

**STATEMENT DELIVERED**

**BY**

**THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF SOUTH AFRICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS,**

**AMBASSADOR JERRY MATJILA**

**AT**

**THE 2018 SUBSTANTIVE SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS DISARMAMENT COMMISSION  
(UNDC)**

**NEW YORK, 2-20 APRIL 2018**

**Mr Chairperson,**

Let me from the outset join other delegations in congratulating you on assuming your position as Chair of the substantive session of the 2018 United Nations Disarmament Commission.

We further extend our congratulations to the Working Group Chairs on their election. My delegation is looking forward to working with you to make this Session a success.

My delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered by the distinguished representatives of Indonesia and Nigeria on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Africa Group, respectively.

**Madam Chairperson,**

Allow me to make few general remarks on the two agenda items before us, which my delegation looks forward to discussing in detail during the thematic debates.

1. South Africa remains committed to **multilateralism** as the best tool to deal with issues affecting international peace and security.
2. We reaffirm our commitment to the UN Disarmament Commission as the only universal and main deliberative and **inclusive platform on critical issues of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control**. The Disarmament Commission has in the past made valuable contributions to our work in the field of disarmament and international security and we call on all delegations to show the necessary flexibility so as to allow this body to fulfill its responsibilities.
3. We welcome the gains made during the 2017 Session of the UNDC, which agreed by consensus on the recommendations on Confidence-Building Measures in the field of conventional weapons. However, we remain concerned about the lack of progress on the nuclear disarmament agenda item since 1999. It is my delegation's hope and in our collective interest that the discussions and deliberations during the next two weeks, will be based on genuine political will and good faith, and that we will be able to make progress.

**Madam Chairperson,**

4. On the issue of nuclear disarmament, my delegation joins the majority of member states that have expressed deep concern about the catastrophic humanitarian consequences that would befall humankind in case of a nuclear detonation, whether by design or accident. Only the total elimination of nuclear weapons and the legally-binding assurance that they will never be produced again will guarantee a world free from the threat posed by nuclear weapons.
5. Also of serious concern is the continuing modernisation of nuclear arsenals and their means of delivery by some nuclear-weapon States in flagrant violation of the letter and spirit of the Article VI of the NPT and the solemn undertakings made at previous NPT Review Conferences in this regard.

**Madam Chairperson,**

6. My delegation welcomes, as a bold and positive step, the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear weapons (TPNW) on 7 July 2017. South Africa was among the first 50 countries that signed the Treaty when it was opened for signature on 20 September 2017 in New York. We call on all States that are committed to the achievement of a world without nuclear weapons and that have not yet done so to sign and ratify the Treaty in order to facilitate its early entry into force.

**Madam Chairperson,**

7. We reiterate that the TPNW is not the final word on nuclear weapons, but a critical step in the evolution of the regime that would be required to achieve and eventually maintain a world without nuclear weapons. Importantly, the Treaty does not prioritise the security interests of one or a few States above the security interests of the international community as a whole, but rather recognizes that nuclear weapons pose a threat to all States and people.
8. My delegation wishes to reiterate that our support for a prohibition treaty is without prejudice to the realisation of existing nuclear disarmament commitments, particularly those agreed to in the NPT context. As we approach the third Preparatory Committee of the NPT in Geneva, it is imperative to recognise that the vitality and relevance of the NPT, as the foundation of the nuclear non-proliferation regime, is dependent on the extent to which State Parties implement their obligations and commitments. It is not acceptable for State Parties to treat their obligations and commitments as an “a la carte menu” from which they can choose. We call upon all States Parties to the NPT to honour their obligations and to faithfully, and without precondition, implement all commitments agreed to in 1995, 2000 and 2010 without any further delay, including the 1995 resolution on the establishment of a zone in the Middle East free from nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.
9. Lastly, we joint others in reaffirming the inalienable right to peaceful uses of nuclear energy. South Africa also believes that nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation are symbiotically and inextricably linked elements of the NPT and therefore progress in both elements is essential to realise the object and purpose of the NPT.

**Madam Chairperson,**

10. We view the second agenda item entitled recommendations to promote the practical implementation of transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities with the goal of preventing an arms race in outer space as very critical to the maintenance of peace and security. It is widely acknowledged that outer space and its exploration for

peaceful purposes is playing a vital and ever increasing role in our daily lives. It is therefore important to ensure that substantive work is undertaken to prevent it from becoming a new arena for conflict.

11. South Africa believes that the best way to promote order, safety, security and the sustainability of outer space activities and to preserve outer space as a domain for peaceful activities is through international cooperation and dialogue. We will therefore continue to support and engage international efforts to develop rules of the road and norms for behaviour in space. In order to achieve the widest possible adherence to such rules and norms, there is no alternative to open and transparent multilateral processes, in which all interested States can participate on an equal basis. Key to such efforts is the extent to which all States are able to gain access to and benefit from outer space, regardless of their level of scientific, technical and economic development. In that connection, we look forward to discussion on this subject during the next two weeks.

**Madam Chairperson,**

12. In conclusion, my delegation looks forward to elaborate more on the two agenda items during the thematic debates and stands ready to participate actively during discussions, and to work with all delegations towards achieving a consensus outcome during this session.