



**Statement of Argentina to the Third Session of the Preparatory Committee for the
2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT – Cluster 1
New York, 29 April – 10 May 2018**

**Delivered by the Head of Delegation,
Ambassador Rafael Mariano Grossi**

check against delivery

As we resume the debates on the review process for Cluster 1 issues today, we are aware that there is a wide international community looking on, who have a right to expect concrete proposals towards disarmament that is irreversible, verifiable and transparent.

Argentina is listening to this demand, since it is a position we share, based on our historical position for general and complete disarmament, where nuclear disarmament is a priority, in accordance with Article VI of the NPT. That expectation has guided our own behavior at the national level, and is in play when we come to the international arena to discuss ways to move forward that are concrete and realistic. We reaffirm, once again, our commitment to work in a constructive manner, seeking the widest consensus, in order to achieve a world free from nuclear weapons.

Our flexibility in the recent negotiations to adopt the agenda and programme of work for the Conference on Disarmament, the foremost multilateral negotiations forum, demonstrates that commitment. We must avoid the marginalization of this forum and, to that end, we are open to discuss and reflect on substantive proposals and to move forward, if possible, always on the basis of consensus.

Argentina is part of a region that has been historically at the forefront when it comes to disarmament and non-proliferation.

The contribution to peace and security at the regional and global level made by the Tlatelolco Treaty –for the past 51 years- has been real and effective, not just by strengthening the commitment of our countries to disarmament and non-proliferation but also through its Protocols, which bind the nuclear weapon countries to refrain from violating our status as a nuclear weapon free zone. Such commitments must be honored and strengthened, and we encourage the revision of the interpretative declarations that condition the object and the aim of Tlatelolco.

We are committed to the consolidation of our region as a Peace Zone. Even in these difficult times, the whole of the region is of one mind regarding the need for the promotion of nuclear disarmament that is general, complete and non-discriminatory as a priority goal. The commitment of OPANAL and CELAC countries with nuclear disarmament is clear, and has been expressed in Special Declarations at each of its Summits of Heads of State and Government.

At the 2015 Review Conference, Argentina joined the 150-plus countries that co-sponsored the Joint Declaration on the Humanitarian Consequences of Nuclear Weapons. We continue to believe that achieving the general and complete elimination of nuclear weapons is the best guarantee against its use or the threat of its use, therefore avoiding the irreparable humanitarian consequences attached to their use.

In the current international scenario, we cannot deny our concerns regarding nuclear disarmament, and we trust that we see in this cycle a decisive commitment of the nuclear-weapons States (NWS) to fulfill their obligations under the NPT and, specifically, to article VI. It would be important to witness concrete signs in this direction. The NPT Review Process is an exceptional opportunity for a horizontal dialogue between NWS and NNWS, and Argentina believes that if all parties come to the table in the spirit of mutual understanding, even in these difficult circumstances we will be able to make progress as long as the political will is there.

Mr. Chairman,

If we, as international community, aspire to have real progress, we must avoid at all cost establishing artificial definitions of success, imposing unrealistic deadlines or, in short, attempting to re-write the consensus reflected in the Treaty, even if we truly believe to be in the right.

The NPT, as every other non-proliferation or disarmament instrument, includes provisions that seek mutual complementarity and strengthening.

For Argentina, the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) is the clearest and most urgent pending goal. We are encouraged by the fact that States are steadily, every year, making the

decision to sign or ratify. But a gesture from one of the Annex II countries is probably the only way to finally bring this Treaty into force. The enforcement of the unilateral moratoriums by nuclear-weapons-armed countries can confirm the nature of CTBT as jus cogens international law. But moratoriums are not enough, not when we have a full-fledged agreed Treaty before us, one that has proved to be a decisive force in bringing nuclear tests to a halt and that has the capacity to continue the active monitoring and vigilance that will be indispensable for the Ban to continue to be in force.

The 2020 Review Conference offers a clear opportunity to make a universal call for the entry into force of this Treaty, taking place in a rare moment when we can truly say that no country is conducting banned nuclear tests. This situation needs to make us ready to consolidate any progress through legally binding obligations. Once and again, we have seen that we cannot give any progress for granted.

We are aware also that the efforts by the international community to reach a world free of nuclear weapons, though its prohibition and total elimination have not started from scratch. Argentina believes that Article VI of the NPT does not only refer to the obligation to eliminate nuclear weapons, through general and complete disarmament, but that this obligation implies in itself the concept of a prohibition, and we must not undermine the validity and binding nature that Article VI of the NPT.

In the conviction that it is possible to advance in the elimination of nuclear weapons, our steps towards that end must be sustained in solid control system, to ensure they are verifiable, irreversible and transparent. Any efforts towards creating the conditions for such a system must be lauded, and Argentina stands ready to participate in good faith.

In the field of disarmament and non-proliferation, our commitments -whether political, legal or other- are of relative value unless they are underpinned by a solid verification system that is neutral, professional and robust. It is in the benefit and interest of all Parties -and in particular of developing states aspiring to take full advantage of the potential of nuclear energy for sustainable energy- to do so in a manner that is not only beyond reproach but also guaranteed and certified by an international inspectorate. When it comes to non-proliferation and potential hostile or non-peaceful uses of nuclear materials, verification is paramount.

To this end, it is necessary to develop adequate and sufficient capabilities. Initiatives such as the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification (IPNDV) and the Expert Group on "Nuclear Disarmament Verification" in the United Nations system are welcome step towards our goals, together with the discussions on verification that are expected to continue within the FMCT Expert Group. We are considering with interest the Agenda for Disarmament "Securing our Common Future" presented by the Secretary General Guterres in 2018.

Argentina is strongly committed to these initiatives, in the understanding that disarmament demands practical contributions at the technical level that can allow us to move forward in a prompt and decisive manner, to lock in any progress as soon as the conditions for new concrete disarmament measures comes about.

Mr. Chairman,

It is important to continue to move forward, in a sustained manner, in the reduction of nuclear arsenals with a view to its total elimination, and we also have a task before us in the field of prevention of an arms race in outer space, for example, as well as in the progress regarding the negative assurances agreements.

No-first-use commitments can also be a welcome step within the nuclear disarmament debate, as a temporary positive step towards the goals enshrined in the Treaty.

At the same time, the obligations to reduce nuclear arsenals must be accompanied by measures that focus in the reduction and elimination of the risks associated to the use of nuclear weapons.

Mr. Chairman,

While it is clear that the NPT establishes a balance of obligations between NWS and NNWS, we cannot accept any view that makes our compliance and implementation of our obligations as NNWS conditional in any way on the behavior of other Parties. That is the strength of a Treaty that imposes legally binding obligations on all of us. And which includes the obligation to make a thorough review of such implementation, one that is long overdue since the 2015 Review Conference did not succeed in adopting its conclusions.

The current international situation reinforces the priority and validity of the NPT. As the rest of the international community, Argentina has received the announcements regarding the interruption of the North-Korean program of nuclear testing and missiles with interest and anticipation. We trust that the dialogue initiated with South Korea and the United States continues towards the achievement of more ambitious and verifiable agreements. In particular, we consider that the signature and ratification of the CTBT by North Korea, as well as a prompt return of the IAEA inspectors to its territory, would constitute additional positive gestures towards the region and the international community as a whole.

We welcome the readiness expressed by the experts in the CTBT Secretariat to contribute their ample expertise to the necessary verification efforts, in any manner that the State parties may wish to see fit. We are reminded, once more, of the importance and the urgency for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test Ban Treaty to enter into force, so it can become the legally-binding grounds to condemn nuclear testing under international law and even to call for on-site inspections and take concrete steps on the basis of the information obtained, if new breaches were suspected anywhere. We call on those States that have not yet done so to ratify the Treaty, especially those whose ratification is indispensable for the CTBT to enter into force. It is hard to understand the rationale of a gradual approach to disarmament that does not include the prompt entry into force of the CTBT.

Mr. Chairman,

Regarding the specific issue of security assurances, we have already stated that the non-nuclear-weapon States will not reach our full security as long as the NWS do not move forward in the acceptance of effective international agreements guaranteeing that such weapons will not be used against us nor its use be threatened, especially when us, countries with no nuclear weapons, are complying strictly and truly with our non-proliferation obligations.

Since the adoption of UN Security Council resolution 255(1968), the NWS have recognized the need to draft credible commitments that offer some kind of guarantee to those who have voluntarily renounced the possession of such weapons of mass destruction. How can we not demand a guarantee that those States who do have nuclear weapons will not commit the absolute excess of using them against the unarmed? It is hard to understand why, fifty years later, such commitment has not been incorporated in a simple and clear legal instrument yet. There are no exceptions or interpretations that can nullify the commitment made.

At the same time, it is understood that the possible adoption of an Agreement granting security assurances should not undermine those assurances already made by NWS in the framework of the Nuclear-Weapons-Free Zones and those in the resolutions of the Security Council, nor would it replace in itself the obligations under Article 6.

Mr. Chairman,

On our path to the Review Conference 2020 is not without obstacles and challenges. On the other hand, the work towards international security and global stability is not one that can wait for the ideal conditions to come about but, on the contrary, needs to be more decisive and resolute in the face of a less-optimistic scenario.

It is necessary to move forward in a balanced way in all three pillars of the Treaty, on the basis of the commitments already undertaken. We are convinced that the dimension of peaceful uses of nuclear energy and its key role in our economic and sustainable development plays against the security aspects - not only non-proliferation, but also the belief that the path towards a much safer world involves the complete elimination of nuclear weapons.

Argentina favors an approach that is ambitious, while keeping our feet firmly on the ground. We will work tirelessly towards progress in any path that shows any promise, while avoiding squandering time and resources on those courses of actions that are certain to further our divisions and keep us away from progress.

Thank you.