Statement by a meeting of non-governmental experts from countries belonging to the New Agenda Coalition

Geneva 30 April 2008

Ambassador Abdel Raouf El Reedy (Egypt), Egyptian Council for Foreign Affairs
Ambassador Mohamed I Shaker (Egypt), Egyptian Council for Foreign Affairs
Dr Mohamed Kadry Said (Egypt), Egyptian Council for Foreign Affairs
Mr Tony D’Costa (Ireland), Pax Christi, International Catholic Peace Movement
Professor Olga Pellicer (Mexico), Mexican Council on Foreign Relations
Ms Marian Hobbs (New Zealand), Co-President, Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament
Mr Alyn Ware (New Zealand), The Peace Foundation Disarmament and Security Centre
Ms Amelia du Rand (South Africa), Institute for Security Studies
Dr Hans Blix (Sweden), Chairman, Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission
Mr Hannes Berts (Sweden), Assistant, Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission

The Group of non-governmental experts from NAC Countries met during the second preparatory session of the NPT Conference, in Geneva. The Group noted the vital importance of the NPT Review Process, as an engine to keep the Treaty operative and responding to changing political, military and economic conditions in the world. Although, the number of nuclear warheads has been and is shrinking, there has been an alarming regressive development since the Review Conference of 2000. The world now needs to revive disarmament.

The Non-Proliferation Treaty provides the directions to reach a nuclear weapon free world and needs universal adherence and full implementation. The Group notes that Iraq and Libya have come to compliance, and urges that further efforts be pursued to find non-violent diplomatic solutions to the situations regarding the DPRK and Iran. As regards the three states that have not adhered to the NPT – India, Israel and Pakistan – the Group submits that regional solutions be sought, notably through a Middle East Zone Free of Weapons of Mass Destruction in accordance with the 1995 NPT Review Conference Middle East Resolution. It also notes that these states, like the rest of the world, should join the global non-proliferation regime. An effective disarmament process, engaging all states that have nuclear weapons, may facilitate such transition.

At the Review Conference in 2000, the New Agenda Coalition was instrumental in inspiring and winning consensus support for 13 steps vital for the implementation of the Treaty. Regrettably, these steps have not been taken. Eight years have been lost.

Going through these 13 steps, the Group finds that practically all of them remain fully relevant and some of them are even more urgent now.

The Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) that was adopted in 1996 needs urgently to be ratified by all States, particularly those with nuclear facilities, allowing the Treaty to enter into force and giving assurance that testing of nuclear weapons is permanently over. The ratification by key states, particularly the United States, would in all likelihood give rise to a positive chain reaction.
Negotiations should be started without further delay on the long discussed treaty regarding fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

The Conference on Disarmament (CD), that has been dormant for over ten years, must now agree on a work program and go into business. It should inter alia set up a subsidiary body to deal with nuclear disarmament with the goal of eliminating all nuclear weapons, strengthening international stability and enhancing security for all. Nuclear weapons cannot be un-invented, but they can be outlawed by convention, in the same manner as biological and chemical weapons.

The Group notes that a number of recent developments open the door for progress, including: the 2006 Report of the Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission; the initiative ‘Reykjavik revisited’ of senior statesmen in the United States; the nuclear disarmament laboratory initiative in the UK; and the re-energizing of the Seven Nation Initiative.

As the demand made in 2000 to bring START-II into operation have failed, efforts must now be made to develop a credible and legally binding START-III arrangement that will also keep adequate verification arrangements alive.

The Group reaffirms the need to diminish the role for nuclear weapons in security policies and the demand for agreed measures to further reduce the operational status of nuclear weapon systems to avoid disasters occurring by mistake or miscalculation. Steps should also be taken to phase out non-strategic nuclear weapons and withdraw all nuclear weapons from foreign soil.

Non-nuclear weapon States can play an active role in nuclear disarmament, including through the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones and the implementation of domestic measures to prohibit and criminalize nuclear weapon related activities.

The Additional Protocol is a voluntary measure that provides improved confidence that fissile materials are not diverted. The Group encourages its adoption by more countries.

The NPT Review Process – apart from acting on the 13 steps - must tackle the new problems and challenges:

The risk that non-state actors might acquire or develop nuclear weapons must be countered. All countries have the obligation under international law to ensure that their territories are not used by non-state actors to develop weapons of mass destruction. The International Convention for Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism should be universally adopted and implemented. All countries are also obliged to implement Security Council resolution 1540 for the same purpose and to establish effective export- and import controls.

More countries may embark on or further expand the use of nuclear power, as they are entitled to under the NPT. It is vital that such a development go hand in hand with measures to prevent the risk of proliferation. The establishment of an international nuclear fuel bank, or a similar mechanism, that would provide fuel to any country with satisfactory non-proliferation credentials and that was faced with non-commercial problems of supply, could reduce the risk for proliferation associated with an increased number of enrichment plants.
The Group proposes that a UN High Level Conference on disarmament, non-proliferation and terrorist use of weapons of mass destruction be organized after thorough preparation and building on the experience of previous thematic World Conferences.

The Group expresses its hope that the States that formed the New Agenda Coalition will continue to work for the implementation of the 13 steps agreed to at the Review Conference in 2000 and is ready to tackle the new challenges that have arisen since then.