



Belgium

Statement - Cluster II Nuclear Non-Proliferation

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. President,

My delegation aligns itself with the declaration of the European Union.

The Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) is approaching its 50th anniversary. The Treaty succeeded in reducing the risk of proliferation, which was very present at the time of its signature, but it did not eliminate the threat. Our disappointment at the lack of progress in the first pillar of the NPT does not warrant a reduction of our attention to the persistent challenge of proliferation.

The safeguards system of the IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) is an irreplaceable element of the non-proliferation regime. Comprehensive safeguards agreements, supplemented by additional protocols, constitute the current IAEA verification standard. States that have not yet done so would undeniably strengthen our collective security by joining this norm. It is worth remembering that the need for an additional protocol is based on historical experience and not on theoretical or political considerations. The importance of this issue is increasing as the use of nuclear energy expands. No State, including new actors, can consider itself exempt from the obligation to provide the necessary guarantees for the exclusively peaceful nature of its nuclear program.

Mr. President,

We are pleased with the progress made last year on the North Korean issue. However, as long as North Korea does not undertake concrete and verifiable steps towards denuclearization, international pressure on the regime must be maintained. Strict enforcement of sanctions by all states forms an essential element. Too often, weak links are exploited by the North Korean regime to bypass the restrictions that constitute an unavoidable tool to induce a change of behavior.

Any agreement with North Korea should be based on a strict verification regime. Therefore, the involvement of the IAEA at the beginning of any negotiations is

necessary. In collaboration with the European Joint Research Center (JRC), Belgium offered concrete support to the Agency's preparation through targeted training of inspectors, particularly in the area of management and measurement of plutonium.

We are convinced of the value of the involvement of CTBTO (Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization), which through its neutrality and expertise could contribute to the verification of North Korean statements. Moreover, a gradual rapprochement of North Korea with the CTBT would be indicative of the country's determination to end nuclear testing in a sustainable and legally binding manner.

On the global level, Belgium recalls the substantial contribution that each non-party State can make to the non-proliferation regime by signing and ratifying the CTBT. It welcomes the recent ratification by Thailand and Zimbabwe and the signature of Tuvalu.

Mr. President,

The nuclear agreement with Iran (JCPOA) remains the best guarantee for the strict verification of the peaceful nature of the Iranian nuclear program. Belgium supports the continuation of its implementation. Since 1 January, it has facilitated the implementation of Resolution 2231 within the UNSC and will therefore take all necessary measures in this capacity to facilitate and strengthen the implementation of the resolution. We recall that our voluntary contributions to the IAEA verification activities in Iran amount to nearly EUR 700,000.

International confidence can be further strengthened, including by the sustainment of IAEA verification, through Iran's ratification of the Additional Protocol.

We are also convinced that strengthening regional stability requires responsible behavior by all actors. We call on Iran to contribute to a de-escalation of regional tensions, in particular by taking steps to restore the confidence of the international community in the Iranian missile program.

Finally, Mr. President,

Like other states, I want to make it clear that NATO's nuclear sharing agreements respect the provisions of the NPT. Any accusation to the contrary only serves to distract from the real issues.

Thank you, Mr. President.