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

The Republic of Bulgaria

Cluster I Statement

Vienna, 4 May 2017

Mr. Chairman,

Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

The Republic of Bulgaria remains committed to achieving the objective of a world without nuclear weapons, in which the security interests of all States are addressed.

We are focused on a progressive approach, including steps and initiatives that could deliver concrete and tangible results in the sphere of nuclear disarmament. While it might seem that such an approach would require much time and has no clear deadline, we consider it more realistic and more likely to lead eventually to a success. We are deeply convinced that the progressive approach has the potential to gradually foster the necessary security environment that could, ultimately, lead to agreement on effective, verifiable and irreversible nuclear disarmament.

In our view, this phase will be preceded by a number of particular achievements of a very significant nature that gradually prepare the grounds for a complete elimination of nuclear weapons, taking place in a verifiable and irreversible way. This approach includes cessation of the further spread of nuclear weapons, end of nuclear explosive testing, reduction of existing stockpiles, ban on the production of fissile material for nuclear explosive devices, building the capacity for nuclear disarmament verification and many others. All of the above would represent enormous accomplishments by themselves and taken together will undoubtedly lead us closer to effective, verifiable and irreversibly elimination of nuclear weapons.

In this context, continuing efforts should be made to ensure the engagement of all States with nuclear weapons and technologies, as this is the only way to achieve the goal of a nuclear weapon free world.

It should be unequivocally underlined that the NPT is in the center of this process. It is the foundation of the nuclear non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament regime. The NPT enjoys almost universal acceptance, and continues to play a critical role in halting the further spread of nuclear weapons, while ensuring that States can exploit the nuclear energy in a safe, secure and peaceful manner. The Treaty commits its States Parties to the pursuit of nuclear disarmament. It also establishes the role of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)
in the verification of the States Parties’ legally-binding commitments to the use of nuclear energy exclusively for peaceful purposes.

The international community should not spare any effort to uphold and consolidate the NPT, working for its full implementation and universalization and avoiding all moves that might undermine it.

The entry into force of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) is an important step towards a nuclear weapon free world that is still pending. The CTBT will end all nuclear explosive testing, thus constraining the development and qualitative improvement of nuclear weapons. 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 welcomes the significant progress that has been made toward the development of the CTBT International Monitoring System (IMS). Continuing efforts are necessary to complete it. The IMS has already proven itself by successfully detecting the nuclear tests of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), the only ones to have taken place in the 21st Century.

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). In 2016 the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution which established a 25-member High-Level FMCT Expert Preparatory Group which will meet in 2017 and 2018. This Preparatory Group will consider and make recommendations on substantial elements of a future FMCT. The initiative also contains an innovative mechanism to engage the broader UN membership in the discussion on this Treaty through two Informal Consultative Meetings, open to all UN Member States. The FMCT process is the only current UN disarmament effort that brings together NPT Nuclear Weapon States, other States with nuclear weapons and NPT Non-Nuclear Weapon States to a discussion on nuclear disarmament.

While the FMCT process is ongoing, the Republic of Bulgaria calls 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.

Verification is a crucial element of any treaty related to nuclear disarmament. While the current international security environment is not conducive to a comprehensive prohibition of nuclear weapons, we are nonetheless in the position to work to address the technical challenges of nuclear disarmament verification. The International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification (IPNDV) is a constructive initiative bringing together Nuclear Weapon and Non-Nuclear Weapon States in an effort to develop a mechanism for verifiable dismantling of nuclear weapons. The 2016 UN General Assembly resolution which called on UN Member States to submit views on measures to develop and strengthen nuclear disarmament verification is a welcome initiative.
The international community should stand resolute and united in addressing one of the most pressing disarmament and proliferation challenges that all of us currently face – the nuclear and ballistic missile programmes of the DPRK.

The Republic of Bulgaria condemns in the strongest possible terms the nuclear and ballistic missile tests, carried out by the 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 commitments.

Failure on the side of the international community to address adequately the nuclear and ballistic missile programmes of the DPRK will set a strong negative example that will undermine the entire nuclear non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament regime.

Mr. Chairman,

Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

To conclude, I would like to assure you that the Republic of Bulgaria will continue its efforts towards the progressive achievement of a world without nuclear weapons, in which the security interests of all States are taken into account.