



# IRELAND

Statement by

Mr Charles Flanagan, T.D.  
Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade

at the

2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation  
of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)

New York, 27 April 2015

*Check against delivery*

Madam President,

At the outset, Ireland would like to convey its sincere condolences to the Government and people of Nepal on the terrible loss of life and injuries arising from the recent earthquake. Ireland will help where we can.

Please allow me to offer my warmest congratulations on your election as President of this Conference. I can assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation in your efforts to achieve a positive outcome.

Ireland works very closely with colleagues in the New Agenda Coalition. The NAC will address this conference and has tabled two Working Papers and Ireland fully associates itself with both. High Representative Mogherini will speak later about the EU's shared belief in the vital importance of strengthening all three pillars of the NPT, to which Ireland fully subscribes.

This year is a particularly important and sombre milestone – it marks 70 years from the end of the Second World War and the terrible scenes of devastation in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Unfortunately, the risk of a nuclear detonation remains as real today as it did 70 years ago. In fact, I would say we have reached a turning point for the Treaty, and I will say more about this shortly.

This year also marks the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Ireland's membership of the UN. Right from our very first days in this distinguished community, Ireland has been deeply concerned with the threat posed by nuclear weapons. Ireland was the initiator of the Resolutions at the United Nations which led to the negotiation of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. We have advocated strongly since then that all provisions of the Treaty should be fully honoured and implemented.

Suggestions that there is an equivalence of achievement with regard to multilateral nuclear disarmament compared with the other two pillars of the NPT are simply not supported by the facts. On the contrary, the imbalance across the three pillars is increasing.

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty was originally motivated by the concern about the human cost of the detonation of any one of the 80,000 nuclear weapons then in existence. Despite considerable reductions, which we welcome and acknowledge, we cannot shy away from the fact that 17,000 of these weapons still exist, with few prospects in the short or medium term for further voluntary reductions outside of the Treaty.

We welcome recent efforts to reach agreement on Iran's nuclear programme, and we strongly hope this agreement is confirmed by all the parties. This would mark a significant achievement for the non-proliferation pillar of the NPT.

It should also, in my view, add to the impetus for urgent discussions about effective measures for eliminating the nuclear weapons still in existence – discussions which of course are an obligation under Article VI.

Madam President,

The 2010 Review Conference unanimously declared deep concern at the “catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons”. Since then, the humanitarian dimension has moved to the very centre of the international deliberations on nuclear disarmament, exactly where it should be. Ireland is very grateful to the Governments of Norway, Mexico and Austria for their leadership in hosting major international conferences on the topic. The Vienna Conference last December was attended by almost 160 countries.

The evidence presented there showed, very clearly in my view, that the risks of a nuclear detonation are greater than we realised; that the capacity to cope with such an event is hopelessly inadequate and that the appalling consequences for life on this planet would be disproportionately worse for women and children than for men.

In a personal message to the Vienna Conference, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon said that “The more we understand about the humanitarian impacts, the more it becomes clear that we must pursue disarmament as an urgent imperative.”

Pope Francis also sent a personal statement to the Conference saying “Nuclear deterrence and the threat of mutually assured destruction cannot be the basis for an ethic of fraternity and peaceful co-existence among peoples and states. The youth of today and tomorrow deserve far more”.

Austria made a Pledge to present the findings of the Vienna Conference to this assembly and to highlight the horror of these weapons and the ever-present risks and dangers they represent – risks and dangers which all our citizens are entitled to know about.

The New Agenda Coalition has submitted a new working paper to this Review Conference, which highlights the possible legal pathways for pursuing the effective measures for nuclear disarmament mandated by Article VI of the NPT. It is a constructive and cogent document which does not seek to prescribe the particular legal instrument to be pursued or the forum in which discussions on effective measures should take place. I encourage you all to study this paper and to reflect urgently on what we can do at this Review Conference to move closer to meeting our joint obligation under Article VI of the Treaty.

We are at a crossroads.

We need to acknowledge that not a single nuclear weapon has been disarmed under the NPT or as part of any multilateral process, and that there are no structures in place for this to happen. If the Treaty is to retain legitimacy, then surely the effective measures it explicitly requires for disarmament under Article VI must be put in place within the coming review cycle, before the Treaty’s fiftieth Anniversary in 2020.



Madam President,

The non-proliferation pillar of the NPT stands between us and a nuclear weapons free-for-all. Ireland has consistently argued for a balanced implementation across all three pillars of the NPT, and we attach equal importance to the non-proliferation provisions of the Treaty, both on their own merits and as a contribution to the goal of disarmament.

We also wish to reaffirm the central importance of the IAEA's safeguards system to the nuclear non-proliferation regime. Together with many states present here, Ireland is an active participant in - and a strong supporter of - several export control regimes, the aim of which is to counter the proliferation of nuclear weapons technology, materials or know-how.

While Ireland has chosen not to include nuclear power in its energy mix, we recognise the right of all State Parties to the NPT to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes under Article IV of the Treaty, subject to full compliance with the non-proliferation and verification requirements of the Treaty. We also support the initiative of the IAEA to promote peaceful uses of nuclear energy as mentioned earlier by Secretary of State Kerry. We are pleased to contribute financially to this work.

At the 2010 Review Conference, considerable work was done to bring forward the prospect for a Middle East Zone free of Nuclear Weapons and other Weapons of Mass Destruction.

Unfortunately, it has not been possible to bring this work to fruition in the form of a Conference in the intervening period despite untiring efforts by the Facilitator.

However, I strongly hope that this Review Conference will give us the impetus to overcome the final remaining hurdles. The benefits to the region, and to the world at large, make the effort both necessary and worthwhile.

Madam President,

We also need to discuss the important need for women to be given agency in relation to the discussions on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament. For every 2 men who die of cancer due to exposure to radiation as a consequence of a nuclear weapon detonation, three women will die. The disproportionate effect on children is even greater and is highest for female children.

For these reasons, Ireland will organise a side event next Tuesday 5 May which will study gender and nuclear weapons, from the dual viewpoint of the disproportionate impact and the evident need for women's voices to be heard clearly and given equal weight in the nuclear weapons debate.

We are given the opportunity every 5 years to review the implementation of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. We owe it to our citizens to ensure that their welfare and safety remain paramount in our discussions on achieving a world without nuclear weapons. Every time we defer constructive multilateral discussions about reaching that goal, we fail our citizens and continue to put them at risk. We must re-double our efforts to ensure not just that others refrain from developing nuclear weapons but that such weapons are never used again under any circumstances and that a process is started now to put all nuclear weapons beyond use for good.

Thank you

ENDS