Statement of the Kingdom of the Netherlands
delivered by
H.E. Robbert Jan Gabriëlse, Permanent Representative to the Conference on Disarmament
at
Third Session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty
General Debate

New York, 29 April 2019
Mr. Chair,

Allow me to congratulate you on your Chairmanship. The Netherlands will fully support you to make this PrepCom a success, both from the floor and as vice-Chair.

Mr. Chair, perhaps we should reflect on what ‘success’ actually means here.

We all share the view that the NPT has been truly essential to global security and, with that, to human security. In 2020, it will have been in force for fifty years. All this time the NPT has been the cornerstone of the post-war global order. The non-proliferation and disarmament regime, that it is at the heart of our common security, has evolved significantly since 1970.

The NPT review process has been a crucial part of this evolution. It has enabled us to set new goals and commitments under the treaty. 2020 marks an important point in this process. And this PrepCom session is our opportunity to lay a solid foundation for the Review Conference.

That means first of all: finalizing the procedural work for the Review Conference. We must adopt the agenda for the Review Conference, and we need to confirm its President to complete the Bureau. We need a fully operational Bureau that can start the necessary preparations for next year.

Second, we should offer substantive guidance to the Review Conference. We have had many discussions since 2017 – some constructive, some confrontational – and we should not have to start from scratch next year. Let’s make sure the PrepCom is more than a talking shop.

Mr. Chair,

‘Success’ depends on our level of ambition. And we are fully aware of the difficult international circumstances that make progress difficult. But this makes it all the more important that we keep looking for ways to move forward.

Our regional NPT consultations taught us that global support for the NPT remains strong because the Treaty reflects our shared interests, but that priorities under the NPT may differ. That’s a fact. So let’s look at where we can align our interests.

We would argue that the Chair’s summaries and reflections of 2017 and 2018 form a good starting point for that. These documents provide a good overview of the discussions held and indicate where there was a convergence of opinion. We have highlighted those convergences in the conclusions and recommendations that we submitted to this PrepCom together with
our Polish colleagues. We are hoping to welcome all of our colleagues to discuss this paper with us at our side-event next week Monday.

Mr. Chair,

It is important that, after 50 years, we maintain and strengthen the credibility of this treaty regime. That means that all of us should implement and reaffirm commitments made under this Treaty over the years – also in relation to Article VI and its ultimate goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

I would also like to encourage my colleagues to explore measures that could help us reduce the risk of nuclear weapons use, for example as a result of miscommunication, escalation, or uncontrolled arms races. The Netherlands has requested the Clingendael institute to categorize some ideas; we shared the results last year. Perhaps we can look into some of these options further in the context of delivering concrete outcomes in 2020.

We must also look into ways in which we can reform our working methods to make the review cycle more effective, efficient and inclusive. Together with our NPDI colleagues we have already put forward some proposals, and we will continue the discussion this year.

Mr. Chair,

The Netherlands firmly believes in a balanced implementation of all pillars of the NPT. We will focus on these in the cluster debates. We encourage full and effective participation of both men and women in the NPT context. We should also ensure knowledge transfer, stimulate education and critical thinking on these issues.

In this context, the Netherlands was pleased to have hosted a successful the nuclear disarmament colloquium earlier this month in Geneva, where academics and diplomats exchanged ideas on nuclear disarmament, specifically on how to create an environment conducive to disarmament. This showed there is a desire for fresh ideas and open dialogue on how to move towards a nuclear-weapon free world. We’re hoping to continue this dialogue with all of you in these next two weeks.

Thank you, Mr, Chair