Remarks by Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia Sergey Ryabkov at the International Conference on Disarmament and Nonproliferation, Tehran, April 17, 2010

At the outset let me express sincere gratitude for this opportunity to address such a distinguished audience.

First, I want to say a few words on the upcoming Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference, which is due in New York on May 3-28, 2010.

Such meetings take place every 5 years. They have always been most remarkable in terms of discussion on topical issues of nuclear nonproliferation and disarmament. This is true this time again as a reflection of high international expectations related to the NPT which is widely considered as a cornerstone of international security.

Surely, the spirit of the upcoming RevCon to a great extent depends on the existing political climate in the area of international stability. Discussions within the NPT review framework are exposed to the same controversies that have long existed between the NPT member states.

Many of those who signed the NPT are seeking to relay responsibility for implementation of the treaty exclusively on nuclear weapons states.

We note that certain states increase their criticism against NPT. These states believe that developed countries are obliged to share peaceful nuclear technologies, but for different reasons don’t do so.

I believe that preserving the integrity of the NPT and its sustainable implementation should be considered as our common primary goals as we are approaching the May RevCon. This is something that has directly to do with ensuring security of each and every one of us.

Recently we experienced that international discussions on the prospects of comprehensive and complete elimination of nuclear weapons become more intense. It is something positive. Famous French author Victor Hugo once said: “Nothing can be stronger than ideas the time of which has come”. It is true, that a growing number of disarmament initiatives like the
Hoover Initiative or the Global Zero has been brought up lately. At the same time prominent politicians and public figures all around the globe have established such structures as Luxembourg Forum or Evans-Kawaguchi Commission and are deeply engaged in their activities.

Certain positive trends are also noticed by us in positions of states that possess nuclear weapons. For example, the United Kingdom came up with a large-scale long-term plan for nuclear disarmament. China is vocal in its support for the UN-sponsored convention on prohibition of nuclear weapons. India and Pakistan are considering issues that relate to operational status of their nuclear and missile systems. Yet, surely, a lot has to be done in order to convert this positive trend into tangible nonproliferation achievements.

I would like here to specifically mention Russian efforts in the area of disarmament. As a nuclear weapon state and a permanent member of the UN Security Council Russia is fully aware of its responsibility for fulfilling disarmament obligations under the Article VI of the NPT. That is why, acting in good faith, Russia continues deep, irreversible and verifiable reductions of strategic offensive arms.

The signature in Prague on April 8 of the Treaty between the Russian Federation and the United States of America on Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms is an important step forward in this endeavor. The new Treaty will replace one of the most significant treaties in the area of disarmament – the Treaty on strategic offensive arms between the USSR and the USA of 1991 (START), which expired December 4, 2009, as well as the so-called Moscow Treaty on Strategic Offensive Reductions of 2002.

The START played a historic role in ensuring international peace, strategic stability and security. It laid down the foundation for mutual trust, transparency and predictability in the crucial area of reductions in strategic offensive arms. All this is now reinforced and embodied in the new Treaty. Deep reductions of strategic offensive arms undertaken by the two countries since the end of the Cold war make the world a more stable and secure place. We are relieved from the constant perception of imminent threat to our and other nations security. This made it possible for us to move from an era of “coexistence” into a phase of partnership and mutually beneficial cooperation. A new military and political climate has been created.

The provisions of the new Treaty envisage that each Party shall reduce and limit its strategic offensive arms so that seven years after entry into force of this Treaty and thereafter their aggregate numbers do not exceed:

- 700, for deployed intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), deployed submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs), and deployed heavy bombers;

- 1550, for warheads on deployed ICBMs and SLBMs, as well as for nuclear warheads counted for deployed heavy bombers;

- 800, for deployed and non-deployed launchers of ICBM and SLBM, as well as for...
deployed and non-deployed heavy bombers. This level anchors deployed and non-deployed launchers and heavy bombers in the legal scope of the Treaty. This makes it possible to limit the "upload potential" of the Parties (a capability to rapidly build up the number of deployed warheads in a crisis situation) and provides an additional incentive for elimination and conversion of the strategic offensive arms that are subject to reduction.

Thus, Russia has once again clearly demonstrated its determination to make a large-scale reduction of the strategic offensive arms.

We routinely analyze strategic and regional developments in the world which lead us to certain conclusions regarding the role of nuclear weapons in assuring national security. We assume that nuclear weapons, while remaining the core element for strategic deterrence, cannot be regarded as a cure-all for the whole range of real threats and challenges.

I believe that the 2010 NPT Review Conference can be successful only in case we manage to ensure a balanced approach to all three pillars of the Treaty - non-proliferation, disarmament and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. But how can we achieve this result? My answer is – the only possible way forward lies through joint efforts and good will of the NPT States Parties.

The UN Security Council summit on September 24, 2009 has highlighted existing concerns of the international community and its aspirations to give an adequate response to the existing global challenges of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. This was a kind of a prelude or a foreword to the Review Conference. To my mind, there are two principal conclusions that we can draw from the Security Council summit.

First, current challenges to the nuclear non-proliferation regime could and must be addressed on the basis of the NPT. This treaty has proved its viability and has withstood many difficult tests becoming firmly established as a unique and almost a universal foundation for cooperation in some very sensitive spheres.

Second, the matter of serious concern is of course a threat that terrorists can get access to nuclear materials. Thus we should work for strengthening the “safety net”, allowing to eliminate these risks in advance. These issues are also directly related to the NPT.

The last session of the Preparatory committee to the 2010 NPT Review Conference which took place in May 2009, demonstrated that disarmament issues will top the agenda of the Conference itself. Some of us openly link the success of the Conference to the progress in the sphere of disarmament. I firmly believe that discussions on the future of disarmament should not be used as a tool of political manipulation overshadowing the original objectives of the NPT. It is necessary to bring this discussion on a constructive track.

President of the Russian Federation Dmitry Medvedev has confirmed our course towards a noble goal of a world free from nuclear weapons. We see it as an ultimate objective of a gradual, stage-by-stage process of general and complete disarmament with the participation...
of all states. This objective can only be achieved on the basis of a comprehensive approach which includes, inter alia, creation of conducive international atmosphere based on the principle of international stability and undiminished security for all.

We believe that the NPT Review process should result in articulating by states parties of some specific conditions that can allow further progress towards nuclear disarmament. These are simple and clear conditions - early resolution of the regional conflicts, elimination of the reasons for states to acquire nuclear weapons or continue to keep the existing ones, verifiable elimination of imbalances or disparities in the area of conventional arms and rejection of the attempts to compensate by them the reductions in nuclear systems. It also implies the viability of the principal legal instruments of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation as well as prevention of placement of weapons in the outer space and, of course, development of a right kind of approach towards development of capabilities in the area of missile defense. I believe that Russian proposal to keep all the nuclear weapons within the territories of the nuclear weapons states is also highly relevant here.

It would be underestimation at best to confine nuclear disarmament issues to US-Russian relations. We are convinced that the task of nuclear disarmament concerns not only nuclear weapons states, but every Party to the NPT without exception as well as states remaining out of the Treaty.

It is now imperative as never before that nuclear disarmament initiatives are not left idle but translated into practical action and arrangements. The earliest possible entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) should become an essential step towards nuclear disarmament. All necessary conditions for it are in place, not least after some quite positive signals on the part of the United States regarding the change of its attitude to this Treaty. We urge all countries whose accession to the CTBT is necessary for its entry into force to sign and ratify the Treaty as soon as possible. Keeping the freeze on nuclear testing is a significant measure but it cannot substitute for legal obligations arising from the CTBT.

I would like to emphasize here the need to strengthen the non-proliferation regime in the Middle East. We realize that the zone free of all weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery in the Middle East can not be established overnightly. After all it is closely related to the eventual progress in the Middle East peace process. However, being a member of the “quartet” of the international mediators on the Middle East peace process, Russia suggested to the states of the region some very specific recommendations aimed at implementation of the 1995 NPT RevCon Resolution. They include convening of the conference or a meeting of the parties concerned to reflect on the ways of the implementation of the 1995 decisions, appointment of a special coordinator on this issue, ratification of the CTBT by all Middle East states, their forgoing of indigenous development of sensitive elements of nuclear fuel cycle and placement of all nuclear facilities in the region under comprehensive IAEA safeguards.

It is fundamental that all nuclear weapons states support us in these efforts. The EU countries have already expressed their positive attitude towards our proposals. I would like
though to underscore that countries in the Middle East themselves should be the most interested ones in establishing a zone free for all weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery in the region. Our task is to facilitate this process and we intend to do so also in future.

Progress towards a “global zero” is impossible without building a modern, proliferation-resistant architecture of international cooperation in peaceful uses of nuclear energy, based, in particular, on strict compliance with NPT verification mechanisms as well as on the multilateral approaches to the nuclear fuel cycle. We are also quite active in this area. Improving the efficiency of the IAEA verification activities is an important aspect of strengthening the nuclear non-proliferation regime. We believe that the Additional Protocol to the Safeguards Agreement is an efficient instrument to provide more opportunities for the Agency in this area. In the future, the Additional Protocol, together with the Safeguards Agreement, should become a universally accepted standard to verify the compliance of states with their NPT non-proliferation obligations and an essential new standard in the field of nuclear exports.

One more point I would like to raise before I conclude is on preventing the global circulation of sensitive nuclear technologies that are directly linked to the production of nuclear weapon material, alongside with providing to a fairly large number of countries a possibility to meet their legitimate interest in developing nuclear energy. Implementation of Russian initiatives on establishing the global nuclear energy infrastructure and international centers for providing services in nuclear fuel cycle is well underway. A significant step forward was made when the Board of Governors of the IAEA adopted the Russian proposal on establishing the guaranteed low enriched uranium reserve under the auspices of the Agency and the subsequent agreement was signed.

To sum up let me briefly go through the list of our key expectations with regard to the upcoming NPT Review Conference - confirmation that the NPT is a primary basis for resolving current proliferation challenges and threats, steps towards making the IAEA safeguards system a universal one and bringing the CTBT into force, as well as launching negotiations at the Conference on Disarmament on FMCT, creation of favorable conditions for disarmament and encouragement of all NPT States, including other nuclear weapons States to take part in it. Besides, I should also mention widening of the geographic coverage of nuclear weapons free zones and strengthening of non-proliferation regime in the Middle East. Last but not least, we need to establish effective mechanisms to counter nuclear terrorism. In broad strikes, this is how we see the set of recommendations, which would allow to adjust NPT toolbox and revive the situation around multilateral agreements and initiatives that are based on the NPT.

I look forward to continuously having a productive conference and, through our consolidated efforts, to achieving meaningful results aimed at effective application of the NPT potential in the interests of nuclear non-proliferation, disarmament and peaceful uses of nuclear energy.
Thank you.