The NPT and the 2018 United Nations High Level Conference on Nuclear Disarmament

Statement on behalf of UNFOLD ZERO, Parliamentarians for Nuclear Nonproliferation and Disarmament and the Basel Peace Office

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Your Excellencies,

My name is Caroline Leroy, and I am from Brazil, which is a country that chose to overcome regional tensions by entering a cooperation with our neighbour, Argentina to prevent a nuclear arms race in South America. Instead of fostering a regional conflict over the fledgling nuclear weapons programs, we chose to pursue peace instead. Our region has put in place the first nuclear-weapon-free-zone in a populated region through the Treaty of Tlatelolco, which celebrated its 50th anniversary this year.

The motivation for the Treaty of Tlatelolco came from the human and environmental impacts of nuclear tests in the neighbouring North America and the Pacific, and the risks of nuclear war highlighted by the Cuban Missile Crisis.

For the past couple of years, my region has championed both the Humanitarian Initiative for nuclear disarmament, and the resolution of conflicts through international law and common security, such as through the United Nations, rendering reliance on nuclear deterrence to be unnecessary.

I am speaking on behalf of UNFOLD ZERO, a coalition of international organisations which supports United Nations initiatives for nuclear disarmament, and UN approaches to security without reliance on the threat or use of force, as required in the UN Charter.

We have submitted a civil society working paper to the NPT prep Com on The NPT and the 2018 United Nations High Level Conference on Nuclear Disarmament. The working paper is a result of a series of consultations and public meetings in UN centres and key capitals around the world.

UN High Level Conferences are opportunities to make progress on key global issues. In the past few years, very successful High Level Conferences have been held on sustainable development which achieved agreement on 17 Sustainable Development Goals, climate change which
achieved the Paris Agreement and *refugees and Migrants* which achieved the New York Declaration.

We call on governments to join civil society to make the 2018 Nations High Level Conference on Nuclear Disarmament a success.

The conference provides a perfect opportunity to bridge the divides between non-nuclear States and nuclear reliant States, and between NPT members and non-members, in order to make progress on nuclear non-proliferation, risk reduction and disarmament.

The conference could utilize the Gift Basket approach, which has been so successful in the Nuclear Security Summits, to make progress on a range of issues and initiatives without having to achieve consensus and without having to force a divisive vote.

The NPT process will not make substantive decisions until the 2020 NPT Review Conference. Even then there is no guarantee that agreement on a final document will be achieved. However, key NPT goals and previous decisions could be advanced at the 2018 UN High Level Conference, including initiatives on reducing the role of nuclear weapons in security doctrines, incremental disarmament measures, renewing a process to establish a Middle East Zone Free from Nuclear Weapons and other Weapons of Mass Destruction, and following up the current UN negotiations on a legal agreement to prohibit nuclear weapons.

We urge members of the NPT to therefore consider now how to advance NPT goals at the 2018 UN High Level Conference, and not wait until 2020 for concrete outcomes to the NPT Preparatory Committee Meetings.

UNFOLD ZERO has been joined by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, which in July last year called on OSCE members to participate in the 2018 UN Conference at the highest political level. And we have been joined by Abolition 2000, the global network for the abolition of nuclear weapons, which has established a working group to build civil society support for the UN High Level Conference. We invite you to liaise with civil society on this, including at the side event on May 9 on the UN High Level Conference.

Thank you