FRANCE

2005 Review Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

Main Committee I

Statement by H.E. Mr François Rivasseau, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of France to the Conference on Disarmament

New York, May 19, 2005

(Translated from French – Only the original French text may be considered official)
Mr. Chairman,

First of all, France fully concurs with the declaration of the European Union presented by the Luxembourg Presidency.

I intend to focus here the issue of disarmament. The work of our Review Conference is especially focused this year on the unambiguous compliance with non-proliferation obligations as a matter of priority. This, however, should not prevent us from recalling the importance of the implementation of Article VI of the Treaty as part of the review of all provisions thereof.

Mr. Chairman,

As you know, since the end of the Cold War, France has contributed in a great extent to the global efforts aimed at nuclear disarmament and general and complete disarmament, and taken major decisions under Article VI of the Treaty.

I want to reiterate here, on the occasion of this Review Conference, France's disarmament commitments. My country is determined to respect, in good faith, its commitments under Article VI.

In implementing its commitments concretely, France is guided in particular by the programme of action decided at the time of the NPT's indefinite extension in 1995. That programme's three principal axes were:
- completion of the CTBT,
- negotiation of the Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT),
- and a determination to press forward systematically and progressively towards the reduction of nuclear weapons globally and to work for general and complete disarmament.

Mr. Chairman,

France resumed nuclear testing and adhered to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT).

- France's last and final nuclear test took place in January 1996. In September of that year, any country signed the CTBT and ratified it in April 1998 together with the United Kingdom.

- France has already drawn all of the CTBT's consequences before it enters into force, by dismantling its Pacific testing centre. No country is alone among the nuclear powers to have undertaken this, France today no longer has nuclear testing facilities.

- It notes, however, that the CTBT has not entered into force. As a member of the European Union, France supports the Council Common Position on the continuation and reinforcement of multilateral agreements in the field of non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery, one of whose aims is the entry into force of the CTBT at the earliest opportunity. Pending that time, it is continuing actively, financially and technically, in the work of the CTBT Preparatory Commission, France will participate in the Article IV Conference, due to be held in New York next September.
Mr. Chairman,

France abandoned the production of fissile materials for use in nuclear weapons and has committed itself to cooperating in formally banning the production of fissile materials for use in nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

Following its announcement that it had ceased to produce plutonium and highly enriched uranium for use in nuclear weapons, France took the further step in February 1996 to close and dismantle its Fontenay-le-Comte and Marcoule facilities. Their dismantling continues to this day. This is a long, complex and costly process, stretching over many years. My country is among the nuclear powers to have undertaken this. Today, France no longer has facilities for the production of fissile materials for use in nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

- On several occasions, France came out in favor of the launch of negotiations on the Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty (FMCT) at the Conference on Disarmament. After being failed for a long time, these negotiations today stand a real chance of being resumed. In this context, the call on all States genuinely interested in seeing concrete advances in arms control, disarmament and peace show responsibility.

- Pending the signature of an FMCT, France calls on each of the States concerned to declare a moratorium on the production of fissile materials for use in nuclear weapons.

Mr. Chairman,

France has greatly contributed to the reduction of nuclear weapons as a whole.

- On the one hand, the logic of strict sufficiency has consistently dictated the posture of France's deterrent force, a key pillar of its security.

- On the other, France has cut the number of its delivery systems by half since 1985. The number of French nuclear weapon systems has been reduced from 6 to 2. The state of nuclear weapons in French delivery activities fell from 7% in 1980 to below 3% in 2009.

France therefore abandoned all its surface-watercraft missiles by withdrawing and dismantling the Florac, Harbin and S2M missile systems. It also abandoned gravity bombs by decommissioning AN-52 bombs. It reduced the number of ballistic missile nuclear submarines (SSBNs) from six to four and put on end to the nuclear mission of Mirage IV aircraft.

France supports the ongoing efforts to bring about a global reduction in nuclear arsenals. Most particularly among these is the process launched by the United States and Russia which provides a number of nuclear weapons that is not of all proportion to the other nuclear weapon States. In reducing the operationally-deployed strategic offensive nuclear weapons in each of these two countries by 2,500 to 3,500 warheads between now and 2012, the implementation of the Moscow Treaty will have a substantial impact on strategic stability. In the nonstrategic domain, too, these countries have made significant commitments.

I would remind you that France has always underlined the considerable relevance between the strategic nuclear forces of Russia and the United States and its own, but that...
should that imbalance be allowed following successive reductions, it might envisage drawing
the consequences from this.

Moreover, France is participating in moderate actions beyond its fourteen. In particular,
it plans to contribute technically and financially to the Russian plutonium disposition
programme, within the framework of the agreement now being negotiated within the
Multilateral Plutonium Disposition Group (MPDG). This programme will serve to convert
some 44 tons of Russian plutonium into pure fuel, while another 29 tons will be disposed
of in the United States under the American-Russian agreement of 2000. This project fits
within the framework of the US Global Partnership from which France has pledged to contribute
up to 750 million dollars.

Mr Chairman,

France is working for general and complete disarmament in compliance with the
obligations binding all States Parties under Article VI of the NPT.

France is a party to the Biological Weapons Convention and the Chemical Weapons
Convention. It is also a party to the Ottawa Convention on the prohibition of anti-personnel
mines, and to several agreements in the conventional sphere, including the 1985 UN
Convention and its Protocol I, referred to the League of States (TLC) Against
Ballistic Missiles. Its activities are aimed at making significant efforts to secure the implementation
unraveling and strengthening of these instruments. In addition, it is necessarily
committed to combating the illicit spread of small arms and light weapons, whose numerous
capabilities in contemporary conflicts, on the African continent especially, are well known.

Mr Chairman,

Several States Parties have said they would like the issue of negative security
assurance to be addressed by the conference.

I want to go back to three types of negative security assurances given by France:

- The first is the security assurance given by France in its doctrine of deterrence that,
  without reducing its nuclear weapons is the safeguard of the nation’s vital interests while ruling
  out those weapons being regarded as battle weapons, at the service of a military strategy. I
  would remind you in this context that the President of the French Republic, announced that no
  part of the French nuclear deterrent forces was any longer targeted.

- France has always resisted negative security assurances to all States Parties to the NPT in a
  unilateral declaration of 6 April 1995, as noted by the United Nations Security Council in its
  Resolution 984 of 14 April 1995. This commitment is consistent with the natural right of
  legitimate self-defense as recognized in Article 51 of the United Nations Charter. I would
  remind you that States that violate their non-proliferation commitments of course cannot
  claim protection under these circumstances.

- Finally, France has always considered that one important path to nuclear disarmament
  and non-proliferation lies in the regional approach. This is a realistic approach, and one
  that consists in seeking a political solution to regional tensions, and to certain crises between
  states, with a view to making progress in the field of security and hence in disarmament and non-
application. This is why it has supported the establishment of non-nuclear-weapon-free zones and given in the framework security assurances to more than a 100 States, in treaty form.

France is thus a party to the protocols of the Helsinki, Lisbon and Pelindo II

France stands ready to go still further on that score. France again says that, together with other nuclear-weapon States, it supports the proposals of the countries in the South-East Asian nuclear-weapon-free zone, aimed at reaching agreements on a protocol to the Treaty of Bangkok. France also supports the plan for a Central Asian nuclear-weapon-free zone, and is taking part in consultations with the countries in that region. It hopes that these consultations will help the countries of Central Asia to sign an agreement promising mutual non-proliferation, in keeping with the principles adopted by the Non-Proliferation Commission in 1990. It will even take part in negotiations on a protocol to the treaty, with the other nuclear-weapon States, when the time comes. France also urges the entry into force of the African nuclear-weapon-free zone, in order for the protocol to that Treaty to be finally effective. France supports the objective of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery in the Middle East.

In view of the progress achieved to date by nuclear-weapon-States since the end of the Cold War, France considers that in the future it would be wholly justified for in-depth discussions on the issue of negative security assurances to take place in bodies where non-NPT States are represented, such as the Conference on Disarmament and, above all, the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC).

France further wishes to underline the role of positive security assurances, which, in the same ways as negative security assurances, provide a guarantee against the use of nuclear weapons by those non-nuclear-weapon States that respect their obligations.

Mr. Chairman,

During the last two decades, States parties, in sufficient numbers to underwrite the Treaty, have violated their obligations, developed illegal nuclear programmes and made untrue statements before the 1995 and 2000 Review Conferences. These actions and those of the powers that have helped them would have been enough, it is not been for the recent disclosures and our common determination to strengthen the nuclear non-proliferation regime.

Despite these events, France remains determined to pursue the application of all NPT provisions. It is fully aware of its responsibility as a nuclear-weapon State and of its obligations under Article VI. It has made commitments within the framework and implemented them. Looking to the future, France renews its determination to contribute to nuclear disarmament and to general and complete disarmament.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.