

STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE AFRICAN GROUP

BY

His Excellency Ambassador Omar HILALE

Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Morocco to the United Nations

THE THEMATIC DEBATE OF THE FIRST COMMITTEE:

NUCLEAR WEAPONS

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Mr. Chairman,

1. I have the honour to speak on behalf of the African Group.
2. The Group aligns itself with the Statement of the Non-Aligned Movement delivered by the distinguished Representative of Indonesia and wishes to make the following remarks on this cluster.
3. The total elimination of nuclear weapons remains the only absolute guarantee against their use or threat of use. In this context, the Group reiterates the urgent need for our planet, including the outer space, to be free of nuclear weapons, as their presence constitutes an existential threat to global peace and the future survival of humanity. It is in view of this that the Group notes the 2017 award of the Noble Peace Prize to the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN).
4. Africa supports the principle of complete nuclear disarmament, as the utmost prerequisite for maintaining international peace and security. It is in this spirit that the African Group welcomes the historical adoption of the landmark Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), on 7 July 2017. The African Group stresses that the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons does not undermine the NPT, but rather complements and strengthens the nuclear non-proliferation regime with the NPT as its foundation. The Group, therefore, wishes to urge all states to support the TPNW by signing and ratifying the Treaty at an early date. It is hoped that all members of the international community, including nuclear-weapon states and those under the so-called “nuclear umbrella”, would seize the opportunity to pursue the goal of a nuclear-free world.

5. For the African Group, the highest priority remains nuclear disarmament and to achieve the total elimination of nuclear weapons, which is the overall objective of the NPT. The Group restates its deep concern over the slow pace of progress by the nuclear-weapon States to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals, in accordance with their legal obligations and undertakings under Article VI of the NPT. The Group, therefore, insists on the implementation of all agreed measures and undertakings by the nuclear weapons States in the context of the Treaty.

6. The African Group further welcomes the 5th General Assembly Plenary Meeting in commemoration of the "International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons" on 26 September 2018, and underscores the importance of the Day as an integral part of the multilateral disarmament effort.

7. The Group re-affirms the contribution of nuclear-weapon-free zones across the world to the overall objectives of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. They represent a significant milestone towards achieving nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation objectives, thereby enhancing global and regional peace and security.

8. In this context, the African Group reiterates its commitment to the Treaty of Pelindaba, which re-affirms the status of Africa as a nuclear-weapon-free zone and as a shield for the African territory, including by preventing the stationing of nuclear explosive devices on the continent and prohibiting testing of those weapons in the entire space that constitutes the African continent.

9. In the same vein, the African Group restates its deep concern at the fact that

commitments and obligations related to the implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East, including those included in the Final Document of the 2010 NPT Review Conference have not been fulfilled. In particular, the Group remains deeply disappointed at the inability to convene the agreed Conference on the establishment of a zone in the Middle East free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction, which should have held in 2012. The Group calls for convening a United Nations Conference with the participation of the States of the Middle East as soon as possible to negotiate a legally-binding treaty on the Establishment of zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.

10. The Group wishes to further stress that the 1995 resolution remains an integral and essential part of the package and the basis upon which the NPT was indefinitely extended. The Group underlines that the continued validity of this resolution until its objectives are achieved. The Group reiterates its regrets that the 9th NPT Review Conference was unable to agree on a final outcome document, despite the concerted efforts of non-nuclear-weapon States; particularly from Africa. As preparations for the 10th NPT Review Conference has begun with the First PrepCom held in May 2017 and the Second PrepCom held in April-May 2018, the Group calls on all States to work towards the actualisation of the goals and objectives of the Treaty and the previously agreed outcomes of its Review Conference.

11. The African Group underscores the importance of the continued respect of the inalienable right to peaceful uses of nuclear energy and stressed the central role of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in this regard, through technical assistance and cooperation and maximizing the use of science and technology for socio-economic development, as well as by continuing to ensure commitments of

States to the implementation of Safeguards Agreement. The Group stresses the importance of nuclear knowledge sharing and the transfer of nuclear technology to developing countries, including African Countries, and highlights the potential contribution of nuclear energy in promoting sustainable development and prosperity across the world. The Group stresses that the Technical Cooperation Program of the IAEA, as the main vehicle for the transfer of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes, should continue to be formulated and implemented in accordance with its statute.

12. The Group wishes to emphasise humanitarian considerations in the context of all deliberations on nuclear weapons, particularly its serious concern for the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of the use or detonation of nuclear weapons, either by accident or as a deliberate action. The Group calls on all States, particularly nuclear weapons States, to take into consideration, the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of the use of these weapons on human health, the environment and vital economic resources among others, and to take necessary measures aimed at dismantling and renunciation of these weapons.

13. Achieving universal adherence to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and particularly bearing in mind the special responsibilities of Nuclear Weapons States is of importance to the African Group. The Group believes that the CTBT offers hope of halting further development or proliferation of nuclear weapons, thereby contributing to the goal of nuclear disarmament. The Group acknowledges the overwhelming support of the international community in promoting the entry into force of the CTBT and calls on nuclear-weapon States and those yet to accede to the NPT, which are listed in Annex II of the Treaty and have not yet signed or ratified the CTBT, to do so without further delay.

14. While reaffirming the importance of the work entrusted to the Conference on Disarmament (CD), the Group expresses its concern at the many years of impasse, which has prevented the CD from fulfilling its mandate as the world's single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum. The Group calls on the CD to resume substantive work, taking into account the security interests of all States and without further delay

15. The African Group will, in due course, submit two draft resolutions titled: "**African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty**", and the "**UN Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa**". The Group expresses appreciation to all delegations for their assistance in the past and seeks further support for these resolutions at this session. The African Group promises to be constructive in its engagement with other Member States, to fulfil the goal and objective of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

I thank you for your attention.