



**Statement by the Republic of South Africa during the General Debate of the Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons**

23 April 2018

Chairperson,

My delegation associates itself with the statements delivered on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, the African Group and the New Agenda Coalition.

South Africa remains steadfast in its conviction that nuclear weapons do not guarantee security, but detract from it. As long as these weapons exist, and vertical and horizontal proliferation persists, the world will continue to face the threat of annihilation. The continued retention of nuclear weapons serves as a catalyst for further proliferation. Recent developments around the Korean Peninsula clearly illustrate that the threat of the use of nuclear weapons is not only real, but also imminent.

We have said many times that the NPT represents a historic bargain between the Nuclear-Weapon States and the Non-Nuclear-Weapon States, in terms of which the former has undertaken to eliminate their nuclear weapons based on the reciprocal undertaking by the latter not to pursue the nuclear weapons option. Maintaining this bargain is therefore central to the integrity of the Treaty in order for it to remain the cornerstone of the nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation regime and the peaceful uses of nuclear technology.

Chairperson,

The 2010 NPT Review Conference reaffirmed the continued validity of the outcomes of 1995 and 2000, particularly the unequivocal commitment by the Nuclear-Weapon States to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals and the agreement to abide by the principles of transparency, irreversibility and verifiability in fulfilment of Treaty obligations. South Africa believes that these commitments, including the extensive 2010 Action Plan under all three Treaty pillars, remain valid until fully implemented.

However, the agreement on the 2010 Final Document still left most States Parties seriously concerned about the lack of progress in respect of nuclear disarmament. For this reason, South Africa believes that the success of 2020 will be determined by the extent to which these commitments by the NWS are being honoured.

Chairperson,

We regret that little concrete progress has been achieved in the area of nuclear disarmament since 2010. Whilst reductions are important, they do not substitute for concrete, transparent, irreversible and verifiable nuclear disarmament measures. Ongoing modernisation programmes, including in relation to delivery systems, make it clear that some States still wish to indefinitely retain these instruments of destruction, contrary to their legal obligations and political commitments. This undermines the NPT bargain and also the non-proliferation norms established by the Treaty.

South Africa therefore welcomes the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and believes that it represents one of the most important developments in the area of nuclear

weapons since 1945. It fills a key remaining legal gap in international law regarding weapons of mass destruction by establishing a clear prohibition of nuclear weapons and would complement and strengthen the NPT norms, in particular Article VI.

Chairperson,

South Africa believes that the strengthened safeguards system remains an essential element of our collective efforts to address the threat posed by the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Such strengthened safeguards would contribute to establishing confidence in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy which, in turn, would greatly facilitate the transfer of nuclear technology and use of nuclear energy to the benefit of developing countries.

We therefore maintain our principled position that States Parties must conclude Comprehensive Safeguards Agreements with the IAEA as required under the Treaty, whilst viewing the Additional Protocol as an indispensable instrument to enable the IAEA to provide credible assurances regarding the absence of undeclared nuclear material and activities in a State.

Chairperson,

South Africa welcomes the progress made towards the implementation of the JCPOA with Iran. In this regard, we call on all the parties involved to continue fulfilling their obligations under the agreement.

South Africa also supports the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in parts of the world where they do not yet exist, including in the Middle East. We believe that such zones enhance global and regional peace and security, strengthen the

nuclear non-proliferation regime and contribute towards realizing the objectives of nuclear disarmament.

The 1995 resolution on the Middle East is an essential and integral part of the package of decisions that enabled the indefinite extension of the Treaty in 1995. Although the 2010 Review Conference agreed on specific actions towards the realisation of the establishment of a Zone in the Middle East free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, nothing has come of it. We therefore urge all States to redouble their efforts towards convening a Conference on this important issue involving all States of the region without any further delay.

Chairperson,

Of particular concern to South Africa are the tensions between key members of the Security Council. It is as if we back in the Cold War era, but the danger now, as stated by Secretary General Guterres, is that we are without the mechanisms of dialogue and communication that had previously that existed during the cold war do not seem to apply this time, particularly with regard to nuclear weapons.

Chairperson,

Like others, South Africa condemned the nuclear tests that have been carried out by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). The current tensions on the Korean Peninsula clearly illustrate that neither the pursuit, nor the possession of nuclear weapons can bring about increased security. The reality of the threats facing the global community today is that they frequently transcend national borders in our increasingly interconnected world. This requires enhanced international co-operation and strong international institutions that can respond to collective security concerns. We welcome the planned Summit between the DPRK, South Korea and the USA, which is expected to take place

in May 2018, as a positive step to a return to negotiations and continue to believe that it is only through negotiations that a sustainable solution can be found that would bring peace and security to the region. We also welcome the reported statements by the DPRK that it will not conduct any further tests.

Chairperson,

Article IV of the Treaty guarantees the inalienable right of all the State Parties to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy purposes without discrimination and in conformity with Articles I and II of the Treaty. This Article is of particular relevance and importance to Africa, given the need for adequate energy supplies to fuel sustainable and accelerated economic growth on our Continent. South Africa's approach to nuclear energy is premised on the fact that peaceful nuclear co-operation and access to the benefits of nuclear energy, pursuant to this Article, are integral components of the Treaty.

Many countries are increasingly recognising nuclear energy as a viable, reliable and clean option to meet their growing energy demands, particularly in the context of the challenges of climate change.

Chairperson,

In conclusion, South Africa reiterates its support for the full implementation of the NPT and its universality in pursuit of our common goal of achieving a world entirely free from nuclear weapons. The strength, credibility and vitality of the NPT rests on the fundamental bargain across its three pillars of nuclear disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation and the peaceful use of nuclear energy, which must be recognized and upheld.

I thank you.