

**STATEMENT BY H.E. MR. GEORGI PANAYOTOV, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE  
OF BULGARIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

**71ST SESSION OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY, FIRST COMMITTEE, THEMATIC  
DEBATE ON NUCLEAR WEAPONS, 17 OCTOBER 2016**

Mr. Chair,

Since this is the first time my delegation takes the floor, allow me to congratulate you, as well as the other members of the Bureau, on the assumption of the chairmanship of this Committee. I take this opportunity to commend the previous Chair, Ambassador Karel van Oosterom of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, for his outstanding leadership. I would like to assure you of the full support of my delegation in your efforts to steer us to a successful end of our deliberations.

There is no doubt that all here in this room share a common objective - that is reaching the ultimate goal of a world without nuclear weapons. What we differ on is the approach.

While we understand that there may be frustration by the pace of progress towards nuclear disarmament, we are of the view that a prohibition treaty, as has been proposed for negotiation in 2017, would not be effective without the participation of all states, and most importantly without the participation of the states with nuclear weapons. Instead of bringing us closer to achieving the ultimate goal of a world without nuclear weapons, it will further divide us.

Unfortunately, the recent developments in global security have demonstrated that the security environment is complex and far from stable. This has to be factored in when advocating for rapid solutions. Being cognizant of the specificities of the security environment of each state is key to understanding why there can be no shortcuts to nuclear disarmament. Achieving the ultimate goal of a world without nuclear weapons requires unity, understanding and trust. Unity in action, understanding of the security concerns of every state, trust is self-explanatory. That is why Bulgaria has been advocating for a progressive approach.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons remains the cornerstone of the global non-proliferation regime and the framework for nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and peaceful uses of nuclear energy. The 2010 Action Plan offers a solid basis towards achieving a world without nuclear weapons. What we need is unity and concerted efforts in implementing it. The commencement of the NPT

new review cycle in 2017 is an opportunity that needs to be seized by all in order to advance in the efforts for the elimination of nuclear weapons.

Advancing nuclear disarmament requires our joint efforts. A common understanding on the necessary steps can be built through an inclusive and comprehensive discussion only, with the substantive participation of the states with nuclear weapons.

Bulgaria supports a constructive and realistic, gradual approach, based on practical and implementable measures, building blocks that will strengthen the international disarmament and non-proliferation regime. Such practical steps could be: overcoming the impasse in the Conference on Disarmament, including through its enlargement; starting negotiations on a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT), bringing into force the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty.

During this session of the First Committee there are very constructive initiatives offering practical steps - namely the draft resolution on FMCT, the proposal on nuclear disarmament verification, amongst others.

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the opening for signature of CTBT. Our efforts should be aimed at its expedited entry into force as this is a key building block in achieving a world without nuclear weapons. Bulgaria welcomes the adoption of Security Council resolution 2310 which it cosponsored, and reiterates the call for refraining from nuclear testing.

Finally, Bulgaria remains hopeful that through unity, understanding and mutual trust, we have the potential to achieve a world without nuclear weapons.

Thank you!