

**2002 NPT Preparatory Committee (PrepCom)
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**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR HUBERT DE LA FORTELLE,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF FRANCE
TO THE CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT,
HEAD OF THE FRENCH DELEGATION
TO THE FIRST SESSION OF THE PREPARATORY COMMITTEE OF THE 2005
NPT REVIEW CONFERENCE**

(NEW YORK, 8 APRIL 2002)

Mr. Chairman,

Allow me first to congratulate you on your election as Chairman of this first session of the Preparatory Committee. Your experience and personal qualities have invested in you the difficult and important task of getting a new cycle of the NPT Review process under way. France wishes you every success in this endeavour and you have the assurance of my delegation's full support.

Mr. Chairman,

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, drafted and implemented during the Cold War and extended indefinitely in the wake of historic upheavals, now more than ever contributes to the security and development of all.

The security challenge has been particularly salient ever since the tragic events of September 11, 2002 demonstrated that no one is safe from terrorist violence. Preventing weapons of mass destruction from falling into terrorist hands, preventing wider dissemination of nuclear weapons, continuing to pursue disarmament - these must be our common priorities.

The challenge of development remains. To meet it, cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy - its medical, scientific and industrial applications are legion - is one of the main instruments available to the international community.

To meet these major objectives, greater international cooperation is imperative. The NPT brings together the interests of all and provides the requisite basis for such cooperation. Therefore France wishes to reiterate its unqualified support for the NPT. France supports and encourages the implementation of the Treaty objectives and the 1995 Review and Extension Conference decisions supported by the Final Document adopted by the 2000 Review Conference. Through this instrument, we must seek to maintain and strengthen the multilateral approach. It is indeed now clearer than ever that multilateral non-proliferation and disarmament regimes are indispensable. The obligations they contain and the controls they provide are factors for confidence-building and predictability. In the current period marked by uncertainty and instability, it is cooperation, confidence and predictability that must guide our endeavours.

Yet the multilateral approach will only, in this instance, provide a fully satisfactory guarantee if each party is assured of the full and strict compliance with Treaty provisions by all. France is determined to keep its commitments. For these reasons it has a legitimate right to expect that an uncompromising review will be carried out of the compliance of all parties with the Treaty. This will be one of the main objectives of our work here. It is a matter of upholding the credibility of the

Treaty and ensuring that there is no repetition of events such as those which occurred in Iraq and North Korea.

The credibility of the NPT as the "cornerstone" of the international non-proliferation regime and the ongoing quest for nuclear disarmament rests on its universal standard vocation. For this reason France has pursued its efforts to universalize the NPT by bringing in those States which have not yet acceded to the Treaty - Cuba, India, Israel and Pakistan.

Mr. Chairman,

The session over which you preside is the first to be held since the adoption of the "improved" strengthened review process in May 2000. As you know, the purpose of the latter is to make possible a review of the principles, objectives and ways to promote the full implementation of the Treaty as well as its universality. At this first session we must make full use of the opportunity given to us to review the international situation and hold an exchange of views without evading any of the fundamental issues touching on the implementation of the Treaty, the 1995 decisions and resolution as well as the Final Document of the 2000 Review. Without this analysis, our chances of success at the 2005 Review Conference will be slim.

France calls for a balanced, structured and substantive debate. No issue relating to the NO should be evaded or receive attention at the expense of others. Only a balanced approach will make it possible to maintain the credibility of our work. Any other approach would weaken the international non-proliferation regime and the disarmament and international cooperation process.

Mr. Chairman,

Allow me now to mention a few French priorities. These priorities flow naturally from a context marked by tragic and unforeseen events. It would be impossible to come together here today as if September 11 had not had a profound impact on the world in which we live. But these priorities also follow from what went before. For this reason France wishes today to reiterate that it remains true to the commitments it made within the NPT framework.

A reassessment of the risk of nuclear terrorism in the wake of September 11 has led us to factor it in at a variety of levels and the international community has mobilized to help States face up to this threat. In terms of physical protection, the basis of the security of nuclear materials and facilities, priority must be given to achieving maximum accession to and strict application of the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material and to giving States all necessary support to this end. As far as radioactive sources are concerned we similarly think that better security can be ensured through the application by a larger number of States of the existing non-binding instruments and through concrete international actions like the one in which France is now participating in Georgia. More generally we support the concrete measures proposed by the Director General of the IAEA.

In terms of export controls we are now, in conjunction with our partners, examining the way in which the risk of terrorism can be covered. In addition, under its chairmanship of the NSG and then its working body, France carried on the quest for full transparency undertaken by this regime. We will also support the initiatives of the Zangger Committee which are under preparation in this field.

Agency verification of strict compliance with commitments undertaken is essential.

The situation in Iraq remains, in this context, a matter of concern.

Although the Agency managed satisfactorily to undertake verification of physical inventories of nuclear materials in January 2001 and January 2002 in implementation of the safeguards agreement signed by Iraq under the NPT, this verification is not a substitute for the activities which the Agency is called upon to carry out under the relevant Security Council resolutions.

More than three years have elapsed since the IAEA Action Team and disarmament inspectors were withdrawn from Iraq. The Agency is no longer in a position to provide assurances as to Iraqi compliance with the relevant Security Council resolutions.

France appreciates the efforts made by the IAEA Action Team to implement the Security Council resolutions and maintain the Agency's operating capability in this area. It again calls for full implementation of all relevant Security Council resolutions - including Resolution 1284. It calls on Iraq, to this end, to cooperate unreservedly with the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and with the IAEA.

It is also to be regretted that the Democratic Republic of Korea is evading the obligations it undertook to fulfill in acceding to the NPT. It is essential that the North Korean authorities fully comply with their commitments and fully cooperate with IAEA verification activities, authorizing access for the latter's inspectors to the sites concerned.

Mr. Chairman,

Despite these difficulties, the international community has undertaken to strengthen the IAEA system of safeguards in order to uphold its credibility and reliability, a prerequisite for the continuation and expansion of international cooperation on the peaceful uses of the atom.

As the Final Document of the Review Conference of May 2000 pointed out, the improvement of this system as a result of the combination, for a State, of a comprehensive safeguards agreement and an additional protocol is an essential part of ensuring the credibility of Treaty verification.

The additional protocols are being signed at a pace which remains slow, even disappointing. For the 187 States Parties to the NPT, only 62 additional protocols have been approved by the IAEA Board of Governors. France calls on all States which have not yet done so to sign and implement an additional protocol as soon as possible.

Indeed, only strong and broad-based support can enable the international community to reap the full benefits of this system - strengthening of international security through increased assurances of non-proliferation, optimization of safeguards implementation and control of their cost, thus holding out prospects of enhanced international cooperation. The international community must give high priority to applying these improvements as broadly and rapidly as possible.

France will in coming days have an opportunity to support the efforts of the IAEA in order to promote the comprehensive safeguards agreements and additional protocols in Africa.

Allow me, Mr. Chairman, to conclude on this point by commending the outstanding work done by the Agency for the benefit of our common objective of non-proliferation.

Mr. Chairman,

Like non-proliferation and the promotion of peaceful uses, disarmament is at the heart of the interconnected commitments under the NPT. Many States have forgone the acquisition or possession of nuclear weapons in order to accede to it.

France has agreed, under Article VI, to pursue good-faith negotiations on nuclear disarmament measures. What it undertook to do it has in fact done, and continues to do, in particular by basing its policy of nuclear deterrence on the principle of strict sufficiency and by reducing its nuclear arsenal in an exemplary manner, despite an international strategic context now marked by increasing uncertainties in the area of security.

In 1995, the NPT Review and Extension Conference adopted the principles and objectives of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, including a programme for action. The latter included the conclusion of a comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty, immediate opening and rapid conclusion of negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile materials for use in nuclear weapons, and an expression of the determination of nuclear weapons States to pursue systematically and progressively efforts to reduce nuclear weapons globally. Let us look more closely at this programme.

The CTBT exists. France made a major contribution to drafting it and making it possible. It signed and ratified it in 1998 and it has provided considerable technical support to the CTBT organization. France is convinced that the CTBT is an indispensable nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament instrument. Additionally, France is striving unremittingly to promote the entry into force of this treaty, in particular by lending its full support to the so-called Article XIV Conferences. Clearly this is a protracted process. The moratorium on nuclear testing has set an important standard. It is also an essential prerequisite which must be upheld pending entry into force of the CTBT. In the longer term, entry into force of the CTBT is nevertheless a crucial condition for sustaining this standard.

The Treaty banning the production of fissile materials- for use in nuclear weapons does not yet exist. But a mandate has been agreed by all and negotiations began briefly in 1998 at the Conference on Disarmament. Informal exchanges of views and information have continued at expert level, demonstrating ongoing interest in this treaty. Its importance as a prerequisite to nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament is recognized by all those for whom it is important that the nuclear disarmament process be irreversible. France reiterates that it is prepared to immediately resume negotiation of this treaty.

France has made clear its determination to contribute to systematically and progressively moving to reduce globally level of nuclear weapons with the ultimate goal of eliminating them altogether. France is aware of the importance of taking a pro-active stance to maintain momentum. The "practical steps" included in the Final Document of the 2000 Review Conference indicate the direction in which we must go. There is, we must realize, not one single path, but there is a general direction to which these concrete measures point.

True to its commitments, France has resolutely implemented Article VI and the relevant provisions of Decision 2 of 1995. It has put these commitments into practice, in particular through exemplary unilateral measures to which I shall return.

If it is to have a profound effect, the pro-active stance must be based on a principle of reality. In this instance, the objective of general and complete disarmament illustrates this principle. It is enshrined in the Treaty and in the 1995 Decision on Principles and Objectives. It is one of the concrete measures in the 2000 Final Document, which it helps to clarify. It is in fact inseparable from nuclear disarmament. Far from constituting an obstacle to achieving a world without nuclear weapons, the prospect of general and complete disarmament must underpin the nuclear disarmament process to ensure that the latter is carried out in compliance with the principle of undiminished security for all.

The years which followed the end of the Cold War saw substantial progress in non-nuclear areas, for example the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in

Europe. This momentum has now slowed at both the regional and the multilateral levels, as illustrated by, among other examples, the conventional arms race and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and missiles in a number of regions in the world, the standoff at the Conference on Disarmament and the absence of a verification system under the Biological Weapons Convention despite several years of work. France deplors this state of affairs and has spared, and will spare, no effort to bring about a return to progress in these areas.

Mr. Chairman,

The measures taken by France over the last ten years are milestones in the process of effective and thorough nuclear disarmament in accordance with the Final Document of 2000. France calls for a systematic and progressive process to ensure that what has been done will not be undone.

France has adapted the format of its nuclear forces to the new strategic environment, forgone the development of certain programs, reduced by half the number of its delivery vehicles and taken the unequalled step of completely eliminating the ground-to-ground component. French surface-to-surface missiles have been dismantled, providing a guarantee that they will not be reused. The format of the airborne and submarine components has been considerably scaled back. Moreover, as far back as 1997 France announced that none of its nuclear weapons was henceforth targeted.

France has applied the principle of irreversibility by dismantling its nuclear testing site and by continuing the dismantling of its facilities for producing fissile materials for use in nuclear weapons. The dismantling of the testing centre in the Pacific, a logical consequence of France's accession to the CTBT, was completed by 1998. Moreover, dismantling of the Pierrelatte enrichment and Marcoule reprocessing plants has begun and continues thanks to major ongoing investments. This is a very concrete demonstration of our conviction that a ban on production of fissile materials for use in nuclear weapons is an indispensable step on the road to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

Allow me, Mr. Chairman, to mention another aspect of international security. In its declaration of 6 April 1995, France responded to legitimate security concerns on the part of the States Parties to the NPT. France gave non-nuclear-weapon States Parties to the NPT the positive and negative security assurances noted in Security Council Resolution 984 of 11 April 1995. These commitments made by France remain valid.

To these guarantees are added those undertaken in a regional context as part of the protocols appended to treaties establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones. More than one hundred States have been given such guarantees by France, which is a party to additional protocols under the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga and Pelindaba. France has actively pursued consultations on an additional protocol to the Bangkok Treaty establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in South-East Asia. France calls for entry into force of the Pelindaba Treaty and encourages those African States which have not yet done so to ratify it. France is also in favour of the creation of a nuclear weapon free zone in Central Asia.

Mr. Chairman,

I have described the French policy on nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament and shown, based on concrete examples, that France is determined to comply with its obligations under Article VI. I also wish to say that the ongoing quest for overall reduction of nuclear arsenals is based first and foremost on a sustained bilateral process between the United States and Russia. This process is at the very heart of the nuclear disarmament process. France is therefore attentive to the results of negotiations which have been announced in this area.

The processing of military-grade plutonium stock-piled in Russia is a priority. The Aida-Mox 1 programme has been completed. Aida is now continuing under the Aida Mox-2 trilateral programme. This concerns a complete project for the construction of a production plant yielding Mox fuel suitable for use in Russian nuclear power plants.

France takes note of the decision by the United States to withdraw from the ABM Treaty. This treaty has so far constituted an essential instrument of strategic stability. France therefore hopes that consultations on a new strategic framework will open the way to binding commitments which can guarantee the continuation of American-Russian bilateral cooperation and the stability needed for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament.

Mr. Chairman,

France, which has chosen nuclear energy as the source of a major portion of its electricity supply. It sees the promotion of international cooperation in this field as very important, intends to work to give full effect to the provisions of Article IV of the Treaty. A number of countries, including France, make use of nuclear energy to foster security of their energy supply, contribute to the reduction of greenhouse gases and ensure stable electricity costs to their economies in a context of sustainable development. Additionally, the application of nuclear technologies to health care, agriculture, and the environment are increasingly benefiting all countries.

The development of peaceful uses and international cooperation and exchanges can only come about in a climate of confidence which assumes compliance with the three imperatives of security, safety and transparency.

Compliance with the security imperative with respect to nuclear materials and facilities is a fundamental issue. It assumes effective, objective and transparent export controls and the active support by a large number of States joining the IAEA Safeguards System so as to combat the risk of diversion and illicit trafficking in nuclear and radioactive materials. The need for us to further strengthen measures designed to prevent acts of nuclear terrorism is now greater than ever. In this respect France, which has supported the IAEA action plan, favours an approach in which States have primary responsibility for the definition and implementation of policies, and bilateral and multilateral cooperation is set up to cope with the terrorist threat, coordinate international assistance measures and work out frames of reference from which national policies can take inspiration.

The highest possible degree of safety is obviously a constant requirement in exploiting nuclear energy. To ensure progress in this field, France calls on all States which have not yet done so to sign and ratify the Convention on Nuclear Safety and the Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management.

France, which each year carries out several thousand nuclear materials transport operations on its soil as well as a number to foreign countries, takes all necessary steps to ensure the highest possible level of safety. French law incorporates the international regulations of the IAEA and the Modal Organizations. In accordance with the relevant resolutions of the IAEA General Conference, France is careful to provide full information and all necessary assurances to countries potentially concerned. We believe that the 2003 conference on the safety of nuclear materials transport will make it possible to identify areas in which progress is possible and to foster broader application of existing instruments.

The last imperative is that of transparency. France believes that the development of nuclear energy must be accompanied by the greatest transparency to ensure that governments and populations are aware of the issues and the resources used. The benefits of nuclear energy will only be recognized if public opinion is convinced that it is a source of energy which protects the

environment and is safe. In this area as in the preceding ones, international cooperation is essential.

Mr. Chairman,

My country attaches particular importance to the broadest possible access to the peaceful applications of nuclear technologies. The IAEA Technical Cooperation Programme is one of the main avenues through which such technologies, both energy-related and related to health care, agriculture and the environment, are disseminated. France supports this programme and welcomes the improvements made in its operation and the increase in resources made available to it by member States. In this respect France, which pays its assessment in full, is the third largest net contributor to the Technical Cooperation Fund. Moreover, it strives to provide additional matching funds by supporting supplementary projects which cannot be financed by the Technical Cooperation Fund, and makes a particular effort to participate in cooperation missions, provide training and receive trainees.

In addition to cooperation within IAEA, the increasing number of countries and institutions with which we cooperate under bilateral agreements also bears witness to France's international engagement. More than 130 bilateral cooperation agreements aimed at promoting the peaceful applications of nuclear technologies are currently in force between France and non-nuclear States.

Thank you Mr President.