

New Zealand Permanent Mission to the United Nations



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UNGA 65: FIRST COMMITTEE

GENERAL DEBATE

Statement by Dell Higgin
Ambassador for Disarmament

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Check against delivery

At the outset could I convey the congratulations of my Government on your assumption of the Chairmanship of this year's First Committee. My delegation looks forward to working with you and your team, and you can be assured of our full support as you discharge your duties.

New Zealand will participate actively in the work of the Committee, including through lead co-ordinator roles for two resolutions. These are on the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty and on Decreasing the Operational Readiness of Nuclear Weapons Systems.

Mr Chairman,

2010 has been a notable year for the disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control community.

The outcome achieved at the NPT Review Conference, while not as strong as many would have hoped, does provide a clear path for our future efforts to achieve a nuclear weapon-free world. We were particularly pleased that the Review Conference was able to agree on action plans for each of the three pillars. It was equally satisfying that the Conference charted a course towards implementation of the 1995 Middle East Resolution. New Zealand associates itself fully with the statement made yesterday by Ireland on behalf of the New Agenda Coalition.

NPT parties have a collective responsibility to ensure that the momentum generated in May results in tangible progress towards a world free of nuclear weapons. New Zealand will certainly be doing its part to pursue this objective. We take heart from the broad ownership of the NPT Review Conference outcome as evidenced by the clear statements of support from nuclear and non-nuclear weapon States alike.

The bilateral nuclear arms reduction agreement concluded between the United States and Russia is also a very important step forward and both countries are to be commended for it. We look forward to further progress towards its ratification and implementation. Like others, we view this agreement as the start of a process.

We also welcome the commitments made by the United States this year in its Nuclear Posture Review, its announcement of its intent to ratify the relevant protocols to the Treaties of Pelindaba and Rarotonga, and its decision to promote greater transparency of its nuclear arsenal.

We are pleased that the UK has also announced a more transparent approach to its nuclear holdings, and encourage other nuclear weapon States to do the same.

New Zealand was very pleased to work with Australia at the NPT Review Conference to promote greater nuclear transparency. Our Foreign Ministers have recently followed up that initiative with a joint letter to the UN Secretary General proposing a standard reporting template which could be used in the context of Action Step 21 agreed at the NPT Review Conference. We view this as a practical contribution both to the advancement of nuclear disarmament in general and to the necessity of generating momentum for the fulfilment of all of the NPT Action Plan on Nuclear Disarmament.

Despite the gains that have been made in nuclear disarmament, all is not well in the multilateral disarmament environment. This was clear from the many concerns expressed about the malfunctioning of our disarmament machinery by the high-level participants at the meeting convened on 24 September by the UN Secretary General.

It is a conundrum that while the international community professes to desire greater progress on disarmament to secure a safer world, we allow the outdated mechanisms at our disposal to deliver stalemate instead of advancement of that objective.

The current situation is untenable - although it is neither irredeemable nor insurmountable.

Indeed, two of the milestones recorded this year are clear demonstrations of what can be achieved when the political will exists for substantive action.

The initiation of Arms Trade Treaty negotiations under UNGA auspices clearly shows that the UN multilateral framework can work. The negotiations launched in July this year have made a very promising beginning.

We are confident of further progress at next year's ATT PrepComs toward our end goal of a strong global treaty which establishes robust and transparent norms to regulate the trade in conventional weapons.

Another important development is the very welcome entry into force in August this year of the Convention on Cluster Munitions. It may be a matter of regret that it was not possible to conclude this Convention within the UN framework, but the circumstances required a strong and timely response.

As one of the leading countries in the Oslo cluster munitions process, we are satisfied with the Convention's effective stigmatisation of an egregious weapons system. The fact of the matter is, Mr Chair, that there is no reason why States with a common purpose should be held back in the face of a clear humanitarian need and a strong will to achieve a multilateral outcome.

The task now is to set the course for the Convention's future implementation. This will be a key focus for the first Meeting of States Parties to be hosted by the Lao PDR in Vientiane this November. New Zealand looks forward to taking a full and active part in this important event.

New Zealand was also pleased with the solid outcome achieved this year at the Biennial Meeting of States Parties on the Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons. We appreciate the confidence shown in New Zealand as Chair of next year's Meeting of Experts, and look forward to presiding over a substantive discussion that will take the PoA goals and objectives forward.

All that said, we remain concerned, as I have already mentioned, at the degree of stagnation on other very important issues on the multilateral disarmament agenda.

We welcomed the Secretary-General's convening of the recent High Level Meeting on revitalising the work of the Conference on Disarmament. Addressing that meeting, the New Zealand Foreign Minister stressed the importance of the CD as the multilateral negotiating body devoted to disarmament. Its stalemate and impasse are not acceptable.

Let me be quite clear. We respect and understand the right of members to protect their vital security interests. What we do not understand is why those interests cannot be taken into account in the negotiating process rather than used as a veto even to begin negotiations.

Coupled with the unnecessarily restrictive manner in which the CD is interpreting its work programme rule, the Conference is deeply mired. It is inevitable that some delegations are weighing other options. As my delegation has said many times before in the CD and elsewhere, New Zealand also has vital security interests to protect, especially in achieving nuclear disarmament. Doing nothing is not an option for New Zealand.

We will therefore be following very closely all activities that follow up and build upon the High Level Meeting and the actions identified in the Chairman's Summary. Those actions should, and must, help keep international attention on resolving the protracted and frustrating problems besetting the CD as well as other integral parts of the multilateral disarmament machinery.

Our strong preference is to work within the CD to find an acceptable solution to that body's deadlock; a solution that truly sets in motion actual negotiations on matters of substance, ideally on fissile materials. We look forward to participating in a CD that is focused on negotiating drafts, not rules of procedure, and which is taking the necessary next steps to control the spread and further development of nuclear weapons.

Mr Chair,

These are some general reflections on the broader context in which we undertake our deliberations here in the First Committee. I look forward to supplementing these comments in more detail in the course of the thematic debates.

**2010 NPT Review Conference Action Plan on Nuclear Disarmament
Action 21: Suggestions for a Reporting Template**

	Reporting topic	Details of relevant policies, doctrines, status and reductions to date	Information on planned announcements of: policy, doctrines, status and future reductions
1	Nuclear doctrine (including measures taken to decrease the operational readiness of nuclear weapons systems and any security assurances)	(current policy framework)	(scheduled policy reviews)
2	Fissile material (policy on production and control)	(current policy framework)	(scheduled policy reviews)
3	Warhead and delivery vehicle holdings	(current numbers, expressed as reductions during NPT review cycle)	(projected reductions)
4	Strategic reductions	(current numbers, expressed as reductions during NPT review cycle)	(projected reductions)
5	Tactical reductions	(current numbers, expressed as reductions during NPT review cycle)	(projected reductions)

