Statement by
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To the United Nations and Other International
Organizations In Geneva

Before

The Open Ended Working Group
On Taking Forward Multilateral Nuclear Disarmament
Negotiations

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Mr. Chairman,
Let me avail myself of this opportunity to congratulate you on your election as the chair of the Open Ended Working Group on “Taking forward multilateral disarmament negotiations.” We stand ready to assist you in your endeavor and we look forward to a successful outcome of this open ended working group.

Egypt associates itself with the statement delivered yesterday by Brazil on behalf of the New Agenda Coalition.

Mr. Chairman,
You have assumed your task recently; however the cause of this working group is as old as nuclear weapons themselves. In fact, the very first resolution of the United Nations General Assembly of 1946 established a commission to, inter alia, to make specific proposals for the elimination from national armaments of atomic weapons and of all other major weapons adaptable to mass destruction. Yet more than 75 years later we are still looking for proposals to achieve nuclear disarmament.

Ironically, instead of seizing that historic opportunity of the end of the Cold War more than twenty years ago to rid the world once and for all of nuclear weapons, especially with the indefinite extension of the Treaty on Nuclear non-Proliferation of nuclear weapons (NPT), multilateral negotiations on nuclear disarmament have not responded to the obvious.

This is clearly a case of lack of political will by the nuclear weapon States and countries outside the NPT to seriously tackle obligations, commitments, and undertakings for nuclear disarmament.

Mr. Chairman,
This year can be truly described as seminal in multilateral diplomacy on nuclear disarmament. This March, more than 120 countries attended the Oslo meeting on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons, wherein it was made clear that humanity would be overwhelmed by any use of nuclear weapon. States attending the second session of the 2015 NPT Review Conference continued their push for the full fulfillment of the 2010 Action Plan towards practical and progressive steps for the implementation of Article VI of the NPT. This Open Ended Working Group is a further attempt at developing practical proposals to forward multilateral negotiations on nuclear disarmament. This will be followed in September with the High Level Meeting on nuclear disarmament to be held in New York.

These intensified efforts are an indication that frustration is mounting on the lack of action by some states sitting comfortably on their laurels ignoring or reinterpreting even their own commitments and undertakings.
Mr. Chairman,
Instead of moving forward with concrete actions on nuclear disarmament, we have been engaging in useless discussion: what constitutes the next logical step towards nuclear disarmament; whether it is better to have a nuclear weapons convention or a “step-by-step approach”.

Such arguments are not only tautological, but they are in fact smoking mirrors used to hide the lack of political will to move forward. For without an overarching framework that would bring all steps together towards achieving a world free of nuclear weapons, such steps will remain as isolated islands and at best incomplete effort.

What we need is to identify the building blocks of a world free of nuclear weapons and design the appropriate legally binding and verifiable instruments dealing with such elements. Having achieved this we can decide whether to bring all those building blocks into an overarching convention or to follow a progressive and comprehensive approach of mutually reinforcing treaties as a matter of convenience. The identification of these building blocks of establishing and maintaining a world free of nuclear weapons could be the most valuable contribution of this OEWG.

Mr. Chairman,
In voting for the General Assembly Resolution establishing this OEWG, Egypt explained its intention to vote in favour of the resolution by saying:

“In light that the present draft resolution clearly states in Operative Clause 1 the achievement and maintenance of a world without nuclear weapons, Egypt has decided to vote for the draft as a reflection of its strong commitment to the goal of the total elimination of nuclear weapons, while hereby restating nonetheless its principled position on the multilateral disarmament machinery.”

We are looking forward to the work of the OEWG and the opportunity that this represents to push forward multilateral negotiations on nuclear disarmament. In this context, we reiterate the need for the Conference on Disarmament, as the single multilateral negotiating body on disarmament affairs, to adopt without any further delay a balanced and comprehensive program of work that will allow for the commencement of negotiations in good faith on global nuclear disarmament.

Thank you Mr. Chairman