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Cluster II – Nuclear Non-Proliferation

Second Session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2026 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)

Geneva, 26 July 2024

Chair,

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

The NPT has been quite successful in curbing the spread of nuclear weapons beyond those of the recognized nuclear-weapon States. This achievement is by no means irreversible. Two crises in particular pose a threat to the global non-proliferation regime. Iran increases its nuclear build-up and decreases its cooperation with the IAEA. The DPRK expands its nuclear and ballistic capabilities, while revving up its aggressive nuclear rhetoric.

Chair,

Both crises can still be contained. A united response from the international community is however needed. This is at risk, when a permanent member of the UN Security Council shops for weapons in both these countries in order to foment its war of aggression against Ukraine. We are concerned about the trade-off underlying these deals and its possible impact on the nuclear and ballistic programmes in these countries.

Iran continuously fails to provide the necessary information and cooperation with the IAEA in order to clarify and resolve outstanding

issues with regards to its obligations under its safeguards agreement with the IAEA, as imposed by article III of the NPT.

Moreover, Iran has moved away from the JCPoA, a voluntary agreement designed to foster confidence in the exclusively peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear programme. Increasing rhetoric in Tehran regarding a possible military turn of the nuclear programme is particularly disconcerting in this regard.

Iran can still correct its course, by returning to conformity with its safeguards agreement and with the JCPoA, by cooperating with the IAEA and by ratifying the Additional Protocol, which will give the IAEA the tools to permanently monitor Iran's nuclear programme in a comprehensive manner. We also call on Iran, as an Annex II State, to finally ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, not only as a confidence-building measure, but also as proof of its stated commitment to nuclear disarmament.

The DPRK continues to taunt the international community. Its expansionist nuclear and ballistic programme is coupled with disquieting changes at the doctrinal level. The control of the respect for restrictive measures should be strengthened, in particular by the members of the UN Security Council, who agreed on these measures in the first place.

The DPRK's fast nuclear and ballistic development is largely due to its ability to procure sophisticated goods and technology from abroad. This demonstrates the need for more and tighter export controls, both at the national and the multilateral level. Belgium calls on all States to adopt and implement the guidelines of the Nuclear Suppliers Group and the Missile Technology Control Regime.

Chair,

Real life events have proven 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 or a bargaining chip, but as part and parcel of the current verification standard. There is no such thing as giving too much confidence. In the same vein, we call on concerned States to amend or rescind their Small Quantities Protocols, especially when they are developing nuclear energy

programmes or nuclear research. Enhanced nuclear status calls for enhanced nuclear responsibility and transparency.