

**Vienna Group of Ten
2018 NPT Preparatory Committee
General Debate Statement**

Chair, I welcome this opportunity to take the floor on behalf of the Vienna Group of Ten, comprising Australia, Austria, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Hungary, Ireland, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway and Sweden.

The 2018 NPT Preparatory Committee is an important juncture to consider progress made and the opportunities that lie ahead to strengthen the Treaty across its three pillars – pillars which are equally important and mutually reinforcing.

We welcome your commitment as Chair to ensuring due and balanced consideration is paid to all three pillars at this PrepCom.

Chair

The Vienna Group of Ten – as it has since 1980 - has met in advance of this NPT PrepCom to consider ways to ensure appropriate consideration and weight is given to the so called “Vienna issues” – which span pillars two and three.

Our work has culminated in a working paper – tabled as working paper five - which provides a comprehensive, finely tuned and carefully negotiated but accessible set of recommendations and supporting background on compliance and verification; nuclear safety, security, peaceful uses, the CTBT, export controls and withdrawal from the NPT.

All recommendations have as their overriding objective the strengthening of the NPT.

Chair

The VG10 takes pride in the fact that our paper has been repeatedly drawn on by States party and successive NPT PreCom and RevCon Chairs as a useful point of reference. Its usefulness derives from the fact that our recommendations represent a carefully negotiated consensus among a diverse membership representing a range of experiences and perspectives on nuclear-related issues.

In spite of our diversity, however, we are likeminded in many ways. The Group considers the NPT to be the cornerstone of the international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. The Group shares the view that the strength of the Treaty comes from its near universality – and we are committed to protecting and further advancing its universal application.

We recognise the critical role that safeguards play in maintaining confidence in the peaceful nature of nuclear activities and recommend that the PrepCom affirm that a comprehensive safeguards agreement, together with an additional protocol constitutes the current verification standard. Furthermore, we encourage those States party that have not yet done so to conclude and bring into force an additional protocol.

The VG10 considers the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty to be vital to the international nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime, underpinned by the NPT, through which the nuclear test moratorium has become a *de facto* international norm. The Group is committed to achieving the CTBT’s entry into force. We urge all States that have not yet done so to sign and /or ratify the Treaty without delay, in particular those remaining Annex 2 States.

The group recognises the central role of the NPT in fostering international confidence and cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. We recommend the PrepCom underscore that peaceful applications of nuclear technology are realising enormous gains to the betterment of humanity – across human health, water management, agriculture, food safety and nutrition, energy and environmental protection and can contribute in significant and broad-ranging ways to the realisation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Our ability to fully harness the benefits of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, however, depend on ensuring that use and application continues to be accompanied by commitments to ongoing implementation of safeguards and the rigorous adherence to the highest standards of nuclear safety and security. The group also emphasises the importance of promoting the equal, full and effective participation of both women and men in nuclear non-proliferation, nuclear disarmament and the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

Chair

The Vienna Group of Ten is clear eyed about the challenges facing the NPT – limited progress toward implementation of nuclear disarmament commitments, non-compliance challenges and the lack of universality of the Treaty are notable.

However, we are equally alert to the progress that has and is being made to strengthen the NPT and which represent positive steps forward. The work of the High-level Fissile Material Cut off Treaty expert preparatory group to identify and make recommendations on elements of a future treaty, the ongoing work of the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification to develop credible measures and build global capacity for verifying nuclear disarmament and the UN's establishment of the Group of Governmental Experts on Nuclear Disarmament Verification are all cases in point.

As we progress through the current Review Cycle, the Vienna Group of Ten calls on all States party to redouble their efforts to realise the fundamental goals of the Treaty and engage in a spirit of constructive cooperation. The eight reflections by the Chair of the 2017 session of the Preparatory Committee can serve as a reference point in this regard.

We as a Group certainly stand ready to do so including by discussing our paper and the ideas contained within.

Thank you.