

**H.E. Mr. Bert Koenders**

**Minister of Foreign Affairs**

**of the Kingdom of the Netherlands**

**NPT Review Conference**

**General Debate**

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Madam Chair,

It is a great honor to congratulate you for a second time today as the chair of this conference, now representing my own country, the Netherlands.

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Five years ago, in these halls, we agreed on an ambitious Action Plan to implement the Treaty that we all cherish as the foundational cornerstone of disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful use of nuclear energy. Today we have come together to review our work, honestly and frankly, and to determine our next steps. We should give credit where we can and take responsibility where we must. We should be realistic and ambitious at the same time. And we should keep things in perspective and not let a single issue dominate everything else. Whatever we do, it

should strengthen the NPT regime. That is what motivates the Netherlands and our partners in the NPDI.

Over the last years, progress has been made. The continuing implementation of New Start has helped to reduce Russian and American strategic arsenals to their lowest levels in more than 50 years. The UK and France have unilaterally reduced their numbers. An understanding on the main parameters of a deal between the E3+3 with Iran has been reached. All of this is important and encouraging. That is also true for the transparency provided by those States that have published a national report; for the strengthening of safeguards by the increased application of additional protocols and for the progress made on improving nuclear security, all important priorities of the Netherlands. There are more achievements and I welcome them all.

However, against the high benchmarks we have set ourselves in the past, there is no reason for complacency. On the contrary, in all three pillars we still have a long way to go. We need to strengthen the safeguards regime and the IAEA's capacity to verify in an efficient way that all fissile material in non-nuclear weapon states is only used for peaceful purposes. The Netherlands calls on all those countries that have not done so yet, to ratify and implement the Additional Protocol.

We also need to be clear about the non-compliance cases and be clear in our condemnation of the DPRK's ongoing development of its nuclear weapons and ballistic missile program.

Let me highlight one area in particular here, disarmament.

Undeniably, there is frustration about the slow pace of progress. I share that frustration and I see the growing attention to the issue of the humanitarian impact of a nuclear weapon explosion as an important expression of that feeling. For the Netherlands, the humanitarian impact underpins everything we do in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation. And like many others, we hope that the momentum of this approach gives new energy to disarmament and will inspire this very conference to make the necessary steps to reach Global Zero.

The Netherlands fully supports the call for further reductions of strategic and non-strategic weapons, as a step in the right direction. However, it seems that since that time the gap between the ambitions and aspirations of those that seek a world free of nuclear weapons and the prospect of progress is widening. Evidently, we all realize that disarmament does not happen in a vacuum; that the current geopolitical situation and lack of trust are not conducive to making progress.

Yet, the current difficulties cannot be a reason to abandon our ambition. We have to look over the hill immediately in front of us, beyond our current troubles and keep in sight the shared goal on the horizon. The Netherlands believes that article VI should be taken very seriously. Eventually, we need to ban the bomb. I am sure we will have fierce discussions about how to get to Global Zero and to a ban, but we need to be concrete and effective in our approach. I support therefore the Australian statement and we will follow closely the discussions on a legal instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons.

We need the determination and perseverance to build trust, step by step. Ensuring security and stability in the process. By improving transparency, by further reducing the role of nuclear weapons in doctrines, by getting the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty entered into force and by starting negotiations on a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty. Even during the Cold War, we kept talking and managed to conclude some key disarmament treaties. Especially in troubling times, we need to keep channels of communication and dialogue open and press onwards with disarmament.

The Netherlands will continue to work for this and we are ready to work with everyone here. That is why we were happy to host the Nuclear Security Summit. That is why we are happy to play an active role in the new Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification that has great potential. These are realistic and concrete steps we need to make.

And it's exactly this spirit of partnership that we would seek to contribute as non-permanent member of the UN Security Council. That's why we are a candidate for the 2017-2018 term.

Tomorrow, during lunch, we will organize a panel about the possibilities for arms control and reducing nuclear risks with two prominent former politicians, one from the US, Senator Sam Nunn, and one from Russia, Alexei Arbatov. Also tomorrow, here in this building you can hear the next generation of scholars that we invited to share their view on the challenges of the Treaty and possibilities for new solutions. You are all invited to join us in this quest for fresh ideas for the future.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This year we will commemorate the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the Second World War with all its horrors. This should renew our resolve to work on disarmament and to make sure that the 70-year record of non-use of nuclear weapons is extended forever. The only way we can be hundred percent sure of that, is through the total elimination of these weapons. Let us work jointly on this. With ambition and realism. And not only on disarmament, but on all three pillars of the Treaty. We should ensure that the “Grand Bargain” between haves and have-nots holds. We need to keep our planet safe from the scourge of nuclear war. That is our common obligation and goal. That is why the Netherlands is an active member of the NPDI.

Madam Chair, in that spirit, you can count on the Netherlands helping you making this conference a successful one.

Thank you.