



Statement by

H.E. Dell Higgle
Ambassador for Disarmament

at the

2017 Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to
the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

General Debate

Vienna, May 2017

Mr Chair,

New Zealand is delighted to have the Netherlands, our next door neighbour here in the UN, in the leadership of this important meeting – the first Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). We are especially grateful for the efforts which you, Ambassador van der Kwast, and your team have made to optimise its prospects for success. I am thinking in particular of the range of regional consultations which you have convened in recent weeks including the one in my own part of the world, Jakarta. It is very evident, Mr Chair, that you have done everything possible to launch this new NPT review cycle on a positive note and to carry that forward with a smooth transition for next year's Prepcom.

I do think, Mr Chair, that at the start of a review cycle one is almost under an obligation to be positive - to see the glass, at least, as *half-full*. A new quinquennium presents us with a refreshed opportunity to look anew at our agenda, to review the foundations of our Treaty, and to capitalise on each and every opportunity to strengthen it.

To suggest that optimism should be the order of the day is not, however, to minimise the challenges we face, including from an international security situation dominated by heightened global and regional tensions and from the legacy of the past (most recently, the failure to reach an outcome at the 2015 Review Conference). Nor is it to ignore the extraordinary complexity of many of the issues which underlie full implementation of the Treaty – these include the need for its universalisation, the requirement to forge an agreement on a Middle East free of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), and for implementation of the unequivocal undertaking given in 2000 and again in 2010 by the Five Nuclear Weapon States to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals.

But it does ensure that we do not lose sight of the benefits the NPT has brought us nor, more generally, of the clear value of a rules-based approach to international security issues. We draw our optimism from the terms of the

Treaty itself, from its 'Grand Bargain' and from the sense of common purpose – the desire to eliminate nuclear weapons – which has motivated the NPT membership for almost 50 years now. We hope that over the course of this new review cycle our sense of optimism will prevail and that the NPT membership proves able to take decisive steps forward, most notably in making progress on the disarmament obligations of Article VI.

The Humanitarian Initiative on Nuclear Weapons has demonstrated clearly over the last several years the catastrophic reality of the threat, and the level of the risk, which the international community faces from nuclear weapons. In New Zealand's own region of the Asia/Pacific we confront the challenge of the DPRK's nuclear ambitions which we continue to condemn in the strongest possible terms.

New Zealand's vote at the United Nations General Assembly last year in favour of the launch of multilateral negotiations on a treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons and to provide the framing for their total elimination is another of the ways in which we demonstrate our very strong opposition to the proliferation of nuclear weapons and our expectation that the NPT's promise of disarmament will indeed be realised. Notwithstanding that most NPT States Parties support this negotiation, we know that not *all* do so. New Zealand is confident nevertheless that the UNGA treaty will reinforce the NPT and be an important enabler of the full implementation of Article VI.

We are confident, too, that our NPT membership will reconfirm the critical importance of non-proliferation and of the full implementation of the commitments made under this pillar. In this regard, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), agreed with Iran, is an excellent example of the possibility of resolving seemingly intractable nuclear issues through diplomacy and dialogue. I would also like to highlight the need to continuously strengthen and universalise comprehensive nuclear safeguards, safety and security mechanisms as well as the key role of export control regimes in supporting non-proliferation.

Mr Chair,

New Zealand associates itself with the statements and ambitions expressed here by the various groupings to which we belong – the New Agenda Coalition (NAC), the De-alerting Group and the Vienna Group of 10. We will amplify today's General Statement with more detailed remarks, which we will deliver during the subsequent cluster debate.

<>