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Statement of Mr. Saber Hossain Chowdhury MP, Co-Chair of PNND & President of IPU “Building a Nuclear-Weapon-Free World

Astana, 29 August 2016

Let me begin by saying how pleased I am to be here in Astana and to be able to express solidarity and admiration for the bold and visionary leadership of Kazakhstan in building a nuclear weapons free world.

By closing down the Soviet nuclear test site in its territory, renouncing the world's fourth largest nuclear arsenal, promoting and negotiating a Central Asia nuclear weapon free zone, Kazakhstan has indeed been a trail blazer and serves as an inspiring model for others to aspire to and follow.

In addition to actions it has taken, Kazakhstan continues to bring the world together by hosting key events including the PNND assembly in 2012 at which the ATOM Project was launched.

This current event - bringing parliamentarians, mayors, religious leaders and other representatives of civil society together with representatives of international organizations and government officials – is a very important initiative of President Nazarbayev to build cooperation and partnerships between these constituencies in realizing a nuclear-weapons-free world. The timing of this event, just after the Open Ended Working Group process and UN High Level Conference on Nuclear Disarmament in two years time in the horizon, is indeed strategic and welcomed.

From the perspective of the IPU, as the world organization of national parliaments, we are convinced of the fact that the agenda for a nuclear weapons free world is an issue of crucial importance for all parliaments and parliamentarians – and that they can indeed play a major role in turning this vision into a palpable reality.

Throughout the 1990's, the issue of nuclear disarmament was discussed at the IPU through the prism of the elimination of weapons of mass destruction. In 2009, IPU Members adopted a resolution entitled "Advancing nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, and securing the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty: The role of parliaments"- <http://www.ipu.org/conf-e/120/120-1.htm>. This resolution captures an

extensive array of recommendations for practical measures to be taken by parliaments to achieve this goal. Among others, to promote the UN Secretary-General's five-point proposal for nuclear disarmament and encourage negotiations on a comprehensive nuclear weapons agreement.

Since then, together with our partners at PNND, we have made steady efforts to keep this issue in our agenda and build greater awareness and support among MPs. IPU Assemblies over the past five years have regularly featured debates and review sessions on nuclear disarmament.

The 2010 World Conference of Speakers of Parliament, held at the Palais des Nations in Geneva, included an advance screening of "Countdown to Zero" and issued an outcome Declaration whereby parliamentary leaders pledged their support for the UN Secretary-General plan aimed at achieving a nuclear-weapon-free world.

Based on the input from Members and the various good practices high-lighted in the course of their deliberations, a Handbook for Parliamentarians on supporting nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation was produced in 2012. To date, the Handbook has been translated into close to a dozen languages and is serving as a practical tool for parliaments and their specialized committees.

Several ground-breaking debates have been held in national parliaments, including a frank discussion on nuclear doctrines in the French National Assembly.

In March 2014, IPU adopted a fresh resolution entitled Towards a nuclear-weapon-free world: The contribution of parliaments- <http://www.ipu.org/conf-e/130/Res-1.htm>

In the lead up to the adoption of the resolution, two co-rapporteurs from Canada and Cuba - representing very different political views - worked together in a pro-active and very constructive manner. Together, they arrived at a bold and forward-looking draft text that served as a solid basis for the resolution ultimately adopted by the full IPU membership. This in fact demonstrates the beauty of parliamentary diplomacy, whilst also highlighting the fact that it is possible for politicians from across the spectrum to work together effectively in addressing critical issues.

The resolution focuses on the role parliamentarians can play to highlight the economic, environmental and humanitarian imperative to abolish nuclear weapons, eliminate the role of nuclear weapons in security doctrines and promote multilateral negotiations to achieve a safe and secure nuclear-weapons-free world. It also calls on all parliaments to promote and mark September 26th as the International Day for Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons.

As per IPU practice, the resolution is circulated within the national parliaments and submitted to the attention of Governments. Several parliaments bring the resolutions for debate within the select parliamentary committees and examine modalities for implementation. There is a statutory obligation of annual reporting by Members, and we also count on engagement with various

partners for follow up at the national and regional levels. Needless to say, throughout this process, cooperation between legislators, local officials, governments and civil society is critical to ensure success.

We are well aware of the fact that building the political will to move this agenda forward requires perseverance and steadfast efforts. As far as the IPU is concerned, we continue to use each and every possible opportunity to engage our broad membership and help mobilize parliamentary action on this critical issue.

In October 2014, in the context of the fall IPU Assembly in Geneva, IPU together with PNND and the World Future Council convened a parliamentary workshop to look at nuclear prohibition and divestment legislation, possibilities to phase out reliance on nuclear deterrence in favor of cooperative security mechanisms, as well as the role of parliamentarians in supporting multilateral nuclear disarmament efforts and initiatives.

The workshop helped to shape parliamentary input to the December 2014 Vienna Conference on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons, where together with the Austrian Parliament and PNND we held yet another parliamentary roundtable on Parliamentary Actions for a Nuclear-Weapons-Free World.

We have also looked for ways to encourage and support the work of the UN Open-Ended Working Group on Nuclear Disarmament, and I would like to commend the work and tireless efforts of Ambassador Thongphakdi of Thailand in taking this process forward.

At the IPU, our activities have continued in the context of our statutory Assemblies throughout 2015 and the current year, with another parliamentary session scheduled in Geneva in late October to examine good practices as these relate to the establishment of nuclear weapons-free zones. These have indeed contributed to getting more and more parliamentarians involved in our joint work.

I am indeed pleased to see that several prominent IPU office-holders, including the President of the IPU Committee on Middle East Questions (Ms. Denise Pascal Allende), the President of the IPU Geopolitical Group for Latin America and the Caribbean (Mr. Roberto Leon of Chile), as well as former IPU rapporteur and Bureau member Senator Salwa Damen el Masri of Jordan have joined us here in Astana for this important meeting, and that they continue pro-actively to engaged in the cause.

I would like in particular to commend Senator Masri for taking the initiative of ensuring the Arabic translation of our Handbook for Parliamentarians on Nuclear Disarmament and helping to generate a substantive discussion on some of these key issues among the Arab states. We are also very pleased to have amongst us Dr. Konstantin Kosachev, Chair of the Russian Federation's Foreign Affairs Committee and a Vice President and Executive Committee Member of the IPU.

Before I end my speech, allow me to share a thought as PNND Co-Chair on supporting and elevating the global movement for a nuclear weapons free

world. I think it is very important to recognize, support and honor nuclear disarmament efforts of legislators, religious leaders and other representatives of civil society through a specific international award. Establishment of such an award would represent a much-needed boost to the nuclear abolition movement. Perhaps President Nursultan Nazarbayev might consider this?

Let me conclude by reiterating we will continue to do our utmost and work methodically with our partners to help build the necessary political will and momentum towards achievement of a world without nuclear weapons, a reality the people we represent aspire to and a fundamental right of all.

Let us create that world and let that be our legacy for future generations.