Cluster III: Specific Issues

Statement by

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Check against Delivery
Mr Chairman

Ireland considers improving the working methods of the NPT review process as a priority during this review cycle.

The issue is not a procedural or superficial one. It lies at the very heart of how we conduct our business and our effectiveness in achieving the goals of the Treaty. We should also note that the decision to indefinitely extend the treaty was adopted as a package with a decision to strengthen the review process of the treaty.

A serious debate on this topic can help us examine how to make the most efficient use of our limited time and resources to ensure we deal with the pressing issues effecting the Treaty. It should also help us to identify new issues that emerge to ensure the NPT remains dynamic and relevant.

Our review cycles have become somewhat predictable over the years. Despite the promise of 1995 to strengthen the Review Process, there are a number of shortcomings that impede the efficiency of our work. The most fundamental includes the fact that Preparatory Committee meetings cannot take substantive decisions or make recommendations to the Review Conference. On too many occasions this results in a bloated workload for the Review Conference itself. This impedes a substantive and rigorous Review
of how the Treaty is being implemented, particularly with regard to the implementation of the disarmament provisions of the Treaty.

There is also an unhelpful trend of repetition in the review cycle. Discussions are repeated in all three sessions of the PrepCom and then again at the Review Conference itself – this is not an efficient use of the short time we have available to us.

Ireland has sought to highlight these issues for a number of years and many States Parties have submitted working papers with solid ideas on ways to break these habits. However, improving the working methods of the NPT review mechanism has not been accorded a high enough priority and we must remedy that during this review cycle.

We should start by conducting a thorough examination of the work that was done previously on this issue and identify where we can move forward.

My delegation would like to make two substantive suggestions. Firstly, with respect to transparency and accountability and secondly with relation to gender issues.

Mr. Chairman,

The 1995 Review and Extension Conference recognized the importance of accountability for the implementation by States parties of their obligations and commitments under the Treaty.
In order to be meaningful, this evaluation requires access to accurate, up-to-date, complete and comparable information. The evaluation process would further benefit from the identification of baselines and agreement on benchmarks or other criteria on the basis of which progress can be measured.

Indeed, the lack of baseline data and an objective set of criteria, means that it has not proved possible to properly utilize the opportunity afforded by the Treaty review process to assess the implementation, particularly with regard to nuclear disarmament obligations and commitments.

This situation simply cannot continue. It leads to our discussions at Review Cycles focusing on agreement on new commitments, even though existing commitments remain unfulfilled. Ireland, together with the New Agenda Coalition, have highlighted these issues in working papers both this year and last year and I urge you to consider the recommendations contained within them.

Mr. Chairman,

In order to fulfil its mandate and to remain responsive to current developments, it is essential that the review process both evaluate compliance with existing obligations and look forward to the new and emerging issues that develop.

In the past number of years, Ireland has sought to highlight the cross cutting nature of disarmament with respect to a number of issues,
including sustainable development, health, the protection of cultural heritage and the environment.

In particular, Ireland has been to the forefront in emphasising the importance of gender considerations in nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

As part of our efforts to promote disarmament education, Ireland has engaged with Chatham House, UNIDIR and civil society to work on broadening the discussion on Nuclear Weapons beyond the silos of narrow security concerns. We funded ground-breaking research by UNIDIR and ILPI on Gender, Development and Nuclear Weapons and have presented our ideas in working papers, most recently in our paper launched on 24 April titled ‘Impact and Empowerment - the role of Gender in the NPT’.

Our Working Papers, highlight the startling fact that, over the long term, women and girls that are exposed to ionising radiation from the detonation of nuclear weapons have a far greater risk of dying from cancer than men who are similarly exposed to ionising radiation.

The papers also bring to the fore the issue of women’s participation in nuclear weapons negotiating forums, which still lags behind that of men in most bodies. Ireland is pleased to note the increased attention this issue has been given at this PrepCom.

We strongly encourage States who can do so to assist and sponsor qualified women participants in Nuclear Weapons forums and to
take gender diversity into account in the composition of their delegations and when putting expert panels together.

Mr. Chairman,

We must not be afraid to propose to do things differently and think about new topics. Doing so fulfils an element of the bargain struck in 1995 to strengthen the Review Process and ensure that the NPT remains capable of tackling future issues.

Thank you