STATEMENT

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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

Vienna, May 2, 2017
Mr. Chairman,

Colleagues,

We are starting the next NPT review cycle in rather difficult circumstances. The Treaty is still facing serious challenges. Of course there were problems before but in recent years they have become particularly visible. We observe the increasing radicalization of approaches to nuclear disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation and even to peaceful uses of nuclear energy. NPT-relevant issues are being discussed at alternative fora with work there arranged not on the basis of mutually respectful dialogue and the rule of consensus as it is the case in the framework of the NPT, but on simple voting. The current situation does not contribute to the integrity and viability of the Treaty which makes us look into its future with concern.

Nevertheless, the NPT which will mark its fiftieth anniversary next year continues to be a pillar of the global strategic stability. It deserves to be titled the cornerstone of the modern system of international security. The “founding fathers” of the Treaty managed to find such solutions that have been repeatedly tested and they still ensure an effective response to modern challenges. The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on the Iranian nuclear programme clearly confirms that. The agreement was reached mostly thanks to the fact that it is based on the NPT and the balance of rights and obligations stipulated in it.

The strengthening of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime has always been one of the priorities of the Russian foreign policy.

A balanced approach of the NPT States Parties to all its three pillars — prevention of nuclear proliferation, peaceful uses of nuclear energy and nuclear disarmament — is the pledge of its long term effective functioning. Unfortunately, in recent years this balance has been disturbed. In the framework of review cycles, disarmament aspects are prioritized while issues of non-proliferation and peaceful uses of nuclear energy are being pushed to the sidelines. It is high time to address this imbalance.
We would like first of all to highlight the peaceful uses, especially since it has become a tradition to start a review cycle in Vienna, where the IAEA headquarters are located. According to its Statute, the objective of the Agency is to accelerate and enlarge the contribution of atomic energy to peace, health and prosperity throughout the world. Russia not only in words but also in deeds consistently supports the IAEA efforts in this field. The Agency’s unique experience and best practices, as well as the unprecedented results make it the most influential platform in the area of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. We attach particular importance to further strengthening the potential of the Agency by providing necessary expertise and material resources to it. On our part, we do a lot in that regard. We support the broad access of the NPT States Parties to the benefits of peaceful uses.

Mr. Chairman,

Full-fledged development of nuclear energy is impossible without a reliable nuclear non-proliferation regime. Its effective implementation is ensured by the IAEA safeguards system. The efforts to improve the IAEA safeguards system should be arranged in such a way that it remains impartial, technically credible, non-politicized and based on rights and obligations of the parties under their safeguards agreements.

The development of new approaches to apply the IAEA safeguards should be transparent. Political decisions on the IAEA safeguards, including amendments to their implementation, should be adopted by the IAEA Policy-Making organs – the General Conference and the Board of Governors. Development and implementation of new approaches behind the scenes is unacceptable.

Mr. Chairman,

The establishment of a zone free of nuclear and all other weapons of mass destruction (WMDFZ) in the Middle East remains among the central issues of the review process. Despite the pause after the 2015 Review Conference, this objective is still on the international agenda. It is evident that as 2020 approaches, the situation around the
WMDFZ will be more heated. It is in our common interests to achieve progress in this area well in advance, preventing this issue from coming to the boiling point.

Convening a conference on the WMDFZ remains an urgent and achievable objective in the context of implementing the 1995 Resolution on the Middle East. Preparation for this event, including achieving the agreement on all organizational modalities and substantive issues should be started as soon as possible. Russia as one of the co-sponsors of the 1995 Resolution is willing to fully support this process.

We would like to highlight the 50-year-experience of the operation of the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (the Treaty of Tlatelolco), which has rigorously proven its viability and effectiveness and contributed significantly to the establishment around the world of NWFZs that today unite over 100 countries. It is critical to finalize international legal status of the Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia through ratification of the Protocol to the relevant Treaty by all nuclear weapon States. Russia has already done so.

Twenty years have passed since the opening of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) for signature. However, despite all the efforts, the Treaty failed to enter into force.

We call upon the United States and other States key for the CTBT's entry into force to make every effort to urgently become Parties to the CTBT. It is in your hands to finally make this crucial Treaty fully operational.

Mr. Chairman,

At NPT-related events, we often hear claims that nuclear disarmament is at a stalemate and even does not exist anymore. This is totally wrong. In fact, over the last thirty years an immense progress has been achieved in this area. Concerted actions of Russia and the United States helped to overcome at least 80% of the path towards a nuclear weapon free world. This is proved by objective statistics that we have voiced on numerous occasions at international fora. Such impressive results have required
efforts of thousands of experts and billions in expenditure. And it is impertinent to ignore it for the sake of propaganda.

Despite the fact that international climate could be more favorable, Russia continues to take specific measures to reduce its nuclear arsenals. The implementation of the 2010 START Treaty goes as planned. We intend to reach the agreed levels by February 5, 2018.

Many NPT Parties are tempted to reach complete nuclear disarmament overnight. While understanding the motivation that pushed them to start negotiating the prohibition of nuclear weapons, we believe they took the wrong path that endangers the viability of the NPT regime. We know that the sponsors of the negotiation process have different opinion and expect that a nuclear weapons ban treaty would complement or even strengthen the Non-Proliferation Treaty. We cannot accept this logic. We will explain our position during the current session of the Preparatory Committee within the nuclear disarmament cluster.

Mr. Chairman,

Despite a whole range of NPT-related problems, there are still indisputable achievements. First and foremost - the JCPOA. This instrument might be imperfect. It is however a balanced and a very fragile compromise that needs to be treated in a very delicate manner. Enough time has passed to declare with certainty that the deal is effective and fulfills its mandate. Iran strictly abides by its commitments which is regularly confirmed by the IAEA. All elements of the JCPOA have already become fully adjusted to each other and enjoy growing trust of the international community. We encourage all, first and foremost the participants of the JCPOA, to do their utmost to meet the aspirations of the international community in terms of keeping for a long term this symbol of successful diplomacy that has proven that NPT-based negotiations could solve any complex issue.

Mr. Chairman,
This review process will be complicated. We stand ready to support you and to do our best to bring our difficult though necessary work to a success. We call upon all the delegations to cooperate in a constructive and pragmatic way.

Thank you.