

30/4/08
Am

Permanent Representation of the Netherlands
to the Conference on Disarmament

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STATEMENT

AT THE

NPT PrepCom
28 April – 9 May 2008

ON

Cluster 1 issues

BY

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TO THE CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

Geneva, 30 April 2008

Mr. Chairman,

1. The Netherlands fully endorses the intervention just made by the Presidency of the European Union. From a national perspective, we would like to add the following observations.
2. This year's Preparatory Committee marks a very special anniversary: It is this year forty years ago that the NPT was opened for signature. Since that moment in July 1968, much has been achieved with regard to the three pillars of the treaty; disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful use of nuclear energy. Today however, there are more countries that have nuclear weapons, or are trying to develop them, than when the Non-Proliferation Treaty was signed. In the last decades the dangers entailed by the possession of nuclear weapons have become more complex and therefore many challenges still lie ahead of us. One thing has remained unchanged: the three pillars of the Non-proliferation Treaty are still mutually reinforcing and equally important.
3. Concerns about the use of these weapons are at least as old as the weapons themselves. So the call for arms control in this field is not new, but history shows us that results are hard to achieve. This is why the goal of nuclear disarmament should remain high on the international political agenda. Since last years' Preparatory Committee we have seen some hopeful signs of a new momentum.
4. Therefore, the Netherlands Minister of Foreign Affairs, Maxime Verhagen, endorsed last month in speeches both here in Geneva at the Conference on Disarmament and at a public meeting with experts and scholars in The Hague, the call by four American elder statesmen for a world free of nuclear weapons. To take steps in this direction, we need to find ways to strengthen the international Non-proliferation system, of which the NPT is the backbone.
5. The Netherlands strongly supports such strengthening of the Non-proliferation system and favours a multilateral and result oriented approach. We take, for instance, every opportunity to call for ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty which is vital to the NPT and constitutes an effective measure of nuclear disarmament. The Netherlands therefore supports the CTBTO; politically, financially and with practical help. Furthermore, in our perspective, the role of the IAEA in implementing full scope safeguards is of vital importance for the full implementation of the NPT.
6. The common endeavour we have before us is to avoid the nuclear nightmare of more nuclear weapons, more nuclear materials, and more enrichment and reprocessing capacity not properly

controlled. The fact that there are terrorist groups who wish to lay their hands on these capacities, can turn into a nightmare indeed. States are not the only major risk factors. The risk is real that nuclear weapons, or the technology to develop them, will end up in the hands of non-state actors such as terrorist groups.

7. We need to work towards a further step-by-step reduction of nuclear weapons, and make them less relevant in today's security environment that has changed so dramatically since the end of the Cold War. And let us not forget that it is the constituencies of our ministers – the voters, the citizens of our countries – who ask us to take the changed security situation into account in our deliberations leading up to the NPT Review.

8. It takes involvement, commitment of all parties to the NPT to move closer to the ultimate goal of a worldwide abolition of nuclear weapons in accordance with the Treaty. The Netherlands calls upon all parties to embrace the responsibility they accepted when signing the treaty and show renewed commitment to the process of non-proliferation and disarmament. Progress on nuclear disarmament requires political will on the part of states that possess nuclear weapons. The nuclear weapon states already have taken bold steps to this end and they should continue to do so. Non-nuclear weapon states need to account for their conduct and do their utmost to meet their treaty obligations. We hope for an equally constructive attitude from all groups as we all stand to benefit from disarmament and non-proliferation. All of us have responsibilities to the multilateral system. Let us show our constituencies that we are ready to give and take. We need to come up with broad-based initiatives to help move the debate forward. It is a responsibility which all of us have, not just some.

Mr. Chairman,

9. Time is starting to become precious and therefore we must find common ground and agree on the threats that face us and on the need to intensify international cooperation to confront them. We should seize the opportunity of the NPT Review Conference in 2010, and the important preparatory work we are here for today, to show new resolve to work towards a world free of nuclear weapons.

10. As Secretary-General of the UN Ban Ki Moon stated before the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva in January 2008, disarmament and non-proliferation are closely related with our mission. Both are widely recognised as indispensable to achieving the maintenance of international peace and security, core of the UN Charter. This is a mission the Netherlands strongly believes in, in which we will draw from past achievements to aim for future success.