

Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapon

Oslo, 4-5 March 2013-02-20

Mr. Chair,

It gives me great pleasure to address this important conference in my capacity as the head of the delegation of Egypt, and allow me to start by extending congratulations to the Norwegian government for hosting this conference that comes amidst increased international realization of the importance required to increase our efforts to eliminate nuclear weapons and to eliminate the increasing reliance on them as a basis for achieving deterrence or security. Egypt remains deeply concerned about the humanitarian impact and consequences that any use of such weapons would have, and welcomes the increased attention that this issue has received in recent years, and feels encouraged about the momentum this issue is gaining day after day whether in the United Nations or in other fora since 2010.

With the mindset of the horrific consequences of Hiroshima and Nagasaki incidents, the sheer horror of the use of nuclear weapons has been reflected in many key multilateral documents since the adoption of the NPT, and very well expressed in the 2010 Review Conference of the Treaty and I quote: "Deep concern over the catastrophic humanitarian consequence of any use of nuclear weapons". Several decades after their adoption, such quotes and expressions of concern remain as pertinent as ever and will remain as long as nuclear weapons exist.

Such nuclear weapons have the destructive capacity to pose a threat to the survival of humanity, and as long as they continue to exist, the threat to humanity will remain. In addition to the grave humanitarian concerns, the use of nuclear weapons also raises important legal issues, such that all rules of international humanitarian law apply fully to nuclear weapons. Recently, the Council of Delegates of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement adopted a Resolution emphasizing not only the incalculable human suffering resulting from any use of nuclear weapons but also stressing that it is difficult to envisage how any use of nuclear weapons could be compatible with the rules of international humanitarian law.

Thus, it is of utmost importance that those weapons never be used again, under any circumstances. The only way to guarantee this is the total, irreversible and verifiable elimination of nuclear weapons under effective international control including through the full implementation of Article VI of the NPT, as well as, the NPT 2010 action plan. This should also be adequately reflected in the outcome document of the 2015 Review Conference.

Mr. Chair,

Nuclear disarmament lies at the top of Egypt's priorities and foreign policy objectives, as evidenced by our constant promotion of nuclear disarmament goals in several international fora. This is based on our conviction that due to the destructive

potential of these weapons, both international peace and security can never be fully attained as long as nuclear weapons exist.

It is regrettable that 18 years after the indefinite extension of the NPT, nuclear deterrence remains a strong element in the strategic doctrines of the Nuclear Weapon States. Retaining this role for nuclear weapons remains one of the most counterproductive in achieving non-proliferation aims, as it increases the danger of other states attempting to develop these weapons to protect their national security. The use of such weapons would have wide scale unavoidable humanitarian consequences. The effects would not only be limited to the initial impact of these weapons, but also the long term effects due to the radiation released would affect the lives of not only those living in the immediate vicinity of the point of impact but entire populations, as well as agriculture and livestock. One must only look at the Fukushima disaster that occurred two years ago to realize the serious effects of a nuclear detonation and the importance of nuclear safety. Indeed, the radioactive particles that were released during the incident were detected in all corners of the globe and we can only imagine what kind of devastation would befall humanity if a nuclear exchange were to take place.

In this regard, Egypt would like to reiterate its call to achieve the universality of the Non-proliferation Treaty, which is vital to attaining the goal of the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. The only true effective guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons is their total elimination.

Egypt reiterates its strong call for a full implementation of the unequivocal undertaking given by the nuclear-weapon States at the 2000 Review Conference, and reaffirmed at the 2010 Review Conference, to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals leading to nuclear disarmament. That undertaking should be demonstrated without further delay through the full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation of Article IV of the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the outcomes of the 2000 and 2010 Review Conferences, to advance systematically and progressively towards a nuclear-weapon-free world as agreed in 2000 and 2010.

Mr. Chair,

If you would allow me, I feel that in this regard I must address an issue that Egypt views with outmost importance concerning the Middle East region. The 2010 Review Conference's fourth action plan emphasized the importance of a process leading to full implementation of the 1995 Resolution on the Middle East, and - to that end - the Conference endorsed a number of practical steps. Among these steps was the convening - by the Secretary General of the United Nations and the co-sponsors of the 1995 Resolution, in consultation with the States of the region - of a conference in 2012, to be attended by all States of the Middle East, on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction.

Egypt deeply regretted that the conference was not convened in December and expressed its dismay to the announced excuses to not hold the conference in 2012 as scheduled. The convening of a successful conference on the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East is integral to the implementation of the action plan of the 2010 Review Conference. This delay in

convening the conference represents a serious breach of the decision taken by the member states in the non-proliferation treaty in accordance with the terms of reference agreed upon and freely arrived at in 2010.

Egypt also expressed its sincere belief that the pretexts announced for postponing the conference do not conform with the mandates and provisions stated in the 2010 NPT Review Conference Outcome document, and thus the utmost reservations on what is being raised about the inability of the organizing parties to implement the mandate issued by all the NPT parties.

Finally, allow me Mr. Chair to express my sincerest hope that all states intensify their efforts towards the goal of achieving a world free of those horrendous weapons. The catastrophic consequences of their use concerns the whole of humanity and it is important that communities raise awareness and the state of knowledge about the humanitarian consequences of such weapons. In this regard, let me conclude by thanking once more the government of Norway for holding this conference and hope that it becomes a part of ongoing efforts to achieve the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

Thank you.