

**H.E. Mr. Bert Koenders**

**Minister of Foreign Affairs**

**of the Kingdom of the Netherlands**

**NPT Review Conference**

**General Debate**

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Madam Chair,

It is a great honor to congratulate you for a second time today as the chair of this conference, now representing my own country, the Netherlands.

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Five years ago, in these halls, we agreed on an ambitious Action Plan to implement the Treaty that we all cherish as the foundational cornerstone of disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful use of nuclear energy. Today we have come together to review our work, honestly and frankly, and to determine our next steps. We should give credit where we can and take responsibility where we must. We should be realistic and ambitious at the same time. And we should keep things in perspective and not let a single issue dominate everything else. Whatever we do, it



Let me highlight one area in particular here, disarmament.

Undeniably, there is frustration about the slow pace of progress. I share that frustration and I see the growing attention to the issue of the humanitarian impact of a nuclear weapon explosion as an important expression of that feeling. For the Netherlands, the humanitarian impact underpins everything we do in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation. And like many others, we hope that the momentum of this approach gives new energy to disarmament and will inspire this very conference to make the necessary steps to reach Global Zero.

The Netherlands fully supports the call for further reductions of strategic and non-strategic weapons, as a step in the right direction. However, it seems that since that time the gap between the ambitions and aspirations of those that seek a world free of nuclear weapons and the prospect of progress is widening. Evidently, we all realize that disarmament does not happen in a vacuum; that the current geopolitical situation and lack of trust are not conducive to making progress.

Yet, the current difficulties cannot be a reason to abandon our ambition. We have to look over the hill immediately in front of us, beyond our current troubles and keep in sight the shared goal on the horizon. The Netherlands believes that article VI should be taken very seriously. Eventually, we need to ban the bomb. I am sure we will have fierce discussions about how to get to Global Zero and to a ban, but we need to be concrete and effective in our approach. I support therefore the Australian statement and we will follow closely the discussions on a legal instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons.

We need the determination and perseverance to build trust, step by step. Ensuring security and stability in the process. By improving transparency, by further reducing the role of nuclear weapons in doctrines, by getting the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty entered into force and by starting negotiations on a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty. Even during the Cold War, we kept talking and managed to conclude some key disarmament treaties. Especially in troubling times, we need to keep channels of communication and dialogue open and press onwards with disarmament.

The Netherlands will continue to work for this and we are ready to work with everyone here. That is why we were happy to host the Nuclear Security Summit. That is why we are happy to play an active role in the new Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification that has great potential. These are realistic and concrete

