Statement by
H.E. Ambassador Nguyen Phuong Nga
Permanent Representative of Viet Nam to the United Nations
at the High-level exchange of views
of the United Nations conference to negotiate a legally-binding instrument
to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination
28 March 2017

Madam President,

First of all, I would like to congratulate you on your election as President
of this important Conference to negotiate a legally-binding instrument to
prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination. You can rest
assured of my delegation’s full support.

I would also like to thank the Acting President of the General Assembly
and the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs for their insightful remarks.

Viet Nam associates itself with the statement delivered by the
distinguished representative of the Philippines on behalf of the Association of
Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Madam President,

1. We are deeply moved by Mr. Toshiki Fujimori’s remark this morning
on the horrific and devastating consequences of the use of the atomic bombs
more than 70 years ago causing immense sufferings to the Japanese people.

2. Despite these painful lessons of the past, multilateral international
efforts and nuclear disarmament negotiations within the United Nations
framework for decades have not brought about concrete outcomes.

3. We share the grave concern of the people all over the world about the
threat to humanity posed by the existence of nuclear weapons stockpiles and
the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any nuclear detonation. More
than ever before, the world has become insecure and vulnerable by the threat of
the arms race, the alarming danger of use or threat to use nuclear weapons
against non-nuclear weapon states and the increasing risk of nuclear
proliferation to non-state actors.

4. The current global context with complex developments makes the
achievement of the world free from nuclear arms all the more urgent. It is the
ripe time for us to show our determination and find out the right solutions to prohibit these most destructive weapons.

Madam President,

5. Viet Nam supports the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice that any threat or use of nuclear weapons by anyone or under any circumstance is not permitted and contrary to the international law.

6. We have relentlessly pursued the consistent policy of peace and comprehensive and complete disarmament. We advocate the total elimination of the weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), first and foremost the nuclear weapons. Viet Nam is a party to and complies fully with its obligations under all WMD disarmament and non-proliferation treaties, including the Treaty on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons (NPT), Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Safeguards Agreement and its Additional Protocol.

7. We also participate in the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism (GICNT) and the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI). We work in close cooperation with the IAEA and other international partners to ensure nuclear safety and security under highest verified standards.

8. In this vein, Madam Chair, Viet Nam strongly supports international efforts in negotiating a legally-binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons completely.

9. Our Conference itself represents a significant step towards the full implementation of Article VI of the NPT, which clearly states that "each of the Parties to the Treaty undertakes to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control."

10. We believe that a comprehensive legal instrument with general prohibitions against the possession, use, development, production, stockpiling and transfer of nuclear weapons will be the necessary starting point for the total elimination of nuclear weapons. It will not be a substitute to the NPT, which is the cornerstone of the nuclear disarmament, but complementary to and reinforce the NPT and existing conventions, such as Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and nuclear-weapons-free-zone treaties.

11. We hope this legally binding instrument will help raise the awareness of the serious threats posed by and humanitarian impacts of nuclear weapons.
12. At the same time, it should ensure the legitimate right of states to develop nuclear technology for peaceful purposes and enhance effective institutional arrangements to provide international cooperation and assistance to states, particularly developing countries, in implementing their respective obligations and commitments under strict and effective international control.

13. Besides, this process should also leave the door open for all countries to join to achieve the ultimate goal of universalization.

14. We call on nuclear weapon states to implement their commitments in nuclear disarmament under Article VI of the NPT. During the process of nuclear disarmament, negative security assurance or guaranty by the nuclear weapon states to ensure that they will not attack any non-nuclear weapon states should be in place as important interim measures.

15. In this regard, we stress the importance of regional nuclear weapons free zones, including the Southeast Asian Nuclear Weapons Free Zone (SEANWFZ) and the need for nuclear weapon states to work towards the early signing and ratification of their respective protocols.

Madam President,

16. For the promotion, maintenance and consolidation of international peace and security, all the States have the responsibility to fully comply with the fundamental objectives and principles of the international law and the UN Charter, including respect for independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, no use or threat to use force and settlement of disputes by peaceful means.

Madam President,

Let me conclude by humbly quoting a famous saying by our respected Former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon “We have a legal and moral obligation to rid our world of nuclear tests and nuclear weapons.”

It is our duty to carry out this tremendously difficult task. But I hope that by working together with renewed political commitments, through dialogue in a more inclusive, responsible, trustworthy, constructive and transparent manner, we can contribute to the realization of our universal objective of attaining and maintaining the world without nuclear weapons for the sake of humanity.

I thank you, Madam President.