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2005 Review Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

Main Committee I

**Statement by H.E. Mr François Rivasseau
Ambassador, Permanent Representative of France
to the Conference on Disarmament**

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(Translated from French – Only the original French text may be considered official)

MISSION PERMANENTE DE LA FRANCE AUPRES DES NATIONS UNIES
245 EAST 47TH STREET, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10017 TEL. (212) 308-5700

Mr. Chairman,

First of all, France fully concurs with the declaration of the European Union presented by the Luxembourg Presidency.

I intend to discuss here the issues of disarmament. The work of our Review Conference is especially focused this year on the unambiguous compliance with non-proliferation obligations as a matter of priority. This, however, should not prevent us from recalling the importance of the implementation of Article VI of the Treaty as part of the review of all provisions thereof.

Mr. Chairman,

As you know, since the end of the Cold War, France has contributed to a great extent to the global efforts aimed at nuclear disarmament and general and complete disarmament, and taken major decisions under Article VI of the Treaty.

I want to reaffirm here, on the occasion of this Review Conference, France's disarmament commitments. My country is determined to respect, in good faith, its commitments under Article VI.

In implementing its commitments concretely, France is guided in particular by the programme of action decided at the time of the NPT's indefinite extension in 1995. That programme's three points were:

- conclusion of the CTBT,
- negotiation of the Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty (FMCT),
- and a determination to press forward systematically and progressively towards the reduction of nuclear weapons globally and to work for general and complete disarmament.

Mr. Chairman,

France renounced nuclear testing and adhered to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT).

- France's last and final nuclear test took place in January 1996. In September of that year, my country signed the CTBT and ratified it in April 1998 together with the United Kingdom.

- France has already drawn all of the CTBT's consequences before it enters into force by dismantling its Pacific testing centre. My country is alone among the nuclear powers to have undertaken this. France today no longer has nuclear testing facilities.

- It notes, however, that the CTBT has still not entered into force. As a member of the European Union, France supports the Council Common Position on the universalisation and reinforcement of multilateral agreements in the field of non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery, one of whose aims is the entry into force of the CTBT at the earliest opportunity. Pending that time, it is contributing actively, financially and technically, to the work of the CTBTO Preparatory Commission. France will participate in the Article XIV Conference, due to be held in New York next September.

Mr. Chairman,

France abandoned the production of fissile materials for use in nuclear weapons and has committed itself to negotiating a treaty banning the production of fissile materials for use in nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

- Following its announcement that it had ceased to produce plutonium and highly enriched uranium for use in nuclear weapons, France took the decision in February 1996 to close and dismantle its Pierrelatte and Marcoule facilities. Their dismantling continues to this day. This is a long, complex and costly process, stretching over many years. My country is alone among the nuclear powers to have undertaken this. Today, France no longer has facilities for the production of fissile materials for use in nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

- On several occasions, France came out in favour of the launch of negotiations on the Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty (FMCT) at the Conference on Disarmament. After being stalled for a long time, these negotiations today stand a real chance of being resumed. In this context, we call on all States genuinely interested in seeing concrete advances in arms control, disarmament and peace to show responsibility.

- Pending the signature of an FMCT, France calls on each of the States concerned to declare a moratorium on the production of fissile materials for use in nuclear weapons.

Mr. Chairman,

France has greatly contributed to the reduction of nuclear weapons as a whole.

- On the one hand, the logic of strict sufficiency has consistently dictated the format of France's deterrent force, a key pillar of its security.

- On the other, France has cut the number of its delivery systems by two-thirds since 1985. The number of French nuclear weapon systems has been reduced from 6 to 2. The share of nuclear weapons in French defence efforts fell from 17% in 1990 to below 9.5% in 2004.

France therefore abandoned all its surface-to-surface missiles by withdrawing and dismantling the Pluton, Hades and S3D missile systems. It also abandoned gravity bombs by decommissioning AN-52 bombs. It reduced the number of ballistic missile nuclear submarines (SSBNs) from six to four and put an end to the nuclear mission of Mirage IV aircraft.

- France supports the ongoing efforts to bring about a global reduction in nuclear arsenals. Most prominent among these is the process launched by the United States and Russia which possess a number of nuclear weapons that is out of all proportion to the other nuclear-weapon States. In reducing the operationally-deployed strategic offensive nuclear weapons in each of these two countries to 2,200 or even fewer warheads between now and 2012, the implementation of the Moscow Treaty will have a substantial impact on strategic stability. In the nonstrategic domain, too, these countries have made significant commitments.

- I would remind you that France has always underlined the considerable imbalance between the strategic nuclear forces of Russia and the United States and its own, but that,

should that imbalance be altered following successive reductions, it might envisage drawing the consequences from this.

- Moreover, France is participating in concrete actions beyond its frontiers. In particular, it plans to contribute technically and financially to the Russian plutonium disposition programme, within the framework of the agreement now being negotiated within the Multilateral Plutonium Disposition Group (MPDG). This programme will serve to convert some 34 tonnes of Russian plutonium into civil fuel, while another 34 tonnes will be disposed of in the United States under the American-Russian agreement of 2000. This project falls within the framework of the OS Global Partnership to which France has pledged to contribute up to 750 million dollars.

Mr. Chairman,

France is working for general and complete disarmament in compliance with the obligations binding all States Parties under Article VI of the NPT.

France is a party to the Biological Weapons Convention and the Chemical Weapons Convention. It is also a party to the Ottawa Convention on the prohibition of anti-personnel mines, and to several agreements in the conventional sphere, including the 1980 UN Convention and its Protocols. France adhered to the Hague Code of Conduct (HCOC) Against Ballistic Missile Proliferation. It is making constant efforts to secure the implementation, universalization, and strengthening of these instruments. In addition, it is resolutely committed to combating the illicit spread of small arms and light weapons, whose murderous capabilities in contemporary conflicts, on the African continent especially, are well known.

Mr. Chairman,

Several States Parties have said they would like the issue of negative security assurances to be addressed by the Conference.

I want to go back to three types of negative security assurances given by France:

- The first of the security assurances given by France is its doctrine of deterrence that strictly links its nuclear weapons to the safeguard of the Nation's vital interests while ruling out those weapons being regarded as battle weapons at the service of a military strategy. I would remind you in this context that the President of the French Republic announced that no part of the French nuclear deterrent forces was any longer targeted.

- France also gave negative security assurances to all States Parties to the NPT in a unilateral declaration of 6 April 1995, as noted by the United Nations Security Council in its Resolution 984 of 11 April 1995. This commitment is consistent with the natural right of legitimate self-defence as recognized in Article 51 of the United Nations Charter. I would remind you that States that violate their non-proliferation commitments of course cannot claim protection under these assurances.

- Finally, France has always considered that one important path to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation lies in the regional approach. This is a realistic approach, one that consists in seeking a political solution to regional tensions, and to latent or open conflicts, with a view to making progress in the field of security and hence in disarmament and non-

proliferation. This is why it has supported the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones and given in this framework security assurances to more than a 100 States, in treaty form.

France is thus a party to the protocols of the Tlatelolco, Rarotonga and Pelindaba treaties.

France stands ready to go still further on that score. France again says that, together with other nuclear-weapon States, it awaits the proposals of the countries in the South-East Asian nuclear-weapon-free zone, aimed at reviving negotiations on a protocol to the Treaty of Bangkok. France also supports the plan for a Central Asian nuclear-weapon-free zone, and is taking part in consultations with the countries in that region. It hopes these consultations will help the countries of Central Asia to sign an agreement promoting nuclear non-proliferation, in keeping with the principles adopted by the Disarmament Commission in 1999. It will enter into negotiations on a protocol to the future treaty, with the other nuclear-weapon States, when the time comes. France also urges the entry into force of the African nuclear-weapon-free zone, in order for the protocol to that Treaty to be fully effective. France supports the objective of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery in the Middle East.

In view of the progress achieved to date by nuclear-weapon-States since the end of the Cold War, France considers that in the future it would be wholly justified for in-depth discussions on the issue of negative security assurances to take place in bodies where non-NPT States are represented such as the Conference on Disarmament and, above all, the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC).

France further wishes to underline the role of positive security assurances which, in the same ways as negative security assurances, provide a guarantee against the use of nuclear weapons to those non-nuclear-weapon States that respect their obligations.

Mr. Chairman,

During the last two decades, States Parties, in sufficient numbers to undermine the Treaty, have violated their obligations, developed illegal nuclear programmes and made untrue statements before the 1995 and 2000 Review Conferences. Their actions and those of the networks that have helped them would have continued, had it not been for the recent disclosures and our common determination to strengthen the nuclear non-proliferation regime.

Despite these events, France remains determined to pursue the application of all NPT provisions. It is fully aware of its responsibility as a nuclear-weapon State and of its obligations under Article VI. It has made commitments within this framework and implemented them. Looking to the future, France reaffirms its determination to contribute to nuclear disarmament and to general and complete disarmament.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.