2017 Session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) Review Conference

The Republic of Bulgaria

General Statement

Vienna, 2 May 2017

Mr. Chairman,

Allow me to congratulate you on the assumption of the chairmanship of the first Preparatory Committee for the 2020 NPT Review Conference and to express appreciation for the balanced, objective and inclusive preparation of the session.

Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

I would like to align with the EU statement and to highlight several elements in national capacity.

Let me underline from the outset the paramount importance that the Republic of Bulgaria attributes to the NPT. Together with the rest of the EU Member-States, my country is committed to actively support the full implementation and the universalization of the NPT. It is our deepest conviction that the three pillars of the NPT – nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy are equally important and mutually reinforcing.

Today we all live in a security environment that is increasingly complex and less predictive. In order to address the arising challenges of different nature, the international community is required to continuously promote good will, trust, confidence, multilateralism and respect for the established universal rules. In this context, upholding and strengthening the NPT is a priority of the highest possible value.

Led by these considerations, we call upon all States that have not yet done so, to accede to the NPT as non-nuclear weapon States.

The Republic of Bulgaria remains committed to the noble goal of nuclear disarmament. In our view, the most realistic way to attain effective, verifiable and irreversible nuclear disarmament is through a progressive approach, based on making the steps that are feasible at the moment and subsequently building upon them. It is going to be a long and, often, difficult process. In order to be successful, we should remain reasonable in our immediate objectives, in our estimations and in our perceptions. We should take into account the lessons of the past and be aware that the proper security environment was the key underlying element of every previous advancement in nuclear disarmament. The participation of all states with nuclear weapons and technology is one of the indispensable prerequisites for the success of any endeavour for universal nuclear disarmament that is effective, verifiable and irreversible.
The NPT provides a treaty-level commitment to the elimination of nuclear weapons. It is the solid foundation for all efforts to achieve a nuclear weapon free world. The NPT is the central platform of a well established nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation architecture of legally binding acts, organizations and various other fora. This framework has a long record of tangible achievements. In our opinion, it is wiser to concentrate the efforts of the international community in the consolidation and the re-vitalization of this proven framework, rather than risking its undermining.

When speaking about the feasible steps towards a world free of nuclear weapons, it is worth highlighting some of them.

The Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is another key foundation stone of the future world without nuclear weapons. More than 20 years after its opening for signature, the efforts of the international community are still required for its entry into force. The Republic of Bulgaria, as an Annex II state, is among those who have signed and ratified the Treaty. Once in force, the CTBT will provide a legally binding global ban on nuclear explosions of any kind. This will be a crucial break-through, with numerous positive consequences for the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Therefore, we call upon all States that have not yet done so, to sign and ratify the CTBT without any further delay.

The Republic of Bulgaria strongly supports the conclusion of a Treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices (FMCT). We hope that the work of the high-level FMCT expert preparatory group will enable the Conference on Disarmament (CD) to begin negotiations on this Treaty as soon as possible. This is a logical next step towards universal nuclear disarmament. In the meantime, we call upon all States that have not yet done so, to refrain from the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

The reduction of nuclear weapon stockpiles in unilateral, bilateral or multilateral context, the moratorium on the modernization of existing nuclear weapons, the development of the nuclear disarmament verification capacity are also among the more feasible steps that could be undertaken on the way towards global nuclear disarmament.

The Republic of Bulgaria would like to emphasize the key role that the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) plays with regard to all three NPT pillars. The Agency should remain credible, professional and well-funded in order to be able to perform its duties. As an EU Member-State, the Republic of Bulgaria contributes substantively to this end.

The Republic of Bulgaria is particularly interested to see the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF) preserved. The Treaty is of great importance for the security in Europe and beyond.

The Republic of Bulgaria condemns in the strongest possible terms the nuclear and ballistic missile tests, carried out by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK). These actions are in violation of a number of UN Security Council Resolutions and pose a serious
threat to the peace and security worldwide. We urge the DPRK to stop immediately its provocative actions and to abide by its international obligations.

The Republic of Bulgaria shares the concern over the non-compliance of Syria with its Safeguards Agreement and urges the authorities in Damascus to take immediate steps for adherence to the Additional Protocol.

The Republic of Bulgaria welcomes the progress in the implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) between E3/EU+3 and Iran and would like to stress the need to continue in the same spirit with regard to all aspects of the agreed, including the commitment by Iran to use the nuclear energy solely for peaceful purposes.

Mr. Chairman,

To conclude, I would like to underline the sincere desire of the Republic of Bulgaria for a successful completion of the 2020 NPT Review Cycle and to assure you of our support for your work in this direction.