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**Permanent Mission of Switzerland
to the United Nations in New York**

**8th Review Conference of the States Parties to the
Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)**

General Debate

Statement by

Her Excellency

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Head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs

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Mr President,

Forty years after its entry into force, the NPT has come to a crossroads. Following several years of stalemate, even regression, we have witnessed in the last few months a series of developments in the nuclear field:

- Nuclear disarmament seems to be experiencing a revival. This has led to the signing of a new treaty on the reduction of strategic nuclear weapons between the US and Russia on 8 April. Switzerland welcomes the signing of this new treaty and urges the two states to ratify it as soon as possible.
- Also, since the beginning of this year, new doctrines were published by the two states with the largest nuclear arsenals. We have seen some positive developments in this context too.
- Finally, we have witnessed recently a momentum in the entire nuclear field, such as the Nuclear Security Summit in Washington.

Mr President,

However, if we take a step back and look at these developments from the perspective of their immediate impact, we have to admit that the results are modest. The recent changes made to the doctrines of the nuclear-weapon States show us that there has not been a fundamental shift in thinking on the role of nuclear weapons in their respective military strategies. Two decades after the end of the Cold War, nuclear deterrence remains in the nuclear doctrines, with a considerable number of nuclear weapons ready for launch within minutes while thousands more remain stockpiled. The continued existence of defence policies based on nuclear weapons only serves to prolong this irresponsible gamble with the future of humanity.

Switzerland fails to see how it will be possible to manage the problems of the future by maintaining such security postures. Nuclear weapons have no use, they are immoral and illegal:

- They have no use between the major powers who have a second-strike capability. They have no use against non-nuclear-weapon states due to their disproportionate power of destruction. And they have no use in confronting the risk of terrorism where nuclear deterrence does not work.

- They are fundamentally immoral because they are designed to cause massive and indiscriminate destruction be it in terms of human lives, material destruction or consequences for the environment, and all this in a timeframe over which human beings have no control. Nuclear weapons are not just a means of mass destruction, they are a weapon of extermination.
- They are illegal by their very nature with regard to the international humanitarian law because they are indiscriminate in their effect, and their use violates without exception all fundamental principles and rules of international humanitarian law. We therefore see no scenario where this weapon can be used without generally contravening international humanitarian law.

Mr President,

Switzerland believes that this Review Conference offers a unique opportunity to place the movement towards nuclear disarmament on a more solid base. Switzerland therefore expects the Conference to adopt an action plan that will advance nuclear disarmament in a concrete, progressive and pragmatic way. We need to build on what has been achieved at previous NPT Review Conferences, in particular the "Thirteen Practical Steps" adopted at the 2000 Review Conference, which we should update, take further, and add the idea of implementation within a timeframe as we have seen in recommendations of the Evans-Kawaguchi Commission - which we welcome.

Mr President,

Although in our view nuclear disarmament remains the pillar of the NPT to which States Parties have devoted the least attention so far, Switzerland is conscious that to ensure success this Conference has to address all the commitments contained in the Treaty.

In the area of nuclear proliferation, the view has become widespread in the last few years that the IAEA is unable to prevent proliferation. We do not share this view. Nevertheless, since this perception does exist, Switzerland expects this Conference to reflect on how it can make the IAEA's safeguards system less vulnerable to such criticism.

In the field of the peaceful use of nuclear energy, we will see a continuing development of civilian nuclear energy in the coming decades. New challenges will clearly emerge with regard to the ability to manage this source of energy for newcomers. Switzerland therefore expects

this Conference to adopt clear language reaffirming the link between the inalienable right of all States Parties to the peaceful use of nuclear energy and the obligations in terms of safeguards, security and safety that derive from this.

Mr President,

If we achieve to adopt an action plan that covers all three pillars of the NPT, we will certainly be able to consider this Conference a success.

However, Switzerland is of the opinion that we should aim to go further and develop a vision that goes beyond this Conference in particular in the area of nuclear disarmament. We must leave behind us certain ideas concerning the nuclear option that still exist in the military doctrines of the nuclear-weapon states. As a nuclear war would threaten the very survival of our common humankind, a debate should be launched concerning the legitimacy of the use of nuclear weapons regardless of the legitimacy of the motive of defence that can be invoked. In addition to military and legal considerations, Switzerland's aim is to bring the humanitarian aspect to the heart of the current debate on nuclear disarmament. In fact, it is necessary to ask the question at which point the right of States must yield to the interests of humanity. In the long term we must outlaw nuclear weapons, specifically by means of a new convention as the UN Secretary General has proposed.

Switzerland considers it important that a debate on this question be launched. To this end it has initiated a study on the subject of delegitimizing nuclear weapons. I invite the States Parties and NGOs to the presentation of this study on 10 May in the margins of this Conference.

Mr President,

The long-term vision of a world without nuclear weapons – as well as of a world able to use nuclear energy responsibly – is possible. States, civil society, all of us have a role to play in making this vision becomes reality. Switzerland therefore appeals to you to make full use of this Conference as a springboard to project us towards a dialogue that we enable us to move beyond the crossroads where the NPT finds itself today.

Mr President, I thank you for your attention.