First meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the 2026 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)

General Debate

Statement by Mexico
On behalf of the New Agenda Coalition
Vienna 31 July 2023
Chair,

1. I have the honour to deliver the following statement on behalf of the members of the New Agenda Coalition, namely Brazil, Egypt, Ireland, New Zealand, South Africa and my own country, Mexico.

2. The NAC congratulates you on the assumption of the chair and thanks you for the constructive and transparent manner in which you have prepared this meeting. We assure you of our full cooperation and support in your role in achieving an outcome that strengthens the NPT and reinforces our shared objective of a world free of nuclear weapons.

3. We thank you for your stewardship of the NTP Working Group on strengthening the Review Process last week. While the discussions were substantive and interactive, we are deeply disappointed that no outcome was achieved. In particular, the failure to reach agreement on concrete measures on accountability and transparency, especially through the national reports by the NWS on their implementation of nuclear disarmament obligations and commitments, despite strong support for such measures from the vast majority of States Parties, is a missed opportunity. Nevertheless, the NAC remains committed to advancing these issues throughout this Review Cycle.
Chair,

4. This Preparatory Committee meeting takes place in a particularly challenging international environment, exacerbated by a number of factors, including a resurgence in the value placed on nuclear weapons by nuclear-weapon States; plans by the nuclear-weapon-States and states under extended nuclear security guarantees to maintain or increase the role of nuclear weapons in security doctrines; and the stationing of nuclear weapons on the territory of non-nuclear-weapon States. The nuclear dimension of current international tensions, including within the context of the conflict in Ukraine, is also deeply concerning. The erosion of critical nuclear disarmament and arms control instruments and the increase in nuclear rhetoric and threats, recently brought sharply into the public consciousness, is a stark reminder of the very real dangers we face from nuclear weapons and the urgent need to achieve nuclear disarmament.

5. These risks are aggravated by increased strategic competition and investments in nuclear weapon modernization programmes by all nuclear-weapon-States, which is inconsistent with their unequivocal undertaking to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals leading to nuclear disarmament. Instead, a new nuclear arms race appears to be underway already. Of particular concern is that long-standing bilateral disarmament and arms control efforts between the two States possessing the largest nuclear arsenals have broken down almost entirely. They now run the risk of erasing the gains made through the reduction of nuclear weapons after the end of the Cold War. We
encourage all of the nuclear-weapon States to return to the renewed pursuit of disarmament and arms control efforts.

6. These negative developments demand urgent and meaningful action. Yet, we convene here today less than a year after the NPT Review Conference failed to deliver any substantive results. All the while, nuclear disarmament commitments remain unmet and unimplemented; improving transparency and accountability, which are necessary for the full implementation of Article VI obligations and nuclear disarmament-related commitments, have not been given sufficient attention by the Nuclear Weapon States. Meanwhile, disarmament-related multilateral fora are increasingly becoming politicised. This new Review Cycle must break the negative pattern. As the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Izumi Nakamitsu has said ‘We are at a turning point of either continuing down the path of “breakdown” or working together to find a path towards “breakthrough”.

7. In the wake of a second consecutive failed NPT Review Conference, it is more important than ever that we work collectively to reinforce and strengthen the Treaty. In line with its mandate from the Decision taken by NPT States Parties in 1995, this review cycle has to evaluate the implementation of undertakings of the NPT States Parties; to identify the areas in which, and the means through which, further progress should be sought in the future; and to address specifically what might be done to strengthen the full implementation of the Treaty and to achieve its universality. Let me assure you, the New Agenda Coalition is fully committed to playing its part constructively and with ambition.
Chair,

8. 2023 marks the 25th anniversary of the foundation of the New Agenda Coalition. The NAC was born out of concern at the lack of implementation of nuclear disarmament commitments under the NPT. It was also inspired, however, by a positive sense that such progress is necessary and possible. Throughout this Review Cycle, the NAC will continue to keep the focus on the full implementation of nuclear disarmament obligations and commitments. To this end, we will constructively engage with all States parties to address these pressing issues by focusing on implementation of obligations and past commitments while working on the development of new, concrete and practical ways to achieve the collective goals of our Treaty.

9. Our approach is based not on frustration, but firmly rooted in the legal obligations enshrined in the NPT, and on the clear evidence of urgency regarding the implementation of those obligations. In our 25th year as a group, we remain determined that the nuclear disarmament commitments, voluntarily entered into by all States Parties, can be fully implemented without delay. This work is clearly more important now than ever.

10. It is our collective responsibility at this PrepCom to agree how we can move forward together, and begin the new Review Cycle with a clear sense of purpose and direction. In setting clear goals for this Review Cycle, any attempts to condition the implementation of disarmament obligations and commitments to improvements to the international security environment are not acceptable. The NPT is a powerful
multilateral tool and a practical instrument of international peace and security. It does not include provision for or require the perfect international security environment to be implemented. Article VI of the NPT, together with our existing commitments, already provide the framework to achieve a nuclear weapon free world and thereby stability and security for all States. These must be fully implemented. In that regard, the nuclear-weapon-States should make a clear recommitment to their nuclear disarmament obligations and commitments, in particular the unequivocal undertaking to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals in a verifiable manner leading to nuclear disarmament, to which all States Parties are committed under Article VI of the NPT.

Chair,

11. The NPT must continue to be informed by recognition of the global devastating humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons. Since it was first acknowledged formally in the 2010 Review Conference Final Document, States parties have continued to deepen their understanding of this critical issue based on clear and robust evidence. At a time when nuclear risks are increasing, a frank recognition of the wide ranging humanitarian impacts of nuclear weapons, including those related to health, gender, the economy and the environment is now more pertinent than ever. As such, the NAC calls for the concept to be underlined in all discussions regarding nuclear disarmament and we think it should feature prominently in your summary of this meeting.

12. With the entry into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), debates on some aspects of nuclear disarmament have
been re-energised. The TPNW seeks to address the imbalance in the global disarmament architecture and the disparity between the treatment of biological and chemical weapons, on the one hand, and nuclear weapons on the other. It reinforces and complements the NPT, including in the way it incorporates a humanitarian approach to nuclear weapons, and emphasises the urgency of the implementation of Article VI. We expect to see the complementarity between the two treaties reflected appropriately.

Chair,

13. Throughout each NPT review cycle, the New Agenda Coalition has consistently called for and proposed measures to accelerate the implementation of States Parties' nuclear disarmament obligations and commitments, especially on the part of the NWS. These measures include de-alerting, entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, a fissile material ban treaty, the creation of new Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones, including the full implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East on the Establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction, and ratification by nuclear-weapon-States of the legally-binding protocols on negative security assurances to existing zone treaties and the withdrawal of interpretative declarations that limit their scope, as well as transparency and nuclear disarmament verification. The NAC will expand further on these issues in our statement on Cluster I.

14. In addition to these well-established measures, the beginning of this Review Cycle offers all States parties an opportunity to take a creative
approach on how to reinvigorate and accelerate the elimination of nuclear weapons. As a starting point, we should recognise that a world free of nuclear weapons is a safer and more secure world for all.

15. While the declared purpose of nuclear deterrence is to maintain national and regional security, the reality is that the existence of nuclear weapons poses major risks to international peace and security. Focusing on narrow national security interests at the cost of other States’ security, or attempting to find new supposed justifications for the continued retention of nuclear weapons, is a dangerous recipe for stagnation. The indefinite possession of nuclear weapons and advocating the benefits/value of deterrence runs counter to the object and purpose of the Treaty and threatens to erode its credibility and effectiveness. It is also necessary to acknowledge that there are no “safe hands” when it comes to nuclear weapons, and that arguments on “responsible nuclear deterrence” are not acceptable. Basing security policies on the perceived benefits of nuclear weapons also weakens the arguments for strengthened non-proliferation measures, and could have the opposite effect of encouraging nuclear proliferation, thereby undermining the very Treaty that we all claim to uphold. The stakes involved are so high that there can be no room for complacency. We all share the goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world. But sharing a goal is not enough — in order to safeguard the relevance and vitality of the NPT, we must make concrete, measurable progress towards realising that goal.

16. The working paper that will be presented under Cluster I is very much part of that NAC tradition and focus. Our intention is to stimulate debate and
thinking on these issues and we look forward to working with all colleagues here in the interests of genuine progress in support of the NPT.

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