

Statement by H.E. Eric Danon Ambassador, Permanent Representative of France to the Conference on Disarmament Head of the French Delegation

"Chapter 1"

(New York, 6th May 2009)

Mr. Chairman,

Here I would like to cover issues from Chapter 1 concerning nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament.

1. The NPT is an essential instrument for collective security, based on Articles I and II.
2. Now as in the past, compliance with these provisions is crucial if the NPT is to fully play its role as an instrument for international stability. By acceding to the NPT, several States that had the capacity to obtain nuclear weapons chose not to do so, basing their decision on the fact that the other States parties would respect their commitments with regard to non-proliferation. In these conditions, if doubts emerge as to the capacity of the international community to ensure compliance with international non-proliferation standards by certain countries, we risk encouraging other countries, in the neighbouring region or elsewhere, to believe that their security will be better assured by developing their own capacities rather than complying with international non-proliferation standards.
3. Therefore maintaining the integrity of the NPT means above all ensuring our collective security. We must all be aware of this.
4. We must work to recreate a more secure international context by addressing pressing and huge challenges which affect our security, in particular States which are under UN sanctions for violating their international obligations, in particular those concerning non-proliferation.
5. As President Sarkozy emphasised in a speech he made on 21 March 2008 in Cherbourg, in the face of proliferation, the international community must remain united and resolute. Because we want peace, we must show no weakness to those who violate international norms. Because civilian nuclear energy can only develop in a climate of mutual trust, we must discourage those who may be tempted to use it for other purposes. This is what is at stake in the case of Iran.
6. Since 2005, the international community, through the IAEA Board of Governors and the United Nations Security Council, has clearly and firmly condemned the cases of violations that threaten the integrity of the Treaty and endanger international stability and regional security. We call on North Korea and Iran to comply with the obligations respectively set out in the Security Council resolutions 1695 and 1718 for the former, and 1696, 1737, 1747, 1803 and 1835 for the latter.
7. Beyond these proven cases of nuclear proliferation and Treaty violations, our concerns go hand in hand with the rise of other threats. Some nuclear arsenals continue to grow, proliferation of biological weapons and of chemical weapons continues as does that of ballistic and cruise missiles. On this last point, which is directly related to the NPT even if not strictly within its scope, there is much to be said about the activities of the two above-mentioned countries over the last year.
8. Alongside a resolute response to proliferation crises and the strengthening of the IAEA's safeguards system, we must also collectively promote increased concrete efforts with regard to prevention and

hindering proliferation. We must better control exports, control access to the most sensitive training, stop proliferating trafficking, criminalise proliferation activities and crack down on their funding. The Security Council resolution 1540 developed this collective approach providing for both increased controls in all States and co-operation to achieve this.

9. With this in mind, we also need to pursue reflection on the consequences of announcing a withdrawal from the NPT : it is neither acceptable nor compliant with the spirit of the Treaty that a State should continue, after withdrawing from the Treaty, to have access to the results of international co-operation received as a party to the NPT, especially if the State has violated the provisions of the Treaty. Several contributions on this issue were submitted at the first Preparatory Committee, and the discussion should continue in the interest of all, taking care not to re-interpret Article X of the Treaty.

10. I now come to the issue of disarmament.

11. Over the last two decades, my country, with others, engaged in good faith, in compliance with the objectives set by Article VI of the Treaty, in negotiations on nuclear disarmament and comprehensive and total disarmament which have led to the adoption of several ambitious instruments (the Chemical Weapons Convention and Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty to mention only those instruments related to weapons of mass destruction).

12. It is a fact that, since the end of the Cold War, the number of nuclear weapons present worldwide has been reduced significantly. Be it the reductions undertaken by France and the United Kingdom or by the two Nuclear Weapon States with the largest arsenals, the trend is clear. The implemented efforts call for additional ones, and, in this respect, my country welcomes the commitment made by Russia and the United States to conclude an agreement to succeed the START Treaty before the end of the year. A new arms control agreement between the US and Russia reflecting further nuclear reductions would also be an important step forward, as they retain around 96% of the world's nuclear weapons.

13. A new outlook is emerging in favour of the entry into force of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), the ratification of which by Lebanon last November I applaud. Also, the hopes placed by the international community in the start at the Conference on Disarmament of cut-off negotiations provide a glimpse of a new nuclear disarmament landscape. We are delighted at the signals that indicate that some States until now hostile to the consensus concerning a CD work programme are reconsidering their position.

14. These prospects for progress provide great hope for the international community and my country applauds this.

15. Allow me to present France's vision concerning nuclear disarmament. It is an issue that France takes extremely seriously. France therefore wishes to approach the subject in a realistic and concrete fashion during this review round.

16. France is proud of its exemplary record regarding nuclear disarmament. These are not simply words. Few Nuclear Weapon States have made as many efforts as my country. France was, along with the United Kingdom, the first Nuclear Weapon State to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), 11 years ago, the only State to have dismantled all its ground-to-ground nuclear missiles. We have also reduced our total nuclear arsenal and taken a series of measures to reduce the operational readiness and alert levels of our nuclear forces to ensure that they are maintained at the lowest possible level necessary to ensure the credibility of our deterrence. We ceased production of fissile material for nuclear weapons (plutonium in 1992, uranium in 1996). We subscribed to a moratorium on production of fissile material for nuclear weapons ; France was the first State to decide to shut down and dismantle its facilities for the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons ; the only State to have transparently dismantled its nuclear test site, in the Pacific.

17. That, very concretely, is what France's commitment to nuclear disarmament means.

18. In addition, France has never taken part in the arms race, and applies the principle of strict sufficiency, in other words it maintains its arsenal at the lowest possible level compatible with the strategic context.

19. My country has also, whether unilaterally or within a regional framework, made strong commitments to answer to the legitimate aspiration of non-Nuclear Weapon States that are parties to the NPT to obtain measures that aim to guarantee their security with respect to the use, or the threat of the use of nuclear weapons. Within the framework of its support for the creation of Nuclear Weapon Free Zones, my country has given security assurances to over a hundred States.

20. Mr. Chairman, last year, within the framework of the previous session of this Preparatory Committee, France presented to the community of States parties a number of concrete and unprecedented measures decided upon by the President of the French Republic and announced during his speech in Cherbourg :

- Reduction by one-third of the number of nuclear missiles, aircraft and warheads of the airborne component ;

- Announcement of a total, and I stress this term, upper limit to our nuclear arsenal (fewer than 300 nuclear weapons) ;

- Invitation to international specialists to come and observe the dismantling of our former production facilities ;

- Innovative and ambitious proposals to pursue disarmament.

21. These commitments made last year by the President of the French Republic have taken effect. I am delighted to inform you that, since then, France has organised two visits to its former production sites for fissile material for nuclear weapons, on 16 September 2008 for over forty Conference on Disarmament Member States, and on 16 March 2009 for over twenty non-governmental specialists. It is the first time that a Nuclear Weapon State has opened the doors to its former military production facilities.

22. In addition, during France's presidency of the European Union in 2008, my country resolutely committed to ensuring that Europe draws up, for the first time, ambitious disarmament initiatives. Based on proposals made by President Sarkozy in March 2008, the European Union put forward an ambitious action plan for disarmament, endorsed by the twenty-seven Heads of State and Government of the European Union in December 2008, to the United Nations General Assembly, with a view to the 2010 Review Conference. On 5 December 2008, President Sarkozy decided to address a letter to the Secretary-General of the United Nations to present this major European contribution to international peace and security. I encourage you to refer to the documents distributed by the EU and by France concerning these initiatives.

Mr. Chairman,

23. We need a vision, we need action, but we also need to be realistic.

24. Let us face it : it is not by eliminating more nuclear weapons that we will convince countries in breach of their commitments to abide by them. Just look at the facts. It was in the mid-1990s, precisely at the very time when the Nuclear Weapon States were most engaged in nuclear disarmament and arms control either unilaterally – France, the UK – bilaterally (US – Russia) or multilaterally –the indefinite extension of the NPT in 1995, the signing of the CTBT in 1996 – that some countries either embarked on or accelerated their clandestine nuclear programmes.

25. Nor would the threat of nuclear and radiological terrorism, against which we must act, be effectively addressed by nuclear disarmament.

26. So addressing the issue of nuclear disarmament is not enough if we intend to ensure its determined pursuit. We have to take into account the political and strategic conditions that render nuclear disarmament actually attainable and determine its pace.

27. That means first working to recreate a more secure international context by fighting in a resolute and united fashion against the proliferation that affects our international and regional security. I mentioned this point earlier.

28. Second, we must also respond to the growing demand for access to peaceful uses of nuclear energy while ensuring that the development of nuclear energy takes place in the best safety, security and non-proliferation conditions. This is the purpose of our discussions with respect to Chapter 3.

29. Third, we should not limit ourselves to nuclear challenges. As encouraged by Article VI of the NPT, we need to broaden our thinking and to address broader strategic matters. Some nations' concerns are probably not only about nuclear postures and arsenals, but also about missile defence or conventional capabilities. Let us not forget either that 90% of victims in current conflicts are the result of individual weapons, whose dissemination must be vigorously fought.

Mr. Chairman,

30. France has a simple and clear approach to disarmament and to security. It plays the game of transparency, which strengthens trust, and it encourages others to join in. France's commitment to disarmament is translated into concrete actions. It thus contributes to strengthening security and stability and opens the way to further progress. 31. We cannot however continue to move in this direction unless the desire for progress is shared by all.

32. And we can only continue to move in this direction if, collectively, we conserve that which guarantees the relevance and the credibility of the NPT - its capacity to respond to reality, maintaining a global political and strategic outlook.

33. Let us use this review round to provide concrete, realistic and pragmatic responses to the challenges of the new "nuclear age" we are entering.

34. The coming months will be decisive concerning the success of this goal. Beyond words, what we need to review in 2010 are realities, actions and proposals.

35. It is because trust, transparency and reciprocity are the very foundation of collective security and disarmament that we invite the international community, particularly within the scope of the NPT, to work on implementing the action plan on disarmament presented by France and its European partners.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.