



Statement by

H.E. Dell Higgle
Ambassador for Disarmament and Permanent Representative of New Zealand
to the Conference on Disarmament, Geneva

at the

2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation
of Nuclear Weapons

General Debate

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Madam President,

Could I first, on behalf of all New Zealanders, I convey our heartfelt sympathy to the Government and people of Nepal regarding their catastrophic earthquake.

The NZ Delegation is committed to doing everything it can to support your efforts over the next four weeks to help us reach consensus at this important meeting of States Parties to the NPT. We know that we are here to find consensus on the means to sustain our Treaty and to carry it forward in a way that meets the needs and aspirations of all our community.

Consensus is a concept that New Zealanders understand very well when it relates to nuclear, and nuclear weapon, issues. It is something we have been able to forge in our own country – a fact that was noted by the UN's High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Ms Angela Kane, when she visited New Zealand last year. She welcomed our example as a country with consensus – “congruence” as she called it - on nuclear issues and cited our nuclear-free legislation as a classic illustration of co-operation and partnership between the different branches of government (combined, too, with a substantial advocacy role played by our civil society). She concluded that NZ's laws, policies and the views of our citizens are all congruent on nuclear matters.

I can assure you, Madam President, that this New Zealand consensus is reflected, as well, in the composition of our Delegation here. In addition to delegates drawn from Government, we are joined by Members of Parliament (notably, the leadership of New Zealand's Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament grouping), and we have representation also from our NGO community.

All of us hope for a successful outcome. New Zealand places great store by this Treaty which for 45 years now has been the anchor point for global nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament policy. Its success, particularly in constraining nuclear proliferation, has been invaluable: it has been able to do this largely on the back of the credibility of its promise – the promise of Article VI - to move forward on a world altogether free of nuclear weapons.

The terms of that promise might well have been drafted differently if, at its outset in 1968, the Treaty had been envisaged as a complete and measure. Instead, given at the time a shelf life of only 25 years, and put in place as a stop gap against the most immediate nuclear security threats then prevailing, its text opted to deal with some issues in an fashion.

As a product of that context, and of compromise, Article VI left over for a future time the work necessary to complete its premise. Some have termed this unfinished business as the " left by the NPT. It is a gap that continues to this day - notwithstanding the indefinite extension of the Treaty in 1995 and the acknowledgement by the International Court of Justice (unanimously, in its 1996 Advisory Opinion) that Article VI is the basis for an obligation to move forward and to close this gap.

What this would require is fairly clear . As long ago as 1995, NZ's then Prime Minister, Right Hon Jim Bolger, observed that, "just as we have international treaties which debar the use of chemical or biological weapons, we will eventually move to a similar sort of treaty ... regarding nuclear weapons". Successive NZ Prime Ministers have recognised the need for the development of legal frameworks to abolish these weapons.

Last September, Secretary-General Ban declared that "[T]he time has come for those negotiations to begin. The lack of such negotiations is disrupting the delicate balance between international commitments to disarmament and non-proliferation."

The New Agenda Coalition, which New Zealand currently coordinates, has sought to respond to the Secretary-General's call by presenting a Paper to this Conference - Working Paper 9 (itself building on WP 18 put forward at last year's NPT PrepCom). It fleshes out the options available to States Parties in moving forward to eliminate the "legal gap" left open in Article VI. It neither prescribes any particular negotiation process nor outcome but, rather, analyses the two legally-distinct pathways open to us in moving forward.

The Secretary-General has said that "what matters most is not

Secretary-