



# IRELAND

**Address by**

**Micheál Martin T.D.**

**Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ireland**

**Eighth Review Conference of the Treaty on the  
Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons**

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PERMANENT MISSION OF IRELAND TO THE UNITED NATIONS  
885 SECOND AVENUE, NEW YORK, NY 10017 TELEPHONE 212 421-6934 FAX 212 752-4726  
ireland@un.int

Mr President

At the outset, please allow me to offer you my warmest congratulations on your election as President of this Conference.

Your task is a very challenging one. However, I am confident that your wisdom and diplomatic skills will enable you to lead this conference to a positive conclusion. I can assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation.

Mr President

My country has had a long and close association with this Treaty, going back more than half a century. In 1958, one of my distinguished predecessors, Frank Aiken, introduced the first in a series of UN resolutions calling for the prevention of the further dissemination of nuclear weapons. His tireless efforts to forge a common approach to this issue culminated in 1961 with the unanimous adoption of the so-called 'Irish Resolution', which paved the way for the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Ireland's pioneering role was recognised when the NPT was opened for signature in 1968 and we were invited to be the first country to sign. We were also the first country which ratified this Treaty.

I am proud of the role which Ireland played in urging the international community to tackle this most terrifying of threats to humanity. I salute the vision of my predecessor, Frank Aiken; I stand in his tradition; and I pledge to work as tirelessly as he did to ensure that the objectives of the Treaty he helped to bring into existence are fully realized.

The horrors which nuclear weaponry can unleash on mankind and on the planet we inhabit defy description. In addition to death and destruction on a massive scale, the environmental costs are profound and long-lasting. Scientists tell us about the effects on the Earth's stratosphere of the detonation of nuclear weapons. A "nuclear winter" caused by sunlight being blocked out for months or even years is a nightmare scenario which we must all work to prevent.

In the Cold War era, the world regularly stood on the brink of nuclear catastrophe. With the NPT, the international community took a decisive step back from the abyss. Frank Aiken described the draft Treaty in 1968 as "a practical and vital step away from war and towards a peaceful and co-operative world which all reasonable men desire". For all States large and small, he continued, the Treaty would provide "an infinitely more effective shield against a nuclear holocaust than the most costly armoury of offensive and defensive equipment".

In the intervening years, the NPT has become the most powerful bulwark available to us against the dangers posed by nuclear weapons. Support for the NPT is a cornerstone of Irish foreign policy. We are firm advocates of efforts to strengthen the Treaty and to ensure full respect for its provisions.

It is as important now as ever to ensure the universality of the Treaty. We call on the small number of States who have not yet done so to adhere to it.

Today, the NPT regime faces unprecedented challenges. Among the most serious are the proliferation risks posed by Iran and the DPRK.

The Treaty also risks being undermined by the reluctance of some States to implement each of its provisions fully. Selective approaches which stress the urgency of non-proliferation while downplaying the need for progress in relation to disarmament serve merely to weaken the Treaty. The NPT's enduring role as the foundation of the international disarmament and non-proliferation regime requires that it be implemented in all its aspects.

I am, however, encouraged by some very positive developments in recent months. President Obama, who in his ground-breaking speech in Prague last year pledged to work for a world free of nuclear weapons, has concluded with President Medvedev the New START Agreement, which commits the US and Russia to significant cuts in their nuclear arsenals. I warmly welcome this important advance on the international disarmament front. A former US President, John F. Kennedy, once made the wise observation that "*arms alone are not enough to keep the peace – it must be kept by men*". The US and Russian leaders have taken a significant step forward and deserve our support and encouragement.

I urge their two countries and the other nuclear-weapon States to work speedily for further substantial reductions and the eventual elimination of all nuclear weapons, including non-deployed and non-strategic nuclear weapons.

Ireland also welcomes the publication last month of the US Nuclear Posture Review. Even if it did not satisfy our ambitions in every respect, the content of the Review was positive and encouraging.

Mr President

A great deal of planning, resources and energy have been expended by the States Parties to the Treaty in preparing for this Review Conference. In these circumstances, it is reasonable to ask: what do we wish to achieve?

First and foremost, we must re-establish the authority of the NPT after the setbacks of recent years. The States Parties should reaffirm the undertakings they gave at previous Review Conferences. This is essential if we are to

make further progress. Having recommitted ourselves, we must agree a balanced, consensual and forward-looking package of decisions on all three pillars of the Treaty and on the Middle East Resolution.

For the great majority of States Parties, this Review Conference will not be seen as a success unless we reach agreement on specific measures to advance disarmament. As long as some States appear to covet their nuclear weapons and to be reluctant to relinquish them, others will covet them too and will strive to acquire them. Those who possess nuclear weapons must show the bold leadership necessary to break this cycle if we are to realise the vision of a world free of nuclear weapons.

The implementation of the 1995 Resolution on the Middle East is an important priority for this Conference. We to reach agreement on concrete practical steps involving all states of the region. Progress can must do all we can to reach agreement on concrete practical steps involving all states of the region. Progress can only be achieved if parties engage constructively with the issues, in a spirit of compromise and goodwill.

A further issue of concern is that the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty has yet to enter into force. I urge the nine remaining Annex 2 States to ratify the Treaty immediately and unconditionally. Similarly, negotiations on a verifiable Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty should begin at the earliest opportunity. I call on all parties involved to show the necessary flexibility to allow negotiations to commence.

Ireland pursues its disarmament and non-proliferation objectives both nationally and through its membership of the EU, the New Agenda Coalition (NAC) and the Vienna Group of Ten. Each of these groups will address the Conference and table Working Papers. Ireland fully associates itself in advance with these statements and I commend the Working Papers for your consideration. The New Agenda Coalition played a key role at the 2000 Review Conference and brokered the 13 Practical Steps, which remain largely unimplemented. The NAC stands ready to play its part in fostering a positive outcome to this Conference.

Today, circumstances are more propitious for a reaffirmation and strengthening of the NPT regime than they have been for a decade. However, we will not succeed at this conference without leadership, political will to find the necessary compromises and hard work. All of us - and I emphasise all of us - must play our part. We do not want, and cannot afford, a further inconclusive Review Conference.

I draw inspiration from the great 18<sup>th</sup> century Irish orator and statesman, Edmund Burke, who counselled: *"Never despair; but if you do, work on in despair"*. Regardless of the enormous challenges we face if this Conference is to succeed, we must not lose hope. My counsel is one of perseverance, patience and flexibility. Ireland will spare no effort to find common ground among the States Parties so that we can emerge from this Conference with a renewed and strengthened NPT regime. Let us work together in the weeks ahead to ensure that this opportunity to provide a safer world for future generations is fully utilised.

Thank you