

NEW AGENDA COALITION GENERAL DEBATE STATEMENT TO THE 2008 FIRST COMMITTEE

Mr. Chairperson,

I thank you for giving me the floor to speak on behalf of the Partners of the New Agenda Coalition (NAC), namely Brazil, Egypt, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, Sweden and South Africa. At the outset, I wish to congratulate you on your assumption of the Chairpersonship of the 2008 United Nations First Committee and assure you of the NAC's wholehearted support for all your efforts to steer our deliberations to a successful conclusion.

Mr. Chairperson,

The New Agenda Coalition has always been an unwavering supporter of nuclear disarmament and a proponent of a nuclear-weapon-free world. The Coalition has therefore consistently sought to actively engage in, and contribute to, the important issues of nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. To this end, we have expressed our views and shared our ideas in a variety of multilateral disarmament fora, including the UN First Committee and the various meetings of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). These contributions remain valid.

To the NAC it is obvious that the only absolute guarantee against the use of nuclear weapons is their complete elimination and the assurance that they will never be produced again. Following this logic, it should be equally clear that as long as some countries possess nuclear weapons, there will be others who will aspire to acquire them. The continued possession of nuclear weapons, or the retention of the nuclear weapons option by some States, creates the very real danger that they may be used, or fall into the hands of non-State actors. The NAC therefore does not subscribe to the view that the possession of nuclear weapons -- or the pursuit of such possession by certain States -- enhances international peace and security.

Against this background, there can be no doubt that the NPT is of vital importance to achieve nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. It remains the only international instrument that not only seeks to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons, but that also contains the legal commitment for the elimination of these weapons. As such, it therefore represents a historical bargain between the nuclear-weapon States and the non-nuclear-weapon States in terms of which the latter have undertaken not to develop nuclear weapons, based upon the undertaking by the former to eliminate such weapons.

Mr. Chairperson,

Whilst the NPT remains the cornerstone of the nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation regime, few would argue that the primary goal of the States Parties to the Treaty to achieve its full implementation, as well as its universality, does not face challenges. Few would also disagree with the fact that the periods since 1995 and 2000 have witnessed developments that did not always positively contribute towards the goals

of nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. Nevertheless, it would be fair to say that the overwhelming majority of the States Parties to the NPT remain committed to fulfilling their Treaty obligations.

Given the importance that the New Agenda Coalition attaches to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, this year's NAC First Committee resolution -- which will be submitted in due course -- continues to emphasize the central role of the Treaty and its universality in achieving nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. It also recalls the three decisions on "Strengthening the Review Process for the Treaty", "Principles and Objectives for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament" and "Extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons", as well as the resolution on the Middle East adopted at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference and the Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference.

Mr. Chairperson,

The NAC Partners firmly believe that these outcomes contain a step-by-step process that outlines detailed elements in a balanced way in both the areas of nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation that would reduce the threat posed by nuclear weapons, de-emphasize their importance and lead to their elimination. The NAC continues to view these issues of nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation as being inextricably linked, and wishes to stress that both therefore require continuous and irreversible progress.

The New Agenda welcomed the opportunity to participate in the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2010 NPT Review Conference that was held in Geneva from 28 April to 9 May this year. In view of the approaching 2010 Review Conference, the Coalition would urge States Parties to intensify their constructive engagement in the work of the Preparatory Committee at its third session to be held in 2009, with a view to identifying and addressing specific aspects where urgent progress is required in order to advance the objective of a nuclear-weapon-free world. Given the need for a constructive and successful preparatory process that would contribute to strengthening the Treaty in all its aspects, the NAC furthermore calls upon all States Parties to fully implement all the commitments undertaken by them at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference and the 2000 NPT Review Conference.

Mr. Chairperson,

The New Agenda Coalition recognizes the efforts undertaken during the course of this year to achieve the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula in a peaceful manner. We would, however, urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to rescind its announced withdrawal from the NPT and to verifiably terminate its nuclear weapons programme. We also continue to urge India, Israel and Pakistan to accede to the Treaty as non-nuclear-weapon States promptly and without conditions.

The NAC welcomed the unequivocal undertaking by the nuclear-weapon States at the 2000 NPT Review Conference to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals. As the primary responsibility for undertaking the necessary steps for the elimination of nuclear weapons lies with the nuclear-weapon States, the New Agenda

Coalition believes that it is incumbent upon these States to accelerate the implementation of their nuclear disarmament commitments in order to make further progress towards achieving our common goal of a world free of nuclear weapons.

Mr. Chairperson,

The need to diminish the role of nuclear weapons in security policies remains an essential component in the nuclear disarmament process, not only in order to enhance strategic stability, but also to facilitate the process of the elimination of nuclear weapons and to contribute to a climate of international confidence and security. In addition, the taking of further practical steps to decrease the operational readiness of nuclear weapons systems, with a view to ensuring that all nuclear weapons are removed from high alert status, will contribute to nuclear disarmament through the enhancement of confidence-building and transparency measures and reinforce a diminishing role for nuclear weapons in security policies.

Furthermore, as transparency and confidence-building constitutes one of the key areas in the nuclear disarmament debate, the New Agenda Coalition welcomes all efforts towards greater transparency undertaken by some of the nuclear-weapon States during the course of this year. In this regard, the NAC encourages initiatives for greater transparency and continues to believe that there would be merit in pursuing progress on such initiatives in the lead-up to the 2010 NPT Review Conference. The provision of further clarity on the current status of holdings, plans for down-sizing, and the reduction of reliance on nuclear weapons in security doctrines, would certainly contribute to furthering confidence that expanded roles for nuclear weapons in security doctrines are not being developed.

Mr. Chairperson,

Genuine security cannot be achieved by the non-nuclear-weapon States abandoning the nuclear weapons option alone. What is also required is for such States not to feel threatened by nuclear weapons. In this regard, the NAC holds the view that the granting of legally binding security assurances to the non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the NPT, would fulfill an undertaking to those States that have voluntarily given up the nuclear-weapons option by becoming Parties to the Treaty. We therefore reaffirm that security assurances should be provided in the context of an internationally legally binding instrument.

The NAC furthermore continues to support the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones as a step in the process towards a world free from nuclear weapons. In this regard, it remains important to continue promoting greater co-operation and consultation among the existing nuclear-weapon-free zones. The New Agenda Coalition therefore supports efforts to promote the convening of a second nuclear-weapon-free zone Conference as a contribution to the 2010 Review Conference of the NPT.

Mr. Chairperson,

Time unfortunately does not allow me to comment on each and every aspect of the nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation debate, but it would be amiss of

me not to place on record the NAC's continued and firm support for a treaty that would ban the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. On behalf of the New Agenda Coalition, I would likewise also reiterate the continued importance of the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty to the advancement of nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation objectives.

In closing, Mr. Chairperson,

The Partners of the New Agenda Coalition remain concerned at the slow and sometimes tortuous pace of progress with regard to nuclear disarmament. The New Agenda Coalition has on numerous occasions, and in various disarmament fora, called for progress in the pursuit of nuclear disarmament and a nuclear-weapon-free world. The Coalition will continue along this path, and in so doing will also continue to promote the full implementation and universality of the NPT as the cornerstone of nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation.

I thank you, Mr. Chairperson.