NPT Prep Com 2017 - Cluster 1 – Statement by Sweden

Mr Chairman,

Sweden aligns itself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union under this cluster, and would like to add the following national perspectives.

In these days of intense disarmament debate, it is worth recalling that a world free of nuclear weapons is an overarching goal to which we are all committed. Current security challenges, from a Swedish perspective, make this task more urgent – not less. Nuclear weapons can never be the basis for sustainable security. The catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of these weapons are well documented and irrefutable.

When my Minister spoke at the Conference on Disarmament in March this year, she noted that the NPT, while in many respects successful – indeed indispensable – as the cornerstone of global disarmament and non-proliferation efforts, had not lived up to its full potential. The main reason for this, she made clear, is an implementation deficit in the disarmament dimension of the treaty. A serious effort by states parties to deliver on the commitments made during previous review cycles, in particular the 13 practical steps from the 2000 Review Conference and the 2010 NPT Action Plan, would go a long way towards rectifying this.

Mr Chairman,

Bilateral agreements on significant reductions by nuclear weapon states, particularly those with the largest arsenals, have previously contributed to the maintenance of international peace and security. But additional steps are now needed to bring down the global stockpile from current levels. The New START Treaty is of crucial importance. As it expires in 2021, we strongly encourage the United States and Russia to initiate a dialogue on further deep reductions. As part of such efforts, a reduction of tactical nuclear weapons, a category entirely outside existing agreements, would be of particular importance. Special emphasis should also be given to nuclear-armed cruise missiles in light of the distinctly de-stabilizing features of these weapons.

Against the backdrop of a deteriorating security climate, the risk that nuclear weapons will be used – by accident, miscalculation or design – is increasing. Risk-
reducing measures should therefore be prominent on our agenda. Let me invite you to join Sweden and Switzerland at our side-event focused on risk reduction, arranged in cooperation with Global Zero, which will be held on Friday 5 May.

Mr Chairman,

Other measures that can and ought to be pursued include negative security assurances. Non-nuclear weapon states have a legitimate interest in receiving unequivocal and legally binding negative security assurances from nuclear weapon possessing states, building on their unilateral statements in the context of UN Security Council resolution 984 from 1995.

Another key issue is the entry into force of the CTBT. Sweden has a history of deep political and technical support to the CTBT. The norm against testing already established by this treaty is an achievement in itself. However, as the DPRK nuclear tests demonstrate, it cannot be taken for granted. Nor can it ever be fully consolidated without a formal entry-into-force. We reiterate our call on all States which have not yet done so, in particular those listed in Annex 2, to sign and ratify the treaty.

An encouraging step was the decision at last year’s First Committee to set up a high level expert preparatory group on a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty, or FMCT. This is a question which should have been dealt with long ago by the CD – a forum whose prolonged paralysis is a source of great concern. Let us aim to follow up the work of the expert group – in which Sweden will participate – by concrete action, including the launch of actual negotiations.

Mr Chairman,

Sweden is actively participating in the on-going UN-mandated negotiations on a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons. As we have stated previously, we believe that a future ban and the NPT should be able to co-exist; ensuring this is the case is a key Swedish position in the on-going negotiations. The outcome we seek is a reinforced norm against use or possession of nuclear weapons. If this can be achieved remains to be seen. But the Swedish perspective is that we have an obligation to explore any avenue with potential to accomplish effective legal disarmament measures, thus contributing to the implementation of Article VI of the NPT.

Thank you!