



IRELAND

STATEMENT

by

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to the Seventh Review Conference of the Treaty on
the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

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Mr. President,

Let me at the outset, express my warmest congratulations on your election as President of the Seventh Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). I am confident that your wisdom and diplomatic skills will help guide our deliberations over the next four weeks towards a successful and substantive outcome. I pledge the support and full cooperation of my delegation as we seek together to effectively address the many challenges confronting the Treaty today and to help lay the foundations for a strengthened regime in the years ahead.

I would also like to associate myself with the statements made by Luxembourg on behalf of the European Union and by New Zealand on behalf of the New Agenda Coalition.

Mr. President,

Ireland has a particularly close association with this Treaty, the most universal of all the multilateral instruments in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation. The man who, in 1958, tabled the proposal for such a Treaty was Mr. Frank Aiken, the then Minister for Foreign Affairs and my Party's representative in the Irish Parliament for my own constituency of Co. Louth. Louth may be the smallest county in Ireland but, as its distinguished representative, Frank Aiken left an enormously valuable legacy to the world and to the United Nations. We are immensely proud of his achievements. It is a particular personal honour for me to follow in his footsteps here today.

Following on from the Aiken initiative, agreement was reached on this crucial issue in 1961 and enshrined in Resolution 1665; this then became known as "the Irish Resolution".

When the Treaty itself was opened for signature, Ireland's pioneering efforts were also recognised with an invitation to us to be the first country to sign the text. We did so in July 1968. Since that time, our highest priority in the area of

disarmament and non-proliferation has been support for efforts to strengthen the Treaty and to ensure full respect for all its provisions.

Our support for the NPT is rooted in the firm conviction of successive Irish Governments that a multilateral approach offers the best way forward to ensure international peace and security. As a small country with neither the ability nor the ambition to project our military power overseas, save in peacekeeping missions in the service of the United Nations, we believe that a rules-based international order and strong international institutions are of fundamental importance.

We continue to place our faith in the multilateral regime of disarmament, and in non-proliferation treaties and agreements which provide the legal and normative basis for all our efforts. We remain committed to upholding, implementing and strengthening these instruments and to pursuing actively the universalisation of the norms which they set out.

Failure to abide by the obligations undertaken under these instruments poses a serious threat not only to present day peace and security, but to the very integrity and vitality of the entire system of arms control. The NPT regime is a robust one and has made an important contribution to the preservation of international peace and security over the last 35 years, but it is not immune to such threats.

As last year's Report of the High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change warned, "We are approaching a point at which the erosion of the non-proliferation regime could become irreversible and result in a cascade of proliferation". Such a prospect must be of the deepest concern to all countries here. But concern is simply not enough. It must also serve as an incentive to seize the opportunity provided by this Review Conference to redouble our efforts to reinforce the authority of the NPT, and to ensure its continued credibility and relevance.

The nuclear scourge and the United Nations – the threat of destruction and the hope of universal peace – have coexisted uneasily since 1945. At this time the United Nations is, under the leadership of the Secretary-General, rightly seeking to reform itself to face the challenges of the future. An acid test of the effectiveness of the entire multilateral system will be our success in halting the erosion of the non-proliferation régime. This is a fight we, for our own sake and that of future generations, cannot afford to lose.

Mr. President,

It would be wrong at the same time to suggest that the story of NPT in the last five years has been an entirely negative one. There have been positive developments, notably the accession to the Treaty by Timor Leste and Cuba, which have brought us a step closer to universality; secondly, the decision by Libya to admit its past activities and to abandon its WMD programme; thirdly, progress in reducing deployed nuclear weapons by some Nuclear Weapon States; and, finally, the effective action in support of disarmament and non-proliferation efforts undertaken within the framework of the G8 Global Partnership, which Ireland joined last year.

The NPT has, nonetheless, been subjected to some very severe strains in recent years. Some argue that the Treaty is facing a crisis. The challenges are indeed serious but difficult challenges do not in themselves constitute a crisis. On the other hand, failure to address such challenges in an effective and timely manner could lead to an erosion of confidence. And any undermining of trust and confidence among States Parties in acting on the common objectives which lie at the heart of the Treaty risks undermining those very objectives, and consequently the Treaty itself.

Since the last Review Conference, we have witnessed the unprecedented decision by a State Party to announce its withdrawal from the Treaty. The announcement by the DPRK in January 2003 is of concern not only to its immediate neighbours in the region, but also to the wider international community. I would urge the DPRK to dismantle immediately any nuclear weapons programme in a visible and verifiable manner, to allow the return of

inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency and, critically, to come into full and unconditional compliance with all relevant international obligations, in particular the NPT and the IAEA Safeguards Agreement. I would also urge the DPRK to participate fully in the Six Party Talks initiative.

The unprecedented action by the DPRK should, I believe, lead this Conference to address the provisions on withdrawal set out in the Treaty. I am not suggesting that such consideration should lead to any formal amendment of the Treaty itself. But it is important that we try to come to a common understanding of what exactly are the implications of a State withdrawing from the NPT. This should, in turn, logically lead us on to considering how best such a move should be addressed in the interest of the world community.

In considering these questions, we must also not lose sight of the reality that three countries have never signed the Treaty. It has to be a serious concern that India, Pakistan and Israel have chosen to remain outside the NPT regime. I would again urge all three countries to accede unconditionally at an early date.

Mr. President,

Concerns have also been raised over the last five years with respect to the nuclear programmes of a number of other countries. In particular, we have followed closely the investigations of Iran's nuclear programme by the International Atomic Energy Agency. I welcome the negotiations currently under way between Iran and the EU3, together with the EU High Representative, and hope that these will succeed in both allaying the concerns of the international community and in putting in place the foundations for new long term arrangements acceptable to all.

We have also been concerned at the revelations of an extensive clandestine black market in nuclear materials and technology operated by the Pakistani scientist, Dr. A.Q. Khan. It is crucially important that all members of the international community work together to root out this deadly trade. We must

spare no effort in tackling illicit trafficking and procurement networks, and in addressing the issue of non-State actor involvement in the proliferation of WMD technology. Countries should also ensure the fullest possible disclosure of all relevant information at their disposal to the International Atomic Energy Agency in order to assist its ongoing investigations.

Against this background, the vital role played by the IAEA safeguards system in the global non-proliferation regime must be acknowledged and reinforced during this Conference. The Review Conference in 2000 specifically endorsed the measures of the Agency's Model Additional Protocol. Our experience since then should now lead us to accept that the Additional Protocol should be considered an essential part of an effective safeguards regime. In effect, we would urge that the Additional Protocol, together with the IAEA Safeguards Agreement, should be considered the verification standard for all NPT States Parties.

Mr. President,

If we are to uphold the authority and integrity of the Treaty we cannot limit the scope of our review to these challenges on the non-proliferation side. For Ireland, upholding the integrity of the Treaty means respect for all its provisions. We attach a particular importance to fulfilment of the nuclear disarmament obligations set out in Article VI of the Treaty, and reaffirmed and developed at previous NPT Review Conferences. We remain convinced that disarmament and non-proliferation are mutually reinforcing processes requiring irreversible progress on both fronts.

We do not believe that the continued retention of nuclear weapons, or the unsatisfactory rate of progress in their elimination, can ever serve as a justification for proliferation by other States.

It is clear, nonetheless, that the legally binding obligations to refrain from the development of nuclear weapons, which the vast majority of States Parties to this Treaty have honoured, were undertaken in the context of equally legally binding obligations by the Nuclear Weapons States to eliminate their nuclear

weapons. That is the underlying bargain in the Treaty. It is doubtful whether the NPT could ever have been achieved without such agreement.

That is why today, some 15 years after the end of the Cold War, we are concerned when it appears that nuclear weapons are still reaffirmed as central to strategic concepts for the foreseeable future. That concern is all the more heightened when we hear reports of plans to develop new nuclear weapons or modify such weapons for new uses. Such plans do nothing to inspire confidence.

This is not to say that no progress has been achieved in this area. We welcome, for example, the conclusion of the Moscow Treaty in 2002 in respect of reductions of deployed nuclear weapons as an important step in the right direction. We would, however, wish to emphasise the importance of the principles of irreversibility and transparency to all arms control measures. It was an American President who once reminded the world of the need to "Trust but verify". It is a maxim worth following.

In his recent report "In Larger Freedom", the Secretary General has pointed out that "the unique status of the nuclear weapon states also entails a unique responsibility". "They must do more", Kofi Annan said, "including but not limited to further reductions in their arsenals, and pursuing arms control agreements that entail not just dismantlement but irreversibility". I call on the permanent members of the Security Council to seize the opportunity for leadership to help strengthen the NPT as the cornerstone of international security.

Mr. President,

The significant progress that can be achieved by NPT States Parties, if there is sufficient political will, was evident in the conclusions of the Final Document agreed by consensus at the last Review Conference. That Document not only contained important commitments on non-proliferation, notably in the area of safeguards, but also provided the international community with a realistic blueprint to achieve nuclear disarmament. Ireland attaches a special

importance to the Thirteen Practical Steps for the systematic and progressive efforts to implement Article VI, particularly the unequivocal undertaking by the Nuclear Weapon States to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals.

We remain convinced that such a consensus document imposes particular responsibilities on States Parties and retains a particular legitimacy. It is a matter of regret and deep disappointment that some Parties now seem to call this agreement into question and appear to wish to resile from these commitments. If they do so, this would undoubtedly serve to undermine these important commitments by suggesting to others that undertakings freely entered into can be readily abandoned or disavowed.

We continue to see a fundamental link between the objectives of the NPT and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), which aims to prevent any further testing, thereby contributing to halting the further development of nuclear weapons. The CTBT is one of the fundamental building blocks in a step by step approach to nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. I would urge those States, whose ratification is required for its entry into force, to review their positions and to take the necessary steps towards ratification. Pending entry into force of the Treaty, all States should continue to abide by a moratorium on testing.

Another crucial step on the path to nuclear disarmament is the negotiation of a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty (FMCT). We are disappointed that the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva has not been able to fulfil the mandate given at the last Review Conference to agree on a programme of work, which would include negotiation on such a treaty. As we all unfortunately know, the CD remains deadlocked on a work programme. Negotiations, sadly and worryingly, have not even commenced, let alone been concluded.

Regrettably, the FMCT has not been the only casualty of the CD's failure to agree a work programme – the call for the establishment of an appropriate

subsidiary body to deal with nuclear disarmament has also gone unheeded. We need to return to these issues at the Conference with a new sense of purpose.

Mr. President,

In our deliberations over the next four weeks, I would hope that the Conference can spend some time examining our working methods and consider whether the current review process is the most effective. In Ireland's view, we may be focussing too much on the Review Conference as the forum for decision-making, while the Preparatory Committees confine themselves to discussion and debate. This is simply not productive in terms of concrete results. A review process in which decision-making functions are only exercised once every five years does not respond adequately to the needs of the Treaty. We see considerable merit, therefore, in the proposal to move to a process involving annual meetings of States Parties; this in turn would enable us to better react to issues affecting the Treaty which require an early response.

Mr. President,

In conclusion, I would hope that all States Parties will make every effort to avoid what has all too often been a characteristic of discussions at previous conferences of this kind; namely, a tendency to talk past each other; to engage in a dialogue of the deaf. We need to listen; to recognise the legitimate concerns of others and to seriously engage in addressing those concerns. The concept for the NPT originated with Frank Aiken and, in vindication of his initiative, the collective will and the efforts of the peoples of the United Nations made that concept a reality, and sustained the Treaty over the last 35 years. We now need to rediscover that original sense of common purpose by focussing once more on the central elements which underpin the Treaty. We need in particular to work towards a final outcome to this conference that both respects the inherent balance of these elements, and helps restore trust and confidence among all States Parties.