

2015 NPT REVIEW CONFERENCE

SOUTH AFRICA'S NATIONAL STATEMENT FOR THE GENERAL DEBATE

Madam President,

My delegation wishes to join others in expressing our profound condolences to the Government and people of Nepal.

South Africa congratulates you on your assumption of the Presidency of the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). We also congratulate the other members of the Bureau on the assumption of their important positions. Please be assured of my delegation's full co-operation and assistance.

My delegation also associates itself with the African Group, Non-Aligned Movement and the New Agenda Coalition statements.

Madam President,

The year 2015 marks not only the twentieth anniversary of the indefinite extension of the Treaty, but also the 70th anniversary of the *nuclear bombing* of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. These key milestones compel us to rise above the often sterile debates to consider whether we have indeed made every effort to "avert the devastation of a nuclear war" and to take measures that would "safeguard the security of peoples".

During this Review Conference it will therefore be important to not only take stock of progress during the period under review but also to agree on actions for the next review cycle that are worthy of the Treaty's objectives.

Madam President,

At the outset, my delegation wishes to reiterate South Africa's commitment to the attainment and maintenance of a world free of nuclear weapons. In this context, we are committed to the Treaty and its three equally important pillars, namely nuclear disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

The Final Document of the 2010 Review Conference contained an extensive Action Plan under all three Treaty pillars which, in a very concrete way, illustrated the continued commitment of States Parties to the Treaty.

However, agreement on the 2010 Final Document was by no means a recognition that States Parties were satisfied with the progress made in the implementation of past agreements or that confidence among States Parties had been restored. In fact, most States Parties remain seriously concerned about the lack of urgency and seriousness with which these solemn undertakings, particularly in respect of nuclear disarmament, continue to be approached. For this reason, South Africa believes that the success of this or any other Review Conference will be determined by the extent to which these undertakings are implemented.

Madam President,

South Africa shares the deep concern expressed by the vast majority of State Parties to the Treaty about the unacceptable humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons. Nuclear weapons are inhumane weapons and it is inconceivable that the use of nuclear weapons could ever, under any circumstances, be

consistent with international law, particularly international humanitarian law. Nuclear disarmament is not only an international legal obligation, but a moral and ethical imperative.

My delegation is pleased to associate with the *Joint Statement on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons*, which was delivered by Austria on behalf of 158 countries. We welcome the outcomes of the Oslo, Nayarit and Vienna *Conferences on the Humanitarian Consequences of Nuclear Weapons*. Rather than serving as a so-called distraction, these Conferences are integral to advancing Action 1 agreed to in 2010. We echo the call to action outlined in the Austrian Pledge, which is in accord with South Africa's long-standing policy on this matter.

The humanitarian perspective also compels us to fundamentally disagree with arguments that these weapons of mass destruction are essential to the security of some, but not for others. This Treaty cannot succeed if it focuses only on the security interests of the few. Security concerns are important provided that they serve to guarantee security for all the world's peoples – our collective security. Indeed, the continued retention of nuclear weapons on the basis of the perceived security interests of some States comes at the expense of the rest of humanity.

The only way to guarantee the security we all seek, is through the total elimination of nuclear weapons and their prohibition. It is indeed an anomaly that nuclear weapons remain the only weapons of mass destruction that have yet to be subjected to a comprehensive, global prohibition. It is clear that as long as these weapons exist, and vertical and horizontal proliferation persists, humanity will continue to face the threat of catastrophe and mass annihilation.

Madam President,

The establishment and maintenance of a world without nuclear weapons require a collective commitment to all three pillars of the Treaty. However, while there has been significant concrete progress in the area of nuclear non-proliferation, it is regrettable that the nuclear disarmament pillar remains marked by a range of agreed actions that remains to be fulfilled. This state of affairs places the Treaty and its review process under increasing pressure as it falls far short of expectations with respect to what we were guaranteed under Article VI and unequivocally reiterated in 2000.

Whilst some argue that there is a need to create the necessary conditions for nuclear disarmament, we believe that these conditions were already established with the entry-into-force of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, reinforced by the '*bargain*' associated with its indefinite extension as well as the outcomes of the 2000 and 2010 Review Conferences.

While it may take time for nuclear disarmament to culminate in a world free of nuclear weapons, we do have a body of consensus measures on which progress could and should have been registered since 2010. Progress has been lacking in a range of areas, including reducing and eliminating nuclear weapons stationed outside the territories of NWS. Similarly, NWS and their allies continue to rely on nuclear weapons as integral to their military and security doctrines. An estimated 1 800 nuclear warheads remain on high-alert status, ready to deploy within minutes.

Any justifications for retaining such weapons would therefore be irresponsible, as they amount to encouraging proliferation, thereby undermining the very Treaty that States claim to uphold. As the UN Secretary General correctly asserted, "*there are no right hands for wrong weapons*". In addition, any

justifications for the associated maintenance and modernization programmes and the vast resources diverted for this purpose are unsustainable in a world where the basic needs of billions, including the achievement of the developmental goals agreed to at the turn of the century, cannot be met.

South Africa is pleased that nuclear-weapon States are now engaging in order to build trust and confidence amongst each other, but it is equally important for them to build trust and confidence with non-nuclear-weapon States. Given that 45 years have now passed since the entry-into-force of the Treaty, we can no longer afford to strike hollow agreements every five years which only seem to perpetuate the status quo. The time has come to bring a decisive end to what amounts to '*nuclear apartheid*'.

Madam President,

In 2010 we agreed that "*all States need to make special efforts to establish the necessary framework to achieve and maintain a world without nuclear weapons*". It is regrettable that five years on, no such framework has been established nor have serious discussions commenced so as to give effect to this commitment.

We therefore welcome the constructive proposals on "*effective measures*" required by article VI of the Treaty that have been presented during the course of this review cycle and we urge this Conference to commit to a thorough consideration of all possible options for a framework of "*effective measures*" that would strengthen article VI as an effective means for achieving the core disarmament objective of the Treaty.

South Africa supports the growing call for the construction of a legally-binding agreement or agreements. South Africa has also long supported a systematic and progressive approach to nuclear disarmament, including through a framework agreement of mutually reinforcing instruments.

South Africa has no set conclusions as to what this should look like or about the sequencing of the implementation of the mutually reinforcing elements that are needed to achieve and maintain a world without nuclear weapons. What is important is that this "*framework*" must be the product of an open multilateral process; contain clear benchmarks and timelines; ensure transparent, verifiable and irreversible nuclear disarmament measures; and importantly move us closer to the achievement of the objective that we seek.

With reference to arguments that the "*effective measures*" proposals distract from a step-by-step approach within the NPT, it is worth bearing in mind that the NPT is not, and has never been an instrument that stands on its own. By entering into safeguards agreements and by agreeing to commitments and undertakings in the final documents of Review Conferences by consensus, the States Parties have created the Treaty Regime. The 1995, 2000 and 2010 outcomes added many important consensus elements to strengthen the Treaty and its implementation. In this regard, it is important to note that the *Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty* and the future *Fissile Material Treaty* both have their roots in the NPT review process.

Madam President,

It remains South Africa's principled position that it is the obligation of States Parties to accept safeguards as required under Article III of the Treaty.

Safeguards contribute to mutual confidence in the peaceful nature of a State's nuclear activities and the absence of undeclared nuclear activities or material, which in turn should facilitate the transfer of nuclear technology and use of nuclear energy to the benefit of developing countries.

My delegation is therefore encouraged by the progress that has been made since 2010 in terms of the number of States that have now concluded Comprehensive Safeguards Agreements and Additional Protocols.

South Africa further reiterates its full confidence in the IAEA as the only internationally recognized competent authority responsible for verifying and assuring compliance with the safeguards agreements of States Parties.

Madam Chair,

Nuclear Weapon Free Zones play an important role in preventing the proliferation – both vertical and horizontal – of nuclear weapons and reaffirms the view that the establishment of internationally recognized nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned, enhances global and regional peace and security and constitutes an important step to strengthen the nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation regime.

Madam President,

Peaceful nuclear co-operation and access to the benefits of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy constitutes one of the core objectives of the Treaty.

Nuclear power and the peaceful applications of nuclear technology, if optimised to the fullest, can meaningfully enhance the achievement of the *Millennium Development Goals* and could contribute to the post-2015 UN development agenda. The inalienable right of the peaceful use of nuclear technology is of particular importance in attaining sustainable and accelerated economic growth in Africa.

South Africa attaches great importance to the IAEA's *Technical Cooperation Programme* which contributes towards addressing the socio-economic needs and sustainable development challenges of developing countries. The TC Programme is also a mechanism which enables the Agency to meet its statutory objective of accelerating and enlarging the contribution of atomic energy to peace, health and prosperity throughout the world. Sufficient, assured and predictable TC funding therefore remains a priority.

Madam President,

We take note of the proposals to elaborate a common understanding on the elements of the withdrawal provisions of Article X. Having listened carefully to the statements delivered during the general debate, my delegation has reached the conclusion that the NPT community might be well served by extending this exercise to other articles of the Treaty. For instance, a systematic analysis of the elements of Articles I and II may lead us to a common understanding on issues such as nuclear sharing arrangements. Looking at articles IV and VI would add clarity on whether these core objectives of the Treaty have been met and clarify what remains to be done. Such an holistic approach to the provisions of the Treaty could be an important contribution by this Conference.

In conclusion, Madam President, South Africa supports the full implementation of the NPT and its universality in pursuit of the goal of achieving and maintaining a world entirely free from nuclear weapons. The strength, credibility and vitality of the NPT rests on a fundamental bargain across its three pillars, which must be recognized and upheld.

Thank you.