

English version

2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

Madam President,

Let me first congratulate you on your election as Chair of this Review Conference. I want to assure you of the full cooperation of my delegation in reaching a successful conclusion to this important Conference.

Belgium fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by the European Union. I wish to add a couple of remarks from a national point of view.

Madam President,

The Non-Proliferation Treaty is a truly collective endeavor. All of us reap its benefits, but we also share the responsibility to make the Treaty work. The 2010 Action Plan has provided us with a detailed path to make concrete progress in all three pillars. This conference provides the right occasion to take stock of progress and reflect on remaining challenges. Belgium wishes to contribute to this review and has presented a national report, as called for in action 20.

Belgium is firmly committed to the goal of a world without nuclear weapons. For us, this should not remain a distant possibility, but become a clear and reachable objective. While nuclear disarmament can only be achieved through a gradual process, we do not believe in a fixed chronological order for all steps to be taken. A number of steps can be taken in parallel, or simultaneously. Effective disarmament will indeed require mutually reinforcing building blocks.

We are convinced that the Non-Proliferation Treaty should remain the cornerstone for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament. It served us well in the past and we can rely on it for the future. No other instrument is better defined or better equipped to guide us on the path towards the global zero. It is therefore essential that the NPT becomes truly universal and that it is fully respected by all States Parties. We call on India, Israel and Pakistan to join the NPT as non-nuclear weapon states.

We are heartened by the progress already achieved in the implementation of the New START Treaty between the United States of America and the Russian Federation. This can not, however, be the endpoint. Further reductions of all types of nuclear weapons are needed. We encourage the US and Russia to include non-strategic nuclear weapons in the next round of their bilateral nuclear weapons reduction and to further develop transparency and confidence-building measures.

Awareness about the catastrophic consequences of a nuclear detonation lends urgency to our work. In this regard, we welcome the initiatives to increase our understanding about the

humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons. However, we have to acknowledge that disarmament will not happen in a void, and that both humanitarian and security dimensions have to be taken into consideration. No nuclear-weapon State will eliminate its arsenal without firm guarantees. Confidence cannot be decreed. Eliminating these weapons therefore requires a negotiated framework leading to verifiable and irreversible reductions. Full nuclear disarmament will happen when nuclear-weapon states will no longer feel the need to have them. We therefore support effective multilateral approaches that promote international peace and stability. But, let there be no mistake: we are frustrated by the slow progress in achieving the objectives of Article VI.

Madam President,

We remain concerned about the lack of progress on key building blocks, such as the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, the commencement of substantive work by the Conference on Disarmament, or the negotiation of a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty. However, this should not stop us from strengthening the already existing instruments.

Belgium for its part actively contributes to the efforts to strengthen the CTBT verification regime. Radio-xenon emissions stemming from medical isotope production sites can interfere with the capacity of the International Monitoring System to detect nuclear explosions. Therefore, relevant Belgian institutions are studying options to mitigate those radio-xenon emissions, which would increase the reliability of the International Monitoring System and thus reinforce the credibility of the CTBT.

Madam President,

There have been some encouraging developments in the field of non-proliferation. The ongoing negotiations between the E3+3 and Iran now present a tangible perspective of a comprehensive settlement that would guarantee the exclusively peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear program. Belgium has backed up its political support for this process with a voluntary contribution to fund the enhanced verification activities of the IAEA in Iran.

North Korea, however, continues to flout international rules by further developing its nuclear and ballistic programs. This Conference should clearly request North Korea to return to its denuclearization and non-proliferation commitments.

Madam President,

This delegation shares the frustration that a conference has not yet been held on the establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Weapons of Mass Destruction. Belgium fully supports the tireless efforts of the Facilitator, Ambassador Laajava, to bring together the parties involved so they can agree on the practical arrangements for such a conference. No ready-made solution can be imposed: it is up to the states of the region to find a path forward that is acceptable for all.

Madam President,

The peaceful use of the atom is in the interest of all of us, regardless of national policies regarding nuclear energy. Safety, security and safeguards are essential elements of a responsible nuclear program. Belgium has taken these parameters at heart.

The Belgian Nuclear Research Centre (SCK•CEN) continues to develop the innovative nuclear research infrastructure MYRRHA, with the main objective of providing the research community with a highly performing and versatile installation to carry out material and fuel testing, in particular with regards to the safety of fission and fusion reactors and the transmutation of radioactive waste.

In the field of nuclear security, Belgium supports the efforts to minimize the use of highly enriched uranium for civilian purposes, when economically and technically feasible. We therefore work towards the timely conversion of our nuclear installations still using highly enriched uranium. The Nuclear Research Centre (SCK•CEN) is leading the international efforts to design and qualify different high density low enriched uranium fuels, which are candidates to replace highly enriched uranium fuel, not only for its own research reactor, but also for foreign high performance reactors.

Our national processing facility for medical radio-isotopes (the National Institute for Radioelements), is also being converted to low enriched uranium. We appreciate the essential contribution medical radioisotopes provide to human healthcare worldwide, especially with regards to cancer diagnosis and treatment. As a major supplier, we therefore continue to guarantee the production of medical radioisotopes, while the complex operation of conversion is underway.

Madam President,

A building cannot stand on a crooked foundation. We have to reinforce all three pillars of the Treaty for the benefit of current and future generations. Full implementation of the NPT offers the best hope for a future free of nuclear weapons and a safer world for all.

I thank you.