



## **BELGIUM**

### **Statement for Main Committee I**

#### **11<sup>th</sup> Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)**

**New York, 27 April – 22 May 2026**

Mr. Chairman,

Belgium aligns itself fully with the statement delivered by the European Union.

Mr. Chairman,

The pursuit of nuclear disarmament faces a convergence of serious challenges. Strategic rivalry, nuclear expansion and innovation coupled with the demise of arms control agreements have brought us to a decisive moment. Yet disarmament is not an aspirational dream; it is a legal obligation embedded in the NPT and a necessity dictated by the unparalleled destructive power of nuclear weapons. Although the space for progress has narrowed, meaningful advances remain possible through a pragmatic and responsible approach. We need realism and not a mantric vision of nuclear disarmament disconnected from the present security situation.

Disarmament without verification risks becoming disarmament without trust. This is particularly evident in light of recent violations of arms control agreements. Strengthening verification must therefore be a priority. Over the years several multinational initiatives have charted the course. Now it is time to collectively establish a knowledge repository which will guide us. This is why the establishment of the GSTE (*Group of Scientific and Technical Experts*) is such a welcome milestone.

We regret that New START expired without a successor agreement in place. We call on the parties involved to engage constructively in negotiations on a new agreement. The strengths of New START should be maintained, such as a comprehensive verification regime. But adaptations to the current needs should be introduced. Ideally a new agreement would cover deployed and non-deployed, strategic and non-strategic nuclear weapons. Pending a new agreement, interim measures could be contemplated, such as a commitment to respect the limits set by New START or an undertaking to freeze the number of strategic launchers. Such steps can help prevent a nuclear arms race and the return to the Cold War's darkest days.

While the US and Russia retain the largest arsenals, the unchecked and opaque nuclear build-up by China should not remain unaddressed. As a minimum China should join other nuclear-weapon States in declaring a fissile material production moratorium, engage in arms control deliberations and demonstrate more transparency over its doctrine.

The promise of a Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty played an instrumental role in the success of the seminal 1995 review conference. The unravelling of this achievement would seriously harm the NPT. Therefore, the deratification of the treaty by Russia, the reports of secretive low-yield tests and statements about the resumption of testing raise our alarm. Appeasement is not the answer. Nuclear-weapon States should recommit to a policy of zero-yield testing and solidify this undertaking by agreeing confidence building measures such as mutual test site visits. Non-nuclear-weapon States can reinforce the norm against testing too, by joining the CTBT, especially those States in the Middle East harbouring or developing major nuclear programmes. A State that calls for disarmament cannot credibly refuse accession to the CTBT, nor should any State delay action while waiting for others to move first. Pending entry into force, States can take meaningful steps: nuclear-weapon States can permanently close and dismantle test sites; States, including those not yet party to the Treaty, can host IMS facilities or sign facility agreements to help complete the monitoring system. The CTBT verification regime has already fostered significant international scientific cooperation, which should be further encouraged, including through regional initiatives.

Mr. Chairman,

Greater transparency and accountability can ease the path toward disarmament. States Parties are entitled to understand how nuclear-weapon States are implementing their Article VI obligations and how their doctrinal choices correspond to their evolving capabilities. Belgium therefore supports the development of a systematic and structured peer-to-peer review of national implementation reports, especially of nuclear-weapon States and further qualitative improvements to reporting.

Belgium, as a non-nuclear-weapon State, stands ready to continue practicing transparency, as demonstrated through our Action 20 report submitted to this Review Conference.

Mr. Chairman,

Finally, nuclear-weapon States should advance efforts on nuclear risk reduction. Several practical proposals are readily available, including improving communication channels, expanding pre-notifications of ballistic missile launches, and ensuring meaningful human involvement in nuclear decision-making.

Thank you.