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Open-ended Working Group to develop proposals to take forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations for the achievement and maintenance of a world without nuclear weapons

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Item 5 of the agenda

Develop proposals to take forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations for the achievement and maintenance of a world without nuclear weapons

An exploration of some contributions that also non-nuclear weapon States could engage in to take multilateral nuclear disarmament forward

Submitted by Austria

1. All States are united in the universal objective to achieve and maintain a world free of nuclear weapons. However, there are different perceptions as to the path that would most effectively lead to achieving the irreversible elimination of nuclear weapons. How can this perception gap be bridged?
2. The May 2013 session of the Open-ended Working Group showed that addressing and dismantling the false dichotomy between a comprehensive and a step by step approach may be one way forward. We should focus our discussion on the individual elements that any approach would need to contain as essential building blocks for the achievement and maintenance of a nuclear weapon free world.
3. The discussions in the Open-ended Working Group demonstrated the value of the working group as a venue for identifying and elaborating such elements or building blocks.
4. Non-nuclear weapon States could make an active contribution to facilitate and take forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations forward by focusing particularly on the following elements that were raised in the discussions of the Open-ended Working Group:
 - (a) Addressing nuclear weapons as a humanitarian and human security issue: The nuclear weapons discourse has traditionally been dominated by military security considerations. Non-nuclear weapon States can play a key role in transforming and

reframing the discourse into a human security debate which addresses the security concerns and needs of peoples and societies. In this connection, the implications of a broader human security focused approach for the responsibility of governments of achieving and maintaining a world without nuclear weapons should be addressed. Moreover, the impact of nuclear weapons on human security should be discussed, given the catastrophic consequences of any nuclear detonation (by accident or miscalculation).

(b) Challenging the patterns of attaching value and special status to nuclear weapons: Non-nuclear weapons States could consider the potential of a broad political discourse that challenges existing nuclear weapons narratives. This could include a critical analysis of the validity of nuclear deterrence in the twenty first century, the threat perceptions of today that are used to justify the continued reliance on nuclear weapons as well as the psychological element and special value that is attributed to nuclear weapons. It should address the link between the retention of nuclear weapons and the proliferation of nuclear weapons and it should put all these aspects in the context of the risk of inflicting unacceptable humanitarian consequences to all humankind. How could such a discourse contribute to building momentum for nuclear disarmament and to creating momentum for serious steps in this direction? Starting points for a discussion on the meaning and potential of devaluing and de-legitimizing nuclear weapons could be the following points:

- (i) Nuclear weapons are what actors make of them – psychological attachment, symbolism and value attributed to nuclear weapons;
- (ii) Economic, legal and moral arguments for the abolition of nuclear weapons;

(c) Building partnerships: A humanitarian and human security based discourse on nuclear weapons would benefit from the participation of a wide range of actors. Non-nuclear weapons States could focus on building partnerships with civil society actors from a broad range of human security related fields as well as with faith based organizations and the media. The responsibilities, the contributions and the potential of different actors for this approach could be discussed.

(d) Education of the public and of future generations: Building momentum for achieving and maintaining a world without nuclear weapons and a better understanding of the challenges posed by nuclear weapons requires broader engagement by the public and especially by youth. A much greater focus should be put on identifying concrete ways to contribute through education to achieving a world without nuclear weapons.

(e) Ensuring that proliferation of nuclear weapons does not take place: Progress on nuclear disarmament is often – though falsely – conditioned by nuclear possessing States with existing proliferation concerns. To strengthen the argument that nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation can only be achieved together, existing non-proliferation commitments (e.g. through the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and respective safeguards agreements with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)) should nevertheless be meticulously implemented and continuously enhanced to meet current standards. Given the safety, security and proliferation risks inherent in the nuclear fuel cycle, engaging responsibly in related activities requires the application of the highest standards for safety, security and non-proliferation. Any involvement in nuclear fuel-cycle activities should be based on a sound risk-benefit analysis and on the principle of the minimization of nuclear risks.

(f) Addressing the urgency of nuclear disarmament and the achievement of a world without nuclear weapons: As long as nuclear weapons exist, a nuclear detonation could happen any day, any time, be it by accident, by miscalculation or simply by madness. What does this imply for the responsibility of governments vis-à-vis their own people and with regard to the international community? What are the options for non-nuclear weapons States in light of the lacking progress towards a world without nuclear weapons in the

established organizational and legal frameworks? Would a ban of nuclear weapons help to prevent States from aspiring to obtain nuclear weapons by making these weapons illegitimate? Would such a ban strengthen the cause of nuclear disarmament beyond the stipulations of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)?

(g) Exploring the further potential of nuclear-weapon-free zones for the promotion of a nuclear weapon free world: Could the values and norms shared among members of nuclear-weapon free zones provide a basis for further cooperation among members and outreach for the achievement and maintenance of a nuclear-weapon free world? How could nuclear-weapon-free zones contribute to delegitimizing nuclear weapons?

5. We would see merit of examining these elements further and exploring their potential to contribute to “taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament for the achievement and maintenance of a world without nuclear weapons”.
