

PORTUGAL

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2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty On the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)

General debate

Statement by

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Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation

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Mr. President,

At the outset, let me congratulate you on your election as President of this Review Conference of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. You can count on the full support and cooperation of my delegation in the very important task you have ahead.

Mr. President,

In addition to the statement delivered earlier by the European Union, I would like to add some ideas on the important agenda of this Conference.

As political leaders, entrusted by our peoples to pursue common good, we cannot miss this opportunity to secure the indispensable political will for further advancing the goals of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, which commemorates this year its 40th anniversary. Our mission here is to make sure that the Treaty does not fall into a sort of middle age crisis; on the contrary, we must ensure that we fully grasp the opportunities that a renewed vigour has created. To that end, we must seize upon the new momentum created by President Obama's speech last year in Prague about the vision of a world without nuclear weapons, and by the recent agreement between the United States and Russia on a new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty. Building on this positive impetus, we must work towards strengthening and revalidating the NPT, both in spirit and letter.

As the world changes – and indeed it has changed rapidly in the past few years and promises to continue to do so – negotiations over long-standing treaties gain new meaning, and are enveloped by new dynamics. This is also the case with the NPT, which we are now reviewing. As we begin our work over this month, I believe that it is useful that we remain mindful of the need to avoid the NPT being dragged into futile and negative divisions between different groups in this General Assembly, to the detriment of all. The drafters of the NPT, forty years ago, wisely designed a Treaty based upon three pillars: nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation, and the civil use of nuclear energy. In our view, judicious and appropriate progress in each of these pillars is the key for making this Treaty vitally relevant for the Twenty First Century.

Mr. President,

We are faced with the need now to break new ground in important areas and, in parallel, to implement disarmament instruments already at our disposal. We all know well what these instruments are, and we know also that if they are duly implemented we would have made very significant strides towards fulfilling the obligations enshrined in Article VI of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. In particular, two cases stand out where we clearly need to further advance: the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty and the Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty, and I wish to dedicate a few moments to each of them.

Portugal is a strong supporter of the rapid entry into force of the CTBT. We welcome the commitment by the US Administration to pursue its ratification and we call on all States listed in Annex II which have not yet ratified the Treaty to do so with no further delay. On this matter allow me to extend a warm word of welcome and congratulations to Indonesia, for its recent ratification of the CTBT. Pending the entry into force of this Treaty, Portugal further calls on all States to abide by a moratorium on nuclear test explosions and warmly welcomes the work of the Preparatory Commission, particularly concerning the International Monitoring System, which includes three stations strategically located in the Portuguese islands of the Azores.

The rapid entry into force of the CTBT may also help in creating the momentum and the political confidence necessary to allow progress in drafting a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty. Portugal favours an early start for the negotiation of such a Treaty, which should comprise an international verification mechanism. Pending the conclusion of a Treaty, States concerned should declare and uphold an immediate moratorium on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other explosive devices. We welcome the commitments made in this regard by five States with nuclear weapons. A worldwide moratorium would not only contribute to a safer world, but it would also have a positive impact in helping to create the necessary conditions for negotiations on the Treaty to begin.

We are aware that the catalogue does not end here. There are other important measures to be addressed, but if we were to achieve the objectives listed above, we would undoubtedly have accomplished substantive progress towards the concrete fulfilment of Article VI of the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Mr. President,

Portugal believes that we must move towards multilateralization of the nuclear cycle, as an important contribution to international non-proliferation efforts. This is why we support the creation of a Nuclear Fuel Bank under the auspices of the International Atomic Energy Agency, for the benefit of all States-parties to the NPT that have signed Safeguards Agreements with the Agency. We view multilateralism as the only reasonable answer to globalisation, and in the field of nuclear proliferation we believe this position to be equally valid.

The International Atomic Energy Agency must also be strengthened in its role as the verification mechanism for the NPT itself, including by the further consolidation and universalization of its Safeguards Agreements and Additional Protocol, and by providing it with the necessary means so it may continue to efficiently respond to present and future proliferation challenges.

Also, as part of the reinforcement of the NPT regime, Portugal believes that renewed and unequivocal Negative Security Assurances by the Nuclear Weapons States should be provided to all States that are in compliance with the

Treaty. Similar assurances should be provided to all Nuclear Weapons Free Zones.

Indeed, we recognize the importance of all Nuclear Weapons Free Zones. In Particular allow me to mention the central relevance of the establishment of such a Zone in the Middle East, taking into account the interests of all States in the region, and thus helping to enhance non-proliferation efforts in an area of the world that is so highly sensitive, and indeed so highly critical, to international peace and security.

Another decisive issue that we are facing, Mr. President, is the Iranian nuclear program. Many centuries of history have taught us that only negotiations held in good faith can bring about lasting peace and security. We therefore call on Iran to engage in serious negotiations concerning its nuclear program and to comply with all relevant Security Council and IAEA obligations.

Regarding North Korea, Portugal urges Pyongyang to renounce its nuclear programme, to return to the Six-Party Talks and to promptly resume compliance with its obligations under the NPT and the IAEA.

Mr. President,

Portugal is strongly in favour of a reinforcement of the NPT regime, including its institutional dimension, in particular as relates to the dispositions for withdrawal from the Treaty. Conditions under which a State-party may withdraw should be clarified and should be absolutely exceptional. In this regard, a revision of Article X of the Treaty should foresee clear consequences for withdrawing from the Treaty, such that international peace and security are not endangered.

Mr. President,

Finally, allow me to assure you that Portugal comes to these negotiations with a constructive mindset, determined to do its utmost for its success, as a non-nuclear and peace loving State. We believe that the historical moment that we are living through may be regarded by future historians as the moment when a safer world came into being. Alternatively, future historians may look at the record of missed opportunities and unsuccessful negotiations as having condemned us to a more precarious existence on this planet. Each of us must do our duty to make sure that future history tells a story that is happier, rather than tragic.

I thank you for your attention.