Statement by Mr. Zulfikar Rahaman, Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Bangladesh to the United Nations, at the Main Committee I of the 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, New York, 20 May 2005

Mr. Chairman,

Let me first congratulate you on your election as Chairman of the Main Committee I and assure you of my delegation's full cooperation in the conduct of business of the Committee.

We extend our support to the working paper NPT/Conf.2005/WP.18 on the substantive issues to be considered by this Committee submitted by the NAM States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

Mr. Chairman,

The NPT is founded on three pillars of equal importance: prevention of spread of nuclear weapons and weapons technology; promotion of cooperation in peaceful uses of nuclear energy; and achievement of nuclear as well as general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control. We remain convinced that the Treaty is a key instrument in our collective effort to halt vertical and horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons as well as an essential foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament.

While the NPT has seen some progress in both containing proliferation and reducing nuclear arsenals during the last decades, much remained to achieve to ensure a nuclear-weapon-free world for ourselves and our future generation, and to be benefited from the peaceful uses of nuclear technology. We are disheartened at some of the States Parties' subjective and fragmented view about the treaty. We need to adopt a holistic approach in this regard.

We wish to reiterate that Bangladesh enjoys an impeccable non-proliferation record and have unconditionally opted to remain non-nuclear. We are committed to full compliance of the NPT and the CTBT. Bangladesh remains fully focused to the goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world. We acknowledge that it cannot be achieved overnight. But it is in the interest of all of us to irreversibly eliminate all nuclear weapons at the shortest possible time. We remain deeply convinced that the best guarantee for nuclear non-proliferation is the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

Mr. Chairman,

We place particular importance on complete adherence to Articles I and II of the NPT. These obligations should be met in a way that is fair and non-discriminatory and should not in any way compromise the inalienable rights of the States Parties to the Treaty to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

We are disappointed at the continued reluctance on the part of the nuclear-weapon States in the implementation of Article VI of the Treaty. We are concerned that none of the 13 practical steps
have been implemented in full. Worse is that some steps have been totally ignored by these States. Bangladesh would urge for full implementation of the unequivocal undertaking given by the nuclear-weapon States at the 2000 NPT Review Conference to accomplish total elimination of their nuclear arsenals leading to nuclear disarmament through the 13 practical steps that were agreed in the Conference.

While we acknowledge that the NPT requires all States Parties’ commitment to ensure nuclear non-proliferation, we are convinced more than ever that this is not practically achievable unless we achieve total nuclear disarmament in the first place. We must adopt a zero tolerance policy for non-compliance of the NPT undertakings both in the fields of nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament, which we believe are actually reinforcing.

Bangladesh feels encouraged at the recent consensus adoption of the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism, which we believe would positively contribute towards nuclear non-proliferation. While the current stockpile of nuclear weapons and fissile material should be closely guarded, they must immediately be destroyed eliminating any chance of their falling into the hands of non-State actors.

We welcome arrangements outside of NPT intended to reduce nuclear arsenals. They should, however, compliment the NPT, not substitute it. We are also increasingly concerned at the continued development of new types of nuclear weapons. Enhanced sophistication and increased precision can only raise the danger of its use.

We are deeply disappointed at the non-entry of the CTBT even after 120 countries have ratified the Treaty. We call upon all the remaining countries whose ratification of the Treaty is necessary for entering into force to immediately ratify it. In the meantime, we urge all concerned States to maintain the moratorium on nuclear testing.

Mr. Chairman,

One of the major achievements of the 2000 NPT Review Conference was the commitment of the nuclear-weapon States to provide negative security assurance to the non-nuclear-weapon States. Maintaining this security assurance is important for NPT as such guarantee would encourage States to remain non-nuclear. We regret that this arrangement has largely been diluted in recent years through imposition of pre-conditions unrelated to the Treaty. We hope that the Conference would be able to reaffirm that commitment of negative security assurance once again.

We deeply regret the continued inflexible postures of some nuclear-weapon States that have prevented the Conference on Disarmament from establishing an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament. It is imperative for all of us to start negotiation of a phased programme for complete elimination of nuclear weapons with a specified timeframe. We also remain concerned at the Conference on Disarmament’s failure to resume its negotiation for a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons and other explosive devices taking into account both nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation objectives.

Despite all the negative developments inside and outside the conference, my delegation is hopeful that the outcome of the 2005 NPT Review Conference would become another milestone in our journey towards a nuclear-weapon-free world.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.