Statement by H.E. Mr. G. Hossein Dehghani,
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On Nuclear Disarmament
at the First Session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2020 NPT Review Conference
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In the Name of God, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful.

Mr. Chairman,
I associate my delegation with the NAM statement delivered by the distinguished representative of Indonesia.

Nuclear disarmament as the fundamental objective of the Treaty remains our highest priority. It requires our special attention, particularly in this review cycle of the Treaty that coincides with the 50th anniversary of its entry into force. The 2020 Review Conference should therefore make concrete decisions on the long-delayed implementation of Article VI of the Treaty.

Unfortunately, the lack of real progress in nuclear disarmament has been the main implementation challenge in the past near 50 years. If we fail to overcome this challenge, it continues to have its adverse impact on the very foundations, integrity, credibility and relevance of the Treaty.

The records of nuclear-weapon States over the past 47 years have clearly proved that they have and continue to be consistently inconsistent with their obligations under Article VI of the Treaty. This situation cannot continue indefinitely. It is a clear case of non-compliance and must be actively addressed by this NPT Review cycle.

The obligation under Article VI is quite clear. Its implementation is neither optional, nor is it conditional on anything, including such concepts as “strategic stability” or “international security environment”. This is a fact that is also emphasized by the International Court of Justice when it ruled unanimously, in its Advisory Opinion of 8 July 1996, that “There exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control”.

The total elimination of nuclear weapons was the main NPT’s promise that encouraged non-nuclear-weapon States to accede to it. Unquestionably, they never meant to be part of a Treaty that divides its parties to nuclear-weapon-haves and have-nots and fails to put an end to the possession of such inhumane weapons by a few powers.

We share the views that reject the assumption that the indefinite extension of the Treaty implies the indefinite possession of nuclear arsenals by a few or that nuclear weapons are legitimately held weapons. Such assumptions are certainly incompatible with the objectives and purposes of the Treaty, as this Treaty seeks not only to prevent non-nuclear-weapon States from acquiring nuclear weapons, but also to eliminate nuclear-weapons all together.

Mr. Chairman,
According to the latest estimates, today there are more than 15,000 nuclear weapons worldwide. Quantitatively, they are nearly 79 per cent less than during the Cold War era. Qualitatively, however, it is hardly acceptable to argue that the destructive power of current nuclear weapons is less than those existing during the Cold War era. It is a fact that the yield of nuclear weapons has increased from kilotons to megatons; A-bombs have been replaced with H-bombs, which are thousands of times more destructive than the former; and the destructive power of existing nuclear weapons is roughly 8 to 100 times larger than those dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. One should also take into account the fact that most of the reduced warheads have only been moved from operational status to various reserve, inactive, or contingency categories. Therefore, most of nuclear warheads continue to exist and have not actually been dismantled. Therefore, as regards the threat of nuclear weapons, our world does not seem to be more secure than during the Cold War era.

Despite the cessation of nuclear arms race for some years in the past, recently we hear alarming and disappointing announcement by one nuclear-weapon State that it intends to continuously strengthen and expand its nuclear arsenal to ensure its place at the “top of the pack” and that it is “never going to fall behind on nuclear power”. In addition, such an important, yet imperfect, arms reduction treaty as the New START was criticized as “a one-sided deal” and “bad deal”. Such statements should be considered as a clear indication of, and an explicit invitation for, the start of a new nuclear arms race.

As taking effective measures on cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date is an obligation under article VI of the Treaty, this provocative policy, which definitely runs counter to that obligation and clearly contradicts the object and purpose of the Treaty, must be rescinded. While existing nuclear weapons seriously threaten the international peace and security and the very survival of humanity, our world cannot and should not tolerate a new nuclear arms race.

Mr. Chairman,

Article VI of the Treaty is not the only unimplemented obligation. Unfortunately, the decisions and action plans on nuclear disarmament adopted since 1995 are yet to be implemented. For instance, reporting to the 2015 Review Conference about the number of meetings by nuclear-weapon States and the preparation by them of a glossary of nuclear terms is the only implemented parts of the 22-point action plan of the 2010 Review Conference on nuclear disarmament! This approach is indicative of the resort to delaying tactics by nuclear-weapon States, which renders impossible the full implementation of the NPT.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, my delegation stresses that the persistence of non-compliance with nuclear disarmament obligations cannot and should not be tolerated anymore. The 2020 Review Conference should therefore take concrete actions to rectify this situation, stop the ever-deepening frustration of non-nuclear-weapon States, prevent the continuous erosion of the Treaty’s credibility, and end the situations undermining the effectiveness of this important instrument.
Our proposal to effectively implement article VI and all decisions on nuclear disarmament is a pragmatic and phased action plan, containing practical and effective legal measures on all aspects required for the total elimination of nuclear weapons, with an implementation time-frame and a robust international verification mechanism.

As an implementation time-frame for the fulfillment of the obligations and commitments on nuclear disarmament is not an option but a must, we believe that the three-phased time-bound action plan put forward by NAM NPT States parties deserves a serious consideration by this Review cycle. The conclusion of a comprehensive convention on nuclear weapons, which is also endorsed by the UN General Assembly, is and should be at the center of any such action plan.

I thank you Mr. Chairman.