Statement by

H.E. Ambassador Mr. Amr Aboulatta

Permanent Representative of the Arab Republic of Egypt to the United Nations

United Nations Conference to Negotiate a Legally Binding Instrument to Prohibit Nuclear Weapons, Leading Towards Their Total Elimination

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Madame President,

Let me at the outset congratulate you, Ambassador Gomez, on the assumption of the Presidency of this historic Conference. My delegation would like to associate itself with the statements delivered by Oman on behalf of the Arab Group as well as Cabo Verde on behalf of the African Group. As we inaugurate its First Session today, we embark on a new crucial journey that has the potential to significantly advance disarmament objectives and contribute to global peace and security. We are confident that with your able leadership, we will collectively steer this Conference towards success, despite the challenging task ahead. My delegation stands ready to provide all necessary support to ensure a successful Conference.

Madame President,

For decades, Egypt has played a vocal and assertive role in the advancement of global nuclear disarmament. We have placed the highest priority to global, non-discriminatory, verifiable nuclear disarmament and the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. It has been Egypt’s longstanding belief that nuclear weapons are a grave source of instability to the world order and a serious threat to humanity that warrants immediate global collective action to eliminate them, without further delay. In various multilateral fora, Egypt has expressed its staunch support to accelerate global action to achieve nuclear disarmament and will associate itself with international efforts that promote this objective.

It is precisely for this reason that Egypt actively engaged in the three sessions of the Open-Ended Working Group in Geneva last year and co-sponsored General Assembly Resolution 71/258 which called on the United Nations to hold this conference to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination. In line with Egypt’s policy, this historic resolution has paved the way to develop a new legal framework for the prohibition of nuclear weapons and accordingly, could signify a milestone in the global nuclear disarmament architecture. The new instrument, in our view, should be ambitious and comprehensive in nature. It should be modeled in a manner that not only creates a global norm prohibiting the use of nuclear weapons, but more importantly, its possession, and serve as an instrument that leads towards their total elimination to achieve complete nuclear disarmament.
Madame President,

Egypt strongly supports the commencement of negotiations for a new legally binding instrument prohibiting nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination. Let me outline six specific points why we support this process:

First: A new instrument would formalize the categorical rejection of the possession and use of nuclear weapons and would complement already existing legal instruments. A new, non-discriminatory legal instrument prohibiting nuclear weapons would be a significant addition to the body of law governing weapons of mass destruction. It should set a framework for the elimination of nuclear weapons within agreed timeframes.

Second: A new instrument would further solidify the international denunciation of nuclear weapons. By concluding a new instrument prohibiting and eliminating nuclear weapons, the international community would further delegitimize the possession and use of nuclear weapons and reinforce the global norm against their acquisition and discredit those that justify their possession.

Third: A new instrument would emphasize, once again, the urgency and criticality of realizing a world free of nuclear weapons. It would underscore the growing international condemnation and disapproval of nuclear weapons and place greater pressure on the nuclear weapons States to fulfil their legal obligations to nuclear disarmament.

Fourth: A new instrument would significantly challenge the conceptual rationale for “nuclear deterrence” as a safeguard for national or regional security. It could potentially encourage the reconsideration of military doctrines that rely on nuclear weapons and reinvigorate global determination to eliminate them while renew focus on their severe humanitarian consequences.

Fifth: A new instrument would address the extensive humanitarian consequences of any nuclear detonation, whether intentional or accidental, not only in a given State, but also within its regional geographic proximity. By prohibiting the use of nuclear weapons, we would avert the catastrophic effects of nuclear detonations.

Sixth: A new instrument would highlight the lack of fulfilment by the nuclear weapon States of their commitments towards nuclear disarmament as explicitly
stipulated in Article VI of the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. It will shed light on their passiveness when it comes to nuclear disarmament, while inject further impetus in international efforts to achieve comprehensive nuclear disarmament and reinforce the global norm against nuclear weapons.

**Madame President,**

Egypt is concerned at the threat posed by the continued existence of nuclear weapons to humanity and reaffirms that their total elimination is the only guarantee for not using them, which leads us to global security. We are gravely concerned that despite the legal obligations of nuclear weapon States to pursue nuclear disarmament under Article VI of the NPT, and notwithstanding the numerous political calls addressed to these States in this regard, very limited progress, if any, can be acknowledged.

The disturbing reality is thousands of nuclear weapons continue to exist in the world today, they continue to feature highly in strategic military doctrines, they are deployed in the territories of certain non-nuclear weapon States, new generations of such weapons continue to be developed, and nuclear deterrence remains a defining characteristic of certain military alliances. These actions, undeniably, have undermined the nuclear disarmament regime and have posed some serious questions regarding not only the sincerity of nuclear weapon States towards nuclear disarmament, but their compliance with the provisions of the NPT.

We express our deep concern at the continued lack of meaningful progress in the field of nuclear disarmament. We reiterate our strong call to the nuclear weapon States to shoulder their responsibility to accomplish, without further delay, the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals, in compliance with their legal commitments. We reaffirm the importance of the application of the principles of transparency, verifiability, and irreversibility by nuclear weapon States.

It is important to point out that the lack of progress in implementing Article VI of the Treaty on the Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the growing frustration with nuclear weapon States to live up to their share of the NPT grand
bargain has naturally, compelled the international community to embark on this new process which we inaugurate today. This process would not have been necessary had nuclear weapon States manifested, throughout the past four decades, serious and persistent political will to achieve nuclear disarmament.

Rather than criticize this new process, question its practicality, and denounce its consequences, those opposed to this new initiative ought to realize that it was the very passivity and indifference towards achieving one of the NPT’s main pillars, namely nuclear disarmament, that ultimately gave birth to this new process.

**Madame President,**

As we commence negotiations on a legally binding instrument, Egypt will seek an ambitious framework that is non-discriminatory, embodies a wide-ranging scope of prohibitions, and sets timeframes for verifiable nuclear disarmament. Our hopes are high that as negotiations come to a close, this new instrument would represent a meaningful contribution to the global nuclear disarmament architecture. We endorse the negotiation of a new legally binding instrument that would realize the total and irreversible elimination of nuclear weapons under effective multilateral verification and control.

**Madame President,**

As I look around this hall today, I can’t help but notice some vacant seats. At a time when the international community comes together to take global collective action to prohibit and eliminate an entire category of abhorrent weapons, we find it unfortunate that some States, but in particular the nuclear weapon States, opted to boycott this Conference. If this suggests anything, it is clearly indicative, yet again, of the questionable commitment of the nuclear weapon States towards nuclear disarmament and creates a clear delineation between those that are willing to promote *collective* security as opposed to *selective* security.

**Madame President,**

Despite the repeated calls by the international community over decades to realize the total and irreversible elimination of nuclear weapons, unfortunately, they continue to exist with staggering numbers. The continued existence of nuclear
weapons, especially with such alarming quantities, not only creates a dangerous, insecure world and risks catastrophic consequences, they uphold and reinforce the concept of nuclear deterrence in strategic defense doctrines.

This new process which we inaugurate today therefore, represents light at the end of the tunnel … a significant opportunity that must not be squandered to reinforce the global nuclear disarmament architecture until we reach “Global Zero”. Egypt stands ready to engage in this process with the energy and commitment it deserves, simply because there is a significant distinction between hollow words of the past century and real actions of today.

Thank you.