



## Conference on Disarmament

**Statement delivered by  
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Permanent Representative to the Conference  
on Disarmament**

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Mr President,

My Delegation welcomes today's opportunity to congratulate the Russian Federation on its assumption of the CD Presidency at this first meeting during its tenure. I would wish also to convey New Zealand's appreciation for Romania's efforts under its Presidency to ensure that the Conference on Disarmament began the year in a positive way and to congratulate Ambassador Vierita on the adoption last Friday of the proposal in CD/WP.599/Rev.1 for the establishment of a CD "working group on the way ahead".

Google tells me, Mr President, that the characteristics of this new year in the Chinese calendar – that of a Fire Rooster – are a 'strong sense of time-keeping and of *responsibility at work*'. This might seem to augur well, then, for the efforts of the Russian Presidency and those of our subsequent Presidents for 2017 to build on WP.599/Rev.1 and bring the CD back to work.

'Fire Roosters' come about only once in every 60 years. We can hope that such a year will prove propitious in overcoming the 21-year stalemate in the CD. But as others here said last Friday, only if the 'working group on the way ahead' is able to

pave the way for the adoption of a Programme of Work and the initiation of negotiations in the CD can it be adjudged useful or successful.

New Zealand's measure for 'success' in this body mirrors that of many others here. We do not look for negotiations to get under way on just *anything*. If the CD is to regain its reputation and credibility and to justify the considerable resources expended on it, it - like any international organisation - will need to be engaged on issues that meet the priority concerns and problems facing the global community. This requires that the CD again fulfil its negotiating mandate on a relevant and *significant* disarmament issue and not on one, for instance, that is already served by existing legal instruments or that is better addressed in alternative fora.

I have referenced issues and problems facing the *global* community, Mr President. My Delegation continues to believe that global concerns warrant global engagement. Accordingly, we fail to see the justification for the limited membership of this body and its exclusion of States that seek the opportunity to work on the issues under its purview.

I would like now to take the opportunity to briefly survey a number of the key issues on which my Delegation will be actively engaged during this Fire Rooster Year.

New Zealand welcomes the opportunity given us all by UNGA Res 71/258 (L. 41) to move forward now on the architecture essential for nuclear disarmament. We look forward to the nuclear weapon prohibition negotiations which will get under way next month at the United Nations in New York but are surprised by the criticism from some quarters that these

negotiations - this exercise in architecture – should be rejected on the basis that they will not bring about the actual elimination of any nuclear weapon.

Actual *elimination* of nuclear weapons has, obviously enough, never been within the gift of we non-possessors of nuclear weapons. But we are certainly able to play our part in meeting the obligation upon us all, as acknowledged unanimously by the International Court of Justice in 1996, to take part in nuclear disarmament negotiations and to create what the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has termed the “indispensable building block” for a world free of nuclear weapons.

Our constructive participation in these negotiations is not the only way in which New Zealand will seek to strengthen the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and advance a nuclear weapon-free world in 2017. This year marks the commencement of the review cycle that will culminate in the 2020 Review Conference – the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the entry-into-force of the NPT. Both nationally and through our membership of the New Agenda Coalition, the De-Alerting Group and the Vienna Group of Ten, New Zealand will work actively to ensure that this cornerstone of our global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime is stable and strong.

Just as New Zealand remains steadfast in our support for the NPT, so too are we committed to ensuring success in newer regimes. As the Arms Trade Treaty enters its third full year of operation we are pleased to see continued growth both in its membership and with regard to implementation measures. It is clear, of course, that many challenges remain – including the need to achieve full compliance with, and universalisation of,

the Treaty and in ensuring that all States Parties are able to participate fully in the inter-sessional processes which have recently been established. Against this backdrop, New Zealand is proud to have been able to provide an early contribution to the Treaty's Voluntary Trust Fund. We are confident that the VTF will be a valuable tool for States to identify for themselves the priority areas where assistance is needed in order to achieve full implementation. We are delighted that the Fund has already attracted significant support from donor countries.

New Zealand continues in the role of Coordinator for National Implementation Measures under the Convention on Cluster Munitions. This important instrument, and the strong international humanitarian law (IHL) standard it sets, remains a priority for New Zealand. We are deeply appreciative of the strong leadership shown during 2016 by The Netherlands as President of the Convention and again by this year's President, Germany. At a time when IHL is being flouted in an appalling manner in a number of brutal conflicts, it is encouraging that the strong normative impact of the CCM – and its sister convention the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Treaty – continues to grow.

The imperative of improving the protection of civilians in situations of armed conflict was properly in focus at last December's Review Conference of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW). New Zealand welcomed the decision to move forward on the issue of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS) and the recognition given there to other pressing humanitarian issues including the use of explosive weapons with wide area effects in densely populated areas and the question of incendiary weapons. Whilst regretting that more progress was not able to be made at the

Review Conference, we retain our commitment to working with others to assist the CCW in remaining relevant in its response to the challenges posed by contemporary conflicts.

I am confident, Mr President, that this survey of the key topics on which New Zealand will be engaged over coming months reveals that notwithstanding the ongoing impasse in this body there is a pressing agenda of relevant issues under consideration in other forums. But it remains New Zealand's hope that, in this Fire Rooster year, you and your fellow Presidents can ensure that the CD builds on the decision taken in WP.599/Rev.1 and not only takes stock of the existing impasse within the Conference but plots a way through it.