disarmament. It calls for further diminishing the role and significance of nuclear weapons in all military and security concepts, doctrines and policies in ways that promote international stability and security. And it calls for further reducing the operational status of nuclear weapons, and reducing the risk of accidental use. The Nordic countries firmly supported the General Assembly resolution together with 170 other UN Member States. The NPT 2010 outcome document expressed its deep concern over the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons. The Nordic countries support a fact based approach to the humanitarian consequences, and some of us have contributed financially to UNIDIR studies on the risk assessment.

- The Nordic countries supported the UN General Assembly resolution setting up the High-Level FMCT Expert Preparatory Group, which will meet in 2017-18 and make recommendations on substantial elements of a future FMCT. We are pleased that a Swedish expert will take part in this Preparatory Group. We welcome the open-ended consultations in New York in early March, which allowed all UN Member States to present their views. From our perspective, it is urgent to negotiate and conclude an FMCT in order to cap any possible nuclear arms race in the future. While we need to set a ban as soon as possible, a future FMCT could also identify ways to include a phased approach on the elimination of existing
stocks. We reiterate the continued relevance of the Shannon mandate, which allows Member States to raise their concerns and priorities in the negotiation process.

- The Nordic countries are firm supporters of the Nuclear Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty. The CTBT is essential to end all nuclear explosive testing, constrain the development and qualitative improvement of nuclear weapons, and end the development of advanced new types of nuclear weapons. We urge all annex II countries to ratify this treaty as soon as possible and call upon them to refrain from any action that can undermine the Treaty. While the CTBT has not formally entered into force, it has already established a fundamental norm. Pending the Treaty’s entry into force, it is vital to complete the International Monitoring System, which has demonstrated its benefit on several occasions.

- The Nordic countries firmly condemn the nuclear tests carried out by the DPRK, which remains a serious challenge to the international nuclear non-proliferation regime. The DPRK must comply with its NPT obligation and allow for the return of IAEA inspectors and the introduction of IAEA safeguards.

- The Nordic countries attach great importance to the establishment of zones free of nuclear weapons on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among States of the region concerned, and on the basis of 1999 Guidelines of the United Nations Disarmament Commission. We regret that it was not possible to convene the 2012 Helsinki Conference for a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery. We reiterate the validity of the resolutions adopted in the NPT in 1995 and 2010. Nuclear weapons free zones provide an avenue for legally binding negative security assurances. The Nordic countries are ready to engage in exploring the legitimate interest of non-nuclear-weapons States in receiving unequivocal and legally binding security assurances. Progress in this area would clearly demonstrate the reduced role of nuclear weapons in security doctrines and policies.

- The JCPOA shows that it is possible to achieve important results, even when the point of departure is difficult. The Nordic countries provided practical and financial support for its implementation. The Nordic countries highly value the IAEA’s role in monitoring and verifying the implementation of Iran’s nuclear-related commitments. It is now essential that all parties live up to their commitments and obligations, while acting in a way that builds mutual confidence. This may potentially facilitate the efforts to make progress with the Middle East zone, while at the same time further strengthen the global non-proliferation regime.

- A credible non-proliferation regime is a pre-condition to achieve and maintain a world without nuclear arms. Safeguards will play a decisive role. From the perspective of the Nordic countries the IAEA Safeguards agreements together with the Additional Protocol constitute the current verification standard. Only with an Additional Protocol in force, is the IAEA in a position to conclude that all declared and undeclared nuclear activities in a given country are
for peaceful purposes only. The conclusion and full implementation of the obligations contained in the Additional Protocol are in the interest of our collective security, as well as each State party individually. Through the Additional Protocol, a State Party improves confidence in the peaceful nature of its nuclear activities and is therefore much better placed to reap the benefits of article IV of the NPT.

- The Nordic countries have different approaches to nuclear energy. Yet, we recognize that peaceful applications of nuclear technologies go far beyond mere generation of nuclear power. Isotopes are crucial in sectors such as health, food productions, water management, environmental monitoring and cultural preservation. We share the view that nuclear safety and security are essential, including as enablers of peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

Most of the Nordic countries have taken an active part in the Nuclear Security summits. At the last Summit in Washington in 2016, we made individual pledges such as working towards minimizing the use of HEU in the civilian sector and enhancing the Nuclear Detection Architecture. We also have long-standing technical cooperation with several countries on both nuclear safety and security. It is crucial that all states must work and act together to eliminate the threat of nuclear terrorism. The Nordic countries are active participants and contributors to several international initiatives to prevent nuclear terrorism. Finland hosted a plenary of the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism (GICNT) in 2015 and has now presented a candidate for the policy coordinator of the initiative. We are committed to continuing our efforts for enhancing nuclear security.

The IAEA is indispensable in upholding the non-proliferation regime, it is key contributor for both nuclear security and safety, and it facilitates the peaceful use of nuclear energy and technologies. The IAEA can also contribute to nuclear disarmament verification in accordance with its Statutes. The IAEA contributes both to global security and in reaching the sustainable development goals. We must provide the IAEA with the necessary political and financial support in order to let the Agency carry out its mandate.

To conclude Mr. Chair, the NPT is vital for our security and well-being. We now have an opportunity to reaffirm the vitality and relevance of this treaty. Let us seize it by focusing on what unites us.