



**Belgium**

**Cluster I Nuclear Disarmament**

**Preparatory Committee for the 2020 NPT Review Conference of the Parties  
to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)**

**Third session, New York, 29 April-10 May 2019**

Mr Chairman,

Belgium aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union.

The Non Proliferation Treaty offers the only near universal vision of a world where nuclear danger is contained by the non-dissemination of nuclear weapons and where States cooperate towards nuclear disarmament. While there have been encouraging steps regarding non-proliferation during this review cycle, the prospect for nuclear disarmament has been undercut by increased "Global Power competition" and the erosion of respect for international agreements. Even the value and purpose of arms control is under discussion, although experience shows its capacity to contribute to strategic stability, especially at times of international tension and nuclear build up.

While one can agree that disarmament is about more than numerical reduction, it is also evident that the acquisition of new nuclear capabilities, the expansion of stockpiles and the opacity of certain programmes do not serve the interest of nuclear disarmament. The comprehensive view of disarmament also implies that nuclear weapon states need to move forward on measures that help reduce nuclear risk. The toolbox for that purpose is well established and was reflected in the 2010 Action Plan. There is however a lack of bold steps to effectively improve transparency, promote strategic dialogue and reduce the operational readiness of new systems. Nuclear danger should never be trivialized and tendencies to lower the threshold for nuclear weapon use should be countered. Treaties reducing weapon systems or their delivery vehicles or limiting the deployment of strategic systems should be safeguarded as a minimum. Enhanced dialogue between the most involved States should aim for further cuts in all systems, deployed or non-deployed or non-deployed, strategic or non-strategic.

Mr Chairman,

We should adapt our approach to nuclear disarmament in function of today's reality. Our debate should not be confined to a repetition of well known principles, but seek to offer new pathways towards progress. However, the basic tenets of nuclear disarmament are clear and can not be brushed aside. The continued production of fissile material for nuclear weapons distances us from our goal, just as the lack of a global legal obligation to ban nuclear tests forever. We pay tribute to the recent efforts, spearheaded by Canada, to bring a fissile material cut off treaty (FMCT) closer to reality. The preparatory work has provided a comprehensive overview of all possible provisions for such a treaty. It has also shown that the question of stockpiles is not a binary choice, and can only be dealt with satisfactorily within the context of treaty negotiations. Consequently, the preparatory phase could be concluded and the negotiation of an FMCT should start in the Conference on Disarmament.

The continued suspension of nuclear tests by the DPRK provides a glimmer of hope for progress on the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. This potential can only be fully realized if CTBT accession is part of a settlement on complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization.

The entry into force of the CTBT should be prepared for to its full extent. All states can contribute to this effect, e.g. by accepting monitoring stations on their territory and concluding facility agreements. The Netherlands, Luxembourg and Belgium recently signed an agreement to pool their national expertise so as to provide more profound and in-depth assessments of incidents on the basis of the data transmitted by the International Monitoring System. We hope this initiative of regional cooperation, aimed at strengthening the CTBT's verification capabilities, can be an inspiration for other States as well.

Mr Chairman,

Sustainable nuclear disarmament can not be realized without firm confidence in its irreversibility and verifiability. Nuclear disarmament verification is therefore an unmissable tool and Belgium seeks to help tackle the associated technical challenges through its participation in the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification (IPNDV). Later this year, it will host a demonstration regarding the technology methods to detect the presence of nuclear material.

Every State can contribute to nuclear disarmament by its support for regional and global security. A Zone without weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East could be a crucial contribution, if it takes into account the interests of all parties concerned. Confidence building measures would be a welcome intermediate step, such as wider adherence to the Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation.

Mr Chairman,

While all States can contribute to nuclear disarmament, the responsibility of the nuclear weapon States is beyond par. Here too new realities have to be taken into

account. No nuclear weapon State can expand its arsenals and capabilities without facing increased scrutiny and pressure to actively participate in the international efforts to reduce nuclear risk and make progress on nuclear disarmament.

Finally, Mr Chairman,

Current technological developments will have an impact on nuclear posture and doctrine and will need to be taken into account. One such domain concerns developments in missile systems, which increase ambiguity regarding payload and reduce reaction time.