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STATEMENT

by

**Her Excellency Ambassador Pennelope Beckles
Permanent Representative**

of the

Republic of Trinidad and Tobago to the United Nations

at the

High Level Segment

of the

**United Nations conference to negotiate a legally-binding instrument to
prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination**

**March 27, 2017
New York.**

Madame President,

Trinidad and Tobago congratulates you on your assumption as President of this momentous United Nations conference to negotiate a legally-binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination. Trinidad and Tobago is pleased that a sister State from our region is leading this process and we possess every confidence that your diplomatic skills and experience will steer us toward a successful outcome. We pledge our full support and cooperation in this regard.

My delegation associates itself with the statements delivered by the distinguished Permanent Representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Caribbean Community and the distinguished Permanent Representative of El Salvador on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States.

Madame President,

Chapter 1, Article 1 of the Charter of the United Nations sets out clearly, its first founding principle: *To maintain international peace and security, and to that end, to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to peace...*

Today, we aim to give true meaning to those words which we, as Member States, pledged to espouse. Today, we finally challenge the perception that disarmament is the neglected goal of the United Nations. We stand on the precipice of history as we seek to shatter the chronic stalemate that has existed in the field of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation for far too long.

Madame President, Trinidad and Tobago is honoured to be counted among those States which support and which will be participating in this very important process.

As a State which subscribes fully to the rule of law in the promotion and maintenance of international peace and security, Trinidad and Tobago holds firmly to the view that the use of nuclear weapons constitutes a crime against humanity and a violation of international law, and the Charter of the United Nations. Further, Madame President, as a small island developing state, Trinidad and Tobago attaches significant importance to implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We submit therefore that the indiscriminate negative

and disastrous impact of an accidental or intentional nuclear detonation on national and regional public health, the environment, food security, infrastructure and economic growth is in flagrant opposition to the objectives of the SDGs and underscores the urgent need for a ban on these weapons.

Madame President,

Trinidad and Tobago is doing its part towards achieving a nuclear weapons free world. On a national level, Trinidad and Tobago does not possess and has no intentions of possessing nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction. Trinidad and Tobago is a very strong advocate of multilateral cooperation in the areas of non-proliferation and of promoting international cooperation for peaceful purposes, as contemplated in Security Council resolution 1540. We are Party to the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty and are proud to be part of a region which was the first in the world to declare itself a Nuclear Weapons Free Zone, pursuant to the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean, the Treaty of Tlateloco, which established the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean.

It is symbolic that as we begin negotiations on a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, Latin America and the Caribbean also observes the 50th anniversary of the landmark Treaty of Tlatelolco.

Madame President,

Trinidad and Tobago submits that the treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination, should be effective, characterized by the principles of transparency and irreversibility.

We join other delegations in highlighting that the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of the use of nuclear weapons and the risks associated with their existence must underpin the negotiations on the treaty.

Further, in keeping with the Trinidad and Tobago's established position on the role of women in disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control, and the continued importance it attaches to this matter, my delegation advocates that the treaty recognizes the following in relation to this issue:

Firstly, the unique challenges women face as a result of the effects of the use of nuclear weapons and;

Secondly, the essential role women can play in contributing to a world free of nuclear weapons, whether it is through fields that bear on nuclear policies or through public awareness raising, risk education or disarmament education.

Madame Chair,

As previously highlighted, Trinidad and Tobago reaffirms its position that the use of nuclear weapons, as a weapon of mass destruction, is incompatible with international law. We are therefore of the view that the treaty should recognize that nuclear weapons threaten humanity and contradict the dictates of public conscience. As has been the experience with other weapons of mass destruction, a set of core prohibitions will be effective in achieving the purposes of a treaty banning nuclear weapons; hence, my delegation also advocates for clear prohibitions on the use, threat of use, production, transfer, transit and stockpiling of nuclear weapons, as well as to assist, encourage or induce anyone to engage in any of these activities.

My delegation also considers international cooperation and assistance as an important element in the treaty.

Madame President,

The treaty should also recognize the indispensable role played by civil society and non-governmental organizations in advancing nuclear disarmament efforts. From the beginning of the nuclear age, civil society has played a prominent role in the effort to eliminate nuclear weapons. Physicists, seismologists, and other scientists; physicians and lawyers; women's organizations; religious leaders; research institutes and disarmament NGOs; parliamentarians; victims exposed to radioactive contaminants resulting from atmospheric testing, the survivors of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki; and the wider public have all been involved.

We cannot ignore the invaluable contribution civil society and NGOs continue to make toward this process.

Finally Madame President,

Permit me to highlight that as we embark on these negotiations, my delegation is in agreement that decisions on matters by consensus is most desirable, however, we welcome Rule 35 of the Rules of Procedure which provides for voting after all efforts to reach consensus have been exhausted. For too long we have allowed the issue of consensus to stymie action in the field nuclear disarmament.

Madame President, the moment is upon us to make critical decisions about the place of nuclear power in the world. I urge us all to embark on these historic negotiations in optimism and in good faith. Our rhetoric must be transposed into concerted action, if only for the sake of generations to come.