

STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE AFRICAN GROUP

BY

MUHAMMAD ZAYYANU BANDIYA
MINISTER COUNCELLOR
PERMANENT MISSION OF NIGERIA TO THE UNITED NATION

AT

THEMATIC DEBATE OF THE FIRST COMMITTEE:
NUCLEAR WEAPONS

DURING THE 77TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL
ASSEMBLY

NEW YORK, FRIDAY, 14 OCTOBER 2022

Mr. Chairman,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the African Group.

2. The Group associates itself with the Statement of the Non-Aligned Movement and wishes to make the following remarks.

3. Nuclear weapons represent a grave existential threat to humanity and if nuclear-weapon States continue to possess and modernise these weapons of mass destruction, our collective security cannot be assured. The Group, therefore, welcomes and underscores the importance of the resolution 70/34 as an integral part of the multilateral disarmament effort.

Mr. Chairman,

4. African Group supports the principle of complete nuclear disarmament as prerequisite for maintaining international peace and security. The Group insists that, achieving the total elimination of nuclear weapons should be the overall objective of the United Nations.

5. Regrettably, the slow pace of progress by the nuclear-weapon States to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals in accordance with their legal obligations and undertakings under Article VI of the NPT and the various relevant agreed outcomes of the NPT Review Conference remains worrisome. The Group, therefore, insists on the implementation of all agreed measures and undertakings by the nuclear-weapons States in the context of the Treaty.

6. In this regard, the African Group is deeply disappointed at yet another failed Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation

Treaty (NPT) that could not agree to any tangible progress on the implementation of agreed commitments.

7. The Tenth Review Conference was an opportunity for the nuclear-weapon States to recommit to fulfilling their unmet commitments to rid themselves and the world of nuclear weapons, and to save the humanity from the possibility of any devastating humanitarian impact of a nuclear detonation or nuclear war.

8. Having one failed Review Conference is bad enough. Having two failed review conferences back-to-back plunges the NPT into uncharted waters and places the credibility and sustainability of the Treaty in deep trouble, placing our collective peace and security in jeopardy.

Mr. Chairman,

9. The African Group re-affirms the central role of nuclear-weapon-free zones in the consolidation of the NPT, as well as in their contributions to addressing nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation across all regions of the world.

10. In this context, the African Group remains committed to the Treaty of Pelindaba, re-affirming the status of Africa as a nuclear-weapon-free zone and providing a shield for the African territory. In addition, it prohibits either the stationing of nuclear explosive devices on the continent or testing of those weapons on the entire space that constitutes the African continent.

Mr. Chairman,

11. The African Group reiterates its deep concern regarding the lack of implementation of the commitments and obligations of the 1995 NPT Review Conference Resolution on the Middle East regarding the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction.

12. In the same vein, the Group recalls the convening of the United Nations Conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction pursuant to UNGA Decision 73/546. We welcome the convening of the First Session under the presidency of Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the Second Session under the presidency of the State of Kuwait. The African Group calls on all invited Parties to constructively continue to engage in good faith in order to negotiate a legally binding treaty that satisfies the implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East.

Mr. Chairman,

13. The African Group underscores the importance of the continued respect of the inalienable right to peaceful uses of nuclear energy and stresses the central role of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in continuing to ensure the commitment of States to the implementation of Safeguards Agreements and in the provision and promotion of technical support and cooperation, as well as maximizing the use of science and technology for socio-economic development.

14. The African Group emphasises the humanitarian considerations in the context of all deliberations on nuclear weapons at this session, particularly, the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of the use or detonation of nuclear weapons, either by accident or as a deliberate action. The Group notes the strides made by States and continues to call on all States, especially nuclear-weapon States, to have in their consideration, the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of the use of these weapons on human health, the environment and vital economic resources among others, as well as take necessary measures and steps to ensure the dismantling and renunciation of these weapons.

Mr. Chairman,

15. The total elimination of nuclear weapons remains the only absolute guarantee against their use or threat of use. In this context, the Group reiterates the urgent need for our planet to be free of nuclear weapons, as their presence constitutes a grave threat to international peace and security and an existential threat to humanity.

16. Africa supports the objective of complete nuclear disarmament, as the utmost prerequisite for maintaining international peace and security. It is in this spirit that the African Group recalls the historical entry into force of the Landmark Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) on 22 January 2021.

17. The Group reaffirms its full support to the adoption of the Declaration of the First Meeting of States Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons entitled, "Our commitment to a

world free of nuclear weapons”, which reaffirmed the determination to realize the complete elimination of nuclear weapons.

18. The Group also reaffirms its support for the Vienna Action Plan adopted during the First Meeting of the States Parties to the Treaty held in Vienna, Austria, from 21-23 July 2022 to facilitate effective and timely implementation of the TPNW and its objectives and goals.

19. In this regard, the Group wishes to urge all members of the international community, especially nuclear weapon States and those under the so-called “nuclear umbrella”, to seize the opportunity to sign and ratify the Treaty at an early date and to pursue the goal of a nuclear-weapons-free world.

20. The continued existence and possession of nuclear weapons does not guarantee security; it is an affirmation of the risks of their potential use. Our world, including the outer space, must be free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. It is in this context that the Group stresses the need for the nuclear weapons States to cease their further modernisation, upgrading, refurbishment or extending the lives of their nuclear weapons and related facilities.

Mr. Chairman,

21. The African Group wishes to reiterate the importance of achieving universal adherence to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), taking into account the special responsibilities of Nuclear Weapons States. The Group believes that the CTBT offers hope of halting further modernization and development or vertical

and horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons, thereby contributing to the goal of nuclear disarmament.

22. The Group calls on the international community to renew its support for promoting the entry into force of the CTBT. The Group calls on all States particularly the remaining eight States listed in Annex 2 that have yet to ratify the CTBT to do so, taking into consideration the special responsibility of nuclear-weapon States as stipulated in Action 10 of the 2010 Action Plan.

23. I thank you.