Statement
delivered by

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on behalf of Australia, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, the Czech Republic, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Montenegro, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Turkey

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UN General Assembly

Nuclear Weapon Cluster

New York, 21 October 2019
Statement on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty

Mr Chairperson,

I take the floor on behalf of Australia, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, the Czech Republic, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Montenegro, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Turkey and my own country the Netherlands.

The nuclear thematic discussions at this UNGA First Committee are an important opportunity for constructive dialogue ahead of the 2020 NPT Review Conference and the 50th anniversary of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

Dialogue can help us but it is not enough.

We need to use the time we have wisely, to define areas of convergence. We will work to help shape a successful outcome for 2020 and beyond.

One thing we can all agree on is that the NPT – over its 50 year history – has made, and continues to make our world safer.

The NPT remains a singular accomplishment. Since 1970, it has been the cornerstone of the global non-proliferation and disarmament architecture, as well as an essential element of international peace and security that has benefited us all.

These accomplishments should not be taken for granted, nor should we assume that the Treaty will maintain this role without our active support for its implementation and strengthening. That is why Review Conferences are important for the Treaty.

In 2020, we should acknowledge the NPT’s achievements and look back honestly to review its implementation – where we have done well, and where we still have work to do. Indeed, an honest assessment of the state of the NPT strikes us as a valuable component of a Review Conference outcome.

Likewise, we need to look forward to our common interests in strengthening the Treaty, to maintain commitments, and to narrow differences and find space for compromise to advance our shared goals.

Our approach takes into account the international security environment, without losing sight of the concerns about the risks posed by nuclear weapons. Indeed, the NPT has always been an instrument for pursuing ambitious aims whilst taking into account geopolitical realities. That goal has not changed: to advance and achieve a world without nuclear weapons.

To this end, we pursue pragmatic, inclusive measures including: universalization of the NPT, entry into force of the CTBT, negotiation in the Conference on Disarmament of a Treaty to ban the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons, cooperation on nuclear disarmament verification, a reaffirmation or tightening of existing Negative Security Assurances, greater
transparency on nuclear arsenals, an inclusive dialogue on nuclear doctrines and measures aimed at nuclear risk reduction.

Several resolutions presented at this First Committee aim to further this concrete agenda – on CTBT, verification, youth engagement, and joint action and future dialogue.

The agreement of a consensus report from the GGE on Nuclear Disarmament Verification shows that dialogue is possible. We welcome continued work on this issue, also within a scientific and technical framework.

We welcome helpful initiatives that spur consideration of how to advance nuclear disarmament in practical terms. Various risk reduction initiatives can invite creative engagement towards NPT 2020 and beyond.

At the same time, while we are conscious of the international security environment, and recognize the constraints it may impose, inaction is not an answer. We need to move forward collaboratively in ways that reduce risks, build trust, and strengthen verification, with a view to providing a pathway to further reductions.

In this context we feel encouraged by the dedicated session of the UNSC on 2nd of April this year and the joint statement endorsed by all of its members on this occasion. We regard this as a sound basis for further discussions and concrete preparatory steps for the 2020 NPT Review Conference. We encourage the NPT Nuclear Weapons’ States to increase their efforts to deliver outcomes in 2020 on a number of work streams including nuclear doctrines, risk reduction, a FMCT, transparency, the Protocol to the Bangkok Treaty, peaceful uses of nuclear energy, the nuclear glossary, and – importantly building pathways to further reductions in nuclear arsenals.

All NPT-States Parties have endorsed a commitment towards a nuclear weapon free world and the Nuclear Weapon States have a particular responsibility, as outlined in Article VI. Building trust and confidence play an important role in this regard. Achieving this is only possible through constructive and sustained engagement, across regions, of all stakeholders.

This First Committee provides us with a chance to exchange views on the challenges and opportunities for progress, to make a frank assessment of what we can do collectively to uphold, implement and strengthen NPT norms, and to lay constructive groundwork ahead of next year’s Review Conference.

Thank you.