

Statement by the Netherlands at the 1st Meeting of States Parties of the TPNW, 22 June 2022

Thank you, Mr President.

The Netherlands is grateful for the opportunity to speak at the first Meeting of States Parties to the TPNW, as a non-member of this Treaty.

The Dutch government remains committed to working towards a world free of nuclear weapons.

We all feel a strong need to stand up to those undermining nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. In the strongest possible terms we condemn Russia's aggressive nuclear rhetoric. Since its brutal and illegal invasion of Ukraine it has on several occasions threatened the use of nuclear weapons.

The UN General Assembly was right to condemn Russia's behaviour in this regard. Nuclear might does not make right. We all – whether members of the TPNW or not - should continue to condemn Russia's aggressive behaviour.

The NPT, the cornerstone of our international disarmament and non-proliferation architecture, is under pressure. The ink on the much-welcomed P5 statement 'A nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought' had barely dried by the time Russia issued its nuclear threats.

The NPT is also under pressure because many believe that nuclear weapon states are making too little progress on disarmament.

In spite of these difficulties, the Tenth NPT Review Conference is an important moment to demonstrate that the signatories are still committed to full implementation on all three pillars. If we want to move forward in the field of nuclear disarmament, we need to come together within the context of the NPT and find a compromise.

This applies not only to the first pillar of the NPT, but also to the crucial second and third pillars, respectively non-proliferation and peaceful uses of nuclear technology and energy.

I'd like to use this opportunity to call on all States who have not yet done so to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty without any preconditions or delay. Also, I'd like to call upon all States that have not yet done so to conclude a comprehensive safeguards agreement, and to sign and ratify the Additional Protocol.

For the Netherlands, the Non-Proliferation Treaty remains the framework within which discussions about non-proliferation and disarmament and the road to Global Zero must take place.

The Netherlands is working actively towards the goal of a world without nuclear weapons. It already has a bridging role within the NPT community, for example through its vice-presidency of the NPT review conference, the coordination of the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative and its active participation in the Stockholm Initiative (both initiatives also have membership of TPNW states).

We will continue working for the strengthening and implementation of the NPT in any way we can. This of course includes the elaboration of effective disarmament measures under Article VI.

In this context, we will continue our efforts in support of other disarmament-related initiatives, such as the Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty, risk reduction and disarmament verification.

It is important to work on strengthening the IAEA and the IAEA safeguards system – especially the implementation of the Additional Protocol. Also, the right to the peaceful use of nuclear energy and technology needs to be reaffirmed and access facilitated.

But we will also keep looking, together with our partners, for other ways to further the implementation of the NPT. We will keep striving to increase the transparency and inclusivity of its review process, building on the valuable experience we gained as Chair of the 2017 PrepCom.

We strive to clarify here our position and contribute to constructive dialogue. From our perspective, arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation on the one hand, and deterrence and defence on the other hand, can help ensure strategic stability.

The Netherlands remains firmly committed to NATO, including its policy of nuclear deterrence and our nuclear task. NATO membership remains essential for our collective security.

The Netherlands does not have the intention to sign or accede to the TPNW. It is incompatible with our NATO obligations. However, the fact that we are not acceding to the TPNW, and do not accept the claim that its provisions have a binding effect under customary law, does not mean that we do not appreciate the opportunity to observe the discussions here today. Open and frank dialogue are essential for the Netherlands.

In fact, this is not the first time we have participated in the TPNW discussions. We would recall our participation in the 2017 negotiations leading up to this Treaty, including our concrete suggestions to make the TPNW a more broadly acceptable disarmament treaty – not only to us but also possibly to other NATO Allies. Suggestions which were unfortunately rejected.

Sustainable progress and international stability only come about when all parties work together. The current geopolitical tensions make a constructive approach more important than ever. The absence of the nuclear weapons states is a limiting factor in the effectiveness of the TPNW. They oppose the treaty and the final treaty text offers them no openings; yet these are precisely the countries that need to disarm.

On verification: of course, nuclear disarmament verification is something that we are still developing. However, we think that this treaty does not incorporate that notion, by, for example, encouraging its members to participate in verification-related initiatives. In essence, we think the lack of verifiability harms the credibility of the treaty.

Also, it remains unclear how the TPNW relates to the NPT. It is important to note that the NPT contains the only disarmament obligations binding on nuclear weapon states. Whatever its shortcomings may be, this makes it the primary framework for pursuing a world without

nuclear weapons. Just as we did in 2017, we now argue again that the TPNW should strengthen and complement the NPT.

In conclusion, we would like once again to thank you for the opportunity to speak at this event. We understand how much effort and personal commitment has gone into making the TPNW a reality.

Although we may differ on the road to Global Zero, and may choose diverging paths or cross different bridges, our intention remains the same: a world without nuclear weapons. Let us build on that.

Thank you.