

Russia

Explanation of vote – 27 October 2016

The Russian delegation shares the sentiments and conclusions which have been voiced in the statement delivered by the UK, the US and France on the resolution advancing the process of multilateral nuclear disarmament L.41. As regards the ban on nuclear weapons, a prohibition on nuclear weapons, we, like our partners in the nuclear P5+1, we believe that the initiative to prohibit nuclear weapons is a destructive initiative.

First of all, this kind of a hasty initiative undermines and erodes the existing mechanism for multilateral initiatives in the sphere of nuclear disarmament. This also undermines the NPT, the sole effective international treaty in effect stipulates progress towards full and comprehensive disarmament and this includes nuclear disarmament. Let us not forget the fact that there are no other treaties in this area. And if some party attempts to move towards a prohibition on nuclear weapons then there are great doubts about new agreements emerging. So, consider this: the co-sponsors intend to propose the topic of prohibition of WMDs to an alternative international platform and to discuss this highly sensitive matter without the participation of nuclear weapons states. The adverse repercussions for the viability and the comprehensive nature of the NPT would be catastrophic.

Let us remind those who for some reason wish to close their eyes to this fact: pursuant to the NPT, nuclear weapons – which are in the possession of five states – are absolutely legitimate. This was signed on to by ALL NPT states parties. All national parliaments ratified this treaty. Now there's a proposal to announce nuclear weapons as being illegal under some kind of a new mythical international agreement. The content of such an agreement would significantly restrict, there must be no illusions here, would be restrictive. So, as a result, two parallel legal regimes would emerge with mutually excluding provisions. We strongly recommend, dear colleagues, that prior to the vote on L.41 that thought be given to the damage this will wreak for the NPT. I repeat: that is the sole, effective, viable treaty which stipulates step-by-step progress towards nuclear disarmament.

Second, a hasty adoption of an agreement on a prohibition is at odds with the provisions of the consensus-based plan of action of the 2010 NPT Review Conference, according to which nuclear disarmament needs to be done in such a manner as to facilitate and promote international peace, security and stability. Instead, the proposal is put forth to cast aside strategic stability concerns and to take out of the context of nuclear disarmament only one aspect: having to do with the prohibition of nuclear weapons. And if we follow basic logic then this needs to be subject to consideration at the final stage of building a nuclear weapon-free world to ensure irreversibility of the definitive elimination of nuclear weapons. We categorically object to revision of consensus-based provisions of the action plan which was adopted during the NPT 2010 Review Conference.

Third, from a purely practical standpoint, any initiative to ban or prohibit nuclear weapons appears quite dubious. It might carry some sense, only providing there were to be willingness and readiness of all nuclear powers to take part. As we all know, there is no such willingness and there will be no such willingness. In any case, Russia certainly shall not take part in measures which are unrealistic and which are at odds with previously reached agreements. Without the participation of nuclear powers this conference loses all practical

purpose but it will not be innocuous. An attempt to compel nuclear weapons states to eschew or renounce them without taking in to account strategic realities and legitimate security concerns. Not only is this at odds with progress towards a shared goal, but this also leads to polarisation and a scattering of positions and outright antagonism amongst those who hold various views. This is attested to by the ambiguous results of the vote of the Open-Ended Working Group. There, more than one third of participants either abstained or voted against the hasty conduct of talks on the prohibition of nuclear weapons. At the same time, we respect the views of those advocating a prohibition on nuclear weapons. We ourselves embrace the noble goal of building a nuclear weapons-free world. However, the questions has to do with how to move towards that goal without undermining strategic stability, without eroding the checks and balances system of international relations, without plunging the world into chaos and dangerous unpredictability and without jeopardizing the integrity of the NPT regime and without deepening – even without intent – such divisions.

The priority now needs to be, not a prohibition on nuclear weapons, this would be largely a propagandistic step, but rather meaningful, substantive joint work to create conditions that would genuinely foster nuclear disarmament. We call for avoidance of this treacherous step. We need to adhere to tried and tested approaches which have already enabled us to reduce global nuclear weapons stockpiles by more than five-fold. It would be impermissible, even with the noblest of intentions, to create further even greater difficulties in progress towards that end.

The Russian Federation will vote against the draft resolution L.41. We call upon all delegations to once again give serious thought to the fatal destructive repercussions which inevitably will follow, provided L.41 will be adopted. We call for this to be given serious thought. It is still possible to step down from those unfounded illusions and instead of useless declarations which we must avoid, we must engage, not in mythical, but in genuinely effective disarmament. This must be based upon strengthening what is indivisible and equitable for international security and strategic stability. So a good example of this is the joint statement of leaders of Russia and China on strengthening global strategic stability. This was signed in Beijing on 25 June 2016. Please join such approaches. Thank you.