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Statement by

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at the Informal Meeting of the General Assembly to mark the observance of the
International Day against Nuclear Tests and the twentieth anniversary of the closure of
the Semipalatinsk Nuclear Test site

New York, September 02, 2011
Mr. President,

I thank you for scheduling this important Informal Meeting of the General Assembly to mark the observance of the International Day against Nuclear Tests and the twentieth anniversary of the closure of the Semipalatinsk Nuclear Test site, which was the scene of nearly a quarter of all nuclear weapon tests in the past. I also express our appreciation for the statements delivered by you and other distinguished speakers in today’s session. Our special thanks are also with the delegation of Kazakhstan for their positive role.

Mr. President,

On August 29, we celebrated the International Day against Nuclear Tests. Together with it, we are now observing twentieth Anniversary of the closure of the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site. As we look back, we see that four to five hundred nuclear weapons tests took place during the last 50 years. However, good news is, the world witnessed only two tests during the last 10 years. This is the time to act and close down all doors on nuclear weapons tests. Today we should pledge to discontinue nuclear weapons tests as well as nuclear weapons arsenals for achieving a world free of both nuclear tests and nuclear weapons. We hope that Member States would seize the moment at this meeting, and it would provide guidance to all of us, including the States which are yet to become Parties to CTBT, for achieving the total elimination of nuclear weapons and divert such resources towards education for all and towards peace, stability and social wellbeing of all the people across the globe.

Mr. President,

Bangladesh is a democratic, secular and inclusive society. My country, with her impeccable disarmament and non-proliferation record, is committed to the pursuit of universal adherence to the CTBT; and also to the NPT. Bangladesh has unconditionally opted to remain non-nuclear by choice. It is the first Annex-2 country from South Asia to ratify the CTBT. We have also concluded the safeguards agreement with the IAEA including the Additional Protocols. Let me reiterate our call for all States, particularly the remaining Annex—2 nations, to refrain from conducting nuclear test explosion and to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). We are convinced that universalizing and entry into force of CTBT at an early date is a critical building block for a nuclear-free world.
Bangladesh is constitutionally committed to achieving general and complete disarmament. As a demonstration of this commitment, the Bangladesh Parliament has also adopted a resolution on the 2010 NPT Review Conference where it called upon governments around the world and relevant sectors of civil society to make use of the Model Nuclear Weapons Convention to assist in exploring, developing and implanting the elements required to achieve a nuclear weapon-free world under a Nuclear Weapons Convention. The resolution, inter alia, reiterated its support for Article IV of the NPT that guarantees the inalienable rights of all States Parties to the NPT to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, without discrimination, and in conformity with Articles I and II of the Treaty, under the IAEA safeguards and verification mechanism. The Bangladesh Parliament, in its unanimous opinion, also expressed the belief that any use of nuclear weapons would constitute an international crime, including crime against humanity, crime against peace, war crime and genocide. The Government of Bangladesh fully supports this Parliamentary resolution.

Mr. President,

It is disconcerting to note that undue restrictions on exports of material, equipment and technology for peaceful purposes to developing non-nuclear-weapon countries continue to persist through measures incompatible with the provisions of the Treaty. These barriers must be removed. Bangladesh is convinced that in addition to electricity generation, peaceful uses of nuclear technology with IAEA safeguards and verification regime, may help tackle some old as well as contemporary development challenges that we confront, including hunger, disease, natural resource management, and climate change. Under the monitoring of IAEA, all the NPT signatories should be allowed to develop nuclear technology for peaceful use.

Mr. President,

We are concerned about the risks posed by continued possession of nuclear weapons, their proliferation- both horizontal and vertical, the expansive role given to nuclear weapons in security doctrines, and the possibility of acquisition and use of such weapons by non-State actors. Though there are some positive developments in recent times, these are insufficient. We stress that non-nuclear states parties to the NPT have a legitimate right to receive unconditional assurances from the Nuclear Weapons States that the latter will not use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against them.
Mr. President,

Bangladesh also views the disarmament and non-proliferation agenda from a development perspective. Our conscience can not justify about one and a half trillion dollar expenditure a year on armament when the developing countries, particularly LDCs like Bangladesh, are struggling to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and many of them are failing to achieve MDGs owing to resource constraints. Now we have to develop a mechanism where funds being spent for nuclear armaments be channeled to meet the MDG targets in the developing nations as well as urgent climate change needs. Full implementation of the disarmament and non-proliferation agenda, including nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, is critical to achieve these goal.

Mr. President,

Let me reiterate that all this notwithstanding, we have not lost faith in ourselves. While we acknowledge that our journey towards a nuclear-weapon-free world would not be easy, we do not believe that difficulties should deter us from beginning our quest for a nuclear-weapon-free world— for ourselves and for our children. We must leave behind a planet habitable for our future generations. Let us resolve to make a difference today and assure the global community of a better future for all.

I thank you, Mr. President.