

Statement by Germany during the Second Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, 13-14 February 2014 in Nayarit/Mexico

I would like to thank the Mexican Government for this very important Conference. At the same time I would like to join those who expressed their gratitude for the great hospitality we have all experienced over the last two days– muchas gracias!

We greatly appreciate the discussion of the impact of nuclear weapon detonations. We share the concern that a nuclear weapon detonation has a devastating impact on human beings as well as on the environment. Everything should be done to further strengthen the “nuclear taboo”. In this context, it is worthwhile recalling that progress has been achieved on this road. Negative Security Assurances already today guarantee all Non-Nuclear Weapon States in compliance with the NPT that nuclear weapons will not be used against them. The role of nuclear weapons in security doctrines has been reduced, to mention but two examples and without suggesting that this cannot be further improved upon.

From our point of view, the best way to further reduce the risk of a nuclear weapon detonation is to carry on implementing the NPT-Action Plan in good faith with its far-reaching and well-balanced proposals. Implementing this Action Plan is not done overnight. It takes perseverance and patience. It requires action with regard to nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation as well as nuclear security challenges.

Progress also requires maintaining a dialogue with the Nuclear Weapon States. As important as the humanitarian dimension is there is also a security dimension to nuclear weapons. They have greatly contributed to preventing armed conflict between the NATO-Alliance and the Warsaw Pact. We Europeans do remember this quite vividly.

Today, the security situation we are facing allows for further progress with respect to nuclear disarmament. But it will be progress achieved in difficult negotiations with bilateral talks between the States with the largest arsenals later leading to multilateral negotiations.

Over the last two days we have often heard the analogy with banning landmines. This analogy with the Ottawa process is not a convincing one, however. After all, these weapons have, unlike nuclear weapons, never played a central role in the international system. In all likelihood, at some point in time on the way down to Zero a Nuclear Weapons Convention will be negotiated. But pressing forward without the Nuclear Weapon States today is not the best strategy for tangible progress. It might rather antagonize important players and thereby, against our best intentions, negatively impinge on the implementation of the NPT, the NPT Action Plan and on the Review Conference in 2015.

Germany looks forward to continuing this crucial exchange before the end of this year in Vienna.