



**PERMANENT MISSION OF
THE KINGDOM OF THE NETHERLANDS
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

**235 East 45th Street, 16th floor
New York, NY 10017**

tel. (212) 519-9500

fax (212) 370-1954

www.netherlandsmission.org

Check against delivery

STATEMENT BY

H.E. Mr. Maxime Verhagen

**Minister of Foreign
of the Kingdom of the Netherlands**

NPT Review Conference, General Debate

NEW YORK, 3 May 2010

Mr President,

‘The ladder of success is best climbed by stepping on the rungs of opportunity.

Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Opportunity presented itself when President Obama announced in Prague last year that the United States would take concrete steps towards a world without nuclear weapons.

Opportunity presented itself when President Medvedev and President Obama signed a new strategic arms reduction treaty in Prague last month.

And opportunity presents itself today. A successful NPT Review Conference will be yet another rung on the ladder to success! After a long period of standstill, we are now closer to our common goal of a world free of nuclear weapons. It is not yet within reach, nor will it be for a long time to come: we still have some steep steps to climb. But we are moving in the right direction. We are moving up the ladder. All of us should accept our responsibility, so the opportunities that arise are not wasted.

The best way of forging broad-based measures on disarmament and non-proliferation is by strengthening the system of international treaties based on the NPT. The ideas underpinning the NPT are clear: states with nuclear weapons pledge to disarm; states without them promise not to obtain them, and all states have the right to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. These ideas remain as vital and relevant as ever.

The conclusion of a new START agreement is an important step up the ladder, as it contributes to the overall reduction of nuclear weapons. The Netherlands warmly welcomes this agreement. The two largest nuclear-weapon states are taking their moral responsibility to lead the disarmament process. We all know how complex this process is, and we have no illusions that a world free of nuclear weapons can be achieved overnight.

While the nuclear weapon states take the lead, we, the non-nuclear-weapon states, must also do our share. I advocate a phased approach, aimed at the reduction of the role and the numbers of nuclear weapons in Europe. We have already started that discussion in NATO. The Netherlands suggests therefore that American sub strategic nuclear arms in Europe are going to be subject of arms reductions talks between the United States and Russia. Non-proliferation and disarmament are mutually reinforcing.

Twenty years after the end of the Cold War, halting the spread of weapons of mass destruction has become even more relevant. The risks associated with proliferation are unacceptable, to my country and to the people of the world. I am grateful to President Obama for organising a Nuclear Security Summit last month. Another timely initiative in what has been dubbed a 'nuclear spring'!!! From that meeting, it also emerged that we must strengthen the non-proliferation regime. I believe that the Additional Protocol should be an integral part of the system of safeguards. We must enhance the international safeguards system, in order to adapt to new developments and insights. Countries like Iran should comply with the demands of the International Atomic Energy Agency. The contribution of the president of Iran consisted of a series of unfounded and unacceptable accusations towards Israel and the United States and unhelpful remarks with regards to European countries like the Netherlands. These comments are not helpful for the debate we are having today! In this respect I fully associate myself with the remarks made by my colleague from Luxembourg.

However, we do not wish the Iranian case to monopolise discussions in this Review Conference. This treaty is too important for international security. This is even truer now that so many countries decide to resort to nuclear energy. These countries deserve our attention and our cooperation. In that respect, the international community should have the means to verify that all non-nuclear weapon states are for peaceful purposes only. Transparency is key. The Netherlands has taken on its responsibility. All of our nuclear facilities are equipped with the most stringent safeguards and have been opened up to peer reviews. I call on all states to take similar steps.

We must also agree on measures to ensure that cases of non-compliance are dealt with in a resolute and comprehensive manner. By failing to do so, we endanger the treaty's integrity.

Verification and compliance are pivotal for building trust. As nuclear cooperation thrives on trust, we must reinforce the nuclear safeguards system. Only then will we be able to capitalise on all the opportunities presented by this nuclear spring.

Nuclear energy is a legitimate option for meeting future energy demands. Increased energy security – meaning secure fuel supplies and secure access to them – is a key interest for states operating nuclear power programmes. To ensure that the development of nuclear power is consistent with the highest safety, security and non-proliferation standards, we must properly address the issue of supply security.

The Netherlands has always actively supported talks and efforts related to multilateral approaches to the nuclear fuel cycle. These do not infringe on anyone's rights. On the contrary, they can help realise states' inherent right to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. I strongly believe that we should take this debate forward. The Netherlands will continue to actively seek a dialogue with all parties concerned.

Mr President,

The work of the IAEA is indispensable. If we are the ones climbing the ladder, they are the ones holding it! I would like to express my gratitude and support to the Agency.

To get to the top of the ladder safely and attain success, we must enable the IAEA to continue its efforts.

Thank you.

* * *