



BELGIUM

Main Committee II Statement – Nuclear Non-Proliferation

Tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)

New York, 8 August 2022

Chairperson,

Belgium aligns itself with the statement of the European Union. Allow me to add a few elements from a national point of view.

We should not forget that half a century ago, the risk of widespread nuclear proliferation was high. The containment of this risk, despite some setbacks, constitutes one of the great successes of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). This is an unmistakable achievement for our collective security, and requires continued consolidation and strengthening.

The IAEA is the NPT's right hand in ensuring compliance with article II of the Treaty. Real life experience, not diplomatic theory, has shown that a comprehensive safeguards agreement alone is insufficient to provide reliable assurance that a country does not possess nuclear material for non-peaceful use. Therefore, an Additional Protocol should not be seen as an accessory, but as part and parcel of the current verification standard. There is no such thing as giving too much confidence.

We commend the work that the IAEA has undertaken to modernize the area of safeguards through the development of new IT and analytical tools. Nuclear safeguards are an area that is constantly evolving, in the light of economic and technological developments. In view of the expansion of civilian nuclear power and growing budgetary pressure, there is a need to strengthen the efficiency and effectiveness of the IAEA safeguards system.

Belgium deeply regrets the very worrying steps taken by Iran and its ever-increasing departure from its commitments under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPoA). We are gravely concerned by Iran's decision to stop the implementation of transparency measures as envisaged in the JCPoA, including the suspension of its Additional Protocol (AP). The Agency has been unable to verify and monitor according to the expected standards. This has significantly reduced its knowledge about the nuclear material and activities in Iran.

We urge Iran to return, without delay, to full implementation of the JCPoA and all transparency measures, including the Additional Protocol. We consider unconditional, timely and full cooperation with the IAEA essential in rebuilding trust.

Belgium commends the continued efforts of the Director General of the IAEA and his staff in dealing with this complex issue in a professional, objective and impartial way. We strongly

support the IAEA's efforts to continue implementing its important long-term mission in Iran and have therefore, over the last years, made several extrabudgetary contributions to this effect.

Chairperson,

North Korea poses a significant threat to the non-proliferation regime. It is our duty to respond resolutely. International pressure on the regime must be maintained. Strict application of sanctions by all states is an essential element. Too often weak links are exploited by the DPRK regime in order to escape the restrictions that are needed to force behaviour change.

The case of DPRK once again underscores the importance of strengthening the international norm against nuclear tests. 174 states have assumed their responsibility by joining the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). Belgium calls on the remaining Annex II States to accede to the Treaty so that it can finally enter into force. Absence of progress regarding adherence by Annex II States is regrettable, but it cannot serve as an excuse for other States not to do the right thing. In this regard, we welcome the accession this year of the Gambia, Tuvalu, Dominica and Timor Leste.

Chairperson,

The Russian illegal occupation of Europe's largest nuclear power plant hampers full implementation of safeguards in Ukraine. There is a straightforward solution available, namely Russia's withdrawal from the plant and from all of Ukraine's territory.

Chairperson,

Export control supports the objectives of the NPT by preventing the diversion of sensitive materials to end-users of concern. In order to facilitate common understanding and cooperative action, the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) assembles 48 States that adopt common guidelines and control lists which give the exporting states necessary assurances to export sensitive products to trusted recipients. In 2020-2021 Belgium assumed the presidency of the NSG. Despite the challenging coronavirus times our country worked hard to ensure the vitality and continuity of the NSG, culminating in the holding of an in-person plenary meeting last year.

Finally, Chairperson, like other States, I want to make it clear that NATO's nuclear sharing arrangements respect the provisions of the NPT. They did so 50 years ago, and they continue to do so. Any accusation to the contrary only serves to distract from the real issues.