



IRELAND

Statement by

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Nuclear Cluster**

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Mr Chairman,

Firstly, I would like to extend condolences to the people of Thailand, and in particular to our Thai colleagues here at First Committee, on the recent passing of their esteemed Majesty the King of Thailand, recalling the remarks of our President, Michael D. Higgins, who has said the world “lost both its longest reigning head of state and a statesman deeply committed to peace and peaceful co-existence.”

Mr Chairman,

I wish to associate with the statement made by Egypt on behalf of the New Agenda Coalition, of which Ireland is proud to be a member. Ireland is a sponsor of the NAC Draft Resolution and looks forward to its adoption by consensus. I will add the following remarks in my national capacity.

As we said in our opening statement to this Committee, Ireland welcomes the Report of the UN-mandated Open Ended Working Group which took place in Geneva this year and we are among the sponsors, together with Austria, Brazil, Mexico, Nigeria and South Africa, bringing forward the Draft Resolution to give effect to its recommendations. We welcome the presentation of the Final Report by the OEWG Chair, Ambassador Thani Thongphakdi of Thailand and we warmly commend him and his team for their professionalism and dedication.

We also welcome the work of the Group, which under the wise stewardship of Ambassador Thani, was transparent, inclusive and respectful and produced a substantial and substantive body of knowledge, which greatly adds to our

understanding of this complex and critical issue. Indeed, there were over seventy working papers, presented at the OEWG by States and by our civil society partners and Ireland hopes that these can be compiled and published by the UN in book form and translated into all UN languages, to ensure that they are retained as a useful and valuable reference for all. The agenda for the OEWG was broad and covered all aspects of the mandate approved by the General Assembly last year. Those who were absent from proceedings were absent by choice and not by omission. All issues relating to effective measures, which Ireland together with our NAC partners, have been presenting for many years, were opened for discussion, as were all issues presented by the progressive approach group of states and others, many of which were overlapping and reflected existing NPT commitments.

In the course of our discussions in Geneva, which as we have already noted benefited from a welcome diversity and gender balance, many issues emerged in common, most especially in the part of the mandate addressing the very important issues of risk, transparency, verification, awareness and other measures, where the Chair noted a broad agreement. It is important to recall that the OEWG recommendations do not only address effective legal measures, they also include vital, interim measures, on reducing the immediate danger from nuclear weapons. But, the OEWG is one of those rare developments which is greater than the sum of its parts, greater than even the material which it has produced. Because something extraordinary happened in Geneva this year. As the distinguished delegate from New Zealand noted in her opening address, the OEWG has led to the “forging of a new mainstream”. We believe that all delegations who were present and certainly my own delegation, engaged in the process in good faith and with no preconceived outcome in mind. However, as

the discussions progressed, as we listened to one another and to the compelling expert presentations, a momentum developed and a sense of possibility and renewed optimism emerged and grew. By May, the majority opinion was coalescing around the potential for a new legal instrument, complementary to the NPT and giving effect to the commitment on nuclear disarmament enshrined in Article VI of that Treaty and on which negotiations could be opened in 2017.

For Ireland, the foundation and driving force has always been and continues to be the NPT; that is the imperative of seeing Article VI fully implemented and our obligation, as a non-nuclear weapon state, to contribute to nuclear disarmament. The humanitarian consequences initiative and the more recent expert presentations to the OEWG, including by those with a military and security background, have only served to reinforce what has always been our view since the origins of the NPT itself, namely that the world will only be a safe place when nuclear weapons are removed from it. We can conceive of no security situation, national, regional or international, which is made safer by the addition of nuclear weapons, given their catastrophic humanitarian consequences. Indeed, it would seem that the existence of nuclear weapons serves to heighten the stakes and exacerbate tensions. Here we concur with the statement made by DG Michael Moeller yesterday, that we need to come to our senses, as it makes no logical sense to destroy entire societies.

We all know that a nuclear detonation respects no boundaries and that the impacts of a nuclear weapon take no sides; as we have heard from many experts, they are indiscriminate, they are catastrophic and they are unanswerable, in terms of a humanitarian response. We have all shared in this room our outrage at the devastating humanitarian consequences of ongoing explosive weapons

use, on men, women, children, on families and on whole societies. What then of a bomb with a power to destroy millions and threaten the very future of our planet? What fresh horror might we express in the aftermath of such a nuclear event, that is if anyone were still here to condemn it? We do not need to imagine any of this; we know the lessons of history, and science can provide us with the far more terrible data of a detonation today. The risks and the reality of nuclear weapons are all too clear. Those arguments have been made and should not need to be repeated. The challenge to us all now is to face these facts and to do something about them, before it is too late. Those of us who focus on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons have many times been accused of “living in a fairy-tale”. But it is the idea of a limited nuclear exchange, or of more usable, targeted, nuclear weapons that is the fantasy, the devastating consequences are the reality. Here we endorse the powerful and compelling statement made by the Vice-President of the ICRC on Wednesday.

Mr Chairman,

There comes a time when choices have to be made and this is one of those times. Risk is composed of possibility multiplied by impact. Given the clear risks associated with the continued existence of nuclear weapons, this is now a choice between responsibility and irresponsibility. Governance requires accountability and governance requires leadership. This United Nations exists because at a crucial point in our history, we decided to stop warring and start talking. At that time, our predecessors knew and understood what was at stake. The very first resolution that they crafted related to nuclear weapons. Somehow, in all that has happened since, we have forgotten this and neglected the most crucial of all our high level goals, the one where lack of progress casts a shadow over all

others. We remain standing on the same precipice. For some time, Ireland has drawn attention to the inter-connected nature of international obligations on nuclear disarmament and we were pleased to hear the President of the General Assembly reiterate that the work of this Committee is integral to the universal master plan represented by the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda, given the disastrous consequences to human life and to the environment of any nuclear detonation.

In this, the 20th anniversary of the CTBT which has still not entered into force but does represent an important global norm, we take note that the Security Council has called on all States to refrain from nuclear weapons testing. Ireland was very pleased to host the important CTBT Data Centres Workshop this year, in association with the Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies and the CTBTO, and we hope that other States will host future scientific workshops. Given that the impact of nuclear weapons is such that they must never be tested again, it seems only logical that they should never be used again either. Even if nuclear deterrence could be said to have worked in the past, and historians are divided on this point, there are no guarantees at all that it will work in the future, in this world of cyber threats and the application of emerging technologies in the nuclear sector, such as robotics and autonomous systems, and against threats from those who may feel that they have nothing to lose or those who do not fear their own destruction.

Semantics are also important. We need to be clear and unambiguous in the language we use about these weapons; “deterrence” requires the threat of use, a threat, we are told, which has to be believable in order to be effective. But there should be no prestige attached to the ability to threaten the life of the

planet and every living thing on it. Any such prestige can only beget proliferation and runs counter to the intention of the NPT.

Mr Chairman,

It is time, it is long past time, to prohibit and eliminate these inhumane, indiscriminate and indefensible weapons of mass destruction. We have, in this room and elsewhere, made many lists and action plans on multilateral nuclear disarmament. But lists and plans must lead to action, if they are to have any real effect. Steps must be taken and blocks must be built, if they are to be anything more than words on a page or words in the air. The UN is a global governance organisation. We have heard a lot about the evolving security situation. In our view, this makes it all the more essential to remove nuclear weapons from the equation. As our former Foreign Minister has said, speaking to this Committee in 1958, “change is the law of all historical situations”. We cannot forever chase the elusive perfect security situation before we take the first step; such a nirvana does not exist of its own accord but we can contribute to its creation, with the required vision and by taking the necessary actions.

Ireland, as a non-nuclear weapons state, accepts fully our NPT commitment to nuclear disarmament. The NPT is the cornerstone of the non-proliferation architecture but it does not profess to be the last word on the elimination of nuclear weapons. Parties to the Treaty have committed themselves, under Article VI, to pursue negotiations in good faith on a separate and complementary treaty on general and complete disarmament. It is to give practical effect to this commitment that Ireland is supporting the recommendation calling for the opening of a conference in 2017 on a new legally binding instrument to prohibit

nuclear weapons, with a view to their total elimination. Because we believe in it and we believe in the promise to humanity that this United Nations had made and needs to fulfil.

The day is coming when, sadly, as the distinguished Ambassador of Japan has told us, that we will have no more living witnesses of the terrible impact of nuclear weapons. We should have the courage to honour the bravery that they have demonstrated in sharing their suffering with the world so that it might never be repeated. In this context, I commend to this Committee the Draft Resolution on Taking Forward Multilateral Disarmament Negotiations, together with the Draft Resolutions on the Humanitarian Consequences and the Humanitarian Pledge, presented by Austria and on the Ethical Imperatives for a Nuclear Free World, presented by South Africa. President Obama has said in his speech to the General Assembly, as he said at Hiroshima, that we can choose a better future, we can choose a better history.

Mr Chairman, we fully agree.

Thank You.

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