



**Address to the Conference On Disarmament  
High Level Segment**

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*Check against delivery*

President, Excellencies,

Allow me to begin by congratulating you, President, on Brazil's assumption of the Presidency. I assure you of Ireland's full cooperation and support.

President,

While travel restrictions unfortunately prevent us from meeting in person, I am delighted to address the Conference on Disarmament again this year. The work of the United Nations in Geneva to address issues fundamental to the peace, prosperity and security of our world cannot be placed on hold.

Since joining the UN in 1955, Ireland has highlighted how the unrestricted use and spread of weapons, both conventional and weapons of mass destruction, undermines human security and hinders development.

It is essential that we take this broad, global perspective on how to tackle disarmament. The pandemic has been a stark reminder that risks can quickly become reality, with devastating global effects. It also reminds us of the necessity of collective action to address and overcome global challenges. There are few areas in which these lessons are more relevant than in multilateral disarmament.

As a starting point, our priority must be to implement existing commitments and to respond to new and emerging challenges. We need to move away from the polarisation that has characterised the work of this body for too long. Constructive engagement and cooperation, rooted in multilateralism and underpinned by robust evidence and expertise, is the only way forward.

For far too long, not least in this forum, we have failed to rise to our collective task. How can it be acceptable that the Conference on Disarmament has been

unable to fulfil its mandate or reach agreement on new membership applications in over twenty years? Once again, I urge all States represented in this forum to extend all efforts to adopt a programme of work, so that we can make progress on the vital issues this chamber has been tasked to address.

There are, President, reasons to be optimistic about what can be achieved.

I welcome the extension of New START for a further five years. I hope that this initial agreement will lead the Russian Federation, the United States and other countries to engage actively on broader follow-on agreements, including to limit and reduce stockpiles of nuclear weapons, with the ultimate goal of their elimination.

President,

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons entered into force on 22<sup>nd</sup> of January 2021, sending a powerful signal that the grave humanitarian risks posed by nuclear weapons are not acceptable. The Treaty gives the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty much-needed impetus on nuclear disarmament, and is fully compatible and complementary to the NPT. I urge those countries that have not yet done so to sign and ratify the Treaty, and to support its full implementation.

It is my hope that the positive momentum from these recent developments can create an environment where further progress is possible. Likewise, I welcome the 169<sup>th</sup> ratification, by Cuba, of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, as a further step. As the last legal instrument negotiated in this body, the CTBT has established a powerful global norm against nuclear weapon testing. It is a demonstration of what can be achieved by the Conference on Disarmament. In this 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary year, I call, individually, on each of the eight Annex 2 states that have not yet done so to show leadership, and sign and ratify the CTBT. All

States must abide by the moratorium on nuclear weapon test explosions or any other nuclear explosion.

Hopefully, in the summer, we will meet in New York at the Review Conference of the NPT, in an atmosphere conducive to success. The Review Conference affords us the opportunity to take stock of progress, and to chart the course ahead for a Treaty that has remained the cornerstone of the Disarmament and Non-Proliferation architecture for over fifty years. Let us work together to ensure tangible progress across all three pillars, not least in areas where progress has been slowest, namely disarmament. As a starting point, it will be vital to reaffirm the commitment of all states to the consensus-based outcomes agreed over the past 50 years, including the unequivocal undertaking of the nuclear weapons states to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals.

As the UN Secretary General's Agenda on Disarmament reminds us, disarmament is not only vital for global security; it also saves lives. Ireland remains fully committed to the protection of civilians in conflict. We will continue our efforts to reach agreement on a Political Declaration that addresses the devastating humanitarian consequences arising from the use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas. While face-to-face work on the declaration has been interrupted, Ireland is continuing its efforts to finalise a Declaration that will result in reduced civilian harm.

President, 2020 was an extremely challenging year for all of us. The challenges of new ways of working underline the importance of dialogue, listening, and broad participation, including by civil society. And of ensuring that women's voices are heard. I urge all participants to make every effort to overcome old differences, and engage constructively to make real progress towards a safer world.

Thank You.

**(843 Words)**