



CZECH REPUBLIC

Permanent Mission of the Czech Republic to the United Nations

77th Session of the General Assembly

First Committee, Thematic Debate – Nuclear Weapons Cluster

Statement by

Mr. Jaroslav Štěpánek

**Head of Disarmament, Non-Proliferation and Export Control Regimes
Unit, MFA**

New York, 17 October 2022

One Dag Hammarskjöld Plaza, 48th floor
885 Second Avenue, New York, NY 10017
tel.: +1 (646) 981 4001, fax: +1 (646) 981 4099
www.mzv.cz/un.newyork

Chair,

Allow me to begin by congratulating you, as well as other members of the Bureau, on the assumption of the chairmanship of this session of the First Committee.

The Czech Republic fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by the European Union. We once again condemn in the strongest possible terms the Russian aggression against Ukraine, which represents an unjustifiable breach of the UN Charter and international law, as well as political commitments, which we have been jointly building throughout many decades to make the world a safer place. The Russian nuclear rhetoric applied since February this year irresponsible and deplorable. It further adds to grave international tensions caused by Russia.

Chair,

Despite the grave circumstances, the Czech Republic firmly believes in the power of multilateralism and international cooperation. We stress the importance of returning to full respect of the principles of the UN Charter, strengthening the rules-based international order and seeking multilateral solutions that will enable us to restore peace, to resume effective dialogue and to promote transparency and confidence-building at international and regional levels for the sake of survival of humankind.

The Czech Republic vigorously supports a balanced approach to all three pillars of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Over more than 50 years, the NPT has proven its irreplaceable role in the international nuclear non-proliferation architecture, in the pursuit of nuclear disarmament, and in the development of nuclear energy peaceful applications. Most States Parties to the NPT taking part in its postponed 2020 Review Conference in August this year showed their good will to arrive at a consensus outcome. Only one country, the Russian Federation, regrettably opted out. No doubt, its main motive was not to have any reference in a final document to the situation around the Ukrainian Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant. Now we already know why: just watch an online chronicle depicting how one of the biggest NPP in the world is being stolen. In this context, let me stress that the Czech Republic fully supports the independence, unity and sovereignty of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders, as well as full Ukraine's sovereignty over all its nuclear facilities.

These developments substantiate the importance of the central role of the IAEA safeguards system which should be further strengthened. We therefore call on all remaining NPT States Parties that have not yet done so to ratify and bring into force their Comprehensive Safeguards Agreements and Additional Protocols without any further delay. With deep concern, we observe the lack of substantive cooperation from Iran to support the IAEA efforts over the last two years to clarify the outstanding issues related to the correctness and completeness of Iran's safeguards declarations.

Further, we urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to return to the NPT and put all its nuclear facilities under the IAEA safeguards.

We also encourage those States that have not yet signed or ratified the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) to do so, thus complementing the international security architecture in accordance with the NPT. We regret that the commencement of negotiations of the Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT) is long overdue and we encourage those concerned to respect

a moratorium on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other explosive devices.

Accelerated progress in the development of dual-capable missiles by several countries is highly alarming. That relates first and foremost to the DPRK yet not exclusively. Both quantitative missile capabilities and their qualitative improvements require intense efforts of proliferators to procure high-end materials, technologies and knowledge necessary for the domestic research, development and production capacities. Therefore, we have to identify and close down all loopholes enabling such proliferation, which is not only contrary to the interests of non-proliferation but primarily falls under the UNSC sanctions regimes. In this respect, the Czech Republic highly values the role of export control regimes, the Nuclear Security Summit and its follow-up as well as other relevant international security initiatives. We reiterate that there is no evidence that the existing counter-proliferation measures would limit access to peaceful uses.

With regard to the challenges of the global nuclear non-proliferation architecture, we are convinced that last year's extension of the New START Treaty can put us back on the right track. At the same time, we have to acknowledge the fundamentally altered strategic reality that must be reflected in any future strategic arms control agreements. We closely follow the interactions between the Russian Federation and the United States and we tend to believe the two countries do their utmost to reach an understanding allowing an expansion of the scope of the Treaty to cover all nuclear warheads. It should also include those countries whose nuclear and missile arsenals have significantly expanded. China's role as a responsible stakeholder is crucial for the global system of strategic arms control to be effective.

Thank you, Chair.