



**Statement by H.E. Dell Higgle
Ambassador for Disarmament**

**Open-Ended Working Group on Taking Forward
Multilateral Nuclear Disarmament Negotiations**

2 May 2016

Thank you Mr Chair.

New Zealand continues to be grateful for the inclusive and transparent manner in which you, Mr Chair, have been conducting our work here in the Open-Ended Working Group on Taking Forward Multilateral Nuclear Disarmament Negotiations. We are grateful, too, for the “Synthesis Paper” you have recently provided us with. We can see that your Paper takes full account of the broad range of views conveyed at the first session of the OEWG as well as in the various Working Papers - and has indeed sought to connect and synthesise them, to the extent possible, under sections corresponding to the mandate given us last year in UN General Assembly Resolution 70/33.

I say ‘synthesise *to the extent possible*’ because after all, Mr Chair, no one can expect you to work magic and to produce unity if there is none. And whilst noting your own observation in para 8 that there is a greater degree of complementarity between the various positions on this issue than is often assumed to be the case, it does seem, at this point at least, that a number of the views and proposals reflected in your Paper are inherently irreconcilable.

That was probably to be expected: differing approaches and varying levels of ambition have, after all, long been a feature of nuclear weapon-related discussions and they are indeed a common feature of many multilateral processes – and certainly of any whose origins lie, like the OEWG, in a contested vote.

You can rely on New Zealand’s commitment, Mr Chair, to joining the collective effort over our forthcoming sessions this week and next, and then later again in August, to iron out as many elements of disagreement as possible. But the gulf

that may prove unbridgeable is the gap between those who are more or less content to continue with the status quo – and those who are not. As my Prime Minister made clear at the UN High-Level Meeting on Nuclear Disarmament in 2013, New Zealand is *not* content with the status quo. That is also apparent from the positions we have endorsed with our colleagues in the New Agenda Coalition and the De-alerting Group.

The overwhelming support for moving in a new direction beyond the status quo and putting in place effective legal measures for nuclear disarmament was conveyed very clearly during the February OEWG and is appropriately reflected in your Paper, Mr Chair. As you have acknowledged, the Humanitarian Initiative has been a mainspring for this.

A consensual outcome to the OEWG's work is certainly highly desirable and we will all, no doubt, be searching during our forthcoming sessions here for whatever complementarity we can find on key issues. But if common ground *is* to be found among all Delegations here, it is clear that it will need to be on the basis of something more than the status quo – of something more than a repeated call for the very same 'steps', or 'building blocks', for nuclear disarmament which have been made so often over the last twenty, and more, years. This time our goal is reflected in our UNGA mandate to move forward on multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations.

New Zealand thanks you again, Mr Chair, for your Synthesis Paper and for your leadership of our process. We look forward to contributing over the coming days to the discussion here.

Thank you.