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**First Preparatory Committee for the 2026 Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons**  
**Monday, 31 July 2023, 10:00 AM**  
**M-Plenary Conference Room (M-Building, first floor) of VIC**

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I want to start my words by congratulating Ambassador Viinanen on his election as chair of the 2024 session of the Preparatory Committee. Ambassador Viinanen obviously needs no introduction. He is a seasoned diplomat well-versed in the matters of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. He has been a solid friend to the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. I am convinced that States Parties are in good hands.

Mr. Ambassador, I can assure you that the Office for Disarmament Affairs is ready to provide whatever assistance we can.

Ladies and gentlemen,

**We are less than one year removed from the conclusion of the Tenth NPT Review Conference.** I know that the disappointment from its inconclusive outcome still lingers.
Yet all States Parties should take comfort in the fact that consensus was only broken by one State and that it was related to issues only tangential to the substance of the Treaty. I would argue that the outcome demonstrated the commitment of ninety-nine percent of States Parties to the NPT. I would also argue that the draft outcome document contained many useful elements that can be built upon in this review cycle.

Some of these were indeed discussed last week in the working group. The working group – the first of its kind for the NPT – seems to have exceeded the expectations of many in terms of the quality and robust nature of its discussions, especially on critical issues such as transparency and accountability. Although it was disappointing that States could not agree on recommendations to send to the Preparatory Committee, I congratulate States Parties for their willingness to engage in good faith, substantive and in-depth dialogue on areas of work that are essential to driving forward not only the successful implementation of the treaty, but the ultimate goal of a world free of nuclear weapons. The nature of the dialogue shows we can take steps forward when we are prepared to engage with one another.

I also congratulate Ambassador Viinanen on his oversight of the working group. I know it was not an easy task.

I strongly encourage States Parties to continue the good work they began last week, especially in the areas of transparency and accountability, and to work together in a sense of flexibility and compromise to finish the job.

However, when it comes to the work you are about to undertake this week, unfortunately, I have to agree with Ambassador Viinanen that the issues related to the NPT have become even more challenging since the Review Conference last year.
There has not been a time since the depths of the Cold War that the risk of a nuclear weapon being used has been so high, at the same time as the regime intended to prevent such use is so fragile.

This is, to a large extent, because of the volatile times in which we live. As the Secretary-General said in his New Agenda for Peace policy brief, the world is in a state of transition. The stakes are high – in fact, existential.

We are seeing the highest level of geopolitical competition, rising tensions and deepening divisions among major powers in decades, coupled with increased military spending and mistrust rapidly replacing dialogue.

The current state of flux is also due to the incredible advances in technology and establishment of new domains that are propelling societies. These same technologies are also changing the face of war, generating rapidly evolving risks and blurring the line between strategic and conventional weapons.

Ladies and gentlemen,

When it comes to the substance of the NPT, these developments are having a major impact. **There are four in particular that I would like to raise.**

**First, there is the chicken and egg scenario in which an increased emphasis on nuclear weapons** – through modernization programmes, expanded doctrines, allegations of growing stockpiles, and most alarmingly, by threats to use them – **are both fueling insecurity and the product of it.**
The fact that in the last twelve months nuclear weapons have openly been used as tools of coercion should worry us all.

These factors are stoking proliferation drivers – reinforced by the false narrative that nuclear weapons provide the ultimate security guarantee – and weakening stability, while enhancing prospects for miscalculation and escalation.

Second, the current geostrategic environment has been detrimental to efforts to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons. The bilateral arms control regime hangs by a thread. As a source of stability and a prime mover of the massive reductions in nuclear weapons that have taken place over the last thirty years, these treaties are invaluable.

As the arms control regime crumbles, there is nothing new to replace it. Clearly there is a need to think about the future of nuclear arms control and what that means in the twenty-first century.

For the NPT, as I said, I do not doubt the commitment of States Parties to the Treaty. But I do worry that the frustration and disappointment at the inability to reach consensus could turn to cynicism about the value of the Treaty.

A key source of current frustration, however, is also to do with the consistent lack of implementation of existing commitments. And let’s be frank, most of these outstanding commitments relate to pillar I and the fulfilment of Article VI.

Third, technological advances and the emergence of new domains in cyber and outer space have exposed new and dangerous vulnerabilities. This is especially the case when it comes to nuclear command and control structures, where the use of
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technology in and against those structures could again lead to mistake or miscalculation, not least through the intervention of malicious third parties.

Technological advances could also enable proliferation by skirting safeguards, providing for hidden facilities, and allowing access to sensitive information and material.

However, on a far more positive note, technology also provides great potential to strengthen disarmament and non-proliferation at the same time. The ability to rapidly accrue and analyze data, for example, could have significant benefit for verification and safeguards.

**Fourth, in the current difficult global context, we see deepening inequalities across the globe and challenges to food security and access to health, all exacerbated by the worsening climate crisis.** These are all having negative impact on the Sustainable Development Goals. The NPT has a historic opportunity to help reduce those inequalities. The advances in nuclear science and technology across a plethora of fields can have a meaningful impact on the attainment of the SDG.

Ladies and gentlemen,

**This session of the Preparatory Committee is the ideal occasion for a reset.** This is a new review cycle and a new chance to strengthen the NPT, the regime it upholds and, in turn, international peace and security.

If I may, I would ask that States Parties take into account the following in their deliberations and consider how they can:
1. **Strengthen accountability** for the implementation of existing commitments, especially disarmament commitments.

2. **Reinforce the norms against the use, testing and proliferation** of nuclear weapons and move forward the shared goal of a world free of nuclear weapons.

3. **Create opportunities for dialogue** between nuclear-weapon States in ways that reduce nuclear risk and get the world back on to track for the elimination of nuclear weapons.

4. **Find common understandings** when it comes to new and emerging challenges – especially the nexus between technology and nuclear weapons.

5. **Encourage the United States and the Russian Federation** to return to the full implementation of New START, but also discuss what is needed for effective arms control in the current and future context.

6. **Strengthen the non-proliferation regime**, including what assistance the International Atomic Energy Agency needs to fulfil its mandate.

7. **Assist the resolution of regional proliferation crises** and discuss what more can be done to strengthen regional solutions to nuclear weapons, including through nuclear-weapon-free zones.

8. **Use the NPT as a platform for the fulfilment of the SDGs and other development initiatives**, as well as contribute to other global concerns, including pandemic prevention and climate change.
I appreciate that this is an extensive list, but it is also not an exhaustive one. There are many other important issues that will be on your agenda.

I wish you the best of luck with your deliberations over the coming weeks. I hope that you will conduct them in the spirit of collegiality and common sense that is needed to confront the challenges we face.

The NPT has earned its status as the so-called cornerstone of the disarmament and non-proliferation regime because it is key to maintaining the hard-won norms against nuclear weapons.

I count on States Parties to ensure it remains so.
I thank you very much for your attention.