

**Second Session of the Preparatory Committee for the
2015 Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear
Weapons**

Cluster I:

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**Decreasing the operational readiness of nuclear
weapons systems**

Geneva, 24 April 2011

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Delegation of Nigeria

on behalf of the De-alerting Group (Chile, Malaysia, New-Zealand, Nigeria, Switzerland)

Mr. Chair,

I have the honour of taking the floor on behalf of Chile, Malaysia, New Zealand, Nigeria and Switzerland on the issue of de-alerting, or decreasing the operational readiness of nuclear weapons systems.

Our countries remain deeply concerned at the maintenance on high alert of weapons which pose a threat to the very survival of humanity. Mindful of the obligations contained in article VI of the NPT, we have for several years called on all nuclear-weapon States to intensify efforts, be they unilateral, bilateral or multilateral, to lower levels of alert.

We find it anachronistic and disheartening that while tensions that marked the international security climate during the Cold War have lowered significantly, corresponding decreases in the alert levels of the States with the largest nuclear arsenals have not followed suit. It is a deep and constant concern that this dangerous feature of Cold War doctrine is perpetuated today.

The concerns caused by maintaining nuclear weapons on a high level of readiness are compounded by worrying developments in cyber-warfare. Cyber-related attacks on nuclear command and control systems or on nuclear weapons themselves cannot be ruled out, and the result of any such attack on nuclear weapons maintained on a high alert level could represent a clear new danger. We welcome the fact that some nuclear-weapon States are now looking more closely at this additional risk – one which we believe adds to the urgency of removing nuclear weapons from high levels of alert.

It remains our strong view that progress in lowering operational readiness would have positive effects on both international and human security. Lowering the operational readiness of nuclear weapons systems would demonstrate a clear commitment to meeting obligations under article VI of the NPT. It would also represent a confidence-building measure and tangible movement towards diminishing the role of nuclear weapons and an interim step towards a nuclear-weapon-free world.

We acknowledge and welcome progress that has been made in the past. The level of operational readiness of non-strategic nuclear weapons has been considerably lowered and decisions to stand down strategic bombers have also been taken.

These examples highlight that de-alerting is possible and that technical and political obstacles can be overcome. However, more can and needs to be done to address the risks arising from the current alert level.

We are encouraged by the numerous calls made by former high-ranking officials from nuclear-weapon States arguing in favour of the necessity and feasibility of reducing the level of operational readiness of nuclear weapons.

Mr. Chair,

Lowering alert levels is an integral element of the nuclear disarmament process. The 13 Practical Steps of 2000 highlighted de-alerting as a step leading to nuclear disarmament and called for "*concrete agreed measures to further reduce the operational status of nuclear weapons systems.*" Moreover, the 2010 Review Conference reaffirmed the nuclear-weapon States' commitment to accelerate steps leading to nuclear disarmament contained in the Final Document of the 2000 Review Conference. In particular, they agreed to "*consider the legitimate interest of non-nuclear weapon States in further reducing the operational readiness of nuclear weapons systems*" and to report back in 2014 on that issue, among others.

2014 will therefore represent a key milestone in the implementation of the commitments made in the NPT framework by the nuclear-weapon States regarding de-alerting. The reporting by the nuclear-weapon States on the implementation of the different provisions set forth in Action 5 of the 2010 Action Plan will enable States parties to assess whether, and to what extent, progress has been made in lowering the operational readiness of nuclear weapons. Moreover, this reporting will enable States parties to identify additional measures that may need to be taken at the 2015 Review Conference to ensure that further progress on this important facet of nuclear disarmament is achieved.

I thank you for your attention.