NAC statement as delivered at MCI Monday 18 May 2015

Thank you Mr Chair.

At the outset please allow the New Agenda Coalition to put on record our appreciation for your ongoing efforts, and for those of Subsidiary Body chair Ambassador Benno Laggner of Switzerland. CRP4/Rev 1 reflects the discussions we have had in this body and is a delicately balanced draft on which we can indeed base our work this week.

This morning the NAC would like to focus its comments on a few key points of concern.

The NAC considers that paragraph 8 is now a more appropriate reflection of the slow progress that has been achieved with respect to the implementation of nuclear disarmament obligations over the current review cycle. We do note, however, that there is still a rather generous reference in paragraph 21 to reductions having been “significant” – perhaps Mr Chair this is a reflection of the sum total of reductions rather than an assessment of progress simply over the past five year period.

We note, Mr Chair that there is a misquotation in paragraph 18 regarding paragraph 4 (c) of Decision 2 from 1995. There is a reference now to “practical steps” in relation to that subparagraph, which is not of course included in the original - that refers instead to “systematic and progressive efforts” by the nuclear-weapon states to reduce nuclear weapons globally with the ultimate goal of eliminating those weapons.

More generally, we note, too, that paragraph 18 contains a reference to “general and complete disarmament under effective international control”. Given this Review Conference has not in fact reviewed progress on general and complete disarmament, we would question whether it is useful to introduce such an exceedingly high level of aspiration into our text. It seems difficult enough as it is, Mr Chair, to be optimistic about the attainment of “nuclear disarmament”.

We note, Mr Chair, that paragraph 24 expresses deep concern at the humanitarian consequences “resulting from any nuclear conflagration”. We are not familiar with this term and wonder exactly how many nuclear weapons
must be detonated in order to reach what is described as a “nuclear conflagration”. This text would seem to suggest that the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons are acceptable when the number of detonations is anything less that those required to produce a “nuclear conflagration”. The NAC considers this new term - “nuclear conflagration” - to be unacceptable including in light of the view of the overwhelming majority of States here that it is the humanitarian consequences of any nuclear weapon detonation that are of deep concern.

We also note with disquiet that the expression of concern regarding the humanitarian consequences of a “nuclear conflagration” – this is characterised as “deep concern” – is the same degree of concern which is used in OP36 to convey the Conference’s emotion faced with the failure of the CD to agree on a Programme of Work – this is a parallel that the NAC finds inappropriate. Further, we note that in paragraph 29 the “devastation that would be visited upon all humankind by a nuclear war” is simply said to be the matter of “understandings and concerns” by the Conference. The NAC believes that such an extraordinary understatement should not form part of the Review Conference’s record.

With respect to OP26 the NAC would question the utility of the “Conference” reaffirming the undertaking by the nuclear weapon States to achieve the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals – as compared to the nuclear weapon States themselves reaffirming that undertaking (as was indeed made in 2000 and reaffirmed in 2010). Given that the Conference itself is not able to deliver on any such undertaking, the NAC feels the onus of implementation must rest entirely on those who gave it and who are able to implement it.

We note that paragraph 27 should be deleted given that this – largely similar – language is repeated in paragraph 37. Paragraph 37 is the more appropriate formulation and is the one which should be retained.

Moving finally onto the forward-looking component of paragraph 47, Mr Chair, the NAC notes with some disquiet that the nuclear weapon States are now only called upon in paragraph 47(6) to cease the development of “advanced new types of nuclear weapons”. This distorts the obligation of Article VI in that it suggests it is perfectly acceptable for nuclear weapon States to develop new types of nuclear weapons, consistently with Article VI, as long as they are not “advanced” types.
Mr Chair, paragraph 47(19) gives encouragement to all States to engage in the identification and elaboration of effective measures for the full implementation of Article VI within the “United Nations disarmament machinery” which, of course, does include the United Nations General Assembly.

We had hoped for something stronger – and more urgent – than this text. After all, as the NAC has made clear in its working papers (WP18 from 2014 and WP9 this year) that a result on “effective measures” lies for us at the very heart of a satisfactory outcome to this Review Conference. We would therefore welcome the Conference at the very least urging action to this end rather than merely encouraging it.

Thank you Mr Chair.