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S T A T E M E N T

by the Delegation of the Russian Federation

at the General Debate

2023 Session of the UN Disarmament Commission

New York, 4 April 2023

Mr. Chairman,

Let me congratulate you on your election to this responsible position and express hope that under your leadership we shall manage to bring positive dynamics into the work of the UN Disarmament Commission (UNDC) and gain success in fulfilling the tasks it is entrusted with. The Russian delegation is ready to extend every support in this regard.

We consider enhancing the UN disarmament machinery, of which the UNDC makes an inalienable part, as a primal goal. Russia consistently stands for consolidation of the UN central role in maintaining global strategic stability and international security, as well as strengthening arms control and non-proliferation regimes.

Mr. Chairman,

We witness the international security and strategic stability environment undergoing steady degradation. The system of arms control goes through the crisis the scale of which is without precedent in the newest history. It is implicated by the US destructive actions on dismantling the arms control agreements and treaties and substituting them for some rules aimed at providing Washington with the determinative military strategic superiority in contradiction with the principle of equal and indivisible security.

Severe crisis in Ukraine is among the deliverables of such an approach. Western countries which undermine the vital security interests of Russia and have waged a total hybrid war against our country are shying away from the genuine reasons of the conflict. However, it won't work. We shall tirelessly repeat that the Ukrainian crisis is connected, first and foremost, with the detrimental policy line of the hostile NATO block aimed at geopolitical and military strategic exploration of the post-Soviet space with the transformation of Ukraine into the anti-Russia springboard.

The accruing engagement of the US and NATO into the military confrontation under the guise of the necessity to inflict on Russia a "strategic defeat" is fraught with a direct military encounter of nuclear powers with

catastrophic consequences. Such our signals are not threats but warnings that, accompanied by belligerent rhetoric, the hostile actions of the Western countries generate the gravest strategic risks all the way to nuclear escalation risks. This policy flatly contradicts the gist and logic of the statement by the leaders of the five nuclear-weapons States as of 3 January 2022.

Considerable negative factors that also create security risks are the building of the US global ballistic missile defence in conjunction with expanding high-precision non-nuclear armaments to fulfil tasks of “global strike” and “disarming strike”; Washington’s advancement towards deploying ground-based medium-range and shorter-range missiles, and placing weapons in space; lowering of nuclear threshold under the US military doctrine; NATO-declared nuclear status; targeted increase of conventional arms imbalances by this block and building its military capacity close to Russian borders; illegitimate application by Western countries - by sidestepping the United Nations – of the restrictive measures that undermine other States’ security.

For the most part, these are areas where the United States has either destroyed or continues to reject the relevant arms control instruments. Moreover, the dismantling of the arms control basics by Washington shows itself not only in the destruction of international agreements through withdrawing from them, but also in undermining their viability through creating conditions that practically exclude any possibility of their further implementation. This is exactly the case of the new START: its material breach by Washington with a fundamental change for the worse, through the fault of the United States, of the circumstances under which the Treaty was operative, forced us to suspend it.

Nevertheless, we reaffirm our commitment to the noble goal of building a world free of nuclear weapons. At the same time, it is obvious that the process of nuclear disarmament, as well as nuclear and missile arms control, cannot be carried out in isolation from the general geopolitical and military-strategic context. This is exactly the approach the final documents of previous NPT review cycles stipulate.

The current situation with the stalling efforts in the field of nuclear arms control and disarmament is linked to the destructive and destabilizing activities of both Western nuclear countries and their non-nuclear allies who actively support them. This raises the issue of the special responsibility of states under the US nuclear umbrella for actions that are incompatible with the goal of creating favorable conditions for moving towards a nuclear-free world.

In addition, the current situation makes us stating again that the world has come close to the point where, in the subsequent stages of nuclear arms reductions, all states with military nuclear potential without exception will need to join this process. Against the background of the growing desire of NATO countries to act as a united anti-Russian front on nuclear matters, the factor of the combined arsenal of the three NATO nuclear countries, which can be used jointly against our country, is of particular significance for us.

Russia is open to a constructive dialogue with all parties interested in finding ways to reduce tensions, prevent an arms race and strengthen international security and stability. Such a dialogue should be based on the principles of equality, indivisible security and the obligatory mutual consideration of each other's interests. We see as the main goal moving towards the development of such parameters of peaceful coexistence - and ideally, fruitful interaction - that would ensure lowest possible conflict potential and drastically decreased crisis manifestations in shaping a more just polycentric world order with its ensured long-term stability.

Russia has consistently advocated a strengthened non-proliferation regime based on the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). The results of the 10th Review Conference can be assessed in different ways. It is true that it did not result in the adoption of an outcome document. However, we do not tend to dramatize the situation – the Treaty continues to be fully operational and remains one of the pillars of the global international security architecture and non-proliferation regime. In our view, the main challenge of the review process is the radicalisation of the positions and excessive ambitions of many States parties, as well as the attempts to introduce politicised issues into the agenda.

In the new NPT review cycle, we are ready to make every effort to work towards negotiated solutions to strengthen the Treaty. At the same time, we are convinced that consensus for the sake of consensus and attempts at all costs to agree on a common and voluminous document is a path that leads to the weakening of the work to promote the goals and objectives of the Treaty. It is clear that States parties to the NPT need to take a new perspective in relation to the preparatory work.

The situation around the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is increasingly alarming. The responsibility for the fact that the CTBT, for more than a quarter century of its existence, has never entered into force lies, in essence, with the United States, which has defiantly refused to ratify it and show an obvious willingness to resume tests. We cannot remain indifferent to these developments. If the United States takes such a step and conducts a nuclear test first, we will be forced to respond accordingly. No one should have any dangerous illusions that global strategic parity can be destroyed.

Nuclear-weapon-free zones are an important element of the non-proliferation regime. We consider the establishment of such zones under Article VII of the NPT and the signing of protocols on security assurances by the nuclear-weapon states to be an important factor in strengthening the non-proliferation regime as well as regional security and stability.

We are positive about the results of the three sessions of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction and their means of delivery ("WMD-free zone"). It is important that the States of the Middle East have taken the process into their own hands. In that regard, the task of ensuring the inclusive nature of the process for the establishment of the WMD-free zone is crucial.

The situation regarding the creation of AUKUS by Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States is a cause for concern. We believe that this partnership triggers tensions in the sphere of international security and creates prerequisites for a new arms race, not only in the Asia-Pacific region. Furthermore, it

sets very negative precedents in the context of the application of IAEA safeguards.

Mr. Chairman,

One of our country's foreign policy priorities remains to keep outer space free of weapons of any kind and to prevent an arms race in outer space (PAROS).

With the US and its allies implementing programmes aimed at using outer space for combat operations and achieving military superiority in space, the need to develop a multilateral legally binding instrument on PAROS has increased. This is the only way to avoid the weaponisation of space. The basis for such a work is the draft Treaty on the prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space, the threat or use of force against outer space objects, prepared by Russia and China.

We are forced to note that recently there have been active attempts not only to devalue previous achievements and developments in this area but also to formulate some new rules that would regulate possible military confrontation in outer space on the terms of the United States and its allies and would also help to implement the American doctrinal intentions of achieving dominance and superiority in outer space. The non-binding rules proposed by Western countries under the concept of so-called “responsible behaviour” in outer space are unable to solve the main task - to ensure the peaceful use of outer space and PAROS.

Russia's initiative to stabilise the situation while a multilateral legally binding instrument on PAROS is being elaborated is the political commitment on No First Placement of Weapons in Outer Space. More than thirty states have already become full participants and the number of supporters continues to grow steadily.

As one of the transparency and confidence-building measures for the purposes of PAROS, the No First Placement of Weapons in Outer Space initiative has in recent years become a significant political factor contributing to international peace, ensuring equal and indivisible security for all, and increasing the predictability and sustainability of States' activities in the peaceful exploration and use of outer space. We call on all States to become part of it.

On our part, in order to give impetus to the negotiations on international legally binding instrument on PAROS, we together with like-minded countries have initiated the establishment of a relevant UN Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) with the task of elaborating recommendations on such an agreement. Its work is due to start in the second half of this year. We expect the most fruitful and constructive participation of Member-States' experts for the sake of the successful results of the GGE work.

Mr. Chairman,

We are convinced that the UN Disarmament Commission is capable of making a significant contribution to multilateral efforts in the area of disarmament and arms control, in accordance with its mandate. We count on the preparation of recommendations and agreement on the final reports in Working Groups I and II.

We believe that with the political will, the members of the UN Disarmament Commission can overcome any differences, engage actively in constructive work on the agenda and achieve effective consensus outcomes.

Thank you for your attention.