

Canada - Opening statement

2007 NPT PrepCom

Vienna, 30 April, 2007

Mr. Chairman,

Let me congratulate you on your election and assure you of my delegation's ongoing support in your work.

We are gathered here for the initial meeting of the current NPT review cycle at a time when realising the objectives of this Treaty have never been so important and in the face of challenges to the Treaty's authority and integrity that have never been so acute. In Canada's view, the NPT is at the core of the international regime that has established: the norm against nuclear proliferation; the legal obligation to pursue good faith negotiations to nuclear disarmament; and the framework for cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. The NPT's "grand bargain" reflects the essential inter-relationship between these three pillars. All States Parties must recognize these core commitments as equal, inseparable and mutually reinforcing, for the Treaty is only as strong as its weakest link. The Treaty must be universal and its implementation comprehensive if it is to have enduring strength. The work of this meeting and all the others of the current review cycle should be oriented towards this end.

Mr. Chairman, with respect to nuclear non-proliferation, the positive fact remains that, until recently, no state that joined the NPT as a non-nuclear weapons state has developed nuclear weapons capabilities. This unblemished record has been sadly compromised by the irresponsible action of the DPRK in conducting a nuclear weapons test last October, which was the first nuclear test in over eight years. This followed the IAEA Board of Governors decision finding the DPRK in non-compliance with its NPT safeguards obligations on several occasions, and triggered UN Security Council Resolution 1718 sanctioning the DPRK. At our first official gathering since the DPRK's action, NPT States Parties must reaffirm that this is not acceptable behaviour. We urge Pyongyang to build on the recent positive results of the Six Party talks and move promptly and purposefully to return to the NPT family as a member in good standing.

The unfortunate, ongoing ambiguity surrounding the DPRK's status within the NPT points to an institutional weakness in the Treaty that we believe should be remedied. At present NPT States Parties lack a provision to meet collectively in a timely fashion to discuss such a critical issue as withdrawal or a nuclear test and to send a clear message on the subject. We believe a Treaty of this importance merits at least an annual meeting of its States Parties fully empowered to take decisions as required in addition to a mechanism to convene promptly in emergency session in the face of a critical threat to the Treaty's integrity. It is high time for this Treaty to possess a small standing bureau to provide stewardship and continuity throughout its five year cycles. Having annual and authoritative meetings of States Parties, ideally in conjunction with annual reports on implementation, will provide a powerful instrument for enhanced accountability of States

Parties for their fulfillment of their Treaty commitments. Better accountability is a stimulus for better implementation.

Another prominent challenge to the non-proliferation norm of the NPT is presented by Iran. The IAEA Board of Governors made a finding of non-compliance when Iran refused to take the steps required of it and the UN Security Council has twice unanimously imposed sanctions. While the Security Council remains seized of the issue, in our view, NPT States Parties should also address the issue of Iran's compliance with Article III during this PrepCom and promote a satisfactory resolution of this chronic problem. Integral to the Treaty is the confidence that States Party have that others are meeting their obligations. Iran must work to restore confidence, resolve outstanding issues, and demonstrate to others that it will work proactively with the IAEA in this regard.

Mr. Chairman,

Nuclear disarmament like non-proliferation also poses key challenges for our Treaty. While we applaud the downward trend in global arsenals of the Nuclear Weapons States Parties to the Treaty we find the current estimated holdings of 27,000 nuclear weapons as far too high and the pathway and timetable for further reductions still ill-defined. Key supporting agreements have not entered into force, like the CTBT a decade after its signature, and while the CD has made some progress in the past year, the long awaited resumption of FMCT negotiations has still not occurred. More progress on these and the other "benchmarks" for nuclear disarmament set out in 2000 will be needed if a shared sense of a dynamic process is to be restored to the Article VI enterprise.

The NPT's third pillar of peaceful uses of nuclear energy is becoming increasingly salient. But the rights accorded by Article IV are tempered by compliance with Articles I, II and III. Growing worldwide energy demand, the requirement for sustainable development and concern about global climate change have fuelled expectations of a nuclear renaissance. If we can develop new rules-based and non-discriminatory initiatives to harness this potential while reinforcing the non-proliferation regime, significant global benefits could accrue.

Since the 2005 NPT RevCon, nine additional States have brought into force a comprehensive safeguards agreement (CSA) with the IAEA, while eight additional States have brought into force an Additional Protocol (AP). Altogether, 75 States now have a CSA and an AP in force. Regrettably, 30 NPT States Parties have yet to comply with the basic NPT requirement to conclude and bring into force a CSA with the IAEA, in some cases decades after they joined the NPT. The AP is far from universal, despite its demonstrated value in broadening the conclusions that can be drawn by the IAEA for a State, and thereby increasing international confidence in the peaceful intent of a State's nuclear program. Canada continues to regard a comprehensive safeguards agreement together with an Additional Protocol as the safeguards standard under Article III of the Treaty.

Mr. Chairman, turning briefly to cross-cutting issues, efforts to universalize the Treaty must continue. We should also ensure that any initiative aimed at bringing any non-NPT state closer into line with international non-proliferation and disarmament norms does not undermine these norms. The NPT membership has taken formal positions on several of these issues at previous Review Conferences and any modifications of these should be on the basis of clear proposals and adequate debate.

Given the unsatisfactory results of the NPT Review Conference in 2005, we must redouble our efforts to achieve practical advances in the upcoming cycle. Over the next two weeks we will be laying the foundation for what can be agreed in 2010. Canada is optimistic that this can be accomplished through renewed political commitment, new approaches to the Treaty's operation, and greater attention to its implementation.

The NPT and its support mechanisms must continue to evolve to ensure the fulfillment of long-standing obligations in the face of new technological, security and geo-political developments. In this respect, it is important not just to handle current crises well, but also to take the experience from this process and apply it to strengthening the Treaty regime. Canada believes that ensuring comprehensive implementation of the NPT's obligations, while promoting its universalization, should be the focus of States Parties' efforts during the current review cycle. Ensuring improved accountability via upgrading the Treaty's institutional arrangements will make an important and lasting contribution to these efforts.