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Ministry of Foreign Affairs

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Dear Chair,

Allow me to also extend my gratitude to the government of Austria for the invitation to this important meeting and for the warm hospitality in these chilly times.

This series of conferences has been successful in contributing to our understanding of the disastrous consequences for humanity that would result from a nuclear weapon detonation.

As a contribution to the knowledge about humanitarian consequences we have submitted a scientific paper by our National Institute for Public Health and the Environment on the late health effects of exposure to radiation. The paper has been made available on the website by the organizers of the conference. Hard copies are available as well.

Dear Chair,

The attention for the humanitarian impact has also brought new energy and impetus to debate on nuclear weapons. In this context, the Netherlands welcomes the engagement and participation of all here, including the nuclear weapon states present. Also, I want to recognize the role that civil society has played in drawing attention to this issue. These are important and positive contributions.

Over these last two days, the case for disarmament has been forcefully made, sometimes in a personal and very moving way. The Netherlands also strongly supports the goal of Global Zero. And all our efforts to promote nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation are underpinned by the concern for the humanitarian consequences of a nuclear explosion.

However, it is a reality that nuclear weapons exist today and are part of current security strategies and military doctrines. One cannot take 16,000 nuclear weapons out of the equation and assume that this has no consequences in terms of security and stability. While this should not
become a pretext for not pursuing disarmament, considerations of security and stability need to be taken into account when realizing disarmament.

It seems that all of us here agree on the goal of disarmament, but that we have different views on how to get there. Some think that an immediate nuclear ban is the way to go. Others believe in a different approach. It should not be concluded that those that do not support an immediate ban as the best way forward, are not sincere about disarmament.

In our view, eliminating nuclear weapons can be achieved only through substantive and constructive engagement by all states, in particular by the states that possess nuclear weapons, and through agreeing concrete and practical measures. The NPT provides a clear legal framework for disarmament. That is why together with the other members of the NPDI we have been calling on all states to fulfill their obligations under the NPT and have been making concrete proposals to implement the 2010 NPT Action Plan. Concrete steps include the start of negotiations on further reductions, the start of negotiations on an Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty, taking further de-alerting measures and improving the transparency of nuclear arsenals.

We hope that the attention for the humanitarian impact will re-energize the political will and create the sense of urgency needed to make the progress we all seek.

Dear chair, allow me to make a short announcement.

Part of the humanitarian process has been education and the sharing of the results of research and knowledge. Research has an important role to play in the wider field of disarmament and non-proliferation as well. It can help future decision making with fresh ideas. Together with education, it can also help in informing and engaging the younger generation in the issues of disarmament and non-proliferation.

It is with these goals in mind that the Netherlands, together with UNODA, Harvard University and the James Martin Center in Monterey, will organize an academic conference on the 28th of April on the present and future challenges and opportunities to the Non-Proliferation Treaty. The conference will take place in New York during the Review Conference and aims to bring
together early-careers scholars from around the world to present their work on the three pillars of the treaty. It also aims to bring academic researchers and policy makers closer together. We are convinced that deepening our understanding of the issues concerned will help us formulate better policies.

Thank you.