Outcome of the first substantive session of the United Nations conference to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination

New York, 31 March 2017

The first substantive session of the United Nations conference to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination was held from 27 to 31 March 2017 in New York, under the Presidency of Ambassador Elayne Whyte Gómez (Costa Rica).

At its opening meeting, the Conference heard addresses by the Acting President of the General Assembly and the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs. The Conference also heard a message by H.H. Pope Francis, viewed a video message by the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross and witnessed the testimony of a survivor of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima.

More than 100 States participated in the first substantive session of the Conference and several of the major regions and sub-regions delivered joint statements. More than 220 representatives from civil society organizations and academia also registered to participate in the Conference. Their contributions deeply enriched and helped to inform the deliberations. The President of the Conference also received a petition in support of this Conference by a group of 3,000 leading scientists, including more than two-dozen Nobel Laureates.

The first substantive session was devoted to a general exchange of views, enabling the States participating in the Conference to hold a robust and constructive discussion on all matters pertaining to the legally binding instrument. Specific topics addressed included: principles and objectives and preambular elements; core prohibitions: effective legal measures, legal provisions and norms; and institutional arrangements.

The Conference also held two informal meeting featuring panels by experts from the International Committee of the Red Cross, academic institutions and non-governmental organizations. These panel discussions fostered a productive and in-depth interactive dialogue among the participants in the Conference. The discussions at the first session were thus held in a constructive atmosphere and in a collaborative spirit. Due the common sense of purpose that prevailed during the session, and a number of common elements and aspirations for the legally binding instrument began to emerge.

The Conference will reconvene on 15 June 2017 in New York, when it will take up its main substantive item, which provided for negotiations, pursuant to paragraph 8 of General Assembly resolution 71/258 of 23 December 2016, on a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination.

---

1 Group of African States, Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, Group of Arab States, Association of Southeast Asian Nations, Caribbean Community