Statement
by
the Head of Delegation of Portugal
to the
First Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to
the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)

Vienna, 2-12 May 2017

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Mr. Chairman,
Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, allow me to congratulate you, Ambassador, on your election as Chairman of this Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and assure you of my delegation’s support.

Portugal fully aligns itself with the statement made on behalf of the EU and would like to make some additional comments, from a national point of view.

The NPT remains the cornerstone of the nuclear non-proliferation regime, and the framework for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, in accordance with Article IV. Portugal therefore appeals to all States that have not yet done so to adhere to the NPT as non-nuclear weapons States.

Portugal considers that the three pillars of the Treaty should be addressed in a balanced matter, and fully expects that the work of this review cycle would be built on the 2010 Action Plan. As the first Preparatory Committee for the new Review Conference is taking place in Vienna, it will provide an opportunity to deeply
discuss the so-called “Vienna issues” and highlight the work developed by the related Vienna based organizations.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The threats and challenges, old and new, to the maintenance of nuclear peace, security and non proliferation are well known. Yet, it is undeniable that, while still insufficient, in recent years there have been positive achievements in relation to the three major areas of the NPT, and this should reinforce our common determination to continue to uphold the treaty as the cornerstone of the non proliferation regime. This new review cycle is the right occasion to take stock, reflect on what has been achieved and on what still needs to be accomplished, and to act upon it.

Portugal fully supports the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). Its Provisional Technical Secretariat, with the world’s largest and most sophisticated verification system, has played a key role, for instance, in the very quick detection of the DPRK’s nuclear tests.

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) plays a central role in achieving the goals of the NPT, by implementing the nuclear safeguards regime, while promoting the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, namely by establishing and upholding international standards for nuclear safety and security. For sixty years, the IAEA has been performing an essential work for the benefit of Humanity, promoting the contribution of atomic energy to peace, health and prosperity throughout the world and, simultaneously, ensuring that its assistance is not used in such a way as to further any military purpose. These objectives remain equally relevant and challenging today. It is therefore crucial that Member States steadfastly support the fulfillment of the IAEA’s mandate. In this context, I would
like to highlight the Nuclear Security Summit that took place in December last year and the successful 7th review meeting of the Convention on Nuclear Safety (CNS) in March/April 2017, which included a reference to the Vienna Declaration on Nuclear Safety in its summary report.

Mr. Chairman,

Portugal entirely supports the implementation of the agreement on Iran’s nuclear programme reached in July 2015. The JCPOA demonstrated that complex non-proliferation challenges can be solved through commitment to a diplomatic solution. We fully expect that all parts concerned will respect and fulfill their commitments under the JCPOA.

Unfortunately, the world faces some serious threats to nuclear peace, security and non-proliferation.

The nuclear tests and missile launches carried out by North Korea are a deeply troubling development, which the Portuguese government vehemently condemns. The continuing provocation by the DPRK’s regime, in direct violation of multiple United Nations Security Council Resolutions, poses a grave threat to regional and global peace and security and underscores yet again the urgency of achieving the complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.

On the implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement with Syria, Portugal regrets the continued non-compliance and absence of progress in this matter and echoes the IAEA Director General’s request to the Syrian authorities for full cooperation with the Agency in connection with all unresolved issues.
The International Community must remain seized on the implementation of the decisions of the 2010 NPT Review Conference on the Middle East. In this context, Portugal regrets that the Conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems is still to be convened and calls all concerned parties to engage in constructive discussions to enable the Conference to take place as soon as possible, on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at between the States of the region.

Mr. Chairman,

The Dialogue between Coastal and Shipping States (DCSS), an informal mechanism aiming at building confidence and promoting transparency on the transportation of sensitive radioactive materials, has been achieving positive developments since its implementation in the early 2000s. In the current cycle, Portugal, as the Chairman of the DCSS, is actively involved in the preparation of a table top exercise regarding the transportation of nuclear waste, to be held in June this year. Taking into consideration the very positive references to the Dialogue in the previous NPT Review Conference, the group decided to submit a working paper (NPT/CONF.2020/PC.I/WP.10) to the PrepCom.

To conclude, Mr. Chairman,

Portugal would like to take the opportunity to reaffirm its enduring support to the NPT and hopes that our work in the coming days will contribute to reinforce the Review Process.

I thank you, Mr Chairman.