



IRELAND

General Debate Statement

by

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**Preparatory Committee for the 2010 Review Conference
of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation
of Nuclear Weapons
Third Session**

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Mr. Chairman,

We congratulate you on your election as Chairman of this third session of the Preparatory Committee. The energy and care you have shown in your preparations augur well for a constructive and substantive two weeks and you have my delegation's full cooperation. Ireland is of course party to the statements this morning by the EU Presidency and by Sweden on behalf of the New Agenda Coalition.

Our main task is to agree the agenda for the 2010 Review Conference and do our utmost to agree substantive input and recommendations for it. On occasions in the past, we have allowed ourselves to be sidetracked by procedural and other issues. I hope we have learned our lessons and moved on. The time has come for resolute action.

Ireland has always had a particularly close association with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Over fifty years ago, the Irish Minister for External Affairs, Frank Aiken, proposed the establishment of a committee to study the dangers inherent in the further dissemination of nuclear weapons and to recommend appropriate measures to avert them. This led to the adoption of what were known as the "Irish resolutions" and ultimately to the negotiation a decade later of the NPT. Ireland was honoured by being invited to be the first to sign the Treaty in 1968. Since then, a key objective of every Irish Government has been to support efforts to strengthen the Treaty and we are committed to doing this across all three pillars.

While the world today is very different, the danger posed by nuclear weapons to the security of the international community remains and, some would argue, has actually increased. The only feasible way to eliminate this danger is through their total elimination. Together with our partners in the New Agenda Coalition and other like-minded governments and civil society, we have consistently called for the prioritisation of nuclear disarmament and believe that the 13 practical steps agreed in 2000 remain the benchmarks for progress.

This meeting takes place at a time of renewed hope, even of optimism. Ireland warmly welcomes the undertaking given by President Obama to work for a world without nuclear weapons. We are encouraged by his promise to work to strengthen the NPT and to pursue ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, as well as to seek a new treaty to verifiably end the production of fissile materials intended for use in nuclear weapons. Similarly, we welcome the joint statement by Presidents Medvedev and Obama that they will negotiate a successor to the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty. As the US and Russia possess the bulk of nuclear warheads it is vital that negotiations are pursued with determination and concluded urgently.

In the NPT context, there are immediate steps which can be taken, including increased transparency on the part of the nuclear-weapon States. Maintaining current levels, or developing new weapons, in the belief that this will enhance national security is unpersuasive, and a bad example for others. A treaty banning the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons would extend international controls over all such materials and we welcome the Conference on Disarmament President's non-paper as a positive step in the road towards negotiations on a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty. The entry into force of the CTBT would constitute a significant concrete gain for the disarmament regime. While welcome, a moratorium on nuclear testing cannot substitute for the Treaty. Ireland again calls on the nine remaining Annex 2 States to ratify the CTBT immediately and unconditionally.

For 40 years, the NPT has provided the essential basis of mutual confidence allowing for the international development of exclusively peaceful uses of nuclear energy. It remains as important as ever to ensure the universality of the Treaty, and we continue to call on all those who have not yet done so to sign and ratify it. The Treaty comprises both key rights and obligations with respect to the uses of nuclear energy, and it is important that both are respected equally by all States Parties.

I said at the outset that we should not get sidetracked by procedures. Equally, we should look critically at the procedures themselves and identify where the NPT strengthened review process needs improvement. We must be able to take a practical and progressive approach to real-world issues that face the regime, for example withdrawal, which require an immediate, collective and cohesive response. The

original 1995 vision of the strengthened review process offered an effective way to confront serious issues, and provides a basis for future consideration of our procedures. We also believe that we could look at shorter annual meetings with the authority to take consensus decisions on issues requiring immediate attention.

Mr. Chairman,

It is imperative that we leverage the fund of renewed international impetus and positive thinking to tackle the challenges we face. For the first time in a decade, there is an opportunity to realise the full potential of the NPT. Ireland believes that 2010 will be a landmark year, and that the Review Conference must develop a new package of agreements, supported by concrete and ambitious benchmarks, with a realistic roadmap towards a world free of nuclear weapons. It would be unconscionable to let the moment pass.