PREPARATORY COMMITTEE FOR THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE TREATY ON THE NON-PROLIFERATION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS: GENERAL DEBATE

STATEMENT BY PORTUGAL

Delivered by Mr. Francisco Duarte Lopes
Permanent Representative of Portugal to the United Nations

New York, 30 of April 2019

Mr. Chairman,

Allow me to congratulate you on your appointment.

Portugal fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by the European Union and by Belgium on behalf of the Broad Like-Minded countries.

Mr. Chairman,

For almost fifty years, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) has been the cornerstone of the international nuclear non-proliferation regime, the foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament and an important element in the development of nuclear energy peaceful applications.

Today, the NPT remains a crucial multilateral instrument, contributing to international peace and security.
However, the gains and legacy of almost fifty years may be at risk, as we are witnessing a rise in global and regional tensions and the collapse of key parts of the non-proliferation and disarmament architecture.

We need to reverse those trends, as we cannot let the world walk into a new arms race. We particularly call on the preservation of the INF Treaty and we underline the need to extend the New START Treaty and negotiate further nuclear arsenal reductions.

Mr. Chairman,

Portugal remains fully committed to nuclear disarmament. The well documented catastrophic consequences of the use of nuclear weapons should reinforce our commitment to a world free of nuclear weapons.

While all NPT State Parties have an obligation towards that ultimate goal, the Nuclear Weapon States have special responsibilities, under article VI of the NPT, to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals. In our view, a process of gradual reduction of nuclear weapons, taking into account legitimate national and international security concerns is the best approach to ensure sustainable progress.

We are convinced that, despite the deterioration of the international security environment, further concrete steps on nuclear disarmament are not only possible, but will contribute to build trust among State Parties and to promote strategic stability.

We need to be pragmatic and redouble our efforts to build confidence and reverse negative trends. Collective engagement is needed to ensure NPT universalization. The early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) should
be a priority and we urgently need to start negotiations on a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty (FMCT).

Other practical measures should include the establishment of robust nuclear disarmament verification mechanisms, the universalization of the safeguards regime, and the promotion of greater transparency and risk reduction measures.

Mr. Chairman,

The threat of nuclear proliferation remains a serious cause for concern. Complete and internationally verifiable denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula is necessary. Until then, Security Council Resolutions should be fully implemented.

On Iran, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) has been serving its purposes, as confirmed by the IAEA. Therefore we encourage its implementation by all parties.

The International Community must continue to seek the establishment of a Middle East Free Zone of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction.

To conclude, Mr. Chairman,

This Preparatory Committee and the next Review Conference are opportunities to strengthen the implementation of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and make it fit for purpose.

Portugal intends to play a constructive role and to strengthen the necessary dialogue to build trust and prepare the way for a successful 2020 Review Conference.

I thank you