SOUTH AFRICA

STATEMENT DURING THE THEMATIC DEBATE ON NUCLEAR WEAPONS

20 October 2014

Chairperson,

South Africa fully associates itself with the statements delivered on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, the African Group and the New Agenda Coalition.

As long as nuclear weapons exist, humankind will continue to face the threat of catastrophe. Experience demonstrates that the immense, uncontrollable capability and indiscriminate nature of a nuclear weapons detonation reaches well-beyond national borders, leaving a trail of death and destruction in its wake. This impact -- including the longer-term humanitarian, environmental and socio-economic consequences -- will be with us for generations. The international community has overwhelmingly voiced their concern at this grave threat. The two conferences on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons held in Oslo and Nayarit confirmed that no State or international body could adequately address the humanitarian impact of a nuclear weapons detonation. South Africa looks forward to Austria’s follow-up Conference in December 2014, which will enable us to continue this important dialogue. My delegation was pleased to join the statement delivered by New Zealand on behalf of 155 States, who reiterated today their deep concern about the unacceptable humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons.

The vast public resources diverted towards nuclear weapons stand in stark contrast to the delivery of development assistance in support of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Today, the costs associated with the maintenance of nuclear arsenals amount to roughly more than double the development assistance provided to Africa. This state of affairs is clearly neither acceptable nor sustainable in a world where the basic human needs of billions cannot be met.

As long as nuclear weapons exist, vertical and horizontal proliferation will persist. The continued development of new categories of nuclear weapons and their delivery systems provides a clear indication that some countries continue to harbour aspirations for the indefinite retention of these weapons, contrary to their legal obligations and commitments.

All efforts must therefore be exerted to eliminate these threats. The only way to guarantee that nuclear weapons will never be used again is through their total elimination and the assurance that they will never be produced again. All States have a legitimate stake in and responsibility for nuclear disarmament. As such, South Africa believes that all of us -- developed and developing, nuclear-weapon or non-nuclear weapons States -- have a contribution to make towards the construction of a framework for the achievement and
maintenance of a world without nuclear weapons, which includes clearly defined benchmarks and timelines backed by a strong system of verification.

Chairperson,

The preparatory process for the 2015 NPT Review Conference illustrated the dissatisfaction of most States Parties about the lack of progress towards the implementation of the 2010 Action Plan, including the failure to convene a Conference in 2012 on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.

This also includes, among others, the commitments made towards deeper reductions in the number of nuclear weapons, reducing reliance on nuclear weapons in military doctrines, the entry-into-force of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), the provision of legally-binding security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States, and the conclusion of a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices. It is clear that the success of the 2015 Review Conference is depended on the extent to which States Parties implement their solemn commitments, including those by the nuclear-weapon States to accelerate concrete progress on the steps leading to nuclear disarmament.

In conclusion, Chairperson, let me reiterate that nuclear weapons have no place in today’s security environment. Instead of deterring conflict and war, as some allege, these weapons have remained a constant source of insecurity and driver of proliferation. The humanitarian imperatives that underpin the need for their complete elimination demand a renewed commitment and determination by all to the achievement and maintenance of a world without nuclear weapons. South Africa stands ready to contribute towards this end.

I thank you, Chairperson.