Vienna Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons

8-9 December 2014

Statement by Italy

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I would like to thank Austria for hosting this conference. Let me also express deep gratitude and appreciation for the messages delivered on behalf of Pope Francis and UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, as well as for the powerful and impressive testimonies of survivors of nuclear weapons and nuclear tests.

We fully share the concern over the devastating impact of nuclear weapon explosions on human beings as well as on the environment. Together with the vast majority of States we strongly expressed our belief that the humanitarian initiative is proving to be extremely valuable in renewing the global focus and raising awareness about the catastrophic consequences of a nuclear weapon detonation. In this context, we were pleased to join the Australian statement at the 69th session of the UNGA.

The dramatic and devastating humanitarian consequences of a nuclear weapon explosion are of serious concern for us and for those who share the goal of a world without nuclear weapons. No need to dwell on the importance of this issue. It was clearly endorsed by the Final Document adopted at the 2010 NPT Review Conference. Achieving this goal will require a high level of commitment by all countries, with a leading role played by nuclear weapons States in moving forward on nuclear disarmament. We applaud the US and UK decision to attend the Vienna Conference. We look forward to other nuclear weapons States to adopt the same constructive approach.

The threats and the risks associated to the spread of nuclear weapons are incalculable and it is essential to double our efforts to prevent new states as well non-state actors gaining access to them. The humanitarian concerns underpin our action on disarmament, non-proliferation as well as on nuclear security.
The Non Proliferation Treaty continues to represent the essential foundation for the achievement of nuclear disarmament. We want to reaffirm our commitment to creating the conditions for a safer world for all without nuclear weapons, in accordance with Article VI of the NPT. We should redouble our commitment to achieve progress based on considering the three pillars of the NPT as mutually reinforcing. Therefore, it is essential to participate constructively and substantively in all relevant discussions on nuclear disarmament with a clear focus on practical and effective measures. On the contrary, we should avoid creating shortcuts that are not contributing to the mutually reinforcing goals of disarmament and non-proliferation.

We should pursue the security of a world without nuclear weapons as the final achievement of the NPT, not as an alternative to it. In addition, it is of utmost importance to preserve the primary role of the Conference on Disarmament on substantive negotiations relating to disarmament and non-proliferation. Therefore, overcoming its deadlock remains crucial. Effective progress on nuclear disarmament can be further achieved through two agreements. The CTBT (Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty) deals with the qualitative dimension of nuclear disarmament thus blocking any improvement on nuclear weapons’ development. Therefore, we urge the States whose ratification is essential for its entry into force to accelerate the signature and/or ratification process of this instrument. The next logical step, the quantitative dimension, can then be reached through the early commencement of negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile material (FMCT – Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty).

As long as nuclear weapons exist, many countries will continue to rely on nuclear deterrence to help prevent nuclear attack or coercion. This is why banning nuclear weapons by itself will not guarantee their elimination. Progress toward global zero will require States focusing on common ground and working together to prevent the use of nuclear weapons and their proliferation, thus promoting effective nuclear disarmament.