NPT Prep Com 2017 – General Debate – Statement by Sweden

Mr Chairman,

Let me congratulate you on assuming the important task of chairing the first Prep Com of a new Review Cycle. I assure you of the full cooperation of the Swedish delegation.

Sweden fully subscribes to the statement by the European Union, as well as the statement made on behalf of the Nordic countries. We are also part of the Vienna Group of Ten. I will now make some additional points from a national perspective.

2020 marks the 50th anniversary of the NPT, a fitting occasion to take stock but also to pave the way for further progress. The stakes have rarely been higher. Challenges abound, the situation regarding the DPRK the most imminent among them.

Mr Chairman,

The backdrop to this meeting is a security environment which continues to deteriorate. The risk that nuclear weapons might actually be used – intentionally or not, with attendant catastrophic humanitarian consequences – is part of this global security challenge.

Disarmament and non-proliferation diplomacy now has to be conducted with a very clear sense of urgency. This Review Cycle is an opportunity we cannot afford to lose. Our overall aim must be not only to preserve, but to strengthen the NPT as the indispensable cornerstone of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

Mr Chairman,

We do not start from scratch. Over the years, the treaty has been reinforced by commitments made at the Review Conferences, most notably in 1995, in 2000 and in 2010. It is more essential than ever that commitments on all three pillars are upheld and implemented through concrete action by all States.

Progress will not be possible unless it is broadly perceived as balanced. The basic logic at the very heart of the NPT continues to apply: the mutually reinforcing
dynamic between the pillars. That will certainly be the approach of Sweden in this Review Cycle.

With this in mind, steps towards nuclear disarmament are essential. That is why the prevailing trend – an apparent renaissance for nuclear weapons – is so disconcerting, removing us further from the achievement of a world without nuclear weapons. We call on the nuclear weapon possessing states to make further deep reductions in their arsenals of nuclear weapons, strategic and non-strategic, deployed and non-deployed. In particular, we strongly encourage the United States and Russia to take the lead by undertaking further cuts, building on progress achieved under New START. In this context, Sweden also recalls the importance of full compliance with the INF Treaty.

Constructive P5 engagement on NPT-related issues, including on commitments made in the 2010 Action Plan, will greatly enhance the prospects for a successful review cycle.

Mr. Chairman,

A month ago in New York, negotiations on a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons were initiated. Deeply concerned with the lack of progress on nuclear disarmament, and motivated by a willingness to explore avenues which could lead to concrete progress, Sweden is actively participating in this process. The purpose is clearly not to replace or undermine the NPT, but to facilitate fulfillment of commitments flowing from Article VI of the Treaty.

In the current security climate, risk reduction should be prominent on our agenda. In collaboration with Global Zero, Sweden and Switzerland will host a side-event on this topic on Friday 5 May. Let me also highlight the relevance of de-alerting – a concept supported by 175 UN members of the current session of the UN General Assembly, which calls for nuclear weapon states to abandon high alert levels.

There is no shortage of issues which best can be described as long overdue. The entry-into-force of the CTBT, is one of them. Another issue more than ripe for action, relevant both for disarmament and non-proliferation, is the Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty. Sweden is looking forward to participate in the high-level expert preparatory group which hopefully can pave the way for actual negotiations on an FMCT.
The prospects for this Review Cycle will also be heavily influenced by some key non-proliferation issues. Apart from the DPRK situation, which is deeply worrying, few matters will be more important than the JCPOA. Its full implementation is essential, as is the avoidance of any action undermining mutual trust.

The JCPOA further underlines the crucial role of the IAEA in upholding non-proliferation obligations under the NPT. The Additional Protocol turns 20 this year. It is now high time for all States which have not already done so to conclude an Additional Protocol. Together with the Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement, it constitutes the current verification standard pursuant to Article III of the Treaty.

All Parties to the Treaty are entitled to develop and use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. But safety and security are key. Sweden has extensive cooperation and support to countries on both safety and security. We also wish to underline the important contribution the IAEA makes in advancing Article IV of the NPT.

Mr Chairman,

Delegations at this gathering all bring their unique perspectives on the best way forward for the NPT. Let us work in a spirit of compromise in order to manage the many challenges to a treaty which is so central for our security.

Thank you!