Joint Statement
of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Republic of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and the Republic of Uzbekistan to present the Working Paper on Environmental consequences of uranium mining by H.E. Mr. Nurbek Jeenbaev, Permanent Representative of the Kyrgyz Republic to the United Nations at the 3rd committee of the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
(New York, May 13, 2010)

Mr. Chairman,
I have the honour to speak on behalf of five Central Asian States - Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Republic of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and the Republic of Uzbekistan.

Let me first of all on behalf of our countries congratulate you on your election to preside over the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). We have no doubt that your dedicated and able leadership and experience will provide valuable guidance to ensure a fruitful and productive outcome to our deliberations.

Mr. Chairman,
Inadequate attention has been given in the past to the serious issue of mitigating the environmental consequences of nuclear weapons programs. As first articulated at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference, and as noted in the consensus Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference, there have been exceptional instances in which serious environmental consequences have resulted from uranium mining and associated nuclear fuel cycle activities in the production of nuclear weapons.
This often overlooked environmental problem caused by nuclear weapons production and borne by the Central Asian states is another reason why our region attaches great importance to the work of the 2010 Review Conference.
One important dimension of this environmental problem pertains to uranium tailings. There are a number of different tailings with toxic radioactive wastes left by the mining industry on the territories of the Central Asian States.

The conditions of the tailings did not correspond to safety standards during the period when these industries were active. Moreover, the state of these tailings has further deteriorated over the past decades, after those industries were shutdown or reoriented, and in a number of cases the situation is close to catastrophic.

This situation is aggravated by the fact that many burial sites of highly toxic uranium waste are located in active seismic regions, landslide risk areas prone to floods and high groundwater zones and nearby river banks, which form the foundation of the extended water basin of the Central Asian region.

In the event of natural disaster, natural degradation of protective structures, the highly toxic substances from these tailings will surely seep into the rivers and other fresh water sources. The waste can quickly and freely spread across the vast territory of the region, which will lead to large-scale contamination of vast territories of the adjoining countries, with a population of tens of millions people.

Such a scenario may result in an environmental catastrophe that is not only regional but global in scale. As such, it is necessary to take effective efforts at all levels to prevent further contamination.

Last year, on April 21-24, 2009, the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme and the Eurasian Economic Community organized a Regional Conference in Bishkek. This meeting has allowed discussing practical measures to resolve the uranium tailings problems and to make concrete proposals during the High Level International Forum on uranium tailings and other radioactive wastes which was held on 29 June 2009 in Geneva.

Mr. Chairman,

In this regard I have the honour to present on behalf of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Republic of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and the Republic of Uzbekistan the Working paper on Environmental consequences of uranium mining in order to reiterate the appeal of the 1995 and 2000 Conferences to all Governments and international organizations that have expertise in the field of clean-up and disposal of radioactive contaminants to consider giving appropriate assistance, as may be requested, for radiological assessment and remedial purposes in this affected area.

Thank you for your kind attention.