



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

Cluster I

Vienna, May 2017

Mr Chair,

The statement which we delivered here earlier this week during the General Debate conveyed New Zealand's hope that the NPT membership would prove able to take decisive steps forward during this new NPT review cycle – most notably in making progress on the disarmament obligations of Article VI of the Treaty.

Next year, it will be 50 years since the NPT was adopted. In 2020, it will be 50 years since its entry into force. It would be difficult to think of a better way in which to celebrate the half century of the Treaty's existence than by ensuring that the current review cycle is able to mark significant advances in implementation of Article VI. As was noted by the New Agenda Coalition (NAC) earlier this week, the very best way to protect the NPT – to enhance its good standing and preserve its vital role in preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons - is to *implement* it. Implementation of the disarmament pillar has long lagged behind implementation of the Treaty's other two pillars.

The most recent statement given by New Zealand under the disarmament cluster, cluster one, of the NPT was at the Treaty's 2015 Review Conference. Our voice was just one of the many there that expressed concern at the diminished credibility of the Treaty and its Grand Bargain as a result of the insufficiency of progress on nuclear disarmament. New Zealand and many others called for action to remedy this in order to reinforce the standing and bona fides of our Treaty.

In 2015, we pushed for progress on transparency and reporting by the Nuclear Weapon States, for recognition of the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons, and for progress in lowering the launch readiness of nuclear weapons. And, together with our colleagues in the New Agenda Coalition (NAC), we put forward options for the elaboration of legally-effective measures for a nuclear-free world pursuant to Article VI. The NAC's proposals on this issue built on the call in the Final Document of the successful 2010 Review Conference for "special efforts to establish the necessary framework to achieve and maintain a world without nuclear weapons".

I am confident, Mr Chair, that the fact that our 2015 meeting was unable to reach agreement on an outcome is not in itself seriously detrimental to the NPT. After all, in its nigh-on 50 years there have been quite a number of failed Review Conferences. Our Treaty will take the 2015 outcome in its stride and look to renewed success at the 2020 Review Conference provided that States Parties are able to see tangible progress on implementation of Article VI.

The legal framing for a nuclear weapon-free world is now being carried forward in negotiations conducted under UN General Assembly auspices. Efforts to negotiate legally-effective measures must continue, however, also in the NPT context. A range of other, interim, measures which the NPT membership could usefully focus on to advance the disarmament pillar during this new review cycle have been presented in a number of Working Papers put to this Prepcom and in group statements.

Those put forward by the cross-regional groups to which NZ belongs include calls from the NAC for a diminution in the role that nuclear weapons play in military doctrines and for reporting on this; and for increased awareness of the risks and catastrophic impact of any nuclear detonation. The De-alerting Group's statement calls for the implementation of previously agreed commitments on de-alerting and for rapid reductions in operational readiness of nuclear weapon systems. It also calls on the nuclear weapon states to report on their efforts to this end.

In the context of group positions supported by New Zealand, I would wish to draw attention also to the Humanitarian Initiative on Nuclear Weapons (HINW) and the side event on that which is being held here next week. We are grateful to the Austrian Government for organising this event – and for the opportunity it provides to reflect again on the catastrophic reality of a nuclear weapon detonation. It is this which remains the true motivation for the international community's long-standing pursuit of a world without nuclear weapons.

We hope that it will indeed prove possible during our Treaty's 50th anniversary review cycle to make real progress toward this long-standing goal.

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