Conference on Disarmament

27 August 2021

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Note Verbale dated 6 August 2021 from the Permanent Mission of Malaysia addressed to the Secretariat of the Conference on Disarmament and transferring the General Statement of the Group 21

The Permanent Mission of Malaysia to the United Nations Office and other International Organisations in Geneva presents its compliments to the Secretariat of the Conference on Disarmament and in its capacity as Coordinator of the Group of 21, has the honour to request the Secretariat to register the General Statement of the Group of 21 as an official document of the Conference on Disarmament.

The Permanent Mission of Malaysia is pleased to append herewith a copy of the said General Statement for the Secretariat's necessary action.

The Permanent Mission of Malaysia to the United Nations Office and other International Organisations in Geneva avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Secretariat of the Conference on Disarmament the assurances of its highest consideration.

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Annex

General Statement of the Group of 21 (G-21)

1. The Group of 21 would like to stress, once again, that the Conference on Disarmament is the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum mandated by the First Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly Devoted to Disarmament (SSODI) and emphasize the importance of preserving it by strengthening the nature, role and mandate of this body. We must underscore the need to redouble our efforts in order to reinforce and revitalize the CD and preserve its credibility through the resumption of substantive work including, inter alia, the negotiations on nuclear disarmament. The G-21 reaffirms its working paper on nuclear disarmament contained in document CD/2192, and all the other working papers submitted to the Conference on 2020.

2. Nuclear disarmament continues to be the highest priority of the international community. The G-21 reiterates its deep concern at the danger posed to the survival of humankind by the continued existence of nuclear weapons and of their possible use or threat of use. The Group, stressing its strong commitment to nuclear disarmament, underscores the urgent need to commence negotiations on this issue in the CD, without further delay. As the highest priority, the CD should start negotiations on a phased programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, including a nuclear-weapons convention prohibiting the possession, development, production, stockpiling, transfer and use of nuclear weapons, leading to the global, non-discriminatory and verifiable elimination of nuclear weapons, with a specified framework of time. In this context, the Group recalls its working paper contained in CD/2192 that calls for the urgent commencement of negotiations on nuclear disarmament in the Conference on Disarmament, in particular on a comprehensive convention on nuclear weapons to prohibit their possession, development, production, acquisition, testing, stockpiling, transfer, use or threat of use and to provide for their destruction.

3. The Group welcomes the formal proclamation, for the first time in history, of Latin America and the Caribbean as a Zone of Peace, on the occasion of the Second Summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), held in Havana, Cuba, on 28-29 January 2014, which includes the commitment of all States of that region to further nuclear disarmament as a priority goal and to contribute to general and complete disarmament. Hopefully, this proclamation will be followed by other political proclamations as “Zones of Peace” in other regions of the world. The Group welcomes the Political Declaration of Quito, adopted at the Fourth Summit of Latin American and Caribbean States held in Quito, Ecuador, on 27 January 2016, which reaffirms, inter alia, the commitment of CELAC to the preservation of peace and international security, political independence and nuclear disarmament conducive to general, total and verifiable disarmament. The Group also welcomes the Political Declaration of Punta Cana, adopted at the Fifth Summit of Latin American and Caribbean States held in Punta Cana, Dominican Republic, on 25 January 2017, which reaffirms, inter alia, the commitment of CELAC achieve a total prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons. CELAC reaffirms its commitment to the consolidation of Latin America and the Caribbean as a Zone of Peace and highlights its character of first ever Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons established by the Treaty of Tlatelolco. The Group welcomes the celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the Treaty of Tlatelolco on 14 February 2017 in Mexico, in the framework of the 25th Session of the General Conference of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL).

4. The group also welcomes the African Nuclear Weapons Free Zone Treaty, known as the Treaty of Pelindaba, signed in Cairo, Egypt, in 1996. The Treaty, which came into effect on 15th July, 2009, seeks to prevent the stationing of nuclear explosives devices, prohibit the testing of nuclear weapons, and the dumping of radioactive waste on the continent. For the purpose of ensuring compliance with the obligations under the treaty, the African Commission on Nuclear Energy (AFCONE) was established.

5. The Group reaffirms the absolute validity of multilateral diplomacy in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation, and expresses its determination to promote multilateralism as the core principle of negotiations in these areas. The Group welcomes the

convening of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on Nuclear Disarmament on 26 September 2013 and reaffirms its related resolution A/RES/75/45 to follow up to this meeting. As the former Secretary General of the United Nations rightly mentioned in the CD in 2015 "The High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on Nuclear Disarmament demonstrated that this issue remains a major international priority and deserves attention at the highest levels". In this vein, the Group fully supports the goals of this resolution in particular its call for urgent decision by the CD to commence negotiation on nuclear disarmament, particularly a comprehensive Convention on nuclear weapons to prohibit their possession, development, production, acquisition, testing, stockpiling, transfer, use or threat of use and to provide for their destruction. The G-21 will make a separate statement in the CD Plenary on this issue. The Group also welcomes the decision to convene, in New York, on a date to be decided later, a United Nations high-level international conference on nuclear disarmament to review the progress made in this regard. The Group welcomes with appreciation the establishment of September 26 as the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, and the high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly organized every year to commemorate and promote this International Day, highlighting the events around the world in commemoration of this day, and calls on governments, parliaments and civil society to take further action annually to commemorate the day.

6. The Group reaffirms the importance of the multilateral disarmament machinery. It notes the report of the Open-Ended Working Group mandated by the United Nations General Assembly "to develop proposals to take forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations for the achievement and maintenance of a world without nuclear weapons" and hopes that it would contribute towards negotiations on nuclear disarmament in the CD, particularly a comprehensive Convention on nuclear weapons to prohibit their possession, development, production, acquisition, testing, stockpiling, transfer, use or threat of use and to provide for their destruction.

7. The Group takes note of the entry into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons on 22 January 2021 and also notes that already 86 States has signed the Treaty and 52 States had ratified or acceded to it as at 22 January 2021. In this regard, the States Parties of the Group of 21 to the Treaty are fully committed to its implementation and to promote its universalization in order to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons.

8. The Group reaffirms that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. Pending the achievement of the complete elimination of such weapons, the Group reaffirms the urgent need for the conclusion of a universal, unconditional and legally binding instrument to effectively assure non-nuclear-weapon States (NNWS) against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons as a matter of high priority. The Group expresses concern that despite the commitment of the nuclear weapon States (NWS) and long-standing requests by NNWS to receive such legally binding assurances, no tangible progress has been achieved in this regard. It is a matter of more concern that NNWS implicitly or explicitly have been subject to nuclear threats by some nuclear weapon States contrary to their obligations under the United Nations Charter. The Group also calls for the commencement of negotiations in order to reach agreement on an international convention prohibiting the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons under any circumstances in accordance with United Nations General Assembly resolution A/RES/75/34.

9. The Group expresses its deepest concern over the immediate, indiscriminate, and massive death and destruction caused by any nuclear weapon detonation and its long term catastrophic consequences on human health, environment, and other vital economic resources, thus endangering the life of present and future generations. The Group believes that the full realization of the catastrophic consequences of nuclear weapons must underpin all approaches, efforts and international commitments towards nuclear disarmament, through an inclusive process involving all States.

10. In this context, the Group concurs with the former United Nations Secretary General by delivering the statement on 23 May 2015 that there is a growing understanding of the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons, and in this regard

welcomes the hosting of the Conferences on this subject, convened in Oslo on 4-5 March 2013, in Mexico on 13-14 February and in Vienna on 8-9 December 2014.

11. The States Parties of the Group of 21 to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) welcome the spirit of the findings of the Conferences on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons. We call on all nuclear weapon states parties to the NPT to implement their unequivocal undertaking to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals leading to nuclear disarmament to which all states parties are committed to under Article VI. Given the catastrophic humanitarian consequences and unacceptable risks and threats associated with a nuclear weapons detonation, we will endeavour to cooperate with all relevant stakeholders in efforts to prohibit and eliminate nuclear weapons. In this regard, we note the relevant resolutions adopted by the 75th Session of the United Nations General Assembly.

12. The G-21 expresses its disappointment that the Conference on Disarmament has not been able to undertake substantive work on its agenda. The Group takes note of various efforts to reach consensus on the CD's Programme of Work and all subsequent decisions, efforts and proposals towards this end.

13. The Group reiterates the urgency for the CD to execute its mandate as set out by SSOD1 and also to adopt and implement a balanced and comprehensive Programme of Work on the basis of its agenda, while taking into account the security interests of all States and dealing with, inter alia, the core issues, particularly nuclear disarmament, in accordance with the rules of procedure, including the rule of consensus. The Group encourages you, Mr. President, to spare no efforts and to continue wide consultations with all delegations to the CD to achieve this goal.

14. The Group furthermore believes that promoting the work of the United Nations disarmament machinery hinges on the need to exercising political will, taking into account the collective security interests of all States.

15. While expressing its deep concern over the persistent lack of consensus on the implementation of the multilateral disarmament agenda in the United Nations disarmament machinery, particularly in fulfilling the commitments on nuclear disarmament as the highest priority, the Group reaffirms its support for an early convening of the Fourth Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly Devoted to Disarmament (SSOD-IV) and expresses its deep concern over the fact that SSOD IV is yet to be convened. The Group welcomes the successful outcome of the Open-Ended Working Group, convened by resolution 65/66 of the General Assembly and its decision 70/551, which held its substantive sessions in 2016 and 2017, under the able Chairmanship of Ecuador, adopting by consensus, recommendations for objectives and agenda for SSOD-IV, which reaffirmed the importance of the existing United Nations disarmament machinery, while considering ways to strengthen it and improve its effectiveness. The Group welcomes the endorsement by the United Nations General Assembly of the report of the Open-Ended Working Group and the substantive recommendations contained therein.

16. The Group of 21 expresses its strong support for the establishment in the Middle East of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction and reiterates the importance of the early establishment of this zone. The Group acknowledges the success in the convening of the first session of the Conference by the Secretary General to elaborate a treaty on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction, in accordance with the mandate of the decision of the General Assembly 73/546. The Group calls upon all states to actively support this process and to contribute to its success.

17. The States Parties of the Group of 21 to the NPT express their disappointment and deep concern that three States Parties, including two States that bear special responsibility as NPT depositary and co-sponsors States of the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference Resolution on the Middle East, blocked consensus on the draft outcome document of the ninth NPT Review Conference (NPT RevCon) including the process to establish a Middle East Zone free of Nuclear Weapons and all other Weapons of Mass Destruction, as contained in the 1995 Resolution on the Middle East. This could undermine efforts towards strengthening the NPT regime as a whole. The States Parties of the Group of 21 to the NPT

reaffirm that the 1995 Resolution on the Middle East continues to constitute the basis for the establishment of such a zone and that the 1995 Resolution remains valid until fully implemented. The States Parties of the Group of 21 to the NPT also express their serious concern over the lack of implementation of the 1995 Resolution, and in accordance with Para 6 of this Resolution, 'Call upon all States party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, and in particular the nuclear-weapon States, to extend their cooperation and to exert their utmost efforts with a view to ensuring the early establishment by regional parties of a Middle East zone free of nuclear and all other weapons of mass destruction,' and reaffirm that the co-sponsors of the Resolution must take all the necessary measures to fully implement it without further delay. The States Parties of the Group of 21 to the NPT express their utmost concern that the persistent lack of implementation of the 1995 Resolution, contrary to the decisions made at the relevant NPT Review Conferences, erodes the credibility of the NPT and disrupts the delicate balance among its three pillars, taking into account that the indefinite extension of the treaty is inextricably linked to the implementation of the 1995 Resolution on the Middle East. In this context, the States Parties of the Group of 21 to the NPT reaffirm the urgency of Israel's accession to the Treaty without further delay and the placement of all its nuclear facilities under comprehensive IAEA safeguards. While the lack of agreement on an outcome document could undermine the NPT regime, the States Parties of the Group of 21 to the NPT emphasize the continued validity of the commitments made in 1995, 2000 and 2010, particularly the unequivocal undertaking towards nuclear disarmament, and calls for their full implementation without further delay.

18. The Group recognizes the importance of continuing consultations on the question of the possibility of expansion of the membership of the CD.

19. The Group emphasizes the urgent need to address the prevalent dichotomy between the lack of progress in disarmament and increasing emphasis and efforts on non-proliferation. The Group calls upon all Member States to manifest their support for, and investment in, disarmament and non-proliferation education in a balance and comprehensive manner through training and fellowship provided by the United Nations, as a priority. In this context, the Group appreciates the Annual India Fellowship Programme on Disarmament and International Security instituted from 2019 and the Disarmament in Geneva Orientation Course held by UNIDIR and UNODA since 2019.

20. The Group also recognizes the importance of enhancing engagement between civil society and the Conference on Disarmament, according to decisions taken by the Conference, and continues to support the strengthening of the CD´s interaction with civil society. In this regard, the Group welcomes the convening of the CD - Civil Society Forum on 19 March 2015, the Second Informal Civil Society Forum on 22 June 2016, the CD-Civil Society Dialogue held on 17 August 2018, as well as the virtual event "Conference on Disarmament meets Civil Society. Lessons of the Pandemic: Rethinking the nexus between disarmament and security" held on 3 July 2020.