

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

HIGH LEVEL SEGMENT

STATEMENT BY

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Madame President,

Let me open by congratulating Sweden on the assumption of the CD Presidency at this important time. Ireland and Sweden have collaborated closely across a number of disarmament issues and I can assure you of Ireland's full and unstinting cooperation and support in your work ahead.

2018 marks a number of important anniversaries in the nuclear disarmament calendar for Ireland. It is 60 years since our then-Minister for External Affairs, Frank Aiken, took the floor of the UN General Assembly to table the first of the so called 'Irish Resolutions'; laying the ground work for the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. It is 50 years since the Treaty, still cited as the cornerstone of the disarmament and non-proliferation regime, opened for signature. It was a

watershed moment, establishing for the first time a legally binding commitment to the disarmament of nuclear weapons. And it is 20 years since the formation of the New Agenda Coalition; a group that played a hugely significant role in agreeing the 13 practical steps, setting out a pragmatic roadmap to achieve nuclear disarmament. 20 years later, it is still working to bridge the gaps between the Nuclear Weapon States and the non-Nuclear Weapon States.

Reflection on such proud moments also brings with it a cause for concern.

Concern that many of the hopes and promises contained in those agreements remain unfulfilled. I regret that in many ways this conference itself has come to represent the stagnation that characterises much of the traditional disarmament and non-proliferation machinery. Indeed, it is deeply troubling that Ireland has been a member of this body for almost two decades and in that time consensus on a programme of work has never been achieved and no new membership applications agreed. We must do better.

In a United Nations where resources are increasingly challenged across the board, the CD is a well-funded body, We as Member States have a responsibility to demonstrate the flexibility and political will to step outside the strict silos of national self-interest and achieve genuine progress. Put simply, in view of the unprecedented global security challenges which we face, the status quo is unsustainable.

This is why Ireland warmly endorses the strong message delivered yesterday in this Chamber by the UN Secretary General, on the need to restore disarmament to its central role in building international peace and security. We welcome his forthcoming initiative and look forward to working together to break the stalemate.

We welcome the useful work of last year's Way Ahead Working Group and the important draft decision adopted by the CD last week on working arrangements. I hope this very positive signal will finally lead to a revitalisation of the Conference on Disarmament.

Madame President,

Ireland remains committed to working inclusively to achieve a more peaceful, secure and prosperous world. We have consistently sought to highlight how the unrestricted use and spread of weapons, both conventional and weapons of mass destruction, contributes directly to human rights abuses, and hinders development. Our disarmament policy is firmly rooted in a humanitarian context and most especially within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals. Promoting disarmament, therefore, is one of five signature foreign policies for our country and builds upon Ireland's historic legacy in this area.

It is essential that we take a broad, global perspective on how to tackle disarmament. Ireland is working on highlighting a number of horizontal issues that interact with disarmament questions such as the impact of weapons of mass destruction on the environment, cultural heritage and sustainable development.

Most significantly, in recent time Ireland has played a pivotal role in bringing the horizontal issue of gender and disarmament to the fore in international negotiations, both in terms of the gendered impact of conventional and nuclear weapons and the need to ensure greater agency for women in all disarmament-related discussions and negotiations.

We are proud that the recently adopted Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons acknowledges this important point and includes a direct reference to the need for the full and effective participation of women. I'm also pleased that ensuring a focus on gender and disarmament, and advancing the women, peace and security agenda while implementing the disarmament and Non-Proliferation strategies is now a key priority for the EU. We must be consistently mindful of such considerations and translate promises into tangible outcomes.

The achievement and maintenance of a world without nuclear weapons has been and remains a driving force of Ireland's foreign policy and one to which our people and our government remain wholeheartedly committed. The risks inherent in the very existence of nuclear weapons need no elaboration here in

this Chamber. As Pope Francis recently said "International peace and stability cannot be based on a false sense of security, on the threat of mutual destruction or total annihilation, or on simply maintaining a balance of power."

For Ireland, a founder member and original visionary of the NPT process, prohibition is a logical and moral imperative; in our view the best way to protect the NPT is to implement it. Our commitment to the tenets of Article VI of that Treaty demanded of us that we work to fill the legal gap by shaping the Treaty Prohibiting Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), which now has fifty six signatories and six ratifications. Nationally, preparations for Ireland's ratification of the TPNW are underway.

This isn't to suggest that Ireland is complacent about the difficult work that will be necessary in the context of the NPT. Serious issues face us as we approach the mid-way point of the Review Cycle. The DPRK's aggressive pursuit of nuclear weapons and its destabilising missile tests are a challenge to the entire international community. The lack of progress on establishing a WMD-Free-Zone in the Middle East is also a matter of serious concern. As always, the Irish delegation will engage actively and constructively in our national capacity, as well as with the EU, New Agenda Coalition, the Vienna Group of 10 and other like-minded partners at the NPT Preparatory Committee meeting this year.

There can be absolutely no rollback on the commitments contained in the NPT or undertaken at previous Review Conferences and we will aim for meaningful and balanced outcomes across the three pillars of the Treaty.

Madame President,

Ireland also looks to other disarmament and non-proliferation areas where we can make progress. We would like to see movement on the long-stalled process leading to a Fissile Material Treaty. We also view the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty as more urgent than ever and call on all remaining Annex II States to sign and ratify the Treaty. We must see the well-established international norm against the testing of nuclear weapons translated into a legally binding commitment on all states.

Let me conclude, Madame President, by reiterating our support for your endeavours to bring this august body back to work.

A functioning CD is in all of our interests and its resumption of substantive work is a matter of urgency. My remarks began today referencing the Irish architect of the NPT, Frank Aiken. Remarkably, his words 60 years ago seems as prescient as ever: *‘We must remain alert to what is happening in a changing world. The old dangers we know so well are still with us, but while we are still discussing them new dangers which may prove fatal are beginning to arise.’* We do not have the comfort of complacency. Let us waste no more time.

Thank you, Madame President.

ENDS