

The Humanitarian Dimension of Nuclear Weapons

Oslo, 4-5 March 2013

Remarks by Ireland at the closing session

I would like to warmly thank and congratulate the Government of Norway and Minister Eide in particular for hosting this thought provoking conference.

Minister, you invited us here to contemplate the unthinkable.

We have heard compelling testimony from many expert sources: from national authorities, from civil society representatives, from doctors and from survivors, from UN agencies and the ICRC of the scale and range of consequences which would arise in the event of a nuclear detonation, be it deliberate or accidental.

The assessment by the International Committee of the Red Cross that effective means to provide an adequate humanitarian response are not at present available at national level and would not be possible at international level must give us all pause for thought.

While we now have a clearer understanding of the appalling humanitarian and medical needs that would arise - the appalling and unimaginable human suffering - that would be inflicted by one of these weapons, what is clear to this delegation is the large number of questions that remain to be answered.

We need to know more about the effects in the short, medium and longer terms in the affected area and how we could respond to them.

We also need to better understand the impact on those areas not directly affected and our planet as a whole. Can we realistically assume that the effects could be contained?

It is our assessment that we would all be affected by a nuclear destination in ways that are only beginning to become clear. Life as we currently live it would be changed forever.

Ireland firmly believes that the only rational response to this situation is prevention, through the elimination of all nuclear weapons.

We strongly welcome and support the humanitarian approach to nuclear weapons. We consider this approach to be fully compatible with and supportive of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. We welcome steps to advance the goal of a world free from nuclear weapons.

We see value in continuing to clarify - scientifically, based on facts, as we understand them - the full range of consequences that would engulf our global family and the limited means that we could muster to respond to them.

This is a risk that confronts us all and we hope that all states will take part in the discussion.

We therefore thank and commend the Government of Mexico for its generous offer to host a second meeting so that we can continue to inform policy makers, civil society and our fellow men and women of the unacceptable cost that we would all pay should the scenarios we have considered today ever come to pass.

Thank you.