

STATEMENT
by Delegation of Ukraine
at the High-Level Meeting of the UN General Assembly
on Nuclear Disarmament
26 September 2013

Mr. President,
Distinguished delegates,

Ukraine considers the issue of nuclear disarmament to be crucial to global peace and development and believes that general and complete disarmament is the cornerstone of international security.

In the last decade, there has been a lot of focus on nuclear non-proliferation, but not enough focus on nuclear disarmament, both by de jure and de facto nuclear states.

We need to give these two pillars of the Non-Proliferation Treaty equal attention.

We uphold the widespread conviction that the best way to foster non-proliferation and to prevent the scourge of nuclear warfare is by pursuing complete elimination of nuclear weapons.

Ukraine supports early start of negotiations on a phased program of elimination of nuclear weapons with clear timeframe, including through elaborating and bringing into force of the Convention on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and on their Destruction.

Ukraine hails progress achieved by the United States and the Russian Federation in implementing the New START Treaty and encourages them to go forth with further reductions in their nuclear arsenals, including strategic, non-strategic, deployed and non-deployed weapons.

These bilateral efforts, as well as the Prague and the Berlin agendas have to be followed up by concrete steps and in other nuclear capitals.

Mr. President,

Ukraine has the moral authority to raise these critical issues with a somewhat critical tone. Next year we shall celebrate the 20th anniversary of Ukraine's accession to the NPT as a non-nuclear state.

We have saved the world a lot of political turmoil and a lot of money by voluntarily renouncing our huge nuclear stockpiles.

We have made additional contribution to nuclear non-proliferation by switching from highly enriched to low enriched uranium.

20 years later, the destruction of the remnants of that arsenal – of course, of conventional nature – is still pending.

20 years later, Ukraine still has no solid legal security assurances – not only against a nuclear attack, but also against political and economic pressure, as stipulated in the Budapest Memorandum of 1994.

20 years later, we have no credible conventional arms control in the region.

The pertinent question is: would anyone today voluntarily give up its nuclear weapons or its intentions to procure them, when they have no guarantee of receiving legal assurances, or adequate financial compensation, or regional cooperation and confidence-building measures? Probably not.

So, the exemplary deed of Ukraine is not just a beautiful page from the history, it is a reminder what may happen if not all the commitments are honored.

Ukraine needs legal security guarantees not because we face any imminent nuclear threat, but because such a step would make it easier to persuade some other countries to give up their nuclear weapons programs.

Ukraine believes that the assurances outlined in the United Nations Security Council Resolution 984 (1995) should be once again reaffirmed in a relevant multilateral legally binding document.

Another way to receive legal security guarantees is to establish a nuclear weapons free zone, in particular, in Central and Eastern Europe.

It is paradoxical that the process that began 50 years ago in this region ultimately facilitated creation of such zones everywhere else in the world except for the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian area.

In order to make such a zone a reality in Central and Eastern Europe, we need to remove the questionable requirement that the member-states constituting this zone may not belong to military alliances.

Ukraine fully supports establishment of nuclear weapons free zones both in the Middle East and in Central Asia. In particular, the success of the second zone will be crucial for breaking the ice on this matter in Central and Eastern Europe.

In addition, an important factor promoting nuclear disarmament would be removal of reliance on nuclear weapons in the military doctrines both of individual states and of alliances.

In the same vein, the concept of mutually assured destruction has to come into oblivion, and the idea of nuclear pre-emptive strikes is abhorrent.

These and similar pertinent issues Ukraine proposes to discuss during a representative thematic conference that we shall seek to convene next year within the framework of the current UNGA session.

Mr. President,

Total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only guarantee that this type of weapons will never be used. However, mere declarations are insufficient for achieving this goal. It requires a set of practical steps.

Those include entry into force of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. Ukraine supports the ambitious plan of the CTBT new Executive Secretary Dr. Lassina Zerbo to engage 8 critical countries into the Treaty.

Likewise, enacting the Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty would be a tremendous step towards global nuclear disarmament.

In this context, the stalemate within the Conference on Disarmament in the last 15 years is impermissible.

Distinguished delegates,

Since the inception of the United Nations the issue of nuclear disarmament has been always on our common agenda. Collectively, we have adopted dozens if not hundreds of documents on this subject.

However, a real step forward in nuclear disarmament – as manifested by Ukraine 20 years ago – weighs much more than heaps of official papers.

I encourage all relevant countries to follow that example.

Thank you.