

## **Video statement H.E. Stef Blok, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands**

Mr President,

Ladies and gentlemen,

While COVID-19 has made international cooperation a lot more complex, it has also demonstrated how essential such cooperation is.

We need to continue making progress and setting new goals...

...when it comes to our international security environment...

... and especially when it comes to arms-control architecture for the 21st century, amid new and disruptive advances in technology.

For that reason, we welcome the extension of the New START Treaty.

We hope that this is the start, or perhaps we should say 'New Start', of positive new steps in arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation.

We do our work in a difficult and challenging environment.

But we can't blame circumstances for our failure to deliver.

Not here. Not in any forum.

Our discussions here are too important to be blocked by procedural arguments...

...as is happening on the topic of the Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty.

The Netherlands continues to promote a pragmatic approach.

By focusing on what we're here for: substance of great importance.

Our 'Back to Basics' working paper sets out guidelines for this.

We currently find ourselves in the run-up to the tenth NPT RevCon.

The bedrock of global efforts to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons.

And the master key to moving towards a nuclear free world.

I cannot overstate the importance of this conference.

The NPT is the only legally binding commitment by the nuclear-weapon states to pursue negotiations on disarmament.

But we should be honest in reviewing its implementation.

Simply saying 'the meeting is the message' is not enough.

To make true progress, we need to take responsibility.

Especially the countries with nuclear weapons.

As chair of Main Committee III, the Netherlands will do its utmost to help make the review conference a success.

Transparency, risk reduction, crisis stability and crisis management are major focus areas.

Furthermore, the Netherlands intends to make extra efforts on arms control, emerging technologies, and on reducing the vulnerability of space.

We welcome the adoption of the UK-sponsored UNGA First Committee resolution. And we will continue to work towards its implementation.

In closing, the Netherlands would like to take this opportunity, as Chair of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, to call on those states outside the Convention to sign up.

We can end the suffering caused by these indiscriminate weapons, which remain dangerous for decades after conflicts have ended.

164 states have already joined. We hope more will follow.

[pause]

Every new start... begins with hope.

And while Europe and my country are covered in layers of snow, and the temperature is rather inhospitable... to say the least...

And while the tone of our discussions on nuclear weapons has been equally cold and at times inhospitable over the past few years,

I do see some glimmers of hope.

A spring of renewed energy... To combat our problems together.... To make our world nuclear free...

Let's make the extension of the New Start Treaty a new start for us all.

Thank you.