



**CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT**

**STATEMENT BY**

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Mr. President,

At the outset, allow me to congratulate you on the assumption of your role and to assure you of my Delegation's full cooperation and support in your important and challenging task. Let me also express my deep appreciation for the work of the previous Presidency.

I add the following opening remarks in a national capacity to those already delivered on our behalf by the European Union.

Mr. President,

Like many speakers before me, I would like to thank you for presenting your draft Programme of Work to the Conference last week. After such an extended period of paralysis in this forum, a sense of disillusionment could take hold. Your draft Programme of Work challenges us to be ambitious and capitalise on the discussions within the Subsidiary Bodies last year. Ireland looks forward to working with you and all members on building a consensus that can get us back to fulfilling the essential mandate of this Conference.

Your draft is timely. Events of recent days have reminded us of the fragility of disarmament and non-proliferation agreements. The announcements by the United States and the Russian Federation that they are suspending their obligations under the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty are deeply worrying. Throughout its 30 year history, the INF has resulted in the removal and verifiable destruction of almost three thousand missiles with nuclear and conventional warheads. Properly implemented, it improves security not only between its parties but globally and for Europe in particular. The unravelling of the Treaty and the potential arms race its termination could instigate would be a

step back into a dark and dangerous past that must be avoided. It could have far reaching consequences for other disarmament and non-proliferation instruments, including the negotiations on NEW START. There remains an opportunity for constructive dialogue to take place and to resolve the issues about Russian compliance raised by the United States in a full and verifiable manner that ensures the Treaty's preservation.

Mr. President,

In 2018, we witnessed direct challenges to the norms against use of WMDs, violations of International Humanitarian Law, and a deepening political stalemate on issues of substance. It is vital that in 2019 we use the tools at our disposal here in the Conference on Disarmament to make substantive progress and re-engage with our collective commitment to sustainable peace and security.

That is why, Mr. Chairman, I was particularly pleased to see a reference in your draft to the Secretary General's Disarmament Agenda. The unrestricted spread and use of weapons - whether conventional or WMDs – is a cross cutting matter that threatens human rights, the environment, the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, and indeed the very future of our planet.

While recognition of the links between disarmament and development is not new, for a long time, there has been a tendency to work in silos. This is despite a large body of evidence demonstrating that excessive arms build-ups can divert essential resources from development and fuel armed conflict and violence. As High-Representative Nakamitsu has stated, the failure to establish dynamic disarmament and arms control systems 'is devastating to socioeconomic

development, peace and security, and human well-being'. The Secretary General's Agenda recognises disarmament's potential in this respect. It offers us new and creative ways to approach our mandate in this Conference by encouraging us to place disarmament and arms control within the scope of sustainable development, conflict prevention and peacebuilding. As such, my delegation hopes that the CD can contribute to the implementation of the actions set out by the UNSG in the areas relevant to the CD's own priorities.

Restoring the focus of disarmament on humanity, rather than thinking about it in isolated, abstract security terms should be at the core of our work. As the President of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins, recently recalled, "*we are engaged in disarmament not for its own sake but because of the effects that these terrible weapons have had on the many human beings who have suffered the appalling and generational consequences of their use*"

National security interests and the security environment are, of course, legitimate concerns and should be carefully considered. However, in times of heightened tensions, it is crucially important that we renew, recommit and implement the commitments we have already made. There is, after all, no greater confidence building measure to improve the security environment than the faithful implementation of past agreements.

This year we face a critical stage in the Review Cycle of the NPT. The PrepCom will be tasked with making recommendations to the Review Conference in 2020, the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Treaty's entry into force. Our starting point at this significant juncture should be to ensure a continued commitment to the Treaty,

including the consensus agreements we have already reached at previous Review Conferences. The lack of progress on establishing a WMD-Free-Zone in the Middle East is also a matter of serious concern. At the NPT Preparatory Committee meeting this year, Ireland is fully committed to engaging actively and constructively in our national capacity, as well as with the EU, New Agenda Coalition, the Vienna Group of 10 and other like-minded partners. We will aim for meaningful and balanced outcomes across the three pillars of the Treaty.

Ireland also looks to other disarmament and non-proliferation opportunities where we can make progress. We would like to see movement on the long-stalled process leading to a Fissile Material Treaty. Negotiated within this body, the entry into force of the CTBT also remains a top priority for Ireland and we warmly welcome the latest ratification of Thailand. With 167 States Parties, the CTBT has the resounding backing of the vast majority of UN Member States. The remaining Annex II States must acknowledge the clear will of the international community for its immediate entry into force.

Mr. President,

As well as implementing past commitments, we must also look to the future to explore new ways of engaging on the substance of our work, not least through a focus on gender issues. Ireland has called for the recognition of the disproportionate impact of ionising radiation on women and girls. As a co-chair of the International Gender Champions Disarmament Impact Group, along with Canada, Namibia and UNIDIR, Ireland is pleased to support efforts that strengthen the application of gender perspectives in multilateral disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control fora. The 'Impact Group' takes a two-track approach, focusing on promoting gender analyses of substantive issues, and on

realising gender equality and improving women's meaningful participation in the disarmament machinery. One such effort by the 'Impact Group' has been to develop a 'Gender & Disarmament Resource Pack' to support chairs of the disarmament machinery to apply a gender lens to their work. The six presidencies of the Conference on Disarmament for 2019 have received this Resource Pack. Ireland hopes that this tool can be usefully employed during our discussions in the Conference on Disarmament this year.

As the current chair of the Commission on the Status of Women, Ireland is working to ensure the body is active in promoting women's rights, highlighting the reality of women's lives throughout the world, and shaping global standards on gender equality and the empowerment of women. Such discussions should be mainstreamed into nuclear disarmament discourse and can add another dimension in how we consider nuclear weapons and why they should be eliminated.

Realising our shared goal of a world without nuclear weapons will require creativity and a fresh approach. In this respect, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is a truly ground-breaking legal instrument that finally puts in place a workable legal framework for the total elimination of nuclear weapons. There have been some suggestions that the TPNW somehow undermines the NPT by creating a separate legal instrument to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Such arguments create a false dichotomy between both treaties. For Ireland, a founder member and original instigator of the NPT, prohibition is a logical imperative. Our firmly held view is that the best way to protect the NPT is to implement it. The TPNW allows us to do exactly that by filling the legal gap that exists in the NPT's disarmament provisions. With respect to the existing

disarmament and non-proliferation regime, the TPNW is practical; it is entirely complementary; and it is now a reality.

Mr. President,

Ireland strongly values the contribution of civil society to the debate on disarmament. Their expertise would add to the richness of our discussions and it is regrettable that we cannot find a means of facilitating their meaningful engagement. Similarly, expanding the CD's membership may also re-energise the Conference's work.

I would like to conclude by calling for open-mindedness and flexibility as we conduct our work this year. There are many issues on which we are all likeminded. We all share a commitment to achieving the goal of nuclear disarmament, even if our views on how to realise this goal sometimes diverge. The Conference on Disarmament is a well-funded UN body, with a clear mandate to negotiate disarmament treaties. We have a unique privilege that should not be wasted. In light of the prevailing security environment, the CD cannot afford to lose any more time. We call upon all member states to spare no effort to ensure that the CD re-asserts itself by making real and substantive progress this year.

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