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NPT Prep Com 2018 – General Debate – Statement by Sweden

Mr. Chair,

Let me congratulate you on assuming the important task of chairing the second Prep Com of this Review Cycle. I can assure you of the full support and cooperation from the Swedish delegation.

Sweden associates itself with the general statement by the European Union, as well as the one delivered on behalf of the Nordic countries. Sweden is also part of the Vienna Group of Ten. I will now make some additional observations from a national perspective.

We are witnessing a deeply worrisome renaissance for nuclear weapons. In words and deeds, nuclear weapon states signal an increased reliance on these uniquely destructive weapons – removing us further from our common goal of a world free of nuclear weapons. Against this backdrop the concerns for the increased risk of the use of nuclear weapons is deeply felt by governments as well as civil society.

Meanwhile multilateralism is being challenged putting the international community under pressure.

When the current review cycle was launched, in a constructive manner, in Vienna last year, the general assessment was that the challenges rarely had been more demanding. If anything, those challenges seem even more daunting today – one year on. Both from a disarmament and a non-proliferation point of view, the NPT edifice is under great stress.

Yet, we must not resign but rather redouble our efforts. The united message coming out of the Review Conference in 2020 must be a re-affirmation of our joint commitment to this indispensable framework.

The alternative scenario, another failed conference, would inevitably undermine the treaty just when we need it the most.

Mr. Chair,

We must now start to rebuild some degree of trust and understanding for each other's perspectives. With an ambitious and realistic mindset, we should now proceed to identify issues which could constitute common ground.

This will take an element of flexibility and adaptation from everyone, starting with a universal acknowledgement that the basic logic at the heart of the NPT continues to apply: the three pillars of the treaty are closely interlinked and mutually reinforcing. Progress will not be possible unless it is broadly perceived as balanced. Furthermore, both nuclear and non-nuclear weapon states need to abstain from using the Prohibition Treaty divisively, in a way which could undermine the NPT.

On their part, nuclear weapon states should refrain from putting forward the global security environment as a pretext for inaction. We need to see a clear-cut commitment from them to make the review cycle a success. This should include progress on outstanding NPT obligations, not least by addressing the implementation deficit still plaguing the disarmament section of the 2010 Action Plan.

From non-nuclear weapon states, we need a full and pragmatic engagement covering all three pillars – an engagement underpinned by a recognition that also intermediate steps can be worthwhile accomplishments: do not the make the perfect the enemy of the good.

Mr. Chair,

A good place to start looking for common ground should be risk-reduction and transparency measures.

Indeed, in view of the gradually increasing risks of nuclear use, few things seem more urgent than the elaboration of an effective risk-reduction agenda in the run up to the 2020 Review Conference. Items on such an agenda could include “de-alerting” and “de-mating” measures, avoidance of mixing nuclear and conventional capabilities, addressing cyber threats and re-establishment of diplomatic and military crisis communication channels. Enhanced transparency – be it regarding doctrines or arsenals – should also be part of the package, as should strengthened negative security assurances.

Existing and new issue-specific or political groupings could facilitate and help us avoid getting stuck in diplomatic disarmament trenches. Sweden intends to take active part in such efforts.

Developments regarding nuclear arms control will weigh heavily on the NPT review cycle. Here, there is ample ground for concern. The future of the INF is at risk – and a Europe without INF would be a less secure Europe. The preservation of the Treaty is therefore critical. We call on the US and Russia to continue the dialogue in order to resolve the serious concerns about Russia’s compliance. In this context, we also strongly encourage the US and Russia – as the overwhelmingly largest nuclear-weapon possessors – to extend the New START treaty, or, preferably, seek further reductions covering strategic and non-strategic, deployed and non-deployed warheads.

Nuclear disarmament verification could offer additional domains of common ground. In the Swedish experience, verification cooperation is meaningful and rewarding. Through the IPNDV and QVNP projects, we have gained a better understanding of the challenges involved and how these can be overcome. This includes effective ways of addressing proliferation concerns. Verification enhances transparency, builds confidence and – by creating the necessary technical capabilities – could facilitate effective and credible implementation of future agreements.

Sweden encourages more nuclear and non-nuclear weapon states to engage in this field.

Mr. Chair,

The dreadful scenario of the DPRK possessing an operative nuclear ICBM capability appear closer than ever. The DPRK must abandon its nuclear weapons and missile program in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner. As a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, Sweden has insisted on combining a policy of pressure, including more effective implementation of sanctions, with a readiness to support diplomatic efforts, as called for by the UN Security Council. We all have an obligation to pursue a peaceful solution to the situation.

Meanwhile, the JCPOA faces profound challenges. Sweden, together with the EU, remains firm in its support to the agreement and expects all parties to continue to fully implement it. A failure in this regard would be seriously detrimental in many ways, including for the global disarmament and non-proliferation regime. As the IAEA confirms by applying its most intrusive safeguards ever, Iran continues to fulfill its nuclear obligations under the agreement. As long as that is the case, the JCPOA effectively curtails Iran's ability to develop nuclear weapons. Iran's role in the region and missile activities are clearly a matter of concern, the latter indeed inconsistent with the UNSCR 2231. They should be addressed separately and not at the expense of the JCPOA.

The JCPOA also underlines the crucial role of the IAEA in upholding non-proliferation obligations under the NPT. It is high time for all States which have not already done so to conclude an Additional Protocol.

All Parties to the NPT are entitled to develop and use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. But safety and security are key. Sweden has extensive cooperation and support to countries on both safety and security.

We are happy to see the awareness of the need of gender perspectives and equal representation increasing within the NPT and the disarmament and non-proliferation field in general. I hope that everyone wondering to themselves what gender has to do with the NPT will join us at Wednesday's breakfast meeting, hosted by Australia, Canada, the Netherlands and Sweden.

Mr. Chair,

2020 marks the 50th anniversary of the NPT. We all have an obligation to contribute to making the Review Conference a re-affirmation of the vitality of this framework. There is no time to waste, the work must start now, here at this PrepCom.

Thank you!