



**Conference on Disarmament**

**New Zealand General Statement**

**Delivered by Permanent Representative**

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President, Secretary-General, Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

First, I want to congratulate you on assuming the role as President of the Conference on Disarmament. We wish you every success in this role.

This is the first time I am taking the floor in this Conference as New Zealand's Disarmament Ambassador, so please allow me to provide some contextual remarks on New Zealand's engagement in this body. I will also offer some reflections on the state of nuclear disarmament, as we near the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> review cycle of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

New Zealand's engagement in Disarmament, including in this Conference, is focused on three priority areas as set out in our Disarmament and Arms Control Strategy, which is publicly available.

**First, Nuclear Disarmament and Non-Proliferation.** Any use of nuclear weapons would have catastrophic humanitarian consequences and cast a long shadow over the world's population and environment. The effects of nuclear war could cascade, with profound consequences for human civilisation. Even the testing of nuclear weapons, such as in the Pacific, has left deep scars. Bearing this in mind, New Zealand has long prioritised nuclear disarmament. It is why we are active in addressing the dangers nuclear weapons pose in the NPT, in the Treaty on the Prohibition on Nuclear Weapons, as a State Party to the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone through the Treaty of Rarotonga, and in the UN General Assembly.

New Zealand is deeply concerned that in 2025 we face a global level of nuclear danger not seen since the depths of the Cold War. Our firm view is that nuclear disarmament would comprehensively reduce those risks over the long-term. New

Zealand calls, again, for urgent and practical action by all the nuclear-armed states toward the goal of achieving a nuclear-free world.

In this regard, it is deeply disappointing that as a collective we may be heading toward a third NPT Review Conference without an agreed outcome in 2026. The reality is that progress toward the goal we all share of a nuclear weapon free world has not only faltered, nuclear arms reductions have started to reverse. In this, the 80th year since the world witnessed the devastation of nuclear weapons on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, it is critical that all of us, but especially the nuclear-weapon states, arrest this slide toward renewed nuclear arms racing.

New Zealand welcomes the establishment of a UN panel to produce new scientific study into the effects of a nuclear war. We thank the many Members of this Body which supported this work in late 2024. This initiative will improve our factual understanding on the impacts of nuclear war on populations and environments, bringing it into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and making the most of new technology, research methods and fields of research, for example on climate and global supply chains. Our hope is that all States, especially those possessing nuclear weapons, will engage constructively with the Panel, including on its report, in view of the special responsibility those States have in possessing these weapons.

New Zealand continues to support negotiation and adoption of a fissban treaty. In the meantime, we encourage all nuclear-armed states to implement unilateral moratoria on fissile material production until such time a treaty can be achieved, whether in the CD or outside it.

**Next in our Disarmament Strategy is the defence of international humanitarian law and the for the protection of civilians.**

We call on all States to endorse and implement the Political Declaration on the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas, as a demonstration of your commitment to the protection of civilians in conflict.

President, the Convention on Cluster Munitions and the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention are highly successful international treaties, which have saved lives and limbs, and supported the recovery of conflict-affected communities. These instruments were agreed to protect civilians in and after conflict, so it is troubling to see States Parties walk back on these obligations in response to the risk of conflict, including by taking steps to withdraw in certain cases. We call on States to reaffirm their commitments.

The Conventions banning anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions emerged from groundswells of international support triggered by the widespread harm these weapons were shown to cause, sometimes even decades after conflict ended. Affected countries have emerged subsequently as leading champions of these humanitarian disarmament regimes, which speaks to the practical value and benefit these treaties have delivered, and continue to deliver, around the world.

**Our third priority for disarmament concerns emerging technologies of concern, including in the outer space domain.**

Late last year, New Zealand became the third-largest space launch state in the world. We appreciate only too well that outer space is becoming more congested and contested. Further elaboration of norms and standards that regulate behaviours in outer space is essential, and this work remains an important focus for New Zealand. We are committed to doing our part to ensure the space environment is kept safe, secure, and sustainable. We continue to welcome deliberations in the CD on preventing an arms race in outer space, if these can add value.

President, I conclude with a remark on the Conference on Disarmament, a body created specifically to negotiate new disarmament and arms control agreements. Each year that we fail to do so is another year that we make no tangible contribution to a safer international security environment. We urge all CD Members to consider how this Body can return to fulfilling its mandate to negotiate.

A welcome first step in this regard would be to do away with the CD's consensus rule. While we appreciate the historical rationale for having such a rule to protect the interests of every state, the reality is that it has hobbled the CD's ability to do its job and is too easily abused. Those states that do not wish to negotiate might be better to stand aside than to block the way to progress. We regret the use of the consensus rule to prevent negotiations occurring on any of the Conference's core agenda items as has become routine in the CD.

A further and important step is to open up CD membership. New Zealand was one of the states admitted in the last round of CD expansion in the 1990s. We continue to hold the view now as we did then: if a State wishes to participate in our endeavours, we should be encouraging and facilitating them to do so, in line with the general principles of inclusivity and multilateralism. Yet there are States that have been prevented from joining the CD for almost three decades now. Observership by States should also be automatic.

Meanwhile, the world outside the CD's hallowed chamber continues to change. In a tightened fiscal environment for the United Nations system more generally, it is growing hard to argue the CD delivers value for money when it does not negotiate any agreements. We look forward to working with others, inside and outside this room, towards collectively rectifying this state of affairs.

I thank you.