



**STATEMENT BY
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SOUTH AFRICA
TO THE
HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT OF THE CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT**

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Thank you, Madam President for the opportunity to address this august body.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The transformation process in my country fundamentally altered the role of apartheid South Africa as a threat to international peace and security to a democratic State determined to act as a principled and responsible actor within the multilateral system. This approach also forms the basis of our engagement in disarmament diplomacy.

If there were a test on moral stature on deserved membership of the conference, South Africa would emerge with flying colours given our history and practical action on disarmament.

Madam President,

Since its inauguration in May 1994, the South African government committed itself to a policy of non-proliferation, disarmament and arms control which covers all weapons of mass destruction and

extends to concerns relating to the proliferation of conventional arms. This policy forms an integral part of South Africa's commitment to democracy, human rights, sustainable development, social justice and environmental protection, which is reflected in our humanitarian approach, inter alia, to disarmament.

Democratic South Africa's commitment to disarmament is based on our belief that international peace and security cannot be divorced from development. Global security cannot be achieved when enormous financial and other resources are still being diverted towards the acquisition of more and more destructive capabilities, while more than a billion people around the world continue to suffer from hunger and deprivation.

In addition to this link between security and development, our approach to international security is also based on the reality that the threats of the modern post-Cold War world are exacerbated by massive nuclear arsenal held by world powers that are most generally hostile to each other, thus, posing a threat and risk to humanity.

Madam President,

As we celebrate 25 years of signing into law of our constitution, it is our view that this conference should find ways of renewing our commitment to eliminate nuclear weapons and should reinvigorate our common resolve for the realization of a world free of nuclear weapons.

South Africa remains steadfast that nuclear weapons do not guarantee security, but detract from it. As long as vertical and

horizontal proliferation persists, the world will continue to face the threat of the impact of the detonation of a nuclear weapon, including long-term humanitarian socio-economic consequences.

By their very nature, nuclear weapons threaten the security of us all, they are a threat to our collective security. All States, therefore, have a legitimate stake in, and responsibility for, nuclear disarmament and this are why South Africa has been calling for the Conference on Disarmament to focus on substantive work and fulfil its mandate to negotiate multilateral disarmament treaties as well as our call for the enlargement of the Conference on Disarmament to ensure inclusiveness given that these issues affect all States.

Madam President,

The First Special Session on Disarmament (SSOD-I) considered the significant role that can be played by appropriate international machinery designed to deal with the problems of disarmament.

We are here today in the Conference on Disarmament which was established as the “single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum” of the international community. Though South Africa is celebrating 25 years since the signing into law of our constitution, we are also extremely concerned that this august body, mandated to negotiate multilateral disarmament instruments, has not discharged its basic mandate for more than 25 years. Even the discussion of elements of legally binding instruments, seem to be a bridge too far.

It must be recalled that the very first resolution adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1946 called for the elimination

from national armaments of atomic weapons. Consequently, we developed the NPT whose preamble emphasises the devastation that would be visited upon all mankind by a nuclear war and the consequent need to make every effort to avert the danger.

We regret that little concrete progress has been achieved in the area of nuclear disarmament since 2010. Whilst reductions are important, they do not substitute concrete, transparent, irreversible and verifiable nuclear disarmament measures. On-going modernisation programmes, including in relation to delivery systems, make it clear that some States still wish to indefinitely retain these instruments of destruction, under the guise of “deterrence”, which is contrary to their legal obligations and political commitments. This undermines the NPT bargain and also the non-proliferation norms established by the Treaty.

As we move towards the Tenth NPT Review Conference, it is imperative that we take stock of the progress made towards the implementation of all Treaty provisions. In South Africa’s view, a starting point of the Review Conference needs to be a reaffirmation of the unequivocal undertaking towards nuclear disarmament and the principles emanating from the previous Review Conferences, including that the principles of transparency, irreversibility and verifiability should apply to all nuclear disarmament, nuclear arms reduction and arms control measures.

Any future outcome should not roll back or reinterpret the agreements reached during the 1995, 2000 and 2010 Review Conferences which remain valid until fully implemented. Concrete progress on these agreements will be essential to the success of the 2020 review cycle. We should not become complacent about the threat posed by nuclear weapons and the lack of the full

implementation of the disarmament obligations flowing from Article VI.

The provisions of the NPT and the outcomes of its Review Conferences must be respected to maintain the continued vitality of this important legal instrument.

Madam President,

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), which entered into force in January 2021, is another instrument to lead us towards a nuclear weapon free world.

The TPNW complements other international instruments by contributing towards fulfilling the nuclear disarmament obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), the objectives of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), which is still awaiting entry into force 25 years after 'opening for signature, and the various nuclear weapon free zone treaties, such as the Pelindaba Treaty that already banned nuclear weapons in Africa.

It is our hope the efforts to reach consensus on a Programme of Work and starting negotiations will continue. We have no doubt that this will require increased flexibility by all CD members and a willingness to move beyond narrow interests.

In conclusion Madam President,

South Africa remains committed to engage in substantive work on all agenda items of the CD including issues that we view as being ready for negotiation such as a fissile material treaty, a treaty on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, as well as other effective measures towards nuclear disarmament.

I thank you.