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Permanent Representation of the Netherlands
to the Conference on Disarmament
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FIRST COMMITTEE OF THE
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THEMATIC DEBATE ON NUCLEAR WEAPONS

BY

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TO THE CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT IN GENEVA

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Mr. Chairman.

Yesterday the Presidency of the European Union made a statement on Nuclear Weapons. The Netherlands fully endorses the intervention by the Presidency. From a national point of view, we would like to add the following observations.

Early this year an article appeared in the Wall Street Journal by George Schultz, William Perry, Henry Kissinger and Sam Nunn, names that need no introduction across the globe. They re-ignited the vision of a world free of nuclear weapons, and underlined the need to re-initiate efforts on practical steps towards disarmament and the final objective of a world free of nuclear weapons.

After the series of setbacks we all know, a new *élan*, a new beginning would be more than welcome. Indeed, decisive steps should be taken towards nuclear disarmament. The already existing system of international treaties and legislation in the field of disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation provides the framework for action. The Non-Proliferation Treaty should be further strengthened in the interest of the international community, and the entry into force of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty becomes, increasingly so, a matter of the highest urgency. International legal instruments such as a Treaty prohibiting the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices would also benefit our disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation efforts. It would facilitate full implementation of the NPT and strengthen our common non-proliferation regime.

Negotiations on such an FMCT could and should start in the Conference on Disarmament without further ado, without pre-conditions, and in the understanding that no issues are precluded from the negotiations. This has been stated on many occasions by the EU as a whole and the Netherlands as one of its constituent parts.

The Netherlands expressed appreciation for the illustrative Treaty text officially submitted at the Conference on Disarmament by the United States in May 2006. At least three model drafts for such a Treaty have already been produced by the scientific community and civil society, to assist and inspire us.

We are ready and consider it high time to establish the appropriate legal framework allowing us to engage in discussions with an open mind and respecting the positions of our partners in this endeavour. We count on all other Members of the Conference on Disarmament, early next year, to express similar readiness and flexibility to start concrete and target oriented negotiations.

Mr. Chairman,

It is, in fact, of the utmost importance that we move forward in Geneva. Although specifics of an FMCT need further consideration, we do have to recognise that not moving forward on this subject will have serious consequences for disarmament in general, for the ongoing preparations towards the Review Conference of the NPT in 2010 and ultimately the Treaty itself, not to mention the future of the Conference on Disarmament as the sole negotiating body of the international community for Disarmament and Arms Control.

Merely 'reflecting' on an FMCT will no longer do the job. Because if we are still not able to show that we really mean business on this subject, we as negotiating parties would definitely lose all our credibility and the CD its legitimacy. In other words, we must start negotiations on an FMCT early next year. Countries which have not yet agreed to a moratorium on the production of fissile materials for weapons use should be strongly encouraged by all of us to do so in the meantime. The last two years in the CD have been very productive; as a matter of fact productive enough to allow for such a quick start, since solid and thorough groundwork has been done for a comprehensive package, the package we all know.

We are ready to move forward and to be effective with regard to the proposal on the table. We trust that we are not alone in our interest for a much safer world and in our readiness to take concrete action on that score.

Mr. Chairman.

I would like to end my intervention where I began, with the remarkable vision expressed in the Wall Street Journal this Spring on a world without nuclear weapons, on which leadership and what steps are thereto required. I am doing so by quoting this time a great European of almost one century and a half ago, Victor Hugo.

Hugo wrote in his time already that the day will come, where canons and – excuse me, Mr. Chairman, for this extrapolation – weapons of mass destruction will be on show in museums in the same way as today one can visit and inspect instruments of torture, fashionable in the Middle Ages and thereafter. And we would all be wondering that such weapons have existed and their use even contemplated.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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