STATEMENT BY

IRELAND

TO THE CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

Geneva, 12 March 2013
Madame President,

My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union this morning and would like to add the following additional national perspective on this important topic on the Conference’s agenda. My delegation also aligns itself with the statement delivered by Brazil on behalf of the New Agenda Coalition. As the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign affairs and Trade of Ireland noted in his address to this Conference last month, there are many disarmament and non-proliferation challenges facing us today.

Madame President,

My delegation would like to welcome the address by Ms. Beatrice Fihn of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom delivered this morning. Ireland has long held that greater participation of our partners in civil society in the work of this Conference, as in other disarmament fora, can add significantly to our work.

Madame President,

Ireland has long held that the maintenance of a world free of nuclear weapons will require a framework of mutually reinforcing instruments. We are convinced that a fissile material treaty can and must serve both disarmament as well as non-proliferation purposes and by doing so would bring us closer to the goal of a world without nuclear weapons. As UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon noted on 18 January, this Conference “should start long-overdue negotiations on a fissile material treaty as a priority.” The negotiation and conclusion of such a Treaty would add to the record of this body and allow this Conference to regain its place at the heart of international disarmament.

In 2000, States Parties to the NPT agreed Thirteen Practical Steps, which highlighted the necessity of this Conference negotiating a “non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive
devices.” Regrettably, thirteen years after those thirteen steps were agreed, this Conference has not been able to respond to that call.

In 2010, the States Parties agreed that this Conference should immediately begin negotiation of a treaty banning the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices in accordance with the report of the Special Coordinator of 1995 (CD/1299) and the mandate contained therein, as part of a balanced and comprehensive programme of work.

Last year, the General Assembly, by a very significant majority, voted for the creation in 2014 of a Group of Governmental Experts to make recommendations on possible aspects which could contribute to such a treaty. In advance of the constitution of this Group, the UNSG has been asked to collect the views of UN Member States on such a treaty and report those views to the 68th General Assembly as part of preparations for work on this important issue. Ireland urges all States to express their views to the Secretary General and to remain involved in this process as it goes ahead.

Madame President,

Ireland believes that, for it to be meaningful, a fissile materials treaty must address the NPT’s disarmament agenda as well as its non-proliferation agenda. It should, in our view, address existing stocks. This would serve to limit the expansion of existing nuclear arsenals while at the same time preventing the proliferation of new arsenals. A treaty along these lines would represent a major contribution to the total elimination of nuclear weapons, as envisaged by the NPT.