STATEMENT
BY

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To the United Nations, Geneva

on
Implementation of the provisions of the Treaty relating to non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, disarmament and international peace and security

in Main Committee I

of the
2010 Review Conference of Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

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Thank you, Chairperson,

My delegation wishes to congratulate you on your election as Chair of Main Committee I and would like to assure you of our full cooperation and support. South Africa wishes to associate itself with the statements delivered on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and the New Agenda Coalition.

Allow me to start by stating unequivocally that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is the foundation of nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. It remains the only international instrument that not only contains the legal commitment for the elimination of nuclear weapons, but also strives to prevent their proliferation.

This Review Conference needs to build upon the unequivocal undertaking made by the nuclear-weapon States to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals and to engage in an accelerated process of negotiations, as agreed to during the 2000 Review Conference through the adoption of the practical steps. This should entail actionable and measurable nuclear disarmament steps by all five nuclear-weapon States that would give real content to their obligations under Article VI of the NPT.

While some argue that steps have been taken since the end of the Cold War to reduce their reliance on nuclear weapons, the continued reliance on such weapons in strategic doctrines, regrettably, would seem to indicate the opposite. South Africa welcomes efforts aimed at reducing nuclear arsenals. It is, however, important to distinguish such efforts from nuclear disarmament steps. A commitment to nuclear arms reductions, which has to do with the strategic balance of power and with the removal of the Cold War’s excessive nuclear destruction capacity does not automatically translate into a commitment to nuclear disarmament and to a vision of a world free of nuclear weapons.

South Africa welcomes the positive statements made by a number of world leaders in recommitting to the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons. The recent conclusion of a New START agreement between the Russian Federation and the United States is likewise important. These are indeed welcome steps, however, further efforts aimed at securing deeper cuts in both strategic and non-strategic weapons are now needed. South Africa believes that the benchmarks for nuclear disarmament established in 2000 - namely transparency, irreversibility and verifiability - are essential components of any arms control process if it is to contribute to nuclear disarmament.

Chairperson,

The development of new categories of nuclear weapons and their delivery systems provide a clear indication that some of the NWS continue to harbour aspirations for the indefinite retention of these instruments of destruction, contrary to their legal obligations and political commitments. South Africa believes that we can only effectively address the threat posed by nuclear weapons through the established multilateral instruments. Universal adherence to, full implementation of and compliance with these instruments are therefore required.

South Africa has often expressed the view that each article of the NPT is binding on all States Parties at all times and in all circumstances. What continues to be of concern to my delegation is the selective manner in which some States have approached their responsibilities under the NPT. In South Africa’s view, States Parties cannot choose to selectively apply outcomes or provisions that suit their particular circumstances. The Treaty, as well as all the outcomes of its Review Conferences, needs to be respected if we are to ensure the continued vitality of this instrument. We cannot risk diluting the fundamental principles and shared commitments that we have agreed to during previous Review Conferences, including the unequivocal undertaking by the nuclear-weapon States to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear weapons. It is therefore critical that NPT States Parties should unite to actively and consistently oppose such practices. One cannot undermine one part of an agreement
and hope that other parts will continue to have the same force, or that others will not in turn attempt to follow the same practice.

South Africa believes that the provisions of the Treaty, the 1995 “Principles and Objectives” and the practical steps for nuclear disarmament agreed to in 2000 provide a blueprint for a step-by-step process that would reduce the threat of nuclear weapons, de-emphasize their importance and lead to their elimination.

Chairperson,

We remain dissatisfied with the lack of progress by the NWS that would demonstrate tangible evidence of their commitment to the unequivocal undertaking. The various elements of the steps to be taken by the NWS have consistently been supported by South Africa, such as the need for increased transparency, the further reduction of non-strategic nuclear weapons, and the engagement of all the NWS in the process leading to the total elimination of their nuclear weapons. South Africa has on numerous occasions and in various disarmament fora called for further progress in the pursuance of these steps, and will continue to do so.

My delegation appreciates the willingness of some of the nuclear-weapon States to share information about their nuclear weapons arsenals and their nuclear disarmament objectives. Whilst we appreciate these efforts, we would encourage all five nuclear-weapon States to further increase their efforts in order to enhance transparency and confidence building.

Chairperson,

South Africa is deeply concerned about the continuing stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament. While recognising that the non-nuclear-weapon States under the NPT have already agreed to a legally-binding commitment not to produce fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, this Conference should do all in its power to ensure the commencement of negotiations on a verifiable universal ban on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices, that would serve both nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation objectives. My delegation will remain actively engaged in the fissile material issue with a view to seeking solutions and compromises that would make it possible for the Conference on Disarmament to finally commence negotiations.

Regarding the prohibition on the testing of nuclear weapons, South Africa continues to view the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) as an important measure to accomplish our common goals of nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. Though it has not yet entered into force as a consequence of the non-ratification by the States required to do so, my delegation welcomes the intention of the United States and China to pursue ratification of the CTBT.

Chairperson,

As the only country to date to have voluntarily and unilaterally destroyed its nuclear weapons capability, South Africa remains convinced that the possession of these weapons does not enhance international peace and security. We therefore remain concerned by the continued retention of nuclear weapons, including by the States that operate unsafeguarded nuclear facilities outside the NPT. Further measurable progress on nuclear disarmament must be a major determinant in achieving and in sustaining international security. South Africa will continue to support all nuclear disarmament efforts in order to achieve a world free from all weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons.

I thank you, Chairperson.