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RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE

MINISTÈRE DES AFFAIRES ÉTRANGÈRES ET EUROPÉENNES

(translated from the French)

**Second Session of the Preparatory Committee for the
2010 NPT Review Conference
(Geneva, 28 April – 9 May 2008)**

**Statement by H.E. Ambassador Jean-François Dobelle,
Permanent Representative of France to the Conference on Disarmament
Head of the French delegation
(Geneva, 2nd May 2008)**

***“Specific issue”:
Nuclear disarmament and negative security assurances***

Mr. Chairman,

I should like to make clear how my country sees future progress on the implementation of the obligations laid down by Article VI of the Treaty in the context of general and complete disarmament.

As I recalled in my statement under Cluster 1, on the 21 March the President of the French Republic, Mr. Nicolas Sarkozy, made a major statement on our defence and disarmament policy which contains essential and innovative points for disarmament.

For his first speech on this subject since his election, President Sarkozy wished to place particular emphasis on the topic of disarmament, especially nuclear. Recalling France's exemplary record in this field, he underscored his wish that France should continue to make an active and concrete contribution to disarmament.

The Head of State thus announced a one-third reduction in the number of nuclear weapons, missiles and aircraft in the airborne component of our forces. The President of the Republic has also decided that France can and must be transparent with regard to its nuclear arsenal, as no State has been hitherto.

Furthermore, the President of the Republic underlined the fact that reciprocity is the very foundation of collective security and disarmament. The President therefore put forward to the international community an action plan to which he called upon the nuclear powers to give a firm commitment between now and the 2010 NPT Review Conference:

- universal ratification of the CTBT to permit its entry into force, beginning with the two nuclear-weapon States recognised by the NPT that have signed but not yet ratified it;
- dismantlement of all nuclear testing sites in a manner that is transparent and open to the international community;
- the opening without delay in the Conference on Disarmament of negotiations for a Treaty banning the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons ("cut-off");
- establishment of an immediate moratorium on the production of such materials;
- definition of transparency measures by the five nuclear weapon States recognised by the NPT;
- opening of negotiations for a treaty banning short and intermediate range ground-to-ground missiles;
- adherence to and implementation by all of the Hague Code of Conduct Against Ballistic Missile Proliferation (HCOC);
- and, parallel to this, mobilisation on all other areas of disarmament.

Mr. Chairman,

Having set out clearly the efforts made by France in the field of nuclear disarmament and the proposals put forward by the President of the Republic, it seems to me to be relevant to recall that the obligations laid down by this Article are not incumbent solely on the nuclear-weapon States and do not relate to nuclear disarmament alone. In this respect the formulation of the Treaty is unambiguous: nuclear disarmament is a part of general and complete disarmament towards which all States Parties to the NPT must work.

My country has shouldered and continues to shoulder its duties in this regard: France is party to the Convention on Prohibition of Biological Weapons and the Convention on Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. It is also party to the Ottawa Convention on Prohibition of Anti-personnel Mines and to several other agreements embodied in conventions, including the CCW of 1980 and its protocols. In particular, France was one of the very first countries to become a party to Protocol V on Explosive Remnants of War. It has subscribed to the Hague Code of Conduct Against Ballistic Missile Proliferation (HCOC). It devotes constant effort to

the implementation, universalisation and strengthening of those instruments. Moreover, France is also resolutely engaged in efforts to combat the illicit dissemination of small arms and light weapons, of whose lethal and destabilising character, especially on the African continent, all are aware.

Further, our conception of the application of Article VI is in conformity with the decisions reached in 1995 at the NPT Review and Extension Conference: the first task is to freeze the nuclear arsenals, this being an essential prerequisite for their continued gradual reduction. That is very much the joint mission of the Complete Test Ban Treaty and the future Treaty banning the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons, which are inseparable and whose entry into force must permit a qualitative and quantitative freeze on which all future progress is conditional. President Sarkozy has recalled the priority assigned by France to progress in these areas.

With regard to overall reduction in nuclear arsenals, France supports the continuation of the efforts now under way. They are marked today, as a matter of priority, by the process undertaken by the United States and Russia, which possess numbers of nuclear weapons far beyond those held by the other nuclear-weapon States. For its part, France is continuing to make an active and concrete contribution to these efforts, as is demonstrated by the announcement by the President of the Republic of a one-third reduction in the number of nuclear weapons, missiles and aircraft in the airborne component of our forces.

Mr. Chairman,

The aspiration of non-nuclear-weapon States Parties to the NPT for measures to assure their security against the use or threat of use of these weapons is legitimate.

Negative security assurances, which involve a pledge by nuclear-weapon States not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States, are particularly important in this regard. My country has given strong undertakings in this domain, both unilaterally and in regional contexts.

As France has emphasised, the French doctrine of deterrence is the primary assurance of this kind, since its purpose is strictly to guarantee the protection of the vital interests of the Nation, excluding any consideration of nuclear weapons as battlefield weapons to be used in furtherance of military strategy. The President of the Republic has once again recalled this by confirming the strictly defensive role of the deterrent. He has also recalled that none of France's nuclear weapons is targeted against anyone.

Furthermore, in a unilateral declaration made on 6 April 1995, France gave negative security assurances to all non-nuclear weapon States Parties to the NPT compliant with their non-proliferation undertakings. The United Nations Security Council took note of this declaration in resolution 984 of 11 April 1995, which provides for the first time a general, collective and concrete response to the concerns of non-nuclear weapon States with regard to security assurances. In this respect, I recall that the granting of security assurances by my country cannot under any circumstances impede the exercise of its right to legitimate self-defence in accordance with Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations.

And lastly, France considers that the granting of negative security assurances within regional frameworks constitutes one of the major ways forward on disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. Non-nuclear-weapon States will be protected against the threat of nuclear weapons first and foremost by their neighbours' renunciation of such weapons. This regional dimension for non-proliferation and its contribution to the security of all has become increasingly important, in full accord with the provisions of Article VII of the NPT, through the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones.

Convinced that this constitutes a realistic and concrete approach permitting progress to be made on security, disarmament and non-proliferation, France has given its support to the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones, and has provided security assurances to over one hundred States in this context. France is thus the nuclear-weapon State that is party to the greatest number of protocols appended to Treaties concerning nuclear-weapon-free zones. France is thus party to the relevant protocols of the Tlatelolco, Rarotonga and Pelindaba Treaties.

Pursuit of this regional approach seems to be by far the most realistic and fruitful approach for progress on negative security assurances. We must for this reason continue to go further in the area of nuclear-weapon-free zones to relaunch negotiations for a protocol to the Treaty of Bangkok (South-East Asia), to seek the required changes to the Treaty of Semipalatinsk (Central Asia) and to succeed in obtaining the entry into force of the nuclear-weapon-free zone in Africa in order for the protocol to this Treaty to be fully effective. My country wishes in this regard to recall the importance of compliance with the principles adopted by the Disarmament Commission in 1999, and in particular those concerning preliminary consultation of the nuclear-weapon States. Concerning more particularly the negotiation of a protocol to the Treaty of Bangkok, contacts have been resumed, notably in connection with the last session of the United Nations General Assembly, as well as even more recently. We hope to see the effective resumption of constructive dialogue based on a

reaction from the countries of the nuclear-weapon-free zone in South-East Asia to the proposals jointly submitted by ourselves and the other nuclear-weapon States.

In addition, we support the goal of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery in the Middle East. We wish all the States concerned to allow this goal to be achieved, as defined in Security Council resolution 687, reaffirmed in the resolution adopted in 1995 by the NPT Review Conference and recalled by the Security Council in its resolutions 1747 of March 2007 and 1903 of March 2008.

To conclude, France recalls the importance of positive security assurances which, by providing further backing for negative security assurances, help protect non-nuclear-weapon States compliant with their obligations against the use of nuclear weapons.

Mr. Chairman, I thank you.

