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Thematic Debate on Nuclear Weapons

Statement by

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Mr Chairman,

I would like to start on a **positive** note. In fact, there have been laudable efforts by some nuclear weapons states to improve transparency regarding their nuclear arsenals. France, for instance, has communicated the total number of nuclear weapons in its arsenal. It also invited international experts to witness the dismantling of its former production sites for fissile material.

Furthermore, we welcome that a number of other nuclear weapon states have put forth information within the CD and the NPT about their steps towards nuclear disarmament. In this sense, publication by some states of their stocks of fissile material is another positive aspect.

Yet, Switzerland calls on nuclear weapons states that have not done so to take steps to increase transparency. In addition, there is still a long way to go to implement Article VI of the NPT and to achieve what has been agreed on in the outcome documents of the 1995 and 2000 Review Conferences.

Switzerland appreciates the constructive atmosphere at the 2nd Session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2010 Review Conference. We consider it crucial that the upcoming PrepCom will be similarly constructive, which would enable us to agree on a substantial report. We feel it is very important that the next PrepCom will set a solid base for a successful 2010 NPT Review Conference.

Mr. Chairman,

There needs to be more discussion on reducing the importance that nuclear arsenals play in military strategies and doctrines. We therefore call on nuclear weapons states to refrain from modernising and further developing nuclear arsenals. We find it difficult to understand that nuclear weapons states speak about disarmament whilst continuing to build new types of nuclear weapons. Such steps run, in the view of my country, counter to the spirit of article VI of the NPT.

Furthermore, the continuing blockage of the adoption of a programme of work at the Conference on Disarmament means that no progress has been made towards negotiating a **FMCT**. We urge states overcome the current deadlock and to enter

negotiations without preconditions. As for the **Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty** (CTBT), we hope that in the near future, this treaty can finally enter into force. Nine of the forty-four States mentioned in Annex II of the Treaty still have not ratified it. Switzerland calls on these States to ratify this treaty without delay.

Switzerland is also takes note of the fact that the United States of America and the Russian Federation, the two states with the largest nuclear arsenals, have not, to date, been able to agree on a follow-up to the **START I** Treaty, which expires at the end of 2009. My country hopes that discussions will not only send out positive signals to the international community, but that a meaningful and verifiable follow-up agreement will represent real progress regarding nuclear disarmament.

Regarding nuclear non-proliferation the situation remains complex.

There are still unresolved issues about the **Iranian nuclear programme** remains unsatisfactory. The IAEA has not been able to make progress on the "alleged studies", and Iran has continued its enrichment activities. This development is all the more regrettable because we have witnessed a number of constructive moments which culminated in the "Geneva Talks" in July. I refer in particular to the exchange of "packages" on both sides and the agreement of the parties to hold discussions on the basis of a reciprocal freeze on their actions. Switzerland considers that the prospects of a diplomatic solution remain realistic and that such a solution is the only viable one. My country therefore encourages Iran to work as rapidly as possible to enable the "freeze-for-freeze" concept to be implemented.

The adoption by the Nuclear Suppliers Group of an exception to its rules allowing nuclear supplies to India, despite the absence of IAEA full-scope safeguards for this country can be seen as a constructive element. Nonetheless, it raises questions about the future of the non-proliferation regime. These conflicting aspects have to be taken into consideration en route to and in the framework of the 2010 NPT Review Conference.

Mr Chairman,

Since I have the floor, I would like to formally introduce the draft resolution "Decreasing the operational readiness of nuclear weapons systems", which we table again this year together with Chile, Malaysia, New Zealand, Nigeria and Sweden. The draft resolution acknowledges and welcomes all steps that have already been taken in this direction. It calls on all states possessing nuclear weapons to take further such steps to decrease operational readiness. The resolution deserves support for a number of reasons.

Firstly, today's post-cold war environment no longer justifies such high levels of alert. Secondly, the estimated thousands of nuclear weapons which remain on high alert pose one of the greatest risks of accidental nuclear war. Decreasing the operational status of nuclear weapons reduces the risk of unintended launches caused by technical malfunction, accident, or acts of terrorism. Decreasing the operational readiness of nuclear weapons also allows for more time for communication, which further contributes to lowering the risk of nuclear conflict.

And lastly, further decreasing operational readiness is a much-welcome confidence-building measure. Not only among nuclear weapon states, but also between nuclear weapon states and non-nuclear weapon states. In this sense, further reducing operational readiness would be a highly welcome step in the lead-up to the 2010 NPT Review Conference.

We agree that reductions in deployment and operational status cannot substitute for irreversible cuts in the numbers of nuclear weapons possessed. Nonetheless, ensuring that all nuclear weapons are removed from high alert in the interim would be a significant improvement for our collective security. The main sponsors of this resolution hope for a broad support.

Thank you, Mr Chairman.