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STATEMENT

by

H.E. John Sandy,

Permanent Representative of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago to the United Nations, Geneva,

at the

Third International Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons,

Vienna, Austria,
December 8-9, 2014
Distinguished Co-Chairs

I first wish to highly commend the Government of Austria on undertaking to ensure that discussions continue on this most important issue by hosting the Third International Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons. I also wish to thank the Austrian Government for the kind hospitality we have experienced since our arrival in Vienna, as well as the United Nations Development Programme for having contributed to facilitating our participation.

The information presented at this Third International Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons only strengthens the argument in favour of the total elimination of these weapons. In this regard, we recall the words of the United Nations Secretary-General at the first ever International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, commemorated less than three months ago on September 26, that "nuclear disarmament is not an idealistic dream but an urgent necessity to meet the genuine security interests of all humanity". Efforts by the international community such as maintaining discussions in these fora, as well as mobilising support for the overall objective, are therefore essential if we are to advance towards creating a world free of nuclear weapons. In CARICOM, we are prepared to do our part, and have recently held a regional meeting in Jamaica last August, with a view to contributing further to these endeavors as a region.

Co-Chairs,

Trinidad and Tobago continues to be a strong supporter of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control efforts, reflected, inter alia, in the fact that we are a State Party to a number of fundamental instruments related to achieving these objectives, including the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), and the Treaty of Tlatelolco by which Trinidad and Tobago proudly became part of the first densely populated region in the world to declare itself a Nuclear-Weapon-Free-Zone.

Trinidad and Tobago, which subscribes fully to the rule of law, holds firmly to the view that the threat or use of nuclear weapons constitutes a crime against humanity and a violation of international law, including international humanitarian law, and the United Nations Charter. We also believe that progress in disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control depend on a number of factors including achieving universality of the NPT; fulfilling commitments under the CTBT which we view as complementary to the NPT; and enhanced and meaningful cooperation at the multilateral level in the promotion of international cooperation for peaceful purposes. We therefore encourage all delegations to become an even more active part of these efforts.
At this Conference, my delegation was also particularly interested in the discussion on the humanitarian dimension in existing disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation instruments, which took place this morning, and which included Dr. Nystuen's enlightening presentation on the humanitarian origins of international law regulating arms.

Co-Chairs,

Trinidad and Tobago is not a nuclear weapon State and is currently not directly affected by nuclear weapons although we are fervently committed to non-proliferation and to working towards their total elimination. It has been said, however, that "small arms and light weapons" constitute the weapons of mass destruction in the sub-region to which we belong, that of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). As a result, Trinidad and Tobago, dedicated to the fight against the deadly and devastating impact of the unregulated trade in conventional arms which plague our region and adversely affect the safety and security of our populations, ratified the Arms Trade Treaty in September of this year. Additionally, we have submitted our bid to host the Arms Trade Treaty Secretariat and to provide the necessary resources required for this purpose. Taking into account the principle of equitable geographic distribution in the hosting of major global institutions as we work together as a global community to address the challenges we all face, Trinidad and Tobago hopes to count on the valuable support of States Parties for this candidature.

Before closing, we wish, within the framework of CARICOM policy, to reiterate our strong objection to the transshipment of nuclear waste through the Caribbean Sea and would welcome dialogue within the context of the International Atomic Energy Agency, with States involved in this practice; a practice that poses a threat to the safety and security of Caribbean marine ecosystems as well as to all countries in the Caribbean littoral.

Finally, we commend the work of civil society which remains a formidable force in assisting to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons, and we reaffirm our commitment to working with all partners towards this end, including through the development of a legally binding instrument, as it is increasingly clear that the only way to avoid the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of a nuclear detonation, for which no one can be adequately prepared, is by eliminating the use and testing of nuclear weapons altogether.

I thank you.