

## The Netherlands at the 2015 NPT review conference

On the following pages is the text of the statement the Netherlands made on 6 May 2015 to Main Committee I of the NPT review conference at the United Nations in New York.

The Netherlands has always been one of the most weaselly weasels, and the least hesitant about loudly proclaiming hypocritical, self-contradictory nonsense in public. A lack of self-awareness is almost a requirement for being a nuclear weasel state, but the Dutch have taken it to new extremes. We coined the term "riding the woodpecker" in response to a bizarre statement the foreign minister of the Netherlands made in the Conference on Disarmament in March 2015. But this NPT statement is even better.

It starts off innocently enough, with the usual weasel line advocating a step-by-step approach to a world without nuclear weapons, and recognizing the progress achieved so far. But then it's on to the woodpecker to fly far from reality and reason. "More needs to be done", the next section begins boldly, before going on to describe how the Netherlands will not be doing any of it.

The humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons is mentioned, along with the standard weasel qualification: "we cannot ignore security and stability considerations". But wait, there's more: "while geopolitical developments should be taken into account, they should not be a reason to slow down nuclear disarmament". So what does that mean? We can ignore security and stability considerations after all? Or we somehow take them into account, but do not allow them to have any effect on our disarmament activities? What does that mean? What does it mean?

But there's no time to ponder that, because in the very next paragraph we are told that "Article VI should be taken seriously". Seriously, that's what it says - in case you thought Article VI was a joke. And then: "We do not agree that there is a 'legal gap' with regard to this article". No legal gap? What? Is the Netherlands saying that nuclear weapons are *already* comprehensively prohibited under international law, as the other weapons of mass destruction are? Well, that's a relief. Or at least it would be, if any other country on earth shared this interpretation (even other weasels agree that a comprehensive legal prohibition will be needed at some stage in the disarmament process). Still, if there's no legal gap, we won't have to bother with an FMCT or any other irksome legal steps towards a world free of nuclear weapons.

No, wait, that can't be right because the statement goes on to call for "work on further steps towards the negotiation of an FMCT" (i.e. work on further steps towards taking a step). Confused yet? There's still more! The statement also calls for new transparency and reporting measures (but apparently not for the Netherlands, which has never provided any reporting or transparency whatsoever on the nuclear weapons based there), and for "steps to further [sic] reduce the role of nuclear weapons in military doctrines" (the Netherlands has not taken any such steps itself, nor announced any intention to take any).

Perhaps best of all, there is an extended defence of "nuclear sharing", involving some historical gobbledegook, and the bald assertion that NATO nuclear sharing is "fully compatible with the NPT obligations". This is from someone who just told us that "Article VI should be taken seriously". Not that seriously, evidently. And don't bother asking how this continued nuclear sharing fits in with the call to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in military doctrines.

When you're riding the woodpecker, it all makes sense.



Kingdom of the Netherlands

check against delivery

## **Non-Proliferation Treaty – Review Conference 2015**

**Statement by H.E. Henk Cor van der Kwast, Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the CD and Disarmament Ambassador at large**

### **Cluster 1**

**6 May 2015**



Mr Chairman,

Let me first congratulate you on your election as chair of this important committee. The success of this conference will largely depend on the outcomes of this committee. We know we are in excellent hands as you have proved with your successful chairmanship of last year's prepcom. Let me assure you that this delegation stands ready to assist you in any way we can.

Mr Chairman,

The Netherlands remains firmly engaged on the road towards **a world without nuclear weapons**. We continue to believe that the best way to reach that goal is via a **step-by-step approach** and by taking practical and concrete measures while paring ambition with realism. Realism does not imply leaning back, in our view it means working harder. Step-by-step does not mean that we cannot make more steps at the same time. On the contrary, we can and should work at different levels to take us forward.

### **Where we are**

Let me start by underlining that **progress has been made**.

The continuing implementation of **newSTART** reduced the Russian and American strategic arsenals to their lowest level in more than 50 years. Even in the current geopolitical climate, the implementation of newSTART continues. The UK and France have unilaterally reduced their numbers.

On **transparency** all P5 have reported last year and have announced to report again this year on the implementation of the action plan. There are differences in the qualities of these reports and more detail is required, but it is a constructive step in the right direction and one we can build on. I will come back to this later.

The recent visits to Los Alamos in the US and Luxeuil air force base in France are small, but important contributions to enhance transparency. We encourage other P5 members to organize similar visits.

We welcome the publication of the **P5 glossary** and the efforts put into it by the delegation of China and the other P5 members. Since there are still a number of issues that were not yet included, we look forward to volume II.

On **verification** steps have been taken. The Norway - UK collaboration to investigate technical and procedural challenges regarding possible a future nuclear disarmament verification regime is useful. Also the new US led International Partnership for verification is a constructive and necessary initiative that can help us further do deal with important verification issues.

The **Group of Governmental Experts on an FMCT** has produced a substantial consensus report, which provides the necessary groundwork for the start of negotiations on a verifiable FMCT. Let me use this opportunity to again compliment the members of and the chair of the GGE, Ambassador Elissa Golberg for the excellent work she and her team have done. We hope the report can help to bring about the immediate start of negotiations.

The Netherlands welcomes these achievements and we should discuss how we can further build on those during this conference.

However we agree strongly that **more needs to be done**.

The frustration about the slow pace of progress is growing. We share this frustration. We see the broad attention for the **humanitarian impact of the use of nuclear weapons** and the conferences in Oslo, Nayarit and Vienna as an expression of this frustration. Like many others we hope that the momentum of this approach can give a fresh impetus to disarmament and will enable us to take necessary steps towards global zero at this conference.

At the same time, we cannot ignore **security and stability considerations**. However, while geopolitical developments should be taken into account, they **should not be a reason to slow down nuclear disarmament**. On the contrary, especially in these troubling times we should intensify our efforts towards this goal.

**Article VI** should be taken seriously. We do not agree that there is a 'legal gap' with regard to this article. It is up to the NPT states to seek consensus on a common way forward in the further implementation of this article.

Some have raised the issue of **nuclear sharing**. This issue was addressed when the NPT was negotiated. At that time basing arrangements existed and were made clear to negotiating delegations and were made public. Weapons assigned to NATO remain under national control of a nuclear weapon state at all times and are never transferred. Therefore NATO's basing arrangements are fully compatible with the NPT obligations. NATO also remains fully committed to working towards a world without nuclear weapons as confirmed in the 2012 Defence and Deterrence Posture Review and the 2014 Wales Summit.

### **Way forward**

On the way forward, the Netherlands strongly believes that we should **focus on what unites us**, on where we can find common ground to move forward. We should continue to build on the consensus on the 2010 action plan, which was and is an ambitious undertaking. We should take stock on what has been achieved and should have an honest debate the actions that have not yet been implemented. Why have they not been implemented yet? Do we need to be more specific or do we need to strengthen those actions?

We are also open for identifying new actions, provided they on bring us further on the path towards global zero.

More concretely, together with our partners of the **Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative** or **NPDI** we have developed several proposals we could discuss on a possible way forward. WP 16 gives an overview of the NPDI proposals. Let me mention some of them:

- On **transparency**: we believe we should agree to a new and regular process of reporting, both for the nuclear weapons states and the non-nuclear weapons states. Can we also agree on a common reporting format as to be able to better compare progress made? Can we agree on other transparency measures, for example with regard to the locations and numbers of nuclear weapons or on command and control issues?

- On **de-alerting**: can we agree on further steps be taken to reduce the level of alertness of nuclear weapons, for example with regard to targeting? Can the 'launch on warning' concept be taken out of nuclear strategies?

- On the **role of nuclear weapons**: can we agree on steps to further reduce the role of nuclear weapons in military doctrines?
- On **FMCT**: building on the final report of the GGE FMCT, we need to work on further steps towards the negotiation of an FMCT, including the possibility of a moratorium.
- On the **humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapon use**: we have to find ways for incorporating this important concept together with security and stability consideration as the underlying basis for further disarmament.
- On the **principle of irreversibility**: can we agree that this is our underlying principle for further negotiations on nuclear disarmament?
- On **further and accelerated reductions of nuclear arsenals**: there is a need for deeper cuts in the remaining nuclear arsenals and accelerated implementation of existing arrangements such as newSTART. President Obama announced that the US is prepared to cut the current arsenal with one third. Would it be possible to find agreement on this offer before the end of the current newSTART arrangements in 2018? We strongly believe also non-strategic nuclear weapons in Europe should be included in new reductions.
- On the **INF treaty**: we urge the parties to resolve current issues and to reinforce this important disarmament treaty. We could also consider expanding the scope of the treaty.

And finally we should agree to **call upon other states possessing nuclear weapons** to freeze their nuclear buildups.

Mr Chairman,

The Netherlands stands ready for a frank and honest debate on disarmament and the way forward. Together with our partners in NPDI we will contribute constructively to this debate.

Thank you.