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THE NINTH REVIEW OF THE PARTIES TO THE TREATY ON THE NON-PROLIFERATION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS

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Statement by the Vienna Group of Ten

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(Check against delivery)

Madam President

I have the honour to take the floor on behalf of the ‘Vienna Group of Ten’ – Australia, Austria, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Hungary, Ireland, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway and Sweden. On behalf of the Vienna Group of Ten, I congratulate you on your election to the Bureau of the 2015 Review Conference and ensure you of our support in helping to make this conference a success.

The Vienna Group of Ten first met in 1980. In the 35 years since, we have convened prior to each Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) meeting with a view to encouraging discussion and substantive progress on the so-called ‘Vienna issues’. We have traditionally defined this to include: the peaceful uses of nuclear energy; nuclear safety, security and safeguards;

export controls; and nuclear testing. This year, we have added a chapter on withdrawal from the NPT. While withdrawal is much broader than discussions in Vienna, we included it in our paper this year due to the inherent risks it carries to non-proliferation.

Members of the Vienna Group of Ten are likeminded in many ways. We believe that the NPT fundamentally contributes to international peace and security. We are committed to its universalisation. We understand the NPT plays a unique role in providing a framework that fosters international confidence and cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. And we recognise the equally important and mutually reinforcing nature of its three pillars.

As we noted at the Preparatory Committee last year, slow progress on the implementation of nuclear disarmament commitments, the lack of universality and a number of pressing non-compliance challenges have had the net effect of undermining confidence in the Treaty itself. But this does not mean that, twenty years after it was extended indefinitely, the NPT is any less relevant than when it was agreed.

To the contrary, full implementation of the NPT remains essential to facilitating the use of nuclear applications in a growing range of areas. Nuclear applications play an essential role in areas such as human health, water management, agriculture and environmental protection. Over 140 Member States of the International Atomic Energy Agency have sought or received assistance from the IAEA to this end.

There has been some solid progress in taking forward the 64-point Action Plan from the 2010 Review Conference that relate to ‘Vienna issues’, particularly regarding high-level focus – and practical steps – on nuclear safety and security. But there is more work to be done in the days and weeks ahead. This Review Conference needs to maintain forward momentum on these and other ‘Vienna issues’.

While we are broadly likeminded, the paper took time to prepare. Our membership is diverse. It includes nuclear power states, uranium exporters and non-nuclear power states, members of NATO, the G20, the EU, the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative, and the New Agenda Coalition. We bring with us a range of experiences and perspectives that have shaped the paper we have submitted to this Review Conference.

Our paper represents a carefully negotiated consensus, consisting of specific recommendations and supporting background material. We hope it will prove useful to delegates when considering how to approach the so-called ‘Vienna issues’. And we hope it will focus delegates’ minds on the importance of these issues and ensure they are given appropriate weight during our discussions.

The Vienna Group of Ten calls on all states parties, including states outside the NPT, to redouble their efforts towards the health, integrity and fundamental goals of the Treaty. We stand ready to engage constructively with other States party to discuss our paper and the ideas it contains.

Thank you Madam President