



ELEVENTH REVIEW CONFERENCE OF THE TREATY ON THE NON-PROLIFERATION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS (NPT)

SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL STATEMENT TO MAIN COMMITTEE II – SAFEGUARDS, NON-PROLIFERATION AND NUCLEAR WEAPON FREE ZONES

5 MAY 2026

Chairperson,

My delegation associates itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and the African Group.

South Africa reiterates the need for all States to remain conscious of the risks inherent in the continued possession of nuclear weapons by some and believes that nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation are mutually reinforcing processes, essential to attain and maintain a world free of nuclear weapons. We strongly support efforts aimed at promoting nuclear non-proliferation and remain committed to continue implementing our international obligations, as well as to cooperate with other States to combat the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Non-proliferation has been the most successful of the three pillars of the NPT as evidenced by the near universal adoption of the Comprehensive Safeguards Agreements and the signature of Additional Protocols by more than 140 countries. We welcome these efforts as important confidence building measures. We also call on States that maintain Small Quantities Protocols, to rescind or revise them, and on all States with advanced nuclear programmes and facilities to consider an Additional Protocol.

Non-Nuclear-Weapon States, though accounting for a significantly lower amount of nuclear material, have been generally complying with their obligations under the Treaty and keeping their end of the grand bargain. Regrettably, in a period of over 50 years, Nuclear-Weapon States have continued to call on Non Nuclear Weapon States to do more on non-proliferation to create an environment that is conducive for disarmament, without Nuclear Weapon States delivering on their end of the bargain.

Emerging proliferation challenges remain a concern. Rhetoric which can be seen as encouraging or legitimising proliferation risks undermining the Treaty. Continued reliance on nuclear weapons in security doctrines, the development of new types of nuclear weapons and qualitative improvements to existing arsenals have also not allayed the fears of non-nuclear-weapon States. Additionally, the continued expansion of the nuclear umbrella and nuclear

alliances as well as new modalities regarding nuclear sharing is a proliferation concern. Other developments such as Naval Nuclear Propulsion raises unique challenges not only for HEU minimisation efforts, but also its potential as a destabilising factor which could obstruct nuclear disarmament and further fuel an arms race. In this regard, it is essential to recall that all States Parties have committed to pursuing policies that are fully compatible with the NPT.

It must be restated that the primary responsibility for undertaking the necessary steps for the elimination of nuclear weapons lies with those states that continue to regard nuclear-weapons as central to their security. It is therefore incumbent upon these States to engage, without further delay, in an accelerated process of negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control and thus ensuring the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. In the letter and spirit of the Treaty, South Africa emphasises that non-nuclear-weapon States under the nuclear umbrella have equal responsibilities for disarmament and non-proliferation.

Chairperson,

South Africa reaffirms that the International Atomic Energy Agency (Agency) is the only recognised competent authority responsible for verifying and providing the assurance that States parties are fulfilling their obligations in line with the provisions of the Treaty and respective safeguards agreements. We commend the Agency for its professionalism and its continued efforts to strengthen the safeguards system, which is central to international peace and security and provides assurances of the peaceful nature of States nuclear activities. These assurances are essential for States, in particular developing States, to benefit from the utilisation of nuclear, and nuclear derived technologies for development.

South Africa continues to advocate for a balance between the Agency's promotional and verification roles, in accordance with its Statute. In this regard, we continue to work closely with the Agency on safeguards implementation in our country as well as through its Technical Cooperation Programme, which is the main delivery vehicle for nuclear science, technology, and applications for peaceful uses.

Chairperson,

South Africa recommends that the Conference reaffirms the Agency as the sole competent authority responsible for verifying the fulfilment of safeguards obligations assumed by States parties under the Non-Proliferation Treaty, with a view to preventing diversion of nuclear energy from peaceful uses to nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices.

Chairperson,

South Africa takes note that in addition to their voluntary offer agreements, the five nuclear-weapon States have Additional Protocols in force, and that the IAEA found no indication of the diversion of nuclear material to which safeguards had been applied and that nuclear material to which safeguards had been applied, remained in peaceful activities.

We recall that the 2010 NPT Review Conference agreed on specific actions aimed at strengthening the IAEA safeguards system, including through the development of appropriate legally binding arrangements to ensure the irreversible removal of fissile material designated by each Nuclear-Weapon State as no longer required for military purposes. My delegation also remains concerned about any withdrawals by the nuclear-weapon States of nuclear material from such selected facilities as provided for in their respective agreements. It is

incumbent on the Nuclear-Weapon States to refrain from such withdrawals, and to apply the principles of irreversibility, verifiability and transparency in relation to their NPT obligations. It is regrettable that, similar to other actions that were agreed upon at the 2010 NPT Review Conference, little progress has been made in the development of an appropriate legally binding verification arrangements with the Agency. Furthermore, no progress has been made with regards to additional declarations of stockpiles of fissile material that could be used in nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

South Africa therefore recommends:

- That the Conference reiterates that IAEA safeguards should be assessed and evaluated regularly and that decisions adopted by the IAEA policy bodies aimed at further strengthening the effectiveness and improving the efficiency of IAEA safeguards, should be supported and implemented.
- That the Conference reiterates the call for the wider application of safeguards to peaceful nuclear facilities in the Nuclear-Weapon and Non Nuclear Weapon States, and stresses that comprehensive safeguards and additional protocols should be universally applied.
- That the Conference supports the establishment of safeguarded worldwide nuclear disarmament and the development of appropriate legally binding verification arrangements, within the context of the IAEA, to ensure the irreversible removal of fissile material from nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. Also, that it stresses the statutory role of the IAEA on nuclear disarmament, including applying safeguards to nuclear materials derived from the dismantling of nuclear weapons.
- That the Conference urges the nuclear-weapon States to commit to declaring to the IAEA all weapon-grade fissile material and to place such material, as soon as practicable, under the supervision of the Agency, for the use of such material for peaceful purposes and to ensure that such material remains permanently outside military programmes.

Chairperson,

Nuclear-weapon-free zones play an important role in preventing the vertical and horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons. The establishment of internationally recognized nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned enhances global and regional peace and security and constitute important steps to strengthen the nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation regime.

In view of the continued importance of power and non-power applications of nuclear energy, nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties also play an important role in promoting regional and subregional programmes for co-operation in the peaceful uses of nuclear science and technology. In this regard, the African Commission on Nuclear Energy (AFCON) is working on facilitating the attainment of these benefits in the African continent.

South Africa is a longstanding supporter for the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in all regions of the world, including in the Middle East, which is a matter of special interest for Africa, as cited in the Pelindaba Treaty. We welcome the convening of the six sessions of the Conference on the Middle East zone and supports any agreed modalities towards achieving this goal. Furthermore, we reiterate our call for Israel to join the NPT and to place its nuclear

facilities under IAEA comprehensive safeguards. Such action on Israel's part would facilitate the implementation of the resolution adopted by the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference on the establishment of the Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction, nuclear, chemical and biological, and their delivery systems which was subsequently reaffirmed in 2000 and 2010. It is important to recall in this regard that this resolution was an essential element of the outcome the 1995 Review Conference, which amongst others, is the basis on which States agreed to the indefinite extension of the Treaty.

Chairperson

South Africa recommends that the Conference reaffirms that the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones by the Treaties of Bangkok, Pelindaba, Rarotonga, Semipalatinsk and Tlatelolco, as well as Mongolia's nuclear-weapon-free status, represent a positive step towards attaining the Treaty objectives of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, and enhancing international peace and security and contribute to the achievement of nuclear disarmament objectives. The Conference could also consider expressing support for the new United Nations comprehensive study of the question of nuclear-weapon-free zones, aimed at assessing the current status of existing and potential nuclear-weapon-free zones, as well as examining options and recommendations towards strengthening existing zones and the possible establishment of new zones, including in the Middle East.

The Conference should also urge the ratification by all relevant States, without further delay, of the relevant Protocols to existing nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties. Nuclear-weapon States that have signed or ratified any of the relevant protocols of a nuclear-weapon-free zone treaty and that did so with reservations or unilateral interpretations affecting the status of the denuclearized zone, should be urged to modify or withdraw such reservations or unilateral interpretations.

Chairperson,

The IAEA's work on nuclear security is indispensable, and it is essential that all States, at all times, maintain effective security of all nuclear and other radioactive material, including the 85% of material used for non-civilian purposes. It is our view, however, that legitimate concerns with nuclear security and safety cannot be used as a pretext for the imposition of constraints on the inalienable right of States to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. The Conference should guard against any preconditions on peaceful uses not supported by the NPT.

Chairperson,

South Africa notes with particular concern the implications for nuclear safety, security and safeguards implementation arising from attacks on nuclear facilities. We support the firm stance of the IAEA General Conference against armed attacks on peaceful nuclear installations as violations of the UN Charter and international law.

Attacks on safeguarded nuclear facilities devoted to peaceful uses are not just attacks on facilities but are attacks on the safeguards system on which we all rely.

The military attacks by an IAEA Member State not party to the Treaty on the Non Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) against a NPT State Party and IAEA Member State's nuclear

facilities under IAEA safeguards cannot but have serious implications for the international non-proliferation regime and for the NPT, on which the global majority rely on for international peace and security.

We call on this Conference to unite behind a clear, unambiguous norm against any attacks on peaceful nuclear facilities.

In conclusion Chairperson, let me reiterate South Africa's support for the full implementation of the NPT, as well as its universal application, in pursuit of the goal of achieving a world entirely free from nuclear weapons. We therefore believe that the international community must continue to promote universal adherence to the NPT, strengthen the multilateral institutions responsible for disarmament and non-proliferation issues, and be vigilant against any steps that could undermine efforts to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

I thank you.

