



# New Zealand Permanent Mission to the United Nations

Te Māngai o Aotearoa

## International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons

### **New Zealand statement**

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Excellencies

First, let me congratulate you, Mr President, for convening this high level event to commemorate the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons. New Zealand was very pleased to support the resolution that instituted this commemoration, and we are delighted to be here today highlighting this very important issue and confirming our commitment to the achievement of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

New Zealand remains deeply concerned about the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons. The past use and testing of nuclear weapons have amply demonstrated the immense destructive capability and indiscriminate nature of these weapons. There is overwhelming and compelling evidence, including in our own region of the Pacific, of the devastating impact of nuclear weapon use and testing on human life, the health of future generations, the environment and socio-economic development. Indeed, it is in the interest of the very survival of humanity that nuclear weapons are never used again, under any circumstances – an outcome that can only be guaranteed with the total elimination of these weapons.

Mr President, the international community has aspired to a world without nuclear weapons for almost as long as such weapons have been in existence. Ever since their elimination was anticipated in the first ever resolution adopted by the UN General Assembly, numerous other obligations have been entered into, and commitments made, to achieve this goal. Chief among these is Article VI of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which has been supplemented by undertakings given at successive NPT Review Conferences and in innumerable UN General Assembly resolutions.

New Zealand deeply regrets that the record of implementation of these and other nuclear disarmament commitments continues to fall far short of expectations. This is particularly clear in 2016, which marks a number of important twentieth anniversaries: twenty years since the crucial – and unanimous – conclusion of the International Court of Justice that “there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects”; twenty years since the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty opened for signature; and twenty years since the Conference on Disarmament last fulfilled its negotiating mandate. In addition, 2016 has seen two nuclear weapon tests by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, ongoing modernisation programmes in all nuclear weapon possessor States, and the continued reliance by a number of States on nuclear deterrence.

Against this backdrop it is perhaps clearer now that it has ever been that achieving a world without nuclear weapons requires more than the status quo. Even as we continue our efforts to progress existing interim measures – including entry into force of the CTBT – we must also move forward in our elaboration of the legal framework needed to achieve a nuclear-weapon-free world. On this, as on all efforts to eliminate nuclear weapons, New Zealand stands ready to do our part.

Thank you Mr President.