

**United Nations Conference to negotiate a legally-binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination**

**agenda item 8 (b)**

**Statement by The Netherlands**

Madame President,

The Netherlands endorses the goal of a world without nuclear weapons, and can support the concept of a legally-binding instrument prohibiting nuclear weapons as an element of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

In all discussions leading to this conference, we have stressed that such an instrument should be verifiable as well as comprehensive and that it should enjoy the support of nuclear-weapon possessors and non-nuclear-weapon states alike in order to be effective. And that it must not detract from the NPT and Article VI, including the chronology inherent therein.

Because these conditions were not accommodated in the text of the resolution establishing this conference to negotiate a legally-binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, we abstained from voting.

Madam President

Throughout this conference we will discuss with all delegations - and consider - whether and how these deliberations on a nuclear weapons ban are contributing to actual steps and measures that will help us achieve a world without nuclear weapons - in full accordance with all provisions of the NPT including Article VI, in a step-by-step and verifiable way that promotes international stability, and is based on the principle of undiminished security for all.

For the Netherlands, it is essential that a legal prohibition instrument will be a proper and effective step towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons, precisely as stated in the resolution (71/258), operational paragraph 12: "leading towards the total elimination".

A ban should furthermore be compatible with existing instruments and in particular it must respect and safeguard the Non-Proliferation Treaty, including Article VI and the chronology it implies.

The instrument must enjoy broad support within the UN, including on the part of nuclear possessor states. A nuclear weapons ban must also be verifiable. Transparency and verification are essential building blocks of a nuclear-weapon-free world. Verification is one area in particular where the non-nuclear weapons states can play a concrete and important role.

And for the Netherlands any ban must be compatible with our obligations as a member of NATO, a nuclear alliance. NATO upholds the principles of the Deterrence and Defence Posture Review (DDPR), including the notion that NATO will remain a nuclear alliance as long as nuclear weapons exist.

We look forward to in-depth discussion.