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STATEMENT BY

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Geneva

NPT Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
Main Committee 1

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Mr. Chairman,

1. At the outset let me congratulate you on your election as Chairman of Main Committee I. We assure you of our full support as you guide us in our work over the coming weeks.

2. Mr. Chairman, the Netherlands aligns itself with the intervention made on behalf of the European Union. From a national perspective, we would like to make the following observations.

3. This spring, sometimes referred to as the “nuclear spring”, many developments and initiatives come together in this Review Conference, each with the potential to reinforce the other. The prospect of a world free of nuclear weapons has appeared on the horizon, although we need to recognize that this horizon is still a distant one.

4. The conclusion of a new START treaty agreement heralds a new dawn for the overall reduction of nuclear weapons. The treaty reflects the commitment of both Russia and the US to reduce their nuclear arsenals and to bring us closer to a world free of nuclear weapons.

5. We also welcome the steps made by some nuclear weapon states to diminish the role of nuclear weapons in their security policies. These steps are in line with our obligations under article VI of the NPT and commitments made in particular in the final document of the 2000
Review Conference to a diminishing role for nuclear weapons in security policies.

6. Disarmament and non-proliferation are mutually reinforcing. The existence of nuclear weapon states should not be an excuse for the further proliferation of nuclear weapons; intensified disarmament steps, like the new START treaty, will strengthen non-proliferation standards. This is in everyone's interest: the risks of a world with nuclear weapons are the same for all of us.

7. Furthermore, nuclear weapon states have the first responsibility for disarmament steps, but this doesn't relieve non-nuclear weapon states from their own responsibility to support and contribute to disarmament steps.

8. Parliaments and public opinion are urging us to make progress. They want us to take concrete steps towards a nuclear weapon free world, but these steps should be taken in a responsible way.

9. We can and should do more. Entry into force of CTBT and the start of negotiations on a FMCT are examples of steps which should be taken in the near future. The Netherlands is organizing on the 19th of May an expert presentation on verification capabilities of CTBT. The verification system is nearing completion and has already proven to work effectively.

10. In our opinion the Review Conference should confirm and strengthen the principles of transparency, verifiability and irreversibility as the guiding principles for disarmament. The Netherlands welcomes the
announcement of the US to publish the number of nuclear weapons in their possession.

11. The reduction and final elimination of non-strategic nuclear weapons are integral parts of the nuclear disarmament process and do need further follow-up. The final document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference contained a reference to non-strategic nuclear weapons in the so-called “13 practical steps”. We believe that it is necessary to reaffirm and continue to build on this commitment.

12. We should commit ourselves to include non-strategic nuclear weapons in arms control and disarmament processes, with a view to their transparent, verifiable and irreversible reduction and elimination. It is promising that Russia and the US have indicated their willingness to include non-strategic nuclear weapons in future disarmament negotiations.