NEW ZEALAND MISSION to the UNITED NATIONS

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2005 REVIEW CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE TREATY ON THE
NON-PROLIFERATION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS

MAIN COMMITTEE III

STATEMENT BY
AMBASSADOR BARBARA BRIDGE

19 MAY 2005

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY
Madam Chair

The right of all States party to the Treaty to be able to develop research, production and the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes without discrimination and in conformity with Articles I, II and III of the Treaty, is a fundamental objective of the NPT.

New Zealand regards this right to peaceful uses as critical to the Treaty. In order to maximise the cooperation between states party on peaceful uses we consider a stable environment of confidence in the verification of the security aspects of the Treaty is very important. Hence the importance of States party concluding an Additional Protocol to their safeguards agreements with the IAEA. Hence also the importance of States party not engaging in active cooperation with those States party which are not in compliance with their obligations under their safeguards agreements with the IAEA.

Madam Chair

New Zealand has not chosen to use nuclear energy itself for power generation, though we do utilise some industrial and particularly medical nuclear applications. This is because we continue to have concerns over the lack of compatibility of nuclear power with sustainable development, due especially to problems over nuclear waste disposal, as well as safety and the risk of proliferation. But we recognise other states’ right to make their own decisions in this regard.

Madam Chair

Over recent years concern has grown in the international community over the potential to misuse the peaceful uses right under Article IV by developing the capability to enrich uranium or reprocess plutonium, and then using this newly-acquired technology for the manufacture of nuclear weapons. A key question is how to prevent this happening, while still preserving Article IV? How can we retain, fully intact, the Article IV rights of those who live up to their Treaty obligations to acquire this sensitive technology, while limiting the ability to do so of those who do not fulfil their obligations?

A great deal of thought has been devoted to this issue recently. In particular, the Experts’ Group convened by the Director General of the IAEA has produced a detailed and comprehensive report, suggesting five step-by-step approaches to this issue. In our view this work represents a valuable contribution to the debate which is now beginning.

New Zealand would support the IAEA’s taking this process forward in the form of further expert consideration of particular areas highlighted by the work so far. Advances may be able to be made in the shorter term such as the back-end of the fuel cycle on issues such as multilateral cooperation in storage of nuclear waste. Assured access of supply has been identified as a critical factor in any progress which is to be made in multilateral approaches to the front end of the fuel cycle, and New Zealand would support further expert work being carried out in this area as well, with an eye to
seeing what might be possible in terms of gradually building up a mechanism in which states parties can have full confidence of supply.

We would also support any moves among states parties themselves towards the first steps identified by the Experts Group.

Madam Chair

New Zealand supports moves to utilise as far as possible technology using low-enriched uranium as a nuclear fuel for those with civilian nuclear activities rather than proliferation-risky high-enriched uranium. We see this as a valuable and practical development, with real potential for enabling the fullest exercise of Article IV rights by States party while minimising the risk of proliferation.

New Zealand notes that five years ago NPT States party agreed that Article V should be interpreted in the light of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.

The CTBT is an effective measure of nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation in all its aspects and is vital to the NPT. We call on those states which have yet to sign and ratify the CTBT to do so without delay. In particular we make this call to all Annex II countries, without whose ratification the Treaty cannot enter into force. We recall that the CTBT was an integral part of the decision ten years ago to extend the NPT indefinitely, and we urge the United States to reconsider its decision not to ratify the CTBT as an important act in strengthening the NPT and as another act of leadership against proliferation.

New Zealand sees the CTBT as relating to both vertical and horizontal proliferation. In this context, we would regard plans for research and development of new types of nuclear weapons or modifications of existing weapons, whether or not they result in a resumption of testing, with the utmost concern. We call on all States to refrain from any action which would defeat the object and purpose of the CTBT, pending its entry into force. In the meantime, maintenance of the current moratoria on nuclear test explosions must be maintained.

Madam Chair

An issue of recent concern to the international community has been the prospect of withdrawal from the NPT by a party in order to avoid its commitments made as Treaty party. In the case of the NPT, withdrawal from the Treaty could have particularly serious implications, involving international peace and security.

New Zealand and Australia have tabled a working paper on withdrawal, WP16, which we introduced on the floor of the Plenary meeting yesterday. We have some suggestions about making better use of the provisions of Article X on which we look forward to engaging with other States party. We intend to comment further on this issue in the meeting of the subsidiary body of this Main Committee.
Madam Chair

Apropo the safety of peaceful uses activities, my delegation wishes to note in particular the importance of the safety of transport of radioactive materials for New Zealand.

Given the shipments of spent nuclear fuel past the shores of our country, we feel strongly that as strict as possible a regulatory regime should be in place. We want the adherence to best practice safety standards, effective communication between governments relating to forthcoming shipments, and satisfactory liability and compensation arrangements in place against the possibility of an accident or incident involving a shipment, including in relation to economic loss arising from perceived risk in a situation of an incident with no immediate release of radiation.

We are pleased with the progress that has been made recently in the context of the IAEA, in particular the developments flowing from the results of the 2003 International Conference on the Safety of Transport of Radioactive Material, including the adoption of an Action Plan based on the results of this Conference. We welcome the establishment by the Director General of the IAEA of the International Experts Group on Nuclear Liability (INLEX), and in particular the work the Group is doing in examining any serious gaps in the existing liability regime, the continuation of informal discussions on communication and information exchange between governments, and the progress on strengthening the international preparedness and response system for nuclear and radiological emergencies. We also welcome the use being made of the IAEA’s Transport Safety Appraisal Service (TranSAS), particularly by the shipping states.

We call for implementation of all areas of the Action Plan, including continued progress in the dialogue between relevant coastal states and the shipping states, including in our region, so that our concerns are fully taken into account.