

## Courtesy Translation

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today is a moment of particular importance both for disarmament and non-proliferation and for the relations between France and its P5 partners and the five countries of Central Asia represented here. It is a very great honour for me to have just signed, on behalf of the President of the French Republic, this Protocol to the Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia.

As you know, France supports the regional approach to disarmament; France is in favour of the development of nuclear-weapon-free zones.

By signing this protocol, France undertakes to neither use nor threaten to use nuclear weapons against the five countries of Central Asia, as it has already undertaken with regard to the one hundred or so States Parties to the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga and Pelindaba. The signing of this Protocol by the five nuclear-weapon States therefore represents another step to strengthen international peace and security, especially in Central Asia.

Furthermore, the signing of this Protocol during the third session of the Preparatory Committee for the Review Conference on the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is a powerful gesture which demonstrates the commitment of both the nuclear-weapon States and the countries of Central Asia to the NPT. This Treaty is the cornerstone of the international non-proliferation regime and the foundation of our disarmament efforts. By carrying out an action planned in the Final Document of the 2010 NPT Review Conference, France is demonstrating that it is committed to taking concrete steps to make progress towards disarmament. Disarmament can only be achieved gradually, by building international confidence.

For Central Asia, the signing of this Protocol also further strengthens the exemplary record of the countries concerned with regard to the NPT. All States in the region are Parties to the NPT and one of them acceded to it after divesting itself of nuclear weapons inherited from the USSR.

The signing of this Protocol today marks the happy conclusion of long discussions between our countries to clarify how each of us understands its requirements. In this regard, France is expressing some reservations and interpretative statements today, as it has done for protocols on other nuclear-weapon-free zones. These have been formulated in writing and placed in the custody of the depositary. They do not contain any surprises.

France welcomes the constructive dialogue held with the five countries of Central Asia, which helped to deepen the understanding and confidence between our States, without which this signing could not have taken place. In this regard, I wish personally to thank Ambassador Sadykov for his involvement and to thank, through him, the authorities of the five countries of Central Asia. France has developed high quality relations with this region in many fields and welcomes today's signing, which enriches this relationship further in the interests of international peace and security.

I hope that the five States of Central Asia may now serve as an example encouraging other regions of the world to engage in equally constructive dialogue.