



Statement by

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to the Conference on Disarmament, Geneva

at the

3rd Preparatory Committee of 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the
Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

Cluster I

New York, 2 May 2019

Mr Chair,

It is clear from our discussions here this week, and the number of new initiatives coming forward, that next year's important anniversary of the NPT's entry-into-force is now having an energising effect on the membership.

New Zealand welcomes the thought very evidently being given as to how it is that we can find the basis for a proper celebration of the Treaty's half-century. In the words of Sweden's Working Paper (PC.III/WP.33), next year's Review Conference presents States Parties with an opportunity "to agree on a way forward in the implementation of the NPT across all three pillars, including Article VI/disarmament. The NPT and its past Review Conferences form legal and political obligations that remain unfulfilled."

We suspect that there could be little disagreement here with the view that the best celebration of this - and any - treaty will be grounded in its Parties' ongoing support for it and in their full compliance with its terms.

Next year's meeting is not, of course, unique insofar as previous Review Conferences have also afforded us the opportunity to take stock of where we are, where we might have been, and where we need to go. Perhaps, as the US's Working Paper (PC.III/WP.43) suggests, "a more pragmatic approach to disarmament ... can contribute to a successful outcome at 2020 RevCon" and, importantly, to effective follow-through.

Some of our debate here, and quite a number of the various Working Papers being put forward, has focused on the need to identify points of convergence between the positions held by various groupings within the Treaty's membership. In this regard, we agree with the optimistic observation made by the UK during the General

Debate earlier this week that there is indeed “more that unites us, than divides us”.

But the very real fact that all parties to the Treaty can properly be said to derive benefit from it (in view of the success it has had in constraining horizontal proliferation and keeping the number of nuclear weapon possessors as low as it currently is), and that we must surely at the very least be united on this, can in no way displace the obligation to deliver fairly on all core obligations of the Grand Bargain - including as to vertical proliferation and other aspects of the disarmament undertaking in Article VI.

The value of all legally-binding instruments, including the NPT, lies in the certainty given their Parties as to what their rights are and what their obligations are. A treaty will come to have little value if its terms are re-interpreted, overlooked, or deferred - and suggestions about the desirability of a ‘recommitment’ to the NPT next year will need to take this fully into account.

Pragmatism certainly has its place in determining possible pathways for the implementation of agreed obligations but can have no place in attempting to rewrite a treaty’s obligations or supplant the standard interpretation of these in accordance with the universally agreed rules of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties. In this regard, we note that the ‘Stepping Stones Approach’ put forward by the Government of Sweden has carefully avoided any implication that it is attempting to rewrite history given its advocacy for the application of pragmatism to the process for implementation of the established disarmament agenda.

We need to be united, Mr Chair, on the need to fully and fairly implement all the terms of the NPT. New Zealand’s statements to follow in the cluster 2 and 3 debates will emphasise further steps our membership can take to enhance the compliance and non-proliferation aspects of the NPT including in order to strengthen and

universalise comprehensive safeguards as well as safety and security mechanisms.

For now, and in the context of our debate under cluster 1, I take this opportunity to recall the Working Paper presented by the New Agenda Coalition to last year's Prepcom (PC.II/WP.13) which, for ease of reference, sets out the full span of the commitments on nuclear disarmament which have been given at previous NPT Review Conferences. We can be confident, I think, that these undertakings will have been made in full consciousness of their compatibility with States Parties' national security interests - yet, as the Delegation of Brazil remarked in their General Debate statement this week, implementation of the disarmament pillar continues on as "the Achilles heel" of the NPT.

It remains New Zealand's expectation that the obligations assumed in the Treaty relating to nuclear disarmament will be fulfilled with the same rigour which the international community is right to insist on in relation to all other rules and undertakings.

Thank you, Mr Chair.

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